A Study of the Literary Criticism of Dr. Taha Husayn:

2.1 Dr. Taha Husayn and the literary views of the Orientalists:

It is found that the development of literary criticism in modern Egypt would be complete with an appreciation of the part played by Dr. Taha Husayn.

Dr. Taha Husayn was an eminent Egyptian writer who followed the Philosophy of the Orientalists and found the method in the study of literature and its criticism. He acquired his critical mind of old method from his teacher, Syed al-Marsafi. Inspite of that Dr. Taha Husayn Contributed to the field of modern literary criticism by his book "Dhikhra Abi al-'Ala in Egypt. He avoided in this book the old methods and got doctoral degree on this book in 1914 from the Egyptian University. The influence of his teacher, Syed al-Marsafi was so deep on him that he could only judge literature in accordance with the judgement of his teacher, al-Marsafi. But Dr. Taha Husayn got a new idea Completely differing from the idea of al-Marsafi, While he got admitted into the Egyptian University and studied the literature under the Orientalists in classical Arabic language. As it may be cited.

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(Since he got admitted in the Egyptian University, he studied the literature under the Orientalists, in classical Arabic language) Dr. Taha Husayn Came in Contact with Carlo Nallino, an Italian Orientalist, where he learnt literature on modern outlook. Dr Taha Husayn was indebted to two great teachers in his whole intellectual life. He used to listen to the lectures of Syed ‘Ali al-Marsafi at day time and of Carlo Nallino at the evening for meeting up his old and new literary trends. Dr. Taha Husayn devoted much to the reading of old and modern literary books, while he visited to the European teachers and went through these books for the upliftment of literary aspects, good and bad.\(^1\)

Syed ‘Aj uddin al-‘Amin, a Critic, says in his book “Nasha’at an-Naqd al-Adabi al-Hadith fi Misr” that the view of the Orientalists is a view which becomes a Condition for the student of literature to study its goodness and badness altogether.\(^2\)

### 2.2 The acquisition of Dr. Taha Husayn from the Orientalists

Dr. Taha Husayn was highly influenced with the views of English Orientalist, ‘Margoliouth’ despite considering the lectures of ‘Nallino’ as his first reason for the Scientific revival in literature. Dr. Taha Husayn followed ‘Margoliouth’ in accepting the view for Pre-Islamic poetry. So far the view of Margoliouth in regards to the Pre-Islamic Poetry is that the Muslims Started to identify the existence of Pre-Islamic Poetry around the end of

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1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, Muqaddama tarikh al-Adab al-‘Arabiyya lil Mustashriq Nallino, p. \(^*\)
Umayyad Period, but they were not satisfied, until they collected the best part of it.¹

It is a fact that some critics, like Ibn Salam and Ibn Qutaiba preceded to this arena of pre-Islamic literary criticism, before the Orientalists to be extended in it. But some French Orientalists like Margoliouth committed mistake in doubting Pre-Islamic poetry either to be ancient or Islamic, that the idea is also followed by Dr. Taha Husayn, as he was indebted to the Orientalists, and thus committed the same mistake.²

Al-Amir Shakib Arsalan, a critic, opines that Margoliouth being westerner began to distinguish the artificial poetry, from the Pre-Islamic language of original poetry.³

Inspite of his being influenced by the Orientalist, Dr. Taha Husayn had fondness for his teacher, al-Marsafi at the time of Azharite life. Al-Marsafi disliked the traditional Azharite courses, though he was entangled with other Sheikhs of Azhar. Inspite of his tiring of the courses, Al-Marsafi tried utmost to make literature interesting to his students. It is noteworthy, that Al-Marsafi introduced some modern subjects, like Geography, Arithmatic and literature, for which Dr. Taha Husayn communicated

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¹ Rahmatullah, Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim, Wamdat ‘Ala an-Naqd al-Hadith, p.72
² Al-Shaib, Ahmad, Usul an-Naqd al-Adabi, p. 272
much to his teacher, al-Marsafi and got satisfied his original taste other than the traditional courses.¹

The ideology of al-Marsafi was useful more in the writing and in the composition of sentence and the power of student in the criticism. Like wise, Dr. Taha Husayn began to reconcile between the old and the new method in the literary criticism at the Azhar and the University and between the origin in the creation and between the methods of the research and the study that have been met by the hands of the Orientalists 'Nallino' and 'Santa lana' are the two distinguished names of the Orientalists, who met the lectures on the history of Arabic literature in Umayyad period and on Islamic philosophy respectively. Dr. Taha Husayn distinguished between these two methods i.e. new and old and found out the merits and attributes in the new idea. Therefore, he said that the view narrated by the University in the study of Arabic literature in Egypt was more useful to the excellence of Arabic Knowledge and this is the history, which has made possible to know Arabic people in particular and the muslims in general.²

¹ Husayn, Dr. Taha, al-Ayyam, Part-II, p. 159.
² Husayn, Dr. Taha, Tajdeed Dhikhra Abi al-'Ala, P.8
2.3 The method of Dr. Taha Husayn in Literary and Critical Study:

So far the literary method of Dr. Taha Husayn was concerned, the literature has a great resemblance with human span of life and its growth. He is reported to have said that whatever Circumstances diversify human life, it becomes close to literature, measured and studied by itself.

