

Al-‘Aqqad: His contribution to modern Arab thought and literature

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Abstract

One of the most well-known scholars in Arab literary world of the twentieth century was Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad (1889-1964). He was a famous writer, poet, intellectualist, novelist, journalist, columnist and a literary critic. Throughout the creative periods of ‘Aqqad’s life; many facts were responsible for his modern cultural views, intellectual thoughts as well as memorable for his influential literary contribution. The purpose of this article is to analyze the biography of Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad and focus the influential contributions to modern Arab thought and literature of him. He was one of the most important figures who contributed immense for shaping Arabic prose literature in a standard trend as well as modernized the Arabic poetry and criticism. He also wrote for socio-political modification and up gradation which brought a distinct and profound change in modern Arab thought, literary conscience and intellectual domain as expressed in his different writings.

Keywords: Al-‘Aqqad, Freedom of thought, Intellectual domain, literary fashion, literary contribution

Introduction

Egyptian Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad (1889 - 1964) was a mostly self-educated writer, historian, philosopher, translator, journalist, intellectualist, poet and a literary critic who was a modernizer of twentieth century Arabic poetry and criticism. Though, he had a little official education, In course of time, he went on to become an important figure in 20th century intellectual life is testimony to his ambition, discipline, and natural talent. Historical records report that, al-‘Aqqad was an ardent reader in numerous arenas. He studied about religion, geography, history and many other subjects. He was known for his excellent English and French. He was famous for his actual patriotism toward the country of his birth; he used his writing to spread his pro-democratic beliefs and was known as a leading innovator in twentieth century Arabic criticism and poetry. He wrote more than hundred books about philosophy, religion and poetry. He instituted a poetry school with Ibrahim al-Mazny and ‘Abdur-RahmanShokry. It was known as ad-Diwan. His most famous books are al-‘Abqariyat, Allah and Sarah. Some of his books were translated into English, German, French, Russian, Urdu, and Persian. He was best known for his use of ornamental and complicated prose style. Al-‘Aqqad was honoured by the college of the Arabic language in al-Azhar when they gave his name to one of the halls in the college. Also, in the early 1980s, an Egyptian television series was produced about the life of al-Aqqad, which was titled al-‘Imlaq (The Giant). ‘Aqqad was one of the most important figures who contributed enormous for shaping Arabic prose literature in a standard style as well as restructured the Arabic poetry in a distinct fashion and criticized the literature in a constructive way. He also wrote for socio-political reform and up gradation which brought one type of new ideas and views as well as profound changes in modern Arab thought, literary concept and intellectual domain as expressed in his different literature.

Short biography

Al-‘Aqqad was born on June 28, 1889, in ‘Aswan’and (in early morning, aged 74). “On March 12, 1964, he died in his home in Helipolis, a suburb of Cairo.”(Al-Gabalawi, 1971).Then he was buried the same day at his native town Aswan.“His father was an ‘*Amin al-Mahjuzat*’, probably a kind of archivist, in this remote Egyptian provincial town and gave his son a strict and religious education.”(Dayf, 1929).

His mother was a Kurdish woman. He began attending the village ‘kuttab’at the age of six. Al-‘Aqqad advanced to a nearby elementary school in 1899, where he spent just four years; whether because of economic pressures or other factors, he received little formal education.Unlike his schoolmates, he spent all his weekly allowances on books. He was graduated from the elementary school on 1903 and did not continue his formal education due to the poor conditions of his family at that time. Even he did not go any secondary school, probably, there was no secondary school at Aswan and his family never thought to send him Cairo for that purpose. This makes him a little bit different among the Egyptian writers; in later years a request for a scholarship to Europe was rejected because he had no school certificates.

In 1904, sixteen years old, al-‘Aqqad left his native town Aswan. During his early youth he worked in a factory of silk and as an employer in the rail ways. However, he was obsessed by reading and acquiring knowledge in different fields. “He became an articled clerk with the municipality of Qena and was subse-Fattah al-DIdl, queritly transferred to Zagazig, the capital of the SharqTyah province. During this period he started to write for various newspapers and magazines in Cairo.”(Al-‘Aqqad, 1968). “According to some sources he also attended a school for telegraphers. Others have it that he enrolled in a technical school (al-Funiinwa’l-s, and ‘i’) —the two may have been one and the same school.”(Ridwan).

