1. INTRODUCTION (1 - 19)

1.1 ARABIC LITERATURE DURING PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD..1 - 2

1.2 IMPACT OF THE HOLY QUR'ÂN AND HADÎTH ON ARABIC PROSE LITERATURE ...................................... 2 - 6

1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC PROSE LITERATURE DURING UMAYYAD AND ABBÂSID PERIOD ............... 6 -10

1.3 (a) MAQÂMAT (RHYMED PROSE) LITERATURE...... 10 - 11

1.3 (b) NON-FICTION LITERATURE:COMPILATIONS... 12

1.3 (c) FICTION AND EPIC LITERATURE.................... 12 -14

1.3 (d) GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT OF BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY ................................ 14 - 15

1.4 LITERARY CRITICISM .............................................. 16

1.5 DOWNFALL OF ARABIC LITERATURE................. 17-18

REFERENCES ............................................................. 18 - 19
1. INTRODUCTION:

Arabic literature had started almost two thousand years ago. It had to come forward through various stages of ups and downs like other languages of the world. Therefore, it is mentionable that Arabic literature must have had a satisfactory development of long period before it finally came into writing shape by scholars. In other words, the Arabs kept alive their history, genealogy and poetry by oral transmission. So we may discuss this development in the following columns.

1.1 ARABIC LITERATURE DURING PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD:

Long before the advent of Islam, a large proportion of Arabic literature was in the form of poetry or in the form of maxims. The themes of the poetry ranged from high-flown hymns of praise to bitter personal attacks and from religious and mystical ideas to poems on sex and wine. A common feature of the poetry, which would be applied to all of the literature, was the idea that it must be pleasing to the minds of the people. The poetry or most of the story was written with the design that it would be spoken aloud and great care was taken to make all writings as melodious as possible. Bedouin poets had perfected the forms of panegyric, satire, and elegy. Their poetry was composed on strict principles, both in form and content. According to the ancient rules quoted by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889 A.D.), “The author of a “qasida” must begin by a reference to the deserted dwelling-places, the relics and traces of habitation. Next, he must lament, and pray his comrades to halt, while he calls up the memory of the dwellers who had departed in search of other encampments and fresh water-springs. Then he begins to touch on love-affairs, bewailing the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire, so as to win the hearts of his hearer. He recounts his
hard and toilsome journeying in the desert. Finally, he winds up with a panegyric of the Prince or Governor in whose presence, the poem is recited.” The common people of the days of Dark Age got interest in being involved with the assembling of poetic recitation. They were singing their poems in their lengthy journeys and in the struggles of some bloody warfare. “The early Arabs, quotes H.A.R. Gibb, one of the great and best of Arabic critics, had no poetry other than verses spoken by someone or other on certain occasions. Qasidas and long poems were first recited in the time of ‘Abd al-Muttalib, that is, in the first half of the sixth century. So far as the themes are concerned, no doubt most of these were already the subjects of those ‘verses spoken by some person or other. Elegies, laments, boasting-poems, satires or cursing-poems, praises of horse or camel, war-poems and the like must have existed long before.” Many such short pieces have come down to us in the course of time. But it is amazing that none of the prose literature of those ancient times has come down to us.

1.2 IMPACT OF THE HOLY QUR’ĀN AND HADĪTH ON ARABIC PROSE LITERATURE:

The Qur’ān, the primary document of the Islamic faith, is the first Arabic book. It is the first major work of Arabic literature and it created a remarkable revolution in the history of literature. A mixture of prose and poetry, it has always been considered the exquisite expression of literary art among the Arabs. Since its inception, it has been playing a tremendous role on Arabic language and literature. Its style, at once vigorous, allusive, and concise, deeply influenced later compositions in Arabic, as it continued to influence the mode of expression of native speakers of Arabic both in writing and in conversation. The impact of the Qur’ān began to develop a strikingly effective rhetorical prose in Arabic literature. It used to create a new linguistic structure in the history of Arabic literature, breaking up the
conventional forms of aesthetic production of its time and to inculcate a new, distinctive, and highly prosaic art.