But this method of Dr. Taha Husayn was not in original, it was presented by 'Runatir' who spoke about the excellencies and the arts of literature. Dr. Taha Husayn distinguished the literary view of Runatir to study books and arts and to know the Connection, established between the literature and the literateur and between the literateur's life and the Social impact.¹

2.4 His influence with Taine:

Dr. Taha Husayn applied modern method in literary criticism under the light of Orientalists and changed his old method that he used to apply in the criticism. His first literary research was found with modern outlook in his book "Dhikhra Abi al-'Ala". It was clear that the method of Dr. Taha Husayn was artistic and historical assimilating the method of Taine.

¹ Husayn, Dr. Taha, Muqaddama Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabiyya lil Mustashriq Nallino, P.12
2.5 Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri in the eye of Dr. Taha Husayn

Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri had a dynamic personalities upon which, Dr. Taha Husayn went through aptly. He studied spiritual, innovative, social, religious, economic and political life of al-Ma'arri besides studying his tribe, family, loss of sight, training, education, journey towards Baghdad, the whole ways of life in total.

He had a very careful as well as deep study on the literary life of al-Ma'arri, and found out three stages like child, young and old stage. He found out the merits and demerits on the whole literary traces of al-Ma'arri. The poetry of his childhood consisted of artificiality, tradition, beauty and exaggeration. The poetry of his youth is found to have mixed with exaggeration, extreme rhyming, unfamiliarity and scientific improvement.

But the poetry of his old age is represented with less exaggeration, less style and in the same manner his prose exhibited the personality of his friend inclining towards the philosophy, knowledge and depth of mind. ¹

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have opined the eminent book 'Luzumiat' of al-Ma'ari based on rhyming and refined words to be the book of philosophy rather than poetry, as it lacked in imagination.

¹ Husayn, Dr. Taha, Tajdeed Dhikhra Abi al-'Ala, p.195.
2.6 Dr. Taha Husayn was well versed with varied languages:

Egyptian University had a credit much to enlighten Dr. Taha Husayn with French language and its literature. He studied in France, Greek and Italian languages and produced his thesis in French language entitled 'Falsafat ibn Khaldun al-Ijtamaiyya-Tahlil Wa Naqd'. He applied, in the thesis, the new method and diversified feelings and opinions of the time and age.¹

After getting married with Mrs. Suzanne of France, Dr. Taha Husayn became able to have obtained the academic degree of a licentiate² in literature from Sorbonne and the doctorate degree as well as diploma in higher education on ancient history.

2.7 His return from France:

Dr. Taha Husayn produced his noted book "Hadith al-Arb'aa" into two parts after his return from France. He added another portion entitled 3rd part. He anthologised this part in the modern literature while the other two parts in the ancient literature. He used these parts as articles comprising old and new problems and added to the book 'Hadith al-Arb'aa'.³

1. Hykal, Fi Auqat al-Firag, p. 182
3. Salama, Ibrahim, Tayyarat Adabiyya, p. 84
In publishing his weekly articles in the criticism, Dr. Taha Husayn followed the view of 'Sainte Beave', what the method was applied in the articles resembled to the method imputed in the book 'Dhikhra Abi al-Ala', written before his journey to France.

2.8 Doubt in the criticism of Dr. Taha Husayn:

In doubting manner, Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have narrated the ancient erotic poets, who confirmed themselves to be Poets namely, 'Umar bin Abi Rabiya', Jarir, 'Ubaidullah bin Qais, Ar-Raqiyat. Despite, he denied the characters of Majnoon Layla, Qais bin Maluh, Qais bin Rih, Jamil Bathina and Gharawt bin Jazam for the attainment of the art of love stories. In addition to these, he refused the character of the Pre-Islamic poet, Antara and what about his poetry. Dr. Taha Husayn is seen to have observed those poets' literary traces as artificial and unauthentic. He took this doubtful views as the method for the study of Old literature.

