CHAPTER - I

LIFE AND CREATIVE PERSONALITY OF DR. TAHA HUSAYN

1:1 Early Life: So far as the early life of Dr. Taha Husayn is concerned, he was born on the 14th Nov. of 1889 at Maghaghah in Egypt. Dr. Taha Husayn was a prolific writer and an outstanding figure of the modernist movement in Egyptian literature.¹

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had own brothers and sisters², while growing up, in the midst of a large family, supervised by the parents. Dr. Taha Husayn was afflicted with small-pox, for which he became blind, when he was barely three ³.

The father of Dr. Taha Husayn was a minor official in a sugar factory in upper Egypt. Dr. Taha Husayn did not get any extra attention of his parents, till it began to appear on him that he was different from other children. The brilliant and enquiring child grew up, but he got neither the care he wished for from his parents at all. He always mourned at his lost sight but his indomitable will power, in connection with various literary fields, sharp intelligence and powerful memory, spared him from this handicap. Unlike other children, he nurtured matured thinking and was

¹ Webster, Merriam, Encyclopedia of literature, p.1088
² Husayn, Dr.Taha, al-Ayyam, part -I, p.17
³ Hasan, Muqtadi, Mujallat al-Majma al-limi al-Hindi, part-I, p.184
endowed at his very prime stage of life, with innovative creations. The boy gradually and patiently, overlooking difficulties, while he had become aware of the world, and prepared himself entirely, by means of imagination, for what he missed through lack of sight.¹

1:2. Education: It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn went to school, and oscillated like any other boy between work and play, success and humiliation. He learnt the holy Quran by heart prodigiously early, only to forget it again at the crucial moment when his father surprised him with a test. But in the end his ambitions were realised, and at the age of thirteen, he was sent up to Cairo, in an elder brother's charge to study at the University of al-Azhar.

The Azhar at this time, was in a critical phase of its existence. Founded as long ago as 970, the mosque had early gained a high reputation as a school of Islamic studies, and for many centuries following upon the Mongol invasion in the East and the decline of Islam in the west, its supremacy remained unrivalled. During the ruling period of Turkish and Mameluke to say from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, it shared in the general decline of Islamic learning, and was reduced to a sterile repetition of scholastic dogma. The traditional sciences, based on divine revelation became firmly established as the basis of Azharite study. The chief of these are four in number.

¹ Husayn, Dr. Taha, The Stream of days, (trans. Wayment, Hilary), p V
1. Hadith, the body of tradition which apart from the Quran is the chief source of our knowledge of the Prophet and his teaching. The study of hadith involves examination not only of the text but also of the authorities by whom each tradition was handed down.

2. Tafsir, or interpretation of the Quran

3. First Principles, or the fundamentals of law, which represent the basis of agreement between the four schools of law the Hanafite, Shafi'ite, Malikite and Hanbalite.

4. Tawhid, or doctrine of the one God. Dr. Taha Husayn arrived at the Azhar when Imam Muhammad 'Abdu was lecturing there, and serving on the administrative council. Dr. Taha Husayn’s growing disillusionment with the Azhar, led him first to those liberal Sheikhs such as Marsafy who had enjoyed the encouragement and favour of the Imam.

Dr. Taha Husayn became very much attached to Lutfi Sayeed and his Jarida in no time and by the feeling of Lutfi Sayeed he began to appeal him. Dr. Taha Husayn got himself admitted to the university of Cairo in 1908. He attended the lectures of the Egyptian scholars like Sheikh Muhammad Mahdi Sheikh Muhammad al-Khudri and thus, he had the occasion to

1. Ibid, p.p. ix,x
study under the orientalists, 'Nallino' and 'Guidi', who lectured in pure classical Arabic. He was blind and poor, but overcoming many obstacles he was accepted in that University while he later stated, in 'al-Ayyam' that the doors of knowledge were from that day opened wide for him. He was the first graduate of this University in Cairo to receive a Ph.D with his thesis on the sceptical poet and philosopher, 'Abu ala al-Maani.'

1:3 : Beginning of Literary Life : It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn took keen interest in lectures delivered outside the curriculum by the great Sheikh al-Marsafi, and came to realise that literature and not religion was his call. After him, Dr. Taha Husayn was greatly influenced by European orientalists such as 'Nallino' and 'litman', who lectured on Arabic literature. Professor 'Nallino' specially delivered lecture on literature of umayyad period.

On a university scholarship to France, Dr. Taha Husayn went first to Montpellier and then to Sorbonne to study historical sciences while he also learnt Greek and Latin.

In Sorbonne, he was greatly impressed by many European teachers of literature. The most important of them are:

1. Dur Kayeem, teacher of Social knowledge.
2. Buluk, teacher of Roman history.
4. Layfi Baryl, teacher of Philosophy.¹

¹ Duarah, Fuad, Asharah Adbai yatahaddathun, p.p 21, 22
Anowar al-Jundi, wrote, in “al-Muhafeza wal-Tajdeed fi Nasr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir” that Dr. Taha Husayn, opened the chapter of his Literary life under the influence of Lutfi Sayeed, Sayeed al- Marsafi and Ahmed Zaki Pasha.