Al-'Aqqad was offered, while still in his teens, to work in a government office, but he resigned in 1906 (at the age of seventeen) to dedicate himself completely to a writing career. He was said to have settled permanently in Cairo at that point, having until now lived and worked in various cities throughout Egypt. But in 1907 he got a great opportunity when the renowned reformer Muhammad Farid Wagdy, who was a writer of neo-maqamah's himself, established the newspaper al-Dustur (Convention in English) and recruited al-'Aqqad as a staff, probably as the one and only editor. He always considered the journalism as a vocation but teaching as well as he had a great sense of free journalism. He commented regarding his first job, "I remember that I received the news of my appointment as I would that of a prison sentence, for I felt with all my heart that a salaried man was the 20th century slave." (Dayyab). He also became an editor with the newspapers al-Bayan (The Clarification) in 1911 and in 1908 became the first Egyptian journalist to interview Sa'ad Zaghloul, a nationalist leader who would one day become the country's prime minister. Al-'Aqqad also wrote many critical essays for a magazine called Oukaz in 1912. After sometime the newspapers have been closed and he worked as a private teacher for a short time for living. "The young al-'Aqqad bade his modest but secure official career farewell, an act which his contemporaries did not understand and which would still be extraordinary in Egypt today." (Al-'Aqqad, 1982). But his intellectual and literary practice has never stopped; he contributed regularly by giving articles and columns in different newspapers and magazines.

'Aqqad's contribution to modern Arab thought

Muhammad 'Abduh is the first promoter and pioneer of Islamic reform in Egypt and a great modernist of the 20th century with immense contribution in the revival and reform of Islamic scholarly thought and movement. Mainly, the modification movement of liberating the thoughts, ideas and views were inaugurated by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt had significantly contributed in reforming and liberating the educational structure, and refreshing the religious standards and thoughts. His work and struggle has brought unique change in legal, social, and political structure of Egypt, and help to regenerate modern Islamic aspiration. The modern worldview he proposed had significant impact in engineering the force of rational spirit and reviving modern and liberal ideas and contributing to dynamic change in social, cultural, educational, political and religious example of modern Egypt. 'Abduh significantly influenced the contemporary intellectuals, scholars, young promising leaders and the different luminaries of Arab world. 'Abduh's modernist thinking made a platform of thinking and showed a new trace of free think-tank practice. His foremost desire was to challenge the rigidity and overcome the conservativeness and highlight the principle of general welfare and social needs of the time. The fresher Egyptian modernists who were uniquely influenced by 'Abduh's thought and idea such as Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq and his brother, 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq who wrote widely on the Shaykh and his theories, Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Muhammad Husayn Haikal, Taha Husayn, Qasim Bey Amin, 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Ibrahim 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, Dr. Mansur Fahmi, and other luminaries.

Some prominent intellectuals from the Manar Party and the Azhar Group also express strong favours and supports for his ideas and views such as Ahmad Abu Khatwah (d. 1906), 'Abd al-Karim Salman and Sayyid Wafa, Muhammad Khalil, Hassunah al-Nawawi (1840-1925), Muhammad Mustafa al-Maraghi, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahim al-Damardash Pasha (1853-1930), Ibrahim Bey al-Lakani (d. 1906), Ibrahim Bey al-Hilbawi, Ibrahim Bey al-Muwailihi (1846-1906), Hifni Bey Nasif (1856-1919), Ahmad Fathi Zaghlul Pasha (1863-1914), Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876-1924), Muhammad Hafiz Bey Ibrahim (1873-1932), and many others. Al-'Aqqad was greatly influenced by 'Abduh's thoughtful aspiration, and became his arduous follower and disciple, trying to emulate his voice and character, and expanding his effort and struggle. 'Aqqad's world of socio-political activism has broadened his philosophical enquiry to embrace thinking, theology, law, social and political science and mysticism, which strengthen the radical change and the reform in Arab intellectual domain. 'Aqqad was one of the great followers of Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt who was influenced by 'Abduh from his childhood. At home there were old copies of al-Ustaddh, the magazine of 'Urabi's follower 'Abdallah al-Nadim, and of al-'Urwah al-wuthqd, the magazine that had been published by al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh during their exile after the failure of the 'Urabi rebellion. When he was still a school boy in Aswan, al-'Aqqad met a certain al-Giddaw, according to al-'Aqqad himself a supporter of Muhammad 'Abduh. (Al-'Aqqad, 1982).

'Aqqad positively holds the ideas of modernism which largely geared to the progress of Arab society. The basic foundation of modern ideal dreamed by him was largely grounded in rationalism, liberalism, nationalism and democratization of politics. His tendencies were more towards secular ideas such as individualism and liberalism, which, from his viewpoint, could bring to men intellectual and cultural liberty. 'Aqqad believed the rigid structure of religious culture was holding back what was essentially a logical and liquid religion. The practice of religion is essentially rooted in ontological premise of rational and logical truth and its teaching is lucid and clear for common understanding and comprehension. He fashioned essential framework for reform appealing for change and advocating a more modern conception of religion, making significant effort to enlighten classical

tradition and ideas. The struggle represents his ground for revival of religious ideals in modern society, and the development of freedom and the liberty of political democracy. Al-'Aqqad commented in al-Risala (1943) in supporting the democratic system: "I (personally) support democracy because it protects the individual freedom and improves human life." (Taubah, 1977).

'Aqqad also heartened the necessity to accept modernity founded in literary construct and artistic dream. 'Aqqad's modern principles and boosts can be seen from various impacts he made in the field of essay, poem, novel, political and social philosophy, democratic view, science, traditional ruling and commentary and contemporary political movement. His inclusivity in writing and evolutionary approach characterized his worldview and standard outlook of modernism and liberalism with strong view that adopting the western ideals will liberate the Muslim from stagnation, misconception, superstition, decadence and backwardness and leading the ways to gain the benefit of modernity, science and technology.

"He was the 'link' which was needed to complete the chain of progress set in motion by Shaikh Muammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1898) in the introduction of a easy, clear and eloquent style of writing after the Arab language was stagnating under the excessive use of *saj*' (rhymed prose) and *badi'* (rhetorical style) which had become merely rhetorical ornaments, the distinguishing mark of all eloquence whether spoken or written." (Nicholson, 1966). What 'Abduh and al-Afghani initiated, he continued and improved upon. "Translations became fully organized and structured, supervised by various societies like 'The Committee for Writing, Translating and Distribution' and properly regulated by the government. Not only French and English works were translated, but also literary sources from the German, Italian and Russian languages. The result was the birth of an 'Egyptian humanities', led and inspired by Shauqi, Shukri, al-'Aqqad, al-Mazini, Lufial-Sayyid, ahausain, Haikal, Taufiq al-Hakim and others who produced and originated this literature. "This literature did not stop at the borders of the Egyptian environment and its past heritage, nor at the Western environment and its ancient and modern heritage, but (it) expanded this environment to become a grand environment of humanities, spreading its lofty, exalted ideals and designs of real, true literature – the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty." (Daif, 1974).

Later 'Aqqad became one of the most influential figures who responsible for shaping Sayyid Qutb's literary outlook and socio-political orientation which caused in profound changes in his scholarly ability as expressed in his works. He influenced his disciple, Sayyid Qutb and exposed him to literature and political views which were utmost in Sayyid Qutb's views on literature and political questions of his country; Egypt. Qutb's improvement of contemporary thought went through in different phases. Literary work is one of them, in which way he became a well-known literary critic between 1926 and 1948. Later on, from 1948 to the early 1950s, he progressed from literature to social criticism of the rudimentary flaws in Egyptian society, which he aimed to resolve. Al-'Aqqad's impact on Qutb's intellectual development began in the early 1920s when the later moved to Cairo for living with his uncle, Husayn. There, Qutb was familiarized to al-'Aqqad, who was already famous in both poems and criticism. According to Khalidi, there are several reasons for the increase in Qutb's relationship with al-'Aqqad. "Firstly, Qutb was living with his uncle, Husayn, who was already close friends with al-'Aqqad, for both were Wafdists and journalists. Secondly, uncle Husayn's residence itself was close to al-'Aqqad's residence. This closeness of course enabled Qutb to visit al-'Aqqad frequently and learned many things from him including the meaning of life. Thirdly, al-'Aqqad's personality and his talent in literary works and criticism attracted Qutb so much that he then began to admire al-'Aqqad and read his works." (Khalidi, 1994).

Intellectual domain and the freedom of thought

Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889-1964) was not only poet, literature or critic but also politician; one of the most important modernist writers and thinkers of the liberal era in modern Egypt. He is one of the giants and the pillars of intellect of the 20th century renaissance. Founder of the National Arab Press in Morocco, Said Hajji (1912-1942) stated, "I wish acknowledge the author's merit for addressing a topic so vast and complex as the literary work of Al-Akkad, giving proof of an intellectual courage that is laudable. Furthermore he had chosen to write to us about a poet and writer only a few can be compared to in contemporary Arab literature." (Hajji, 1933). He fought many battles in protection of freedom of thought and the liberation of the homeland. He is considered as a unique encyclopedic figure and a cultured individual. He was a keen reader, he used to read in different fields of knowledge and wisdom, and he wrote in various spheres, distinguishing himself as a writer, thinker, poet, historian, journalist, translator and philosopher. In 'Aqqad's view, the values of a liberal democracy were rooted in individual freedoms and civil liberties, constitutionalism, a parliamentary and multiparty system, the separation of powers, equality for all inhabitants, cultural multiplicity, and the indisputable legitimacy of political opposition. Even 'Aqqad's position was always against the autocracy, tyranny, monarchy, expansionism and racial discrimination. He also criticized Nazi racial discrimination, autocracy, and expansionism. He exposed Hitler and Nazism as the ultimate danger not only for freedom and democracy, but also for modernity, the very

existence of modern man and enlightened culture. 'Aqqad (1889–1964) expressed his views in the early years of the Second World War; in that time his liberal democratic worldview had completely fused. As a representative of the Wafd party in the Egyptian parliament, and later as the intellectual leader of the Sa'adist party and its representative in the Chamber of Deputies, 'Aqqad was one of the most constantly democratic activists in Egyptian politics and culture. "He struggled for political freedom from the 1920s to the early 1940s for independence from British rule. During those years, he joined the Wafd party under the leadership of Sa'ad Zaghlul and devoted his talents to the cause of the party. His support of the party ended with the death of Sa'ad Zaghlul, for he was disillusioned with the new party leader, Nahhas Pasha, whom he considered more inclined to demagoguery than to democracy." (Kepel, 1984). However, in his ideas and activities it is rightly reflected that he was one of the members of intellectual community. In that time the liberal modes of thought mainly developed on the basis of two representative intellectual basics. The first was the very presence of parliamentary; the second was the emergence and movement of a strong civil society.

The fair-minded success of Egyptian parliamentary government was based on a mature civil society that developed a distinct liberal public domain. It emerged in the late nineteenth century, reached maturity after the Great War, and flourished during the interwar era. This civil society gave birth to a liberal public sphere, one that can be defined as the effendi liberal public sphere. The intellectuals organized the hardcore center of this effendi liberal public sphere: they were the idea makers, the cultural producers; the writers and artists. Prominent within this intellectual community of discourse were about thirty luminary liberal intellectuals. Many of them were more dominant: 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Ahmad Amin, Taufiq al-Hakim, 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq, and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri. The intellectual voices of women were equally important, particularly those of Huda Sha'arawi, Nabawiyya Musa, and Labiba Ahmad. All of these intellectuals were of the similar generation. One of them was a little exceptional; Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad. He is considered as a representative thinker of the day and the delegate of a liberal democracy. He was the most influential promoter of a liberal democracy in Egypt and the Arab world. His impact on larger educated publics was unique. As part of promotion of liberal democratic principles and values, on a different level, in quest for democracy, 'Aqqad turned his visions against Tyranny. He observed it as a dictatorial system that quieted freedom of thought, blocked civil rights, and transformed human beings into simple particles within state mechanism, thereby detaining them. 'Aqqad understood that there was a built-in structural problem in his society: a majority uneducated in liberal democracy. He dedicated his life and career to education, which he regarded as the most effective agent of democratization and liberalization of Egyptian life. "However, at critical stages, 'Aqqad took prison ship as well as demonstrated that he was in fact a liberal democrat. In 1931, after nine months' imprisonment, al-'Aqqad on his release went straight from the prison to the tomb of Sa'd Zaghlul where he recited a poem." (Wahy al-Arba'in, 1933). In the early 1930s when the dictatorial regime of Isma'il Sidqi (1930–33) undermined the 1923 constitution and thereby threatened to destroy the parliamentary government, 'Aqqad led a democratic struggle against Sidqi. Specially, Whenever the Prime Minister Isma'il Sidqi suspended the constitution, it was al-'Aqqad who addressed the House with the threatening words: "the people are prepared to crush the greatest head in the country if attempts are made to tamper with the Constitution or to abolish it." (Al-Gabalawi, 1964). The breakdown of Sidqi's authoritative government and the refurbishment of the constitution and the reaffirmation of parliamentary life toward the mid-1930s were an achievement for 'Aqqad and his liberal democratic platform. Al-'Aqqad himself is also an intellectual and liberal character, who regarded as having a strong influence on Qutb's thought, especially on literary views, socio-political issues and Islam whom Qutb clearly mentioned in many of his writings. 'Aqqad wrote some poetical collections starting from 1916, and indulged into many intellectual confrontations against numerous well-known Egyptian thinkers caring his principles about poetry and literature. "Qutb mentioned to an-Nadwi, who visited him in 1951, that: al-'Aqqad is a man of pure intellect; he will only examine a problem through reason and intellect, so I proceeded to quench my thirst at other springs nearer the spirit. I then took the trouble to study the poetry of Orientals such as Tagore. I used to believe moreover that someone like al-'Aqqad, with his great wisdom and personality, would not submit to such necessities and confusions as the government and the authorities, but he reconciled himself to them." (Haim, 1982).

In course of time, al-'Aqqad became one of the most important figures like 'Abduh who is responsible for shaping Sayyid Qutb's literary outlook and socio-political orientation which resulted in profound changes in his intellectual ability as expressed in his works. He influenced his disciple, Sayyid Qutb and exposed him to literature and political views which were paramount in Sayyid Qutb's views on literature and political questions of his country; Egypt. Qutb's relation with al-'Aqqad also made better him to read Western books on various subjects such as literature, history, philosophy, psychology and education, since many of them were available in 'Aqqad's personal library. "In addition, Qutb was a loyal reader of al-'Aqqad's writings, judging by his enthusiasm in reading all the articles and books written by his mentor. Thus, al-'Aqqad's secular ideas such as liberalism, individualism and modernism as reflected in his writings gradually influenced Qutb's as he began to realize how reason and intellect could guide human action. Qutb did admit to this development when he stated

that al-'Aqqad helped him to focus on the thought rather than the utterance.”(Musallam, 1983).

Possibly it was during this stage that Qutb seemed to be significantly influenced by the western way of thinking and became familiar with its civilization. This can be seen from Qutb's later writings in which he mentioned western writers like T.W. Arnold (1864–1930), Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and the English poet Thomas Hardy (1840–1928). In Qutb's novel *Ashwak*, for instance, Qutb used ideas like existentialism, scepticism and liberalism, which indicated his Westernized tendencies. Noting on this new orientation, Haddad writes, Qutb's association with al-'Aqqad had exposed him to Western sources and made him “extremely interested in English literature and read avidly anything he could lay his hands on in translation”. (Haddad, 1983).

Development in modern literary fashion

The Egyptian writer 'Aqqad enriched the Arab library with numerous books on different topics including history, philosophy, poetry, literature, political, biographies and memoirs (autobiographies) besides translated books from the English language. The early 20th century was characterized by incessant attempts to integrate the different aspects of the Egyptian renaissance by shaping the national consciousness and thought a process which led to several literary and intellectual contentions, with 'Aqqad playing therein greater role, giving his individuality and his rejection of all constraints. “He was nicknamed “Giant” both for his physical stature and his status in literature.”(Nur). Al-'Aqqad in literary battles against the latter's literary opponents such as ar-Rafie and some others among the neo-classicists. “His acutedisputes started in 1914, often focusing on poetry; they were engaged with ar-Rafie and Shawki. The core of these disputes focused on the choice between the old and the modern or tradition and regeneration. Therefore, 'Aqqad is legendary to the readers' as a literary reformer who comes out of a general literary trend and tradition to open a newfangled door of literature. Sayyid Qutb commented about 'Aqqad, It is to him that I owe my ability to think clearly; he stopped me from imitating al -Manfaluti and al-Rafi.”(Haim, 1982).

He is almost the exclusive writer in contemporary Arabic thought and literature who engaged passionate disputes characterized by the almost potency and challenge as a result of the then political clashes. As he had struggled political battles, al-'Aqqad had literary battles to fight during the early years of the twentieth century when there were efforts to complete the various aspects of the Egyptian renaissance. His literary dilemmas started in 1944, and those were mostly concerned with poetry. The main conflict was between imitation and innovation. The poets carried on with the mission or refreshing words, phrases, and ideas that had remained dormant during five or six centuries of intellectual stagnation. But their poetry, whenever it unrestricted the great patriotic themes, was often overwhelmed with sweetness and romanticism. “Although it was popular and lent itself to pleasant quotation, the spread of education and the increasing contact with foreign literatures made it seem less and less satisfactory, and capable critics like 'Aqqad and Taha Husain began scrutinizing its weaknesses and calling for an utterance of greater organic unity and relevance to individual experience. A change was bound to come, and when at last it came about twenty years ago it was devastating. For the change meant a change in form as well as content; indeed content seemed intractable without doing violence to form.”(Gabra).

'Aqqad wrote in different aspects of literature, he composed some Diwans (collections of poems), the first entitled 'Yaqazat al-Sabah' or 'Morning awakening', 'Bits and Pieces' and 'Shazarat', he is considered as a pioneer innovator in Arabic poetry. “In the twentieth century, new styles in poetry were introduced by two new schools: in the 1920s the Diwanschool, led by Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad and, in the 1930s, the Apollo school, the most prominent representative of which was Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi. Between these two schools poetry survived the twentieth century in the Arab world as a vibrant and relevant cultural mode, at a time when it ceased to be so in Europe and North America, Where poetry was drowned by television channels and Internet availability. Towards the end of the century, the trend towards passive media consumption defeated poetry in the Middle East as well, at least in urban centres; but it is still alive in rural areas.”(Pappe, 2010).

The poetic style of 'Aqqad has a rational feeling which widely interprets feelings, he believed that the poet who can not be identified through his poetry is not worthy of being known, he always emphasized the value of the poets uniqueness and independence. He had interest in stories but not as much as poetry, he wrote but one story called 'Sarah' (1938). It relates a personal experience in his life with the only woman he loved. His views of women were those of respect and appreciation, and were included in some books in which he demanded the full participation of women in building the society. Here another thing is notable that al-'Aqqad is one of the leading members of modern and new literary form of Arabic novel. “The first Arabic novel of literary merit, *Zaynab*, was written in Paris between 1910 and 1911 by a young Egyptian lawyer, Mohammad Hussayn Haykal (1888-1956), and was published in Cairo in 1914. In 1926 Haykal's example was followed by other writers; Taha Husayn started his autobiographical novel as a series of articles which he published in 1927 as the first volume of *al-Ayam* (the second volume written in 1939, the third in 1972). Soon other writers like al-Mazni (Ibrahim el-Katib, 1931), Tawfik al-Hakim ('Awdat al Roh, 1933), and 'Abbas al-'Aqqad (*Sarah*, 1938) 'tried their

hands at this "new" literary form."(Moussa-Mahmoud, 1973).

It is proven to the critics that the style of 'Aqqad is a top-level and scientific one, and some consider the issues raised thereby as symbolizing the Egyptian conscience - his emotions, morals and literary bravery. He touched all things with his poetry. "According to al-'Aqqad, poetic experience is not limited to feeling or imagination about the past, but also extends to the present and not only to a few topics like nature and love but to all scenes and perspectives."(Daif). 'Aqqad was specially concerned about literary studies, and if we only mention his book on 'Ibnur-Roumy' the Arab poet in which he exposed the innermost of the poet, his life and his proficiency, one can only perceive in these studies genuine opinion, compact evaluation and skillful analysis. 'Aqqad believed in the liberty of criticism and subsequently the liberty of mind as towards the assessment of literature - hence the uniqueness of 'Aqqad's literary criticism through which he influenced fine arts; he even had impact on the literary trends which were to crystallize and appear later on. The spirited, frank and knowledgeable critiques of 'Aqqad invited for the breaking out of literary disputes of great interest to his readers.

Let us proceed now with the 'Aqqadian School of writing. "The movement which later came to be called the diwan movement was conceived about this time with the close collaboration of Shukri and al-Mazini."(Haykal). This style reflects a most projecting eye of this literature and provides the best demonstration of interconnection between ideas and the thoughts of the writer. Al-'Aqqad does not beat to present only the results of his reflections. For him, style is basic to the idea. The mastermind and brain of the art of writing is exhibited only if one is in entire control of the manner of writing. One cannot deal with thoughts without taking into interpretation the style nor deal with style to the harm of the desired expression of thoughts. They must go organized as a pair and only in this style can the writer's personality and scholarly capacity be acknowledged and highlighted. After an in-depth study of 'Aqqad's works of rhyme and prose, it can be said; he hardly shies away from the states of the soul. "In prosody al-'Aqqad's experiments are restricted to the length of the metre which he varies according to the subject matter. For instance he uses short metres for commonplace themes."(Daif). He never put his feelings in the forefront of his concerns nor highlights the emotions he felt in his writings. His works bore fruit of thoughts full of substance. He perceived life's images in the depths of a ripe reflection. The fertility of his creative expertise won over many who had thought literature was limited to the emotional side.

It is not difficult to point out the gains of the 'Aqqadian manner in all the works of the author. His writings are clear and explicit, not with respect to vocabulary and stylistic processes, but in the statement of his ideas and the interconnection with their conception. We have no worry to journey from the start of his theses or books to their very end. We find sensation in the overall unity which pleases us as we spend time reading. We observe just below the apparent all that this great writer has marked on quiet pages that arise to speak to us with expression more animated than that of enlightened thinkers. "Al-'Aqqad resembles the neo-classicists in his use of pure classical Arabic and the stress on the elegant word. His language is clearly marked by *tahdid* (definition) as opposed to *I'ha* (suggestion)."(Al-Sabur, 1976). Al-Mutanabbi, Ibn Rumi and al-M'arri are three great poets. Each has specialized in a field in which he had shown particular brilliance. We see each intimately tied to their field, totally dedicating his reflections to it. These ancient poets drew inspiration from their life's experiences and not from books. Their poems expressed deep visions of life, "Among the poets of the classical school who influenced al 'Aqqad was Ibn Rumi whose subject matter, sorrow and complaints about people and time greatly appealed to him." (Daif, 1957). In divergence to our contemporary authors whose poetry was mostly encouraged by knowledge gained from literature.

Literary work

Al-Aqqad's literary works are included in essay, poem, novel, and critiques of classical and modern Arabic. Specially his essays show the influence of 19th-century English essayists, mainly Thomas Carlyle. He gave a boundless devotion for literature, "Al-'Aqqad remained a bachelor and devoted his life to literature. His best works appeared during the thirties and forties."(Haykal). He also devoted much thought to religion and politics, and his works include studies of the philosophy of the Qu'ran, of political and social philosophy, and biographies of various Muslim leaders. 'Aqqad wrote more than hundred books about philosophy, religion and poetry. He founded a poetry school with Ibrahim al-Mazny and Abdur-Rahman Shokry called ad-Diwan. Some of his books were translated into English, German, French, Russian, Urdu, and Persian. He was best known for his use of ornamental and dense prose style. Al-'Aqqad wrote several poetical collections starting from 1916, and indulged into numerous scholarly confrontations against various well known Egyptian intellectuals protecting his principles about poetry and literature. "Although al-Aqqad's main concern was journalism and he wrote eighty-two prose works, (Al-Tunisi) his Diwans totaling ten looked successively from 1916 to 1950. His works are frequent, among them: Allah (1947), Al-'Abqariyyat, The Genius of Muhammad, The genius of Abu-Bakr, The genius of Omar, The Genius of Othman, The genius of Ali, The genius of Khaled, The genius of Christ (Translated by F. Peter Ford 2001), The genius of righteous, Hours among Books, The Noon Glow (poetry volume), Ghosts of the Afternoon (poetry volume), Sorrows of the Night (poetry volume), The Strong Hand in Egypt, The Absolute

Rule, Sarah (1938), A-Asiru Maghrib (In English ' Cyclones of a Sunset'), The caller of the heaven Belal, The daughter of the righteous, Al-Hussein the father of the martyrs, 'Amr Ibn al-'Ass, Mu 'awiya Ibn AbiSufian, Fatima az-Zahra, al-Fatimiyyun, The truths of Islam and the falsity of its contenders, The Qu'ranic philosophy, Thought is an Islamic duty, The emanation of the light, Democracy in Islam, Diwan an-Naqdus-'Shir (In 1921 'Aqqad wrote it with al-Mazini in two parts. It is considered fundamental in the poets' approach to poetry and criticism.) Human being in the holy Qu'ran, Islam in the twentieth century, What is said about Islam, Me ('Ana' in Arabic), The opium of the peoples, This tree, The funny Guha, The great soul of al-Mahatma Gandy, The life of a pen, The beginnings of the Mohammedan mission, No for communism and colonialism, Ibn Rumi: his life and poetry, Zionism and the issue of Palestine, A compound of the living (1916), The morning awakening (1916), The Diary Resume (1921), Sa'ad Zaghoul (1936), The Arab Impact on European Civilization (1942), Al-Faraby (1944), Francis Beckon (1945), Poetic Language (1958), Eblees or the Devil (1958), Introduction to Shakespeare (1958), Benjamin Franklin (1959), The Diaries (1963) etc. Additional legendary writings are Wahy al-Arba'in (1933), Hadiyyat al-karawan (1933) and 'Abir Sabil (1937).

Conclusion

Al-'Aqqad was a bright center for the spirit and for mind. He shines for us non-westerners who stagnate in the black night the path to follow. He rids us of beliefs that have distanced us from the beauty contained in life ever since we capitulated to the material order; an order that dominated our existence and subjected us to criteria measured by rigorous strictness. In fact, al-'Aqqad fulfilled his mission as he intended. As much we know, there has never been another intellectual engaged in a literary endeavor who succeeded in such a short time to reach full maturity of his thinking and writing. With only a couple years past his fortieth, he succeeded in collecting the fruits of his endeavors. Contemporary Arabic literature and thought had witnessed an extraordinary evolution after World War I. It has chosen to settle closer to the reality of life with a new style of writing thanks to talented Egyptian men of letters headed by al-'Aqqad, Taha Houssain and Mohammad Haykal. We can understand the 'Aqqadian thinking in a precise manner when we approach it from an 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural perspective. We can analyze this culture's characteristics with the esthetic values it presents to adapt its criteria to ours and to enlighten our satisfaction. Founder of the National Arab Press in Morocco, Said Hajji (1912-1942) stated, "After having carefully studied the poetry and prose by Al Akkad, I can make the case that his style does not reflect his psychological state and the idea of conceiving writings based on psyche is not his style. This is because his works from top to bottom are dominated by an active mind and he only finds his inspiration to describe his views of life in the depths of his reflections. This is what allowed him to produce his most fertile work when many people could not conceive of literature outside the sphere of feelings which I readily qualify as a reflection of the general state of man more so than it reflects the maturity of an adult mind." (Hajji, 1933). It was vibrant from the beginning of 'Aqqad, Who had played a foremost role throughout the nineteenth centuries' literature in the rise and spreading of many popular proses, would be the literary focus for this newly introduced field.

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