

INTRODUCTION

The art of storytelling is very old in the history of Arabic literature. It was used in the Holy Quran to have profound impact on the readers. Sura Kahf, Sura Yusuf and many other Suras of the Holy Quran are the finest examples of the art of storytelling. Classical literature of Arabic is also very rich in stories of all kinds. Tales, anecdotes and quasi-historical narratives are reported in famous historical compendiums like Ali al-Massoudi's *Muruj al-Dahab* (The meadows of Gold) and in geographical encyclopedias Yaqut al-Hamawi's *Mu'jam al-Buldan* (Geographical Dictionary). *Maqamat Badi-uzzaman* and *Maqamat al-Hariri* which are considered to have preserved the vast vocabulary in Arabic language

1) Ali al- Massoudi (896-956 A.D) was an Arab historian and geographer, known as the 'Herodotus of the Arabs'

2) Yaqut al- Hamawi was an Islamic biographer and geographer renowned for his encyclopedic writings on the Muslim world.

are also such examples of storytelling. Arab folk literature had a popular tradition of oral fiction. Famous warrior poet Antara has been the subject of many stories.

The art of storytelling in Arabic literature got a major focus through the introduction to Europe of the translations of the stories of *Alf-Laila* which revolutionized the European literature. It was during the reign of Ottoman Caliphate that the first piece of *Alf-Laila* was brought to Europe through one French emissary. By the beginning of 18th century it was translated into many European languages. There are strong indications that the evolution of English novel as an art form was to a great extent stimulated by *Alf-Laila* popularly known in the European literature as the *Arabian Nights*.

With such a rich literacy tradition in Arabic language, it is a strange coincidence that when Europe was experiencing the advancement towards renaissance, Arabic literature suffered stagnation that started from 16th century and lasted till Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 A.D. Although the invasion did not last long, it brought dramatic changes in the thinking, culture and literary activities of the Egyptian people. The Machiavellian Mohammed Ali Pasha, ruler of Egypt (1805-1848), deputed official delegations to the Europe which included army officers, engineers, litterateurs, bureaucrats, administrators and journalists that returned home after getting enriched by the intellectual, cultural and literary traditions on Europe. There began a literary awakening and a renaissance movement known as *Nahdah* movement in Egypt.

The Arab world, in the 1st half of 20th century, went through a period of change which involved much insecurity, a historical change replete with contradictions, dissension and struggle. All these things made the novel, as a mode of expression, more capable than any other genre of literature. The novel, a fictitious narrative in prose, of considerable length showing characters in action, with more or less close adherence to the Principle of realism, developed in Europe in the 18th century and was not known to the Arabs in their classical literature.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Arabs, influenced by the novel in European literature, attempted this new form in their language. It was natural that the first attempts at writing the novel would be an extension of the *maqama*. Although the link with

the traditional *maqama* is marked in the use of the title, dialogue, style, choice of words and forms of sentences, al-Muhailihi tried to adapt the *maqama* to the times by taking his images from the society he lived in. He used his characters and events as instruments of social reforms.

After the interaction with foreign literatures many Arab novelists contributed to the development of novel which was taken to its zenith by a group of eminent writers. As a result of their sincere efforts, novel has now developed into the most favorite mode of literary expression in the modern Arabic literature.

The early novel writers were not prepared to follow western models in their entirety. When Rifa'a al-Tahtawi

3) Rifa'a al- Tahtawi (1801-1883) was an Egyptian writer, teacher, translator, Egyptologist and renaissance intellectual.

translated *Les adventures de Telemaque* he did not render not render all the aspects of the novel, but selected what he felt would be suitable to advice kings and rulers. He also included sermons to improve the behaviour of the common man, thus showing the seeds of what later developed into the deductive novels.

The novel which assumes a consistent underlying world view and demands powers of sustained and united invention for which the Arabic literature of the past offered few models had a more checkered history. Most of the fiction produced in the 1930s and early 40s reflected the combination of nationalist, democratic and romantic ideals that had penetrated the elite. The central focus of these novels are the lower middle class and the historical time is that of 1930s and second World War in which poverty and starvation was

prevalent and people used to go to mausoleums and graves to seek solace from the hardships of life. These novels had a theme of conflict between the old and the new, or the past and the present. In other words, the conflict between two value systems is prevalent in these novels. The novelists have tried to show the way the people get affected by the socio-economic and politico-cultural environment, the way sins and crimes are committed and the way human values got degraded.

Among the pioneer figure in the development of modern Arabic literature in the Syro-Lebanese region, mention must be made of Fransis Marrash (d. 1873). He published a novel entitled '*Ghabat al-Haqq*' ('The Forest of Truth') in 1885, which is a highly idealized philosophical work and essentially an allegory about freedom.

From 1931, novels began to appear regularly; their authors were mostly men of letters for whom the novel was one genre among many at which they tried their hand. Some of these works are of merely historical interest today, as '*Sarah*' (Woman's name; 1938) by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, one of the dominating literary figures of the period.

Many European novels especially from French and English were translated into Arabic. The reading public for these translations were created largely by the rise and spread of journalism. However, the Arabic translations of western novels were not without their use in the development of the Arabic novels. These translations encouraged many Arab authors to try their hand at writing novels. The main feature of most of the

novels of this period is the introductions of western character or settings.

Since the genre of novel primarily deals with love, it was difficult for the early Arab novelists to deal with it openly in a traditional Arab Society where social intercourse between men and women were not common. Because of this, one can observe the complete absence of an Arab setting or Arab characters in early imaginative fiction writing. Authors could not dare to come to terms with contemporary local life. Thus the appearance of novel in which real Arab characters arise from real local environment was further delayed.

Novel played an important role in modern Arabic literature. It paved the way for the emergence of modern Arabic literature which was initially regarded morally suspected especially in the conservative

societies like Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese societies. But with the course of time, novel gained popularity and was considered to be highly serious and respectable form in modern Arabic literature and successful novelists were awarded the highest state prizes. The novelists like Tawfiq al-Hakim, Muhammad Hussain Haykal, Abdul Qadir al-Mazini, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad ,Mahmud Taymur, Ihsan Abdul Quddus and so on tried to address through their writings various social, political, religious and moral issues and problems faced by the people at that time.

In the field of modern Arabic fiction, Mahfouz's contribution made a new path to the development of Arabic novel. He was the first Arab writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. Like Haykal, Mahfouz is widely regarded as the founding

father of modern Arabic novel. He was the first Arabic novelist to make an analytical study of Arabic novel. Mahfouz was greatly influenced by western writers. Through his interaction with western literature, Mahfouz discovered that the Western world is much more developed in literature than the East.

Mahfouz is one of the leading figures of this art; he has played an outstanding role in the Arabic novel and its progress. In fact, with Mahfouz, Arabic novel has achieved maturity. He is called Charles Dickens of Arabic novel. He is not only a Hugo and a Dickens, but also a Galsworthy, a Mann, a Zola and a Jules Romain. He is an Egyptian lover of the River Nile and one with endless quests. The literature which was morally suspect in its very genesis in the Arabic literary circles was destined to be at the paragon of international

recognition when Mahfouz got the Nobel Prize. His contribution to the genre of Arabic novel laid the ground work throughout the Arab world. His stories were widely filmed in cinema. He was awarded state's highest prize for literature in 1957. Mahfouz's achievement in stretching the literary language to convey realistic dialogue is perhaps more important in the context of the Arabic novel outside Egypt than in his native country.

Mahfouz's novels deal with the various aspects of life as love, faith and death and above all the means of life. The struggle between men and women also forms an important aspect of his novels. He is preoccupied mainly with the liberty and deals with the relationship of the citizen to the state, of the child to the father and of the woman to the man. His writing style is panoramic

and he uses very ambiguous and complex sentences. He does not avoid colloquial idioms in his writings.

For his writing style and techniques Mahfouz obtained Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. He wrote many Arabic novels such as *Radubis*, *al-Qahira al-Jahida*, *Zuqaq al-Midaq* and so on. Among them *al-Qahira al-Jadida* is very significant and remarkable.

Through this novel Mahfouz puts to limelight the old Cairo with their mixture of inhabitants, their works, their social life and the women of their homes. It can be considered as the first stream of consciousness novel in Arabic. He wrote it in 1945.

This Ph.D. thesis has been divided into four chapters excluding an introduction and conclusion.

In first chapter, I have discussed about the origin and development of Arabic novel and its introduction by the pioneering writers. The early Arab novelists derived their model directly or indirectly from western literature. Many Arab novelists contributed to its development. But Arabic novel reached its zenith by the efforts of Najib Mahfouz.

In the 2nd chapter, I have sketched the life of Mahfouz and his works in the field of novel. Mahfouz grew up in the midst of stirring national events. He is the first and the only Arabic writer to be honored Nobel Prize for literature in the entire Arab World.

There have three main stages of novel writing represented in his work. The first stage is that of the historical novel, as, *Abath al- Aqdar*, *Radubes* and *Kifa Tiba*, which focused on Ancient Egypt. Then he wrote realistic novels about

contemporary Egyptian society in the vein of 19th century European social and realistic novels; this period started with *al-Qahira al-Jadida* and ends with *Trilogy*. And when he exhausted this, he moved on to a much higher form of novel. This was the stage in which he wrote shorter novels, using the stream of consciousness technique and highly changed imagery; this period started with *al-Liss wa al-Kilab* and ends with the *Miramar* in 1967. Then, later, stage, he gave free reign to all possible experiences and experiments. The Nobel Laureate Najib Mahfouz is widely recognized as the founding father of Arabic novel

In the 3rd chapter I have analyzed the thematic study of *al-Qahira al-Jadida*. The novel has the life of a young boy who wants to make a good living by attaining university education along with three other boys; first one influenced by communism and second

one by capitalism and third one by Islam. Through these three characters, the novelist has attempted to project the three ideological and intellectual streams in the Egyptian society.

The 4th chapter of my thesis is a stylistic study of *al-Qahira al-Jadida*. Mahfouz's writing style and technique helped him to develop his literary talents and perhaps for that he got the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. His style and technique combines the elaborateness of classical Arabic with simplicity of modern. In this novel Mahfouz followed the western writing style and technique. His writing style and technique is panoramic almost photographic description and details of background. However, He uses very ambiguous and complex sentences.

In this thesis I tried to show how the renowned novelist as well as the Nobel laureate Najib Mahfouz reached to the International scene and how the Arabic novel flourished in his time. His novels not only have the depiction of Egyptian society but also reflect the global dimension of the human life across the planet. Mahfouz's special concern was in Egyptian people, their life and facts. In essence, however, he is the Mahfouz of Egypt; his realistic style, his interest in social issues, indeed, his whole ethos is genuinely Egyptian. Mahfouz should be claimed by all Arabs because most of his novels reflect Arabic and Islamic traditions. The picture of the world as it emerges from the bulk of his work is very gloomy indeed, though not completely despondent. It shows that the author's social utopia was far from being realized. Mahfouz seems to conceive of time as a metaphysical force of oppression. His novel *al-Qahira al-*

Jadida consistently shows time as the harbinger of change, and change as a painful process and very often time is not content until it has dealt his heroes the final blow of death. Mahfouz depicts women in various situations and on different social levels.