The language used in the Qur'ān, is called classical Arabic. Not only is the Qur'ān, the first work of any significant length written in the language, but it also has a far more complicated structure with its 114 sūras (chapters) which contain 6,666 ayāt (verses). It contains injunctions, narratives, homilies, parables, direct addresses from God, instructions and even comment on itself and how it will be received and understood. It is also surprisingly admired for its abundance of metaphors as well as its clarity, a feature is mentioned itself in sūra 16:103: :-

"And we know well that they say: Only a man teacheth him. The speech of him at whom they falsely hint is outlandish, and this is clear Arabic speech."

The Qur'ān is also considered as prime source of Arabic literature. The earliest Arabic prose literature came into being not from literary movement, but it was developed step by step and at the early stage, its chief objective was to serve the religious and practical needs of the society so that common people may fully understand the Islamic revelation and the circumstances of the religion. So the specific linguistic features of the Qur'ān were imitated by the people in their writings. Thus, the Arabic literature began to develop so rapidly that it gradually used to prefer the styles of prose in addition to the poetry of the Arab society.

So the influence of the Qur'ān on the development of Arabic literature has been incalculable in many directions. Its ideas, language and rhythms pervade all subsequent literary works in a greater or lesser measure.4 Although it contains elements of both prose and poetry, it is closest to saj ' or rhymed prose. The Qur'ān is regarded as entirely as a
model and a part from these classifications. Therefore, the writers used to follow its styles and metaphors in their writings. The text is believed to be divine revelation and is seen as being eternal or 'uncreated'. The curious people were sticking to its research and recitation. This leads to the doctrine of *i'jaz* or inimitability of the Qur'an which implies that nobody can copy this work's style nor should anybody try. The closest anyone has come to imitating the Qur'an is probably *al-Mutanabbi* (915-965 A.D.) who is regarded as one of the great poets in Arabic. His name means the "would-be prophet" partly from an attempt at rebellion in his early life and partly for his skill at writing. This doctrine of *i'jaz* or inimitability of the Qur'an had a strong influence on the growth and development of Arabic literature.

The people studied Qur'anic exegesis (critical interpretation), Qur'anic criticism, the science, apostolic tradition, jurisprudence, scholastic theology, lexicography, rhetoric and literature. Renowned scholars engaged themselves in the study of astronomy, spherical geography, philosophy, geometry, music and medicine. Thus, the structure of Arabic literature started to take a new shape in the form of prose-style.

In consequence of these developments, the science of the traditions (*Hadith*) started to contribute a very considerable mass of prose literature to the *Arabic* such as Fiqh (jurisprudence), *Tafsir* (interpretation), Sharh (commentation) and *Tārīkh* (history) etc. The traditions cast light on those points very clearly on which the Qur'an had given just an indication of the work and left them obscure in its narration.

The sayings and the actions of Prophet *Muhammad (sm.)* were collected and preserved at first by memory and then by writings, to be finally collected and arranged by such pious men as *Abū 'Abdallāh*
Muhammad Ibn Isma‘il al-Bukhari (810-870 A.D.), Abu‘l Husayn Muslim Ibn al-Hajjāj (817-875 A.D.), Abu Dawud Sulaiman Ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistāni (817 – 889 A.D.), Abū ‘Isa Muhammad al-Tirmidhi (d. 892 A.D.), Abu ‘Abdal-Rahman Ahmad al-Nasa‘i (830-915 A.D.) and Abū ‘Abdallah Muhammad Ibn Yazid Ibn Māja (824 – 896 A.D.) in the ninth century. The Hadith that is apostolic tradition, not only provided the basic texts from which Islamic law was elaborated, but also formed the raw materials for historians as well as litterateurs of the early Arabs. Since each Hadith, or "saying," is a first-person narrative, usually by an eyewitness of the event described, they have a closeness and freshness that has come down genuinely through the centuries. The personalities of the narrators - Hazarat Abu Bakr®, Hazarat Umar®, Hazarat Abu Huraira® Hazarat Aishah®, and a host of others are just as vibrant as the events described, for the style of each Hadith is very personal.