2.9 The acquired Philosophy of Dr. Taha Husayn:

He is reported to have acquired the philosophy from the philosophies of the critics. Dr. Taha Husayn followed the philosophy of "Sainte Beave" in the criticism and applied as special method for the study of Poets. For the study of literature and for the easy understanding of literary personalities, he also followed the philosophy of "Taine" and that was the philosophy of 'Gibran' or 'Jul limitre'.

1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, Hadith al-Arba'a, part-I, P.142.
2.10 The Assessment of the Criticism in the book “Hadith al-Arba’a” :

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have mentioned the critics who criticised the ancient Poets in general and the Singers in particular. He opined that the philosophy of the true historical criticism, applied for the interpretation of the life of the ancients.

He is reported to have discussed the old literature with historical prudence in the book ‘Hadith al-Arb’aa’ but this prudence was clear enough in his eminent book “Fil Adab al-Jahili”. This prudence was the foundation for the study of all kinds of literary forms. Dr. Taha Husayn had undertaken this historical prudence for the true assessment of the literary criticism as well as literary personalities. The true judgement of the literary assessment has been made by this historical prudence and kept the literature in systematic manner.¹

2.11 His importance to the Ancient Literature :

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have given emphasis on ancient literature and considered it as the subject matter for literary research, criticism and analysis. Ancient literature is considered to be the mirror for social and intellectual life besides all literary phases on each and every condition, he found out the ancient Arabic literature artistic and excellent.² In this context, he is found to have mentioned the name of ‘Abu Nuwas’, who

¹. Husayn, Dr. Taha, Hadith al-Arb’aa, part-II, p.139, ². Ibid, p. 298
described in his poetry the remains of ruined house and tent. He exposed the inter-relation between a poet, poetry and the society in which the poet lives. He made clear that the true poet portrays the feelings of the Social life and admires it. In this way, the poet explains his feelings of the Society and its different aspects in a beautiful manner through his poetry.¹

Dr. Taha Husayn is reported to have expressed that the method of Old literary taste is found in Jarir and Farajdaq while criticising each other through poetry. But this old literary taste becomes changed in the modern method. The method of Jarir and Farazdaq was revived by Ar Rafii and he had undertaken the literary taste for the learned ones not for laymen while Dr. Taha Husayn was quite opposite to him.

2.12 Literary taste and the book ‘Hafiz wa Shauqi’ :

Dr. Taha Husayn is reported to have mentioned his prominent book ‘Hafiz wa Shauqi’ published in 1933. In this book, he discussed the poets, their ancient feelings and the examples. He doubted Hykal, as he highlighted in his Muqaddama the double personality of Shauqi. He is found to have attacked Shauqi for his Islamic thought in this book.

It was clear that most of the poets mentioned in this book, followed the old literary taste turning away from the modern taste. So far the literary view of Dr. Taha Husayn was concerned, the European taste became

¹. Ibid, p. 52.
the taste of the age. He found fault with the style of Shauqi, as his style was devoid of the taste of age.¹

Dr. Taha Husayn was proud of the view of Khalil Mutran, who revolted with the modern outlook in literature. He found the modern literary trend in the poetry of Khalil Mutran while he preserved the origin of language and its style from the oldness. He preferred Khalil Mutran to Rafi and Shauqi in the field of literary taste and its modern style. The European writers became aware of the need for developing language, form, style and modern literary taste to suit the requirements of new ideas and movements and they responded to the need of the hour.

In the book Hafiz wa Shauqi, Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have given the equivalence in merit between Hafiz and Shauqi. Both of them excelled in literary field and expressed meaningful and needful words in the literature. Hafiz became distinguished in elegy and in sketching the grief of people through his poetry while Shauqi displayed his adeptness in portraying imaginary and patriotic writing through his poetry. It was clearly found in both of their writings the literary beauty, form, style, imagination, allegory and the simile in the Arabic language.²

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¹ Husayn, Taha, Hafiz wa Shauqi, p. 27.
² Al-Shaib, Ahmad, Usul al-Naqd al-Adabi, p. 117.
2.13 Literary taste and the book Fil-Adab al-Jahili:

'Fil Adab al-Jahili' is an eminent book authored by Dr. Taha Husayn. He discussed in this book Arabic literature in general and pre-Islamic literature in particular on modern outlook. As he is reported to have cited in this book:

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have mentioned the history of economic, political and social life, that are co-related and influenced by literature and the literature also influenced by the same.

He is found to have opined that the origin of literary development is the political development in true sense. It is apparent in the reign of Abbasid period where literature developed through political development.

In this book, Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have discussed various causes for literary development. He put forward the book al-Adab al-Jahili for modern research but undertook another method as a new colour for literature i.e. the Philosophy of 'Descartes'. Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have mentioned Pre-Islamic literature that represented Pre-Islamic life and Society while this literature took colour after Islam as Islamic literature that represented Islamic life and Society.

1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, Fil Adab al-Jahili, p.37.
After giving a true picture of the poetry of Imrul Qais, Tarafa, Ibn Kulthum and Antara for Pre-Islamic history, he is found to have mentioned the holy Quran, history, legends etc. for up to date historical knowledge of Pre-Islamic period.

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have reduced to the writing the description of women, wine and the war in pre-Islamic poetry to Islamic poetry and represented the life of Muslims.

He undertook the Philosophy of Descartes as the first base for his literary study and imputed this Philosophy on literary research in modern period.

In this book, he is reported to have modernised the Science and Philosophy and changed the Philosophies of the litterateurs in their literatures and the artists in their arts by this Philosophy of Descartes.\(^1\)

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn studied the Pre-Islamic literature and the Pre-Islamic life not only in the literature of Pre-Islamic but the holy Quran, the poetry of the poets, who witnessed the Prophet (sawm) and the poetry of the poets of Bani Umayya.\(^2\)

In this book, Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have mentioned two languages. One of them is Southern portion of Arabic language and the other is Northern portion of Arabic language.

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1. Ibid, pp. 81-84
2. Ibid, p. 88.
The former one is 'Hymiarite' and the next one is 'Adnanite' language. In this book, he is reported to have accorded the personality of Imrul Qais as the personality of Homer in Greece and clarified him as 'Adnanite and his language as Yemenite. He is found to have doubted Imrul Qais and Umr bin Kulthum as Pre-Islamic poets and denied the Muallaqa to be Pre-Islamic poetry.¹

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have defined the poetry as limited speech with measure and rhyme intending artistic beauty.²

He is reported to have mentioned the all ancient Arabic poetry as song but lacked in stories and allegories while the then Arab poets were too weak to follow them. The ancient litterateurs were also weak to imitate the artistic Prose.³

The development of artistic prose was natural but established the national growth and development according to the social order. He is found to have cited that the growth of artistic prose according to the Arab people started after Islam and the holy Quran. The litterateurs of Muallaqa namely Tarafa, Umr bin Kulthum were weak in the artistic Prose while it developed after Islam. Despite the development of artistic Prose under Islamic period, it is connected with the Pre-Islamic

¹. Rahmatulla, Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim, Wamdat Ala an-Naqd al-Hadith, p.108
². Husayn, Dr. Taha, Fil Adab al-Jahili, p.393
³. Ibid, p. 411
literature.\textsuperscript{1} Pre-Islamic period is the root cause for the growth of artistic prose while the Islamic period is the golden period for its development.

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have shared with al-Aqqad and many other modern writers the view that the ancient Ode (qasida) did not form a unified whole, while he wrote in 1922 that even in the Abbasid period the structure of the poem was, as before dependent on the uniformity of its metre and rhyme and not on the unity of meaning.\textsuperscript{2} Later, he claimed that the lack of unity may apply only to the so-called Jahili Poetry but not to Islamic Poetry. In 1935, he expressed a modified view according to which a certain unity of meaning was inherent in the famous Ode of the Pre-Islamic poet, Labid. It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn regarded what logical interconnection there is between the various themes of the poem as forming a real artistic unity while al-Nuwayhi considered that Labid's poem was far from displaying 'the unity of the emotional motive' and 'the unity of the artistic purpose' which are pre-requisites of a true unity.\textsuperscript{3} Dr Taha Husayn is found to have expressed that all literary genres blossom separately i.e. each one is found to have flourished at a different stage in the development of a national culture. In his view, the fact that the bulk of Arabic poetry was purely lyrical is no proof of its inferiority while the ancient Greeks themselves had not excelled in more than one poetic

\textsuperscript{1} Rahmatullah, Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim, Wamdat 'Ala an-Naqd al- Hadith, p. 109
\textsuperscript{2} Hadith al-Arbaa, vol. II, p. 8
\textsuperscript{3} Al-Nuwayhi, al-Sheir al-Jahili – Manhaj fi Dirasatihi wa-Tahlilihi vol.II, pp.435, 442
genre in one particular period. Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have commented that modern Arab writers should borrow the methods of literary criticism from the West and what he is found to have called 'the literary sciences' which include criticism, rhetoric, and grammar, while the ancient Arabs did not establish well-defined standards of evaluation and literary criticism clearly. Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have concluded that the generalizations of the ancient Arab critics fell short of establishing a form of literary criticism.¹