The present research work entitled A Study on Blind Poets in Arabic in Abbasid Period (750 to 1258 A.D) with special reference to Abû 'l-‘Alâ al-Ma‘arrî has been undertaken to acquaint with all the aspects of the blind poets who flourished in the Abbasid period from 750 to 1258 A.D. The Abbasid period witnessed a huge numbers of poetical productions that gave a fillip to the development of Arabic literature. As Arab tradition goes, poets were the seers of the merits and short comings of the society which they used to give information through their verses which are full of philosophy and wisdom; their messages are also relevant to the activities of the human society as well. Here a humble approach has been made through this research work to visualize their importance and significance in the realm of Arabic literature.

The poets in Arabic literature have a brilliant history in the world literature, while their artistic poeticism appears from earlier period of Islam. Here it is imperative to know that the Arab Bedouin could produce excellent poetry in qasida form; of course their poems were of the precursor to the prose art of Arabic literature. Accordingly their poets championed throughout the ages past and present in eloquence and rhetorical aspects. In fact, their poetical tradition continued artistically in the subsequent periods, may specially be pointed to early Islamic and Islamic periods both of which are historically determined as the Umayyad and Abbasid periods according to the specification of the modern historian thereof. During the early Islamic period, scholars wrote down this pre-Islamic poetry for preservation. The early Islamic and Islamic poets also imitated the works of their predecessors, and they began writing other types of poetry, such as love lyrics. These new poems at first described traditional Bedouin settings, but later they began to reflect the poets' elegant
new lives. Themes of the Islamic religion were sometimes borrowed, with love depicted as a holy war. In fact, during seventh to eighth centuries the Muslim Empire grew, new intellectual centres developed in Iraq and towards her cities poets flocked in large numbers, where they could find patrons and meet other writers. Finding there suitable situations of learning and patronizations, a good number of poets could expose their calibre in high order that gave a fillip to the development of Arabic literature. In this connection, the present research work has been undergone specially on the Blind Poets who flourished during the Abbasid Period (750 – 1258 A.D.). Here we have made a threadbare study on the poet Abû 'l-'Alâ al-Ma'ârî in view of bringing out the characteristics of his poetry in detail; which would help us to comprehend the whole picture of the blind poets and the importance of their works as well.

The First Chapter has been captioned as “Arabic Poetry over the Preceding Ages” dealing with the account of Arabic poetry that flourished during the span of time right from Pre-Islamic to Abbasid periods. It is a matter of fact that Arabic poetry that flourished in the pagan period, has diverse themes like fakhr (glorification), hâmasa (bravery and fortitude), ghazal (amatory verse), madhî (praise), rithâ' (elegy) and hijâ' (satire) and wasf (description). A good deal of poetry existed through oral transmission. Their preservation was rescued particularly with al-Aghani of Abu’l- Faraj (d. 356/966) and the Jamharat Ashr al-‘Arab, the Mufaddaliyat, the Hamasa of Abu Tammam (231/ 854) and that of al-Buhturi (d. 284/897).

In fact, this chapter is comprised of Pre-Islamic, Islamic and latter Abbasid periods’ poetical accounts in common so as to highlight the position of Arabic poetry that thrived in flowery language. The pre-Islamic odes of the Mu‘allaqât are counted seven to ten in number; their poets are namely Imru‘il-Qais (d. 540 AD.), Zuhâir b. Abî Sulma (d. 607 AD), Tarafa b. al-‘Abd (d. 564 AD) Labîd b. Rabi‘a (d. 661 AD.), ‘Antara b. Shaddâd (d. 615 AD.), ‘Amar b.
Kulthûm (d. 600 AD.), al-Harith b. Hilliza, al-Nabigha of Dhubyan (d. 604 AD.), al-A‘shâ and ‘Abid b. al-Abras (d. 555 AD.). In fact, they were awarded with prizes at Ukaz and their poems were hanged on the wall of Ka’ba written in golden letters. In addition to this, we find two to three brigand poets namely Shanfara, Ta‘abbata Sharr and Arwat b. al-Warud; their poems are also considered as masterpiece of Arabic poetry.

Arabic poetry also thrived during the forty years beginning with the Prophet’s flight to al-Madina and the assassination of Ali in 660 AD. In this connection, we find a few champion poets namely Hassan b. Thabit and Ka‘b b. Malik, Abdullah ibn Rawâha, Ka‘b ibn Zuhair, Abbas b. Mirdas and al-Nabigha al-Ja‘di; their poems were complemented for Islam in objective.

The poetry in the Umayyad period also flourished in the adverse situations of warfare and rivalries among the different tribes being stimulated by victory and spread of Islam. Historically famous two satirists were Farazdaq (d. 728 AD.) and his rival, Jarîr; and third one was the Christian al-Akhtal (d. 710 AD), known as a panegyrist. The poet Dhu‘r-Rumma captured Arab taste with his rich vocabulary and the fertility of his similes, and the poetess Layla al-Akhyaliya won the palm for her elegies. The familiarity of ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abi Rabi‘a (d. 719 AD.) of Makkah was credited with that of ghazal (love lyric) poetry. The development of poetry in the Abbasid period is being highlighted in the following chapter.

The Second Chapter is designed as “Development of Abbasid Poetry from 750 – 1258 A.D.” It is worth-mentioning that the poets of Abbasid period were credited with the lyrical form of poetry, as it was popular in that time. Bashshar ibn Burd wrote delicate love poems. Abu Nuwas wrote brilliant lyrics of love, wine, and the hunt, and he showed great imagination in
his use of Arabic. Religious poems such as those of Abu’l-Atahiya were also popular during this period. Two centuries later, the blind Syrian poet Abū ’l-‘Alā al-Ma’arrī took up similar solemn ideas and novel characteristics. Another type of poem that grew more popular was the poetry that praised powerful rulers or patrons. These poems used stately language and a grand style to celebrate the subject’s virtues.

The Third Chapter has been captioned as “Outstanding Blind Poets of the Abbasid Period”. Since the Arab poets are credited with their multifarious poetic talent, and there was no exception of this even in the Abbasid period from 750 to 1258 A.D., during which the contributions of a few blind poets namely Bashar bin Burd (693 – 783 AD), Ali Ibn Jabala, surnamed al-‘Akawwak (776 – 828 A.D.), Ibn al-Ta‘āwūs wīdhi (Abū ’l- Fatḥ Muḥammad, 1125 A.D. – 1188 A.D), Jamāl al-Dīn Yaḥyā Ibn Maṭrūḥ (١١٩٦ – ١٢٥١ A.D.) are remarkable. They distinguished and acquainted themselves in the present generation by dint of their knowledge in the field of Arabic poetry as well; and our search of knowledge gives speciality to Abū ’l-‘Alā al-Ma’arrī, since his poetic merits diffuse high order of philosophy. The following chapter will deal with his life and works in a threadbare discussion.

The Fourth Chapter has been entitled as “Abū ’l-‘Alā al-Ma’arrī and his Poetical Works”. Abū ’l-‘Alā al-Ma’arrī (973-1057) was a celebrated Arab poet who lived in Marratu’l- Nu’man (معرة النعمان) what is today Syria and Iraq. A writer of poems, commentaries, elegies, and religious tracts, he was a sceptic and cynic. He is considered as the Lucretius (i.e. Roman poet and philosopher) of Islam and the Voltaire of the East. He could overcome his blindness with his intellectual works in the field of Arabic poetry. In leading his life, he adopted vegetarian foods and advocated a philosophy that no
living creature should be injured or killed in any way of food or sports. Although Abū 'l-'Alā al-Maʿarrī was charged with heresy, but he was not prosecuted, nor suffered any punishment for reasons. He is popularly known throughout the Arabic speaking world.

We find his poems written in two parts of life, the former composed in youthful age known as Siqṭ al-Zand (سْقَتُ الزَّنْد) “The Spark of the Fire-stick” and along with another type of poetry was published known as al-Dirʿiyāt (الذراعيات) “The armour or mail coats” used in the war. Again in the latter part of his life whatever he composed in his maturity of life known as al-Luzūmiyyat (اللزوميات) i.e. Luzūm mā lam yalzam (لزوم ما لم يلزم) “The self imposed compulsion”. In fact, those, who critically discussed his poetry, among them, we find Von Kremer, who is of the opinion that Abū 'l-'Alā al-Maʿarrī was one of the greatest moralists of all time. Furthermore, about him Ibn Khillikan says that “his asceticism, his deep sense of right and wrong, his powerful intellect, his prodigious memory, and his wide range of learning, are alike acknowledged by both friend and foe.” Besides, his life and his outstanding works are highlighted in this chapter; his different types of poetry; analysis of his poetry and style of his poetry are elaborated with proper discussion. As his merits go, different critics dared to comment on his poetry; their views are presented in the way of criticism.

In fine, after doing a threadbare study and highlighting all the aspects related to the present research work, we have drawn a conclusion in the Fifth Chapter with the authentic references followed by a Bibliography.

****