Lutfi Sayeed made Dr. Taha Husayn acquainted with, the reality of affairs, and uncovered the veil of innovative thoughts, and views, over Dr. Taha Husayn, while Sayeed al-Marsafi, opened the door of Classical taste. Ahmed Zaki Pasha, Caused Dr. Taha Husayn to Practise, on the Scientific research and the Quranic injunction.

Dr. Taha Husayn, gained much from the Orientalists, in the prime stage of life. Mayluni, taught him old Babylonian and Assyrian history, and removed the veil of ignorance from him.¹

His intellectual life, was no less Complex and taxing than his economic situation. As soon as, he embarked on historical and literary studies, at the Sorbonne, he realised how ill prepared he was for them. He was not absorbing and grasping them, as he should. While his long apprenticeship, at the Azhar and the University, had not equipped him for them. In France, it has been found, that Dr. Taha Husayn was allowed to take up again the studies and tried once more to realise his deepest hopes. It is found that he was in the position of listening sweet voice after reading great passages, from French literature and highlighted from Greek as well as, Roman history, while helping him to acquire Latin.²

1. Al-Jundi, Anowar, al-Muhafeza wal-Tajdeed fi Nasr, p.396
2. Husayn, Dr. Taha, a Passage to France (Trans-Cragg, Kenneth) p.93.
His sojourn in France had a fixed term, he had duties to fulfill, tasks to complete, being responsible for all these to the University in Egypt, which sent students to Europe to attain knowledge, not for fun and games. He spent most of the nights in France sleeplessly, not seeking slumber until it finally over came him in the small hours. When early morning came it brought another’s days study just like yesterday’s. Then he returned to Paris, resuming his University life, at the Sorbonne morning to evening and otherwise closeted with his reader apart from one day with the French teacher and another with the Latin.¹

The orientalists as it has been found, impressed Dr. Taha Husayn with their scientific approach to literature. Importantly, he had made a detailed study of Descartes’ method of analytical research while he was busy with studies in France.²

1.4: Journey towards Europe:

‘Abd al-Aziz Jawish had put the thought of travel to Europe into Dr. Taha’s mind and to France in particular. His whole mind became occupied with the idea of this Journey. It was strange how the idea became part of his very self, colouring his whole existence. He began to look upon it, not as a dream to amuse him, asleep or awake, but as a reality that had to come about stranger yet was the fact that he began to talk of his journey to Europe as one speaks about a deliberate intention in a mind made up. When summer

1. I bid, p.114
2. Mahdi, Ismat, Modern Arabic Literature, p. 108
came, Dr. Taha Husayn, talked to his brothers and sisters, about his journey to Europe soon.¹

Then, he began to get himself ready, for the journey to begin the new life of his fond dreams, and his spacious hopes. The day of departure from Cairo arrived, while he left with a brother, to accompany him and share his life in France.

During his stay, in France, something had happened for him, which kindled such inward hopes, as he had never dared to think of. He knew that he could be, like other people, better living, with deep content and gladness, with a life of joy and grace. But he was found, rough going and he would never taste as long as he lived.

Despite the rough going and the hard things, his life, in France had been so welcome, and satisfying and here was the university, summoning him to Egypt, to return just as he had gone, as if, he had only been caressing hope, in order to, know the bitterness of despair. His weary night's journey, had covered the distance, between Montpellier and Marseilles. All the time, the one thing that rang in his mind, was that sweet voice, heard in the reading of verses of French literature.²

At Sorbonne (France), he had with him a great zeal after philosophical and social study. He studied at Sorbonne from 1915 to 1919 and wrote a doctoral thesis on Ibn Khaldun and he studied Greek and Latin as well.

¹ Husayn, Dr Taha, a passage to France (trans-cragg, Kenneth), p 49
² Ibid, p. 87
He took up his life in Montpellier with utmost happiness, while he was as pleased as any one could be. Living in France was easy and convenient for Dr. Taha Husayn in those days, while he had an opportunity for various fields of studies.

1.5 Academic Development:

It appears from reliable sources that Dr. Taha Husayn spent his Sorbonne life from 1915 to 1919 with various studies. After his coming back to Egypt, Dr. Taha Husayn was appointed lecturer of ancient history and literature in the Cairo University in 1919. There he delivered many lectures so that the Egyptian might learn about the ancient culture and civilization. In a way of such, Dr. Taha Husayn composed two books namely, "Suhuf Mukhtarat min al-Shey al-amthali indal Eunan" and 'Nizam al- Ithnayn'. He introduced these two books only because of literary renaissance in Arab world just like that of Europe or the manners of Greek principles. Fact is that both Dr. Taha Husayn and Lut Sayeed acquainted the Arab world with the ancient Greek civilization.  

In 1924, while the University was turned into Government University, Dr. Taha Husayn was appointed teacher of the Arabic literary history in the arts faculty. According to Abd-al-Rahman al-Badawi, the Cairo University was turned into Government University in 1920, and Dr. Taha Husayn was appointed teacher therein the arts faculty in the same year and in 1928, he was appointed dean of arts faculty. But he resigned from the post on political ground. Later on, he was again appointed dean in 1930. In 1939, he was appointed secretary of education minister and he could thus become able to accomplish and reform the education department. In 1942, he got appointment for the post of vice-chancellor in the University of Alexandria.  

Dr. Taha Husayn used to write on the magazine, "Kaukab-as-Sharq" and another narrative newspaper, 'Kifala'. He selected a story from French literature on every Sunday and wrote an article on Arabic poetry on every Wednesday. The art of drama was at the then time lying behind in Egypt. That was why, Dr. Taha Husayn tried his level best to bring forward the French dramas in front of the people so that they might be well acquainted with the dramatic knowledge.

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1. Al-Badawi, Abd ar-Rahman, Ilā Taha Husayn fi 'id Miladihi as-sabyeen, p 14
3. Ibid, p. 281
1.6 : Religious and Political mind in him :

Religious teaching was the only profession open to Dr. Taha Husayn. Despite his blindness, he memorised the holy Quran at a village school and concentrated himself on linguistic and religious studies, at the age of thirteen.¹

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have advanced to the village school or Kuttab, where the aim was to teach pupils to learn the whole Quran by heart. So far the pre-Islamic poetry is concerned, for Arabs, it could be drawn on as confirmatory evidence in elucidating difficult language in the Quran, while Dr. Taha Husayn said that the language of the Quran which provided a yardstick for judging the authenticity of the language of the poetry and said that all circumstances of pre-Islamic literature are not unauthentic, since in the Quran is the best view of pre-Islamic Arabia and Arabic literature begins with the Quran.²

For centuries the Jahiliyya verses were taken to serve as grammatical and linguistic examples to study the Quran. Dr. Taha Husayn on the otherhand stated that the language of the Quran should be taken to judge the authenticity of Jahiliyya poetry.³

Dr. Taha Husayn, who, despite his attachment to Maarri, could not be called irreligious. But he regarded religion as a personal matter, which was not affected by Western Science and Scientific methods. During the

1.  Mahdi, Ismat, Modern Arabic literature, p. 104,
1930's and 1940's, religion played a considerable part in Dr. Taha Husayn's writings. He applied the unassuming techniques of his literary criticism to the life of the Prophet in 'Ala Hamish al-Sira (1937-43), to the tribulations of the early Muslim in al-wad al-Haqq (1950); to the orthodox Caliphs in al-Fitna al-Kubra (1947).\(^1\)

It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn's course, however, continued to be rough, not only in religion and literature but also in Politics. He did not think that he would participate in politics directly or indirectly. He had no hesitation about doing his duty unflinchingly and speaking out for the right as it might be necessary. Dr. Taha Husayn was up to his ears in politics. It would have been more appropriate to concentrate entirely on teaching and study, giving his thoughts only to students and books. He was absorbed, anyway, in Politics, caught in its fires.

He had since encountered, both for good and evil, fair and foul satisfaction or malice, has been a consequence of his entry into Politics.

1.7 : Learning at the Azhar :

The Arabic stream was represented by al-Azhar which preserved the Islamic and Arab Literary heritage, in the darkest days of decline and was the only source of learning in Egypt.\(^2\)

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2. Mahdi, Ismat, Modern Arabic Literature, p. 8
Dr. Taha Husayn had spent four years at the Azhar. It was a life of unrelieved repetition, with never a new thing, from the time the study year began until it was over. He studied Tauhid, the doctrine of the divine unity after the dawn prayer, then Fiqh, or Jurisprudence after sunrise, then the study of Arabic grammar during the forenoon, following a dull meal, then more grammar in the wake of the noon prayer. After this came a grudging bit of leisure and then, again, another snatch of wearisome food until, the evening prayer performed, he proceeded to the logic class which some sheikh or other would conduct. The Azhar upbringing had nurtured him in the sort of talent it required. He bethought himself that there were four more years of this ahead. He pondered over the fact that he would have to go on with these studies in the same old way. It was in the midst of all this that the name of the 'University' was first mentioned. He had not heard this word before and, initially, a peculiar sense of strangeness possessed him. All he knew was the mosque in which he was spending all his daylight hours and half the night.

When the University was established and he became a student there, his fears abated and a glad anticipation filled him with happy satisfaction. When he went to his Azhar classes, he had no attention for anything the Sheikhs were saying. His mind had no register either for them or for their studies. He did not wait for the afternoon prayer but went off to the University with his two companions, when the rhetoric class ended.

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1. Husayn, Dr.Taha, A passage to France (Trans- Cragg, Kenneth), p. 120
The theme of the first University studies was Islamic civilisation. His first impression was the utter contrast with everything in the Azhar. The Professor, Ahmad Zaki, began the class with words the like of which he had never heard in the Azhar.¹

In the Azhar, he had been used to a different form of words from the Sheikhs. They were not directed to the students but addressed to God in praise and adoration.

1.8 Honour and Award:

Dr. Taha Husayn transcended the reality in which he lived by opening up to the study of humanities while he was awarded more than 36 Egyptian and foreign decorations among which was the collar of the Nile which is the highest decoration in Egypt conferred on Kings and Heads of State. He also obtained the United Nations Prize for his achievements in the field of Human Rights. It has been found that he was granted honorary doctorates from the Universities of Oxon, Madrid and Rome. In 1973, he received the United Nations Human Rights Award.²

1.9: His Constructive Ideas and Egypt:

It is reported that many of the ideas of Dr. Taha Husayn had been accepted in Egypt and it had become a reality. A Programme of free public education was in fact adopted in 1950, and education for

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¹ Ibid, p. 4
² The Egyptian Gazette, April 12, 2003
Egyptians became free through the end of Secondary school. Consequently, the school population has grown from 1,500,000 in 1949 to about 2,300,000 in 1953, moreover, literacy which was approximately ten percent in 1938, had increased to approximately thirty percent in 1953. As to matters of organization, elementary, primary, and secondary education were then unified in one system, according to Dr. Taha Husayn's suggestions.

Higher education had likewise shown both growth in facilities and organic change. The Egyptian University became Cairo University and in addition to this and al-Azhar there are at present three other Universities, Ibrahim University in Cairo (The name of which will probably be changed to "The University of Heliopolis"), Alexandria University in Alexandria, and Assiut University in upper Egypt. The Dar al-Ulum is now a part of Cairo University, and other formerly independent institutes, such as the Institute of Education, are now incorporated into the various Universities. New institutes, such as the one suggested for translating, editing, and the press have been created in the Universities of Cairo and Alexandria. As is the case with many Universities in the West, endowed Chairs have been established in several instances, and student dormitories have been provided, at least in Cairo and Alexandria Universities. Furthermore there has been increased co-operation with international educational and cultural bodies, and UNESCO has established one of its centres for fundamental education in Egypt.

1.10 : Dr. Taha Husayn— The Neglect and The Reaction :

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn followed his brother to al-Azhar with great hopes while he was unable to be adjusted with other young students at the Azhar. He is reported to have found that he spent the Azharite times with loneliness, bitterness and despair and was neglected by his brother.\(^1\) Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have not sympathised to the Personalities who had shown their roughness for his handicaps while he alternatively showed hardness on them, even on his near and dear ones like his father and grand father. It has been found that the few people who are treated kindly are the brother and sister who had died in childhood and the agricultural expert who had come from Cairo to spend some time with the family.\(^2\) It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have been despised by the Student friends as well as the Sheikhs of al-Azhar and outside Azhar, as yet he had found an opportunity to develop his intellect and academic side.

1.11 : His Source of Inspiration and Moulding of His Creative Personality :

Although Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have afflicted with blindness while he was barely three but his Strong will power, Sharp intelligence and Phenomenal memory helped him in moulding his creative personality. At his childhood, he was given an opportunity by his father to take religious teaching under a Village school teacher, who encouraged him much to memorise

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the holy Quran. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn was at Azhar while he was thirteen years old, where he learnt the vital lesson of being thorough in the study of texts, developing those qualities and retentive faculties that enable patient research.¹

He is found to have been influenced by the lectures of his teacher, Sheikh al-Marsafi. The influence of Dr. Taha Husayn was so deep that he could only judge literature in accordance with the judgement of his teacher, al-Marsafi. He is reported to have indebted to two great teachers viz. Sheikh al-Marsafi and Carlo Nallino in his whole intellectual life. He devoted much to the modern as well as classical literary books for the upliftment of all literary aspects under the guidance of European teachers.² It has been found that melancholy was a part of his psyche as well as soul when he lost his eye sight and ensuing deaths in his family. His writings are product of his own untiring effort and the experience of varied phases in life. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn became a writer and used to write in the newspapers by dint of the kindness of two teachers namely, Lutfi al-Sayyid and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz.³

It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn was happy while he left Cairo for Paris. In Paris, he met his future life companion who brought light into his life.

¹ Dawwara, Fuad, Ashra Udaba yatahaddathun, p. 18
² Husayn, Dr. Taha, Muqaddima tarih al-Adab al-Arabiyya il Mustashriq Nallinu, p-1
³ Husayn, Dr. Taha, a passage to France, (trans.- Cragg, Kenneth) p.22
"She changed his life from misery to bliss, from despair to hope, from poverty to affluence, from distress to happiness."¹ Dr. Taha Husayn has been found to have religious as well as literary mind, despite political personality. He was found to be saintly personality, valuing simplicity of life and is accepted as giant in modern Arabic literature.

1.12 : Psychological Analysis :

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have been suffered a lot due to deprivation of his eye sight, while he felt that the loss of eye sight was due to the ignorance of his parents, who paid little attention to the early time of his eye disease. It has been found that the family tension had made Dr. Taha Husayn more imaginative, when his little sister had been suffering from fever, while his mother looked after her and arranged for food. Allah knew better about food, whether that was good or bad.² It is reported that her father got himself busy, at the recitation of the holy Quran and her mother forwarded the hand upto the sky, seeking mercy upon the child. But it was a matter of surprise that none of them felt for calling Doctor, while the condition of the child was getting broken and the door of the sky, was remaining closed.

¹ Hussayn, Dr. Taha, al-Ayyam, Part - I, p. 152
² Ibid, p. 121.
Gradually, her respiration was about to lose and she had left the world. What was her disease and how she expired? Allah knows it better.¹

While his eighteen years old brother suffered at cholera disease, a great change came into the life of Dr. Taha Husayn. His heart enlightened with the truth of the Almighty Allah, while he used to give alms sometimes and to say prayer, despite reciting the holy Quran in search of peace and tranquillity. He had been found suffering from a guess that his brother was fallen short of accomplishing religious compulsions (injunctions) inspite of being eighteen years of old. It is found that they had decided twice to accomplish five times prayer for three years while keeping fast for two months. This pledge, they had made between themselves and Almighty Allah. In addition, they promised that whatever be provided from food, they would first serve the poor and the orphan before taking their share.² Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have spent many dark nights by thinking about his brother, while reading the chapter of the holy Quran thousand times for his brother.

It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn preserved the holy Quran by heart under a teacher, while his father took a test on him but he could not succeed. His father told him to go away for not learning the holy Quran, then Dr. Taha Husayn became pale with sweat and shame. It is found that his teacher came to know and asked Dr. Taha Husayn to cause him to hear the language of Dr. Taha Husayn on another day.

1. Ibid, pp. 120, 121
2. Ibid, pp. 135, 136
Like wise, his teacher asked Dr. Taha Husayn in a rude manner about the happenings of yesterday. 'Was he not able to read the chapter? Did he forget the event? No matter!' The teacher told, "you have forgotten the holy Quran. You are bound to recall it. But neither a short coming for you nor for me in it. All of them are only for your father".

It has come to light that if he had paid the remuneration, the day on which Dr. Taha Husayn had memorised the holy Quran, then Allah might have blessed upon him. But he did not pay attention to his right. Therefore, Almighty Allah had erased the holy Quran from his heart. It is found that the teacher revoked again Dr. Taha Husayn for the holy Quran and told his father "you have censured and cursed on me. Wherever I swore in the child that he did not forget the holy Quran but became hopeless. You told me liar and disgraced me. Today, I have come so that you could test the boy in front of me. I took an oath that if the boy could not remember the holy Quran, I would be ashamed of the jurist of the city.

Dr. Taha Husayn's father told, "No matter! Don't tell all these, but tell that he had forgotten the holy Quran and you caused him to remember twice."

The teacher told, "I swore in the matter thrice that neither he had forgotten nor I had taught. Moreover, I heard the holy Quran from him and he caused me to hear just like the flowing of water".¹

¹. Ibid. pp. 41-44.
1.13: Dr. Taha Husayn as a Teacher:

Being well-equipped with various literary phases, he had an opportunity to teach history at the Arts College in Egypt, in 1919. It is found that he had also written a letter to the President of Cairo University that he would teach for a year, the history of Arabic literature, without salary and would be able to benefit the students, while he spent long days in Cairo. It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn was paid a salary of five guineas a month while he was permitted to take classes there in the University. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn was turned from the Dean of the faculty of letters at the Egyptian University into a Supervisor of Elementary Education while the students assembled outside their classrooms to protest against the transfer of Professor, Dr. Taha Husayn. It is reported that the University Director Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayed proposed a compromise, which was that Dr. Taha Husayn be allowed to continue teaching at the University. It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn was the best loved figure in the University among Professors and students alike, while he was the leading expert on Arabic literature, not only in Egypt but in the entire Middle East.¹

Dr. Taha Husayn was found to have been working at the government office and was associated with the French school of jurisprudence while he had passed the secondary school.²

¹. Al-Ahram weekly online: 10th to 16th July/ 2003.
². Husayn, Dr. Taha, a Passage to France, (trans-Cragg, Kenneth). p. 74
1.14: His French study and the Paris lady:

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have travelled to France in the month of May, 1914, while he had obtained his doctor of Philosophy from the Egyptian University in the same year. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had proceeded to study the French language and literature in a night school of Azhar, while he studied in France two languages: Greek and Italian, as a part of study for history and philosophy. He is found to have submitted the thesis on "the social philosophy of Ibn Khaldun" in French language, for which Hykal, an Arab novelist says that Dr. Taha Husayn excelled in presenting his self style in this thesis.1 It was in France that Dr. Taha Husayn met his 'sweet voice', Suzanne, who came to read to him since not all the references needed were available in Braille. It has been found that he got married with that Paris lady, who became his mentor, advisor, assistant and best friend. It is reported that she had changed his life from misery to bliss, from despair to hope and prospect, while poverty to affluence. She is found to have extended every possible help to him, before and after the marriage. She inspired him, so that he could smoothly go for study and devote himself to the varied lectures, delivered by learned scholars. After his death, she wrote M'aak (with you), published in Arabic; a touching remembrance of their life together. She wrote: 'We were together, alone, close to an extent beyond description.

I was not crying—the tears came later. Each of us was before the other; unknown, and united as we had been at the beginning of our journey. In this last unity, in the midst of this very close familiarity, I talked to him, kissing that forehead that was so noble and handsome'.  

Later on, it has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn could be able to have attained the Licentiate degree in literature from Sorbonne in 1917, while he also obtained the diploma of Higher education in Ancient history in 1919.  

1.15 : Dr. Taha Husayn’s Historical Study :  

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn happened to read in the papers a notice for young students to participate in two delegations in France - one for historical, the other for geographical studies, while he was a student of Egyptian University. It is found that he had no sooner read the notice than he decided to participate in one of those groups and would cross the sea to Paris and study history in the Sorbonne. It is reported in this context, that Dr. Taha Husayn wrote at once to the Head of the University, Amir Ahmad Fuad and to the Administrative Council of the University expressing his eagerness to be the student for history in France. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had no requisite qualification to be efficient for the study of History in France, as he did not obtain secondary certificate, (which was requisite for historical study in France) but the exams, completed by Dr. Taha Husayn were done good

1. The Egyptian Gazette, (April 12, 2003), p.3
2. Rahmatullah, Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim, Wamdat ala al-Naqd al-Hadith, p.82.
and high marks also attained by him in the concerned subjects. It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn entered the French University only because of his excellent merit and efficiency while he completed study in the history within a very few months and obtained the highest grade in the history of the ancient east as well as in the history of Islam. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn expressed his gratitude to the University, which had made him the most well equipped person to study history. Dr. Taha Husayn returned to Egypt in 1919 while he was appointed to teach history at the Arts college.

1.16 : Dr. Taha Husayn and the Years 1920-1940 :

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had a valuable position in the rift between the old and the new, among writers and poets in their approach to literature held in the years 1920-1940 in Egypt. The rift has been glorified by the scholars of al-Azhar calling for the preservation of classical norms and the University graduates under western influence advocating radical changes. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had led the group for change. It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn came under heavy attack for his views on literature generally and on poetry especially as he set out in his book fil-shir al-Jahili (About Pre-Islamic poetry). In his book fil-sheir al-Jahili, Dr. Taha Husayn questioned the authenticity of the poems attributed to that period while he opined that the bulk of Jahiliyya poetry was composed in Islamic time but attributed to the

1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, a passage to France, (trans. Cragg, Kenneth) pp. 50-51
Jahiliyya because of religious and political considerations.¹

It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn published his Wednesday articles between 1922-1924, collected under the title ‘Hadith al-Arbaa’ on the poetry of Umayyad and the Abbasid periods. One passage in these articles, where he discussed three different approaches to poetry. He is found to have named ‘Sainte Beuve’ as the representative of the approach which seeks to penetrate to the personality of the poet. Taine as the exponent of another approach which consider the poet as the product of his period, environment and nation and ‘Jules Lemaitre’ as the representative of a third approach which is solely concerned with the artistic features of poetry.

1.17: Dr. Taha Husayn and his Study on Poetry:

Dr. Taha Husayn was the first Arabic scholar to make an analytical study of poetry. It has been found that he had selected for his research on the ‘Abbasid period the work of those poets who are known for their innovations like Abu Nuwas and his followers.² It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn had read the poetry of Abu Nuwas and his associates despite giving much interest in reading ghazal poetry while adopting different styles from those poetry. It is reported that by dint of the kindness

¹ Haykal, Ahmad, Tatawwur al-Riwayya al-Arabiyya fi Misr, p,259
² Vol. II of Hadith al-Arbaa deals with Abbasid poets and poetry.
of two men namely, Lutfi al-Sayyid and 'Abd al-Aziz Jawish, Dr. Taha Husayn became a writer. Both of them inspired him much for composition of poems and recitation of them in the public gathering. So far the impetus of Dr. Taha Husayn is concerned, he composed a qasida, greeting the festival of the Hijrah and had recited it to Sheikh Abd al-Aziz. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn though not inspired much by the poetry of Khalil Mutran, yet, he listened the recitation of the poem of Khalil Mutran. It is reported that Dr. Taha Husayn had listened and memorised some Islamic as well as Abbasid poems of prominent poets.

Dr. Taha Husayn is reported to have mentioned that a great literary (poetic) conversation held between some distinguished poets, like al-Sayyid al-Shawqi including Tagore, an Indian poet, while Dr. Taha Husayn was in the middle of a group of friends. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had an in-depth study on Pre-Islamic poetry, while he wrote a book about Pre-Islamic poetry and opined that the bulk of Jahiliyya poetry was composed in Islamic times, while attributed to the Jahiliyya because of religious and political grounds. It has been found that the writings of Dr. Taha Husayn on the Arabic literary heritage consist of some studies of ancient poets, such as Maarri and al-Mutanabbi and numerous essays covering a wide range of subjects, such as, the forgery of Pre-Islamic poetry, the emergence of love poetry in the period.

1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, a passage to France, (trans - Cragg, Kenneth), p. 22
2. Ibid, p. 56
3. Haykal, Ahmad, Tatawwur al-Riwayya al-Arabiyya fi Misr, p.259
of the Umayyads. It is reported that at the end of 1922, Dr. Taha Husayn
speaks of a development both in thematic content and vocabulary of the
poetry of the Umayyads from that of the pagan Arabs, while the love
poetry of Jarir, al-Farazdaq and al-Akhtal was far more pleasant and deli­
cate than that of the Jahiliyya.¹

It is reported that the most characteristic feature of Dr. Taha
Husayn's work on the literature of the early centuries of Islam is the way
in which he relates its development to the political, social and intellectual
conditions. It is found that the inhabitants of Macca and Medina gave
themselves upto entertainment and sensual pleasures while their poets
composed a new type of erotic love poems, which Dr. Taha Husayn calls
the ghazal of the libertimes. Despite that, the poor and destitute poets of
the desert were plunged into despair and produced melancholic, chaste
and platonic love poetry. It is interestingly found at this point that Dr. Taha
Husayn's views on the emergence of the Arabic Ghazal, which seem to
have been widely accepted among modern Arab scholars,² leaned
heavily on an earlier account given by prof. Nallino to his students in the
Egyptian University one of whom was Dr. Taha Husayn himself.³

1. Semah, David, Four Egyptian literary critics, P. Ill,
2. Kinany, A.Kh., The development of Ghazal in Arabic literature, pp.174-81
1.18 : Dr. Taha Husayn and His Translated Works:

It has been found that the Arab people translated books from French, Indian and Greek languages, while the Arab civilization and cultural heritage with which the whole universe became glorious, during Islamic times up to Abbasid times. True to speak, that the translation movement activated much in the modern period. During this period, some foreign stories and novels are Arabicised by Arab writers.

Taha Husayn had made attempts to build Arabic literature on the firm foundations laid down by the Greeks. It has been found that Taha Husayn translated a lot of Greek books into Arabic including the plays of Sophocles and also Andre Gide’s modern version of Oedipus, while he wrote on modern French literature too including works on Sartre, Albert Camus and Paul Valery. Min Baid, is a collection of articles written in Europe between 1923-1930 and includes his essay on Descartes. Sawt Baris, another collection of essays in two volumes was published in 1942. Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have treaded on the field of Egyptian stories with criticism, while he raised the developing movement for the art of story. He played role in this aspect as a guide and introduced the old method of writing story, while working out books like, ‘Hadith al- Arbaa’ and ‘al-Adab al-Jahili’. In this context, he is reported to have expressed the necessity between the old and the new, while he laid stress on ancient theme and style.

1. Al-Talawi, Dr. Muhammad Najeb Ahmad, Taha Husayn wal-Fann al-Qasasi, p 188
It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn had translated some famous European stories and novels, while introducing with prominent litterateurs and philosophers like, Kufka, al-Birkami, Janbul Sartar. 

It has been found that some Arabic books also are translated by some foreign young writers.

Translations of modern Arabic prose literature are becoming available for certain leading writers, particularly in French and English and, it is hoped that this is merely a start. There is a useful collection of short stories translated by Denys Johnson Davies. The plays of Mahmud Taimur and Taufiq al-Hakim can be read in French, and individual works by Hakim and Taha Husayn are available in English translation.

1.19 : The Link Between his Arabic Culture with that of Greece :

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn was appointed a Professor of History at the Egyptian University in 1919 while he did not confine himself to political and constitutional history but transferred to his students his knowledge of Greek drama such as Sophocles and Aeschylus. It is reported that the greater part of Dr. Taha Husayn canon is basically influenced by Greek culture while he issued ‘selected pages’ from Greek dramatic poetry (1920), ‘The Athenian System’ in 1921, and ‘Leaders of thought’ in 1925.

1. Ismail, Dr. Ajuddim, Dhikhra Taha Husayn, p.19
Thus, the link between his Arabic culture with that of Greece was a turning point. The first book was an incomplete attempt at an expose of Greek poets and their works. The second book was a meticulous translation of one of the most important texts of Greek History of civilization. It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn was not merely influenced by Greek thought in his literary work but also in his books on politics and civilization.  

1.20 : Dr. Taha Husayn : His awareness of Social reforms

It is found that two great men appeared in Egypt in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, who had their lasting influence on Egyptian thought and life. Al-Sayyid Jamal Uddin al-Afghany arrived in Cairo in 1871 while Egypt was in the position of indebtedness to British and French bankers. Jamal, who had struggled for the liberation of the Moslem people in Afghanistan, Persia, India and Turkey and became the intellectual leader of the young Egyptian Movement. During his eight years stay in Cairo, he was able, by his mastery of the Islamic sciences and the new message, he drew from them for his own age while starting a considerable movement for reform in every department of Egyptian life, social, political and religious. The leadership was taken over by his pupil and intimate friend, Muhammad 'Abdu' after his expulsion in 1879. It has been found that Jamal was a man of restless revolutionary spirit while Abdu was a patient but energetic reformer, who spent most of his life in the land of his birth. He was influential much, in many ways in secular matters than...
religious affairs, while struggling for years to reform the Azhar.\(^1\) The stirring personality of al-Imam Muhammad Abdu and his disciples Qasim Amin and Lutfi al-Sayyid increased Dr. Taha Husayn's awareness of Social reforms. Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have laid tress on modern education, at the Azhar, rather than traditional Islamic studies and came in contact with Western ideas, thus, devoted in the contemporary problems of Egypt and Islam. It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn, along with Muhammad Abdu made an attempt for the liberation of the Moslem people and the renovation of Islam by methods of gradual reform through moral and religious education. It has been found that he had introduced a no. of reforms most important of which was the establishment of the principle of free education in Egypt while his motto was 'Education is like water we drink and the air we breath'. Dr. Taha Husayn strongly believed in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 in Arab Unity and in Social reform. It is reported that he had succeeded in making all Elementary and Secondary education free.

1.21: His achievements:

Dr. Taha Husayn is found to have occupied senior University posts including a Professor of ancient history of Arabic literature, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University, a general supervisor of culture at the Ministry of Education, Rector of Alexandria University and Chief Editor of 'Al-Katib al-Arabi' (The Arab Scribe) magazine. In 1950, he was selected as minister of education. In 1914, he received the first Doctorate granted Husayn, Dr. Taha, The Stream of Days. (trans-wayment, Hilary) p VII.\(^1\)
by an Egyptian University. In 1918, he obtained another Ph.D. in Social Philosophy from the Sorbonne, Paris. In 1919, he received a diploma in post graduate studies in the Roman civil code from the Same University. In recognition of all Dr. Taha Husayn’s achievements for Egypt the state bought his residence in the Pyramids district after his death and converted it into a museum carrying the name 'Ramatan' which literally means in Arabic the two Oases where travelling caravans stop to take rest. As Dr. Taha Husayn was keen on having his son Dr. Moeniss share his residence, he designed the villa with two entrances to preserve each one’s privacy and freedom. That is why, he called it “Ramatan” or two places of rest for him and his son.  

1.22: Dr. Taha Husayn and the Trend of Symbolism:

The literary schools in Arabic are found to have developed on the basis of worldly status through various literary aspects like novel, romantic poetry and story. It has been found that the Symbolism had flowed in the story as the new literary art. It is found that despite the oldness of Symbolism, its application in Arabic is new and highly progressive through emotions, thoughts and allusions. Literary and artistic movement that originated with a group of French poets in the late 19th century, spread to painting and the theatre, and influenced Russian, European and American literature of the 20th century to varying degrees. Symbolist artists sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and

1. Egypt; The Ramatan, Taha Husayn Museum, Cairo, p.1
suggestive use of highly metaphorical language. Symbolism originated in the revolt of certain French Poets against the rigid conventions governing traditional French Poetry while the Symbolists wished to liberate. Poetry from its expository functions and its formalized oratory in order to evoke the fleeting and immediate sensations of human experience.¹

Symbolism was introduced by the French poets Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), and Stephane Mallarme (1842-1898) in the last quarter of the 19th century. Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the Precursor of Symbolism, in his Sonnet "Correspondences" summed up his aesthetic creed:

The Symbolism is anthologised in the story of Arabic from thoughts and emotions while pointing out meanings but the sign or indication in Arabic is the first unmixed product than the method of Symbolism. It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn is preceded in advancing Symbolism in Arabic novel while it first came using in modern European Literature. He had an excellency in the application of Arabic Symbolism in the Egyptian story.³ It is reported that the "Ahlam Shaharzad" is one of the prominent symbolic books of Dr. Taha Husayn in Arabic literature and is said that Dr. Taha Husayn had the circle of union between

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1. Webster. Merian, Encyclopedia of literature, P.1085
2. From the poem "Correspondences" by Charles Baudelaire, the Penguin Book of French Verse, p.406
the Arabic literature and the European literature.

It is found that Dr. Taha Husayn had started the application of Symbolism in his story since 1943, while it came to an end in the book "Ahlam Shaharzad" and then found to have repeated in the book "Jannat al-Hayan" as well as "Ma wara' an-Nahar" respectively. 'Dua' al-Karawan is also one of the eminent Symbolic books of Dr. Taha Husayn and the book deals with the Romantic thoughts and feelings while applying highly progressive Symbolism in a Poetic style.

Symbolism does not express a meaning as much as it refers to a vague sense of human passion and emotion and hidden allusions. Indecisive metaphors and adjectives melt into one another like wavering bands of smoke or like sculptures of clouds. "Symbolism' wrote Faris, is: the discovery of that which lies behind sensation, the exposure of sealed secrets, the notations of lightning flashes, the rejection of every day reality.1

It is to be mentionable that the Arab poets adopted Symbolism as a reaction against the poetry of the preceding generation, represented by the neo-classicists Shawqi and Hafiz and the Apollo movement characterised by wijdan (emotion), which extolled sentimental subjectivism and came to be condemned by adventurous writers for its shallowness2

like romanticism, symbolism in Arabic was openly attacked for being totally irrelevant to the needs of post-war Arab poetry, and although it continued to be popular with some poets, its appeal faded away before the rising new movement - that of Social realism.¹

1.23 : Prose and Poetic Style of writing in him :

It has been found that Dr. Taha Husayn was one of the avant-garde² writers in modern Arabic literature. He had done a lot of works on Prose as well as on Poetry, while shaping a new style of his own accord. It is reported that he had contributed much to the field of writing poetry, from the very beginning of critical point of view. Despite the elevation to the field of Prose, he had also gone through the poetry, and was very much poetical in his language, while his poetic style of writing is often found in some of his books of great importance, e.g., Fil-Adab al-Jahili, al-Muaddabuna fil Ard, Dua al-Karawan, etc.

It is found that the book, “Dua’ al-Karawan” (the call of the curlew) is a unique work of fiction in modern Arabic literature, while most of the critics agree with the book to be a piece of poetry and that applies to both its romantic theme of the triumph of love over revenge as well as its highly elevated style. It has been found that the novel is so highly and matchlessly poetical that many paragraphs invite the translator to attempt

¹ Mahdi, Ismat, Modern Arabic Literature, p. 174
² According to Webster, Merriam, Encyclopedia of literature, p. 89. "avant-garde means an intelligentsia that develops new concepts."
a poetical translation in order to convey the real nature of the text. It has been found that the poetical style of writing is clear in his famous book, 'Dua al-Karawan', while some scholars had considered this book as untranslatable for prosaic English. It is reported that comparing other works by Dr. Taha Husayn, this book is much more poetical despite the romantic theme of the triumph of love in the book.

1. Husayn, Dr. Taha, The call of the Curlew (trans- As-Safi, A.B.) p-Preface