The Apostolic Tradition plays an important role in the development of prose-style and the literary form of works such as Ibn Ishāq’s "Siratun Nabi" (Biography of Prophet), originally written in the middle of the eighth century. In this book, Hadiths dealing with the life of the Prophet (sm) are arranged in chronological order, and the comments of the author are kept to a minimum. Events are seen through the eyes of the people who witnessed them; three or four versions of the same event are often given, and in each case, the "chain of transmission" of the Hadith is given, so that the reader may judge its authenticity. In the tenth century, the Hadith literature created the codification and criticism, which was called “‘ilm al-rijāl” or the science of men, and this science, was specially applied to the criticism of the witnesses and authorities on whom the whole edifice of tradition rests. Among the most important authors who have written on this subject we may mention Ibn Abi Hatim ‘Abdal-Rahman (894-939 A.D.),
author of the "Kitab al-Jarh wal-ta’dil" or Criticism and Correction, in six volumes. Another one, Abu’l-Qasim Sulaiman al-Tabarani (870-971 A.D.) compiled a book entitled "Mu’jam" or Alphabetical Dictionary of the Traditionists in three volumes. Then, Abu Nasr Ahmad al-Kalabadhi (918-1008 A.D.) wrote a book on the names of “huffāz” or custodians of traditions. ‘Abdal-Ghani Ibn Sa’id (944-1018 A.D.) also compiled a book on the names of traditionists resembling each other and those which differ. These works have a great impact in the history of Arabic prose literature.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC PROSE LITERATURE DURING UMAYYAD AND ABBÁSID PERIOD:

During the Umayyad period, the Arabic prose literature made considerable progress. The main components of the prose literature of Umayyad period were speeches, letters, grammar, the adab, the hadith, the fiqh, the tafsir and the ta’rikh. Normally, a speech passed through one or more stages of metamorphosis before it was recorded. The version of the speech underwent changes in the hands of subsequent transmitters. Some such famous speeches still exist in the history of Arabic literature such as the speeches of ‘Umar bin al-Khattab® (d.643 A.D.), Ziyad Ibn Abih (d. 672 A.D.) and Hajjaj bin Usuf (d. 714 A.D.) etc. Then the letters of this period are also considered as important prose literature. These letters relate to the political matters and comprise formal correspondence that took place among the caliphs, their governors, military generals, partisans and rivals in the times of wars with the unbelievers and all with dissensions amongst the Arabs for political or economic dominance. The science of grammar was founded about the middle of the first century of Hijrah by a literate Arab Abu’l-Aswad al-Du’ali (d.688 A.D.). Non-Arab Muslims, non-Muslims alike stood in dire need of a device to ensure the correct use
of the Arabic language. 'Isâ b. 'Umar, a Thaqifite Arab wrote two earliest grammatical books known as "al-Jâmi'and al-Ikmál". Al-Khalil bin Ahmad (d.793 A.D.) was the inventor of 'arûd (prosody) and the author of "al-Kitâb", which is a monumental work on syntax. Then we find a developed type of Arabic literature grew up during this period which was called "adab". Adab is usually translated as "belles-lettres,". 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya al-Kâtib, an Umayyad official, played an important role in creating of this genre. It is said that the art of letter-writing began with 'Abd al-Hamid and ended with Ibnul-'Amid. This literature, at least in its inception, was created for educating the growing number of high govt. officials in Arabic language with emphasis on refining their manners and modes and their knowledge of history, culture and diplomacy. "Belles-lettres and literary history are represented by a whole series of valuable works." The Adab also stands for educative literature. It includes tales and stories of the Arabs & the non-Arabs, proverbs and essays. Some of the books of this category known to us are: Kitab al-Amthal (The book of proverbs), by a Yamanite Arab, 'Abid bin Sharya, Kitab al-Amthal by Suhar al-Abdi, al-Adab al-Saghîr (The small book of the literature), al-Adab al-Kabîr (The large book of the literature) by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. We have already discussed about the science of hadith in the previous column. The Fiqh was also supposed to be a kind of prose literature during this period. The fiqh or the law was developed by two ways. First one is fatâwâ or the legal judgments of the noted pupils of the Companions, known as tabi‘un and those of the latter’s outstanding pupils, the tab’tabi‘in. Illustrious amongst the muftis were: Sa‘id b. al-Musayyab (d. 712 A.D.) of Medina, al-Hasan al-Basri (d.728 A.D.) of Basra, Sa‘id b. Jubayr (d. 712 A.D.) of Kufa etc. The primary sources of fatâwâs were based on the three main subjects-the Qur’ân, the Hadith and the Judgments of the top Companions. Secondly, Ra‘i or qiyâs - Personal Judgment.
During this period, a galaxy of Traditionists started solving legal problems by the exercise of their own judgments in reference to a hadith, transmitted by single or sets of several transmitters. Tafsir is also a big part of early prose literature. The Tafsir made all-round development in the Umayyad period. There are many brief or vague references, some difficult or technical words are applied in the Qur'an, which need detailed illustrations or comments for the common people. Umayyad Tafsir had three categories: (a) the one attributed to the Prophet, (b) the other attributed to the top Companions and (c) the another one attributed to the tabi'un and tabi'in. Most outstanding commentators were ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Ali, Mu’adh b. Jabal, Ibn Mas‘ud, Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Zayd b. Thabit, Abu Musā al-Ash‘ari and Ibn ‘Abbās. Amongst the tabi‘un and tabi‘in Traditionists, several numbers are known to have taken active interest in the tafsir literature and among them the following occupy a distinguished position: 1. Sa‘id b. Jubayr (d. 712 A.D.) of Kufa. 2. Al-Dhhak b. Muzahim (d.724 A.D.) of Khurasan. 3. Mujāhid b. Jabr (d.721 A.D.) of Mecca. 4. ‘Ikrima (d.722 A.D.) of Medina. 5. Abū Salih Badhan. 6. Al-Hasan al-Basri (d.728 A.D.) of Basra. 7. Qatada b. Di‘ama (735 A.D.) of Basra. 8. Ibn Jurayj (d.767 A.D.) of Mecca etc. History, though cultivated widely during the Umayyad period, is quite limited in scope. The focal points of the historical activity of the Umayyad period were: 1. Account of the Prophet’s life at Mecca and Medina and that of his successors. 2. Account of the wars of the Prophet and his successors with the unbelievers in and outside Arabia. 3. Dates of important battles etc. Some eminent historians of this period are as follows: Ibn ‘Abbas (d. 688 A.D.) of Medina, ‘Urwa b.al-Zubayr (d.712 A.D.) of Medina, Musa b. ‘Uqba (d.758 A.D.) of Medina, Muhammad b. Ishāq (d.767 A.D.) of Medina, Abu Mikhmāf (d.773 A.D.) of Kufa etc.
The Umayyad court in Damascus patronized scholars and writers. Caliph *Hishâm ibn Abd al-Malik* was instrumental in enriching the literature by instructing scholars to translate works into Arabic. These translations contributed immensely to the development of scholarship and learning. In this context, the works of *Ibn al-Muqaffâ'* (d.760 A.D.), *Ibn Qutayba* (d. 889 A.D.), *al-Jâhiz* (d. 869 A.D.), *Ibn ‘Abdi Rabbihi* (d. 940 A.D.), *Abul Faraj al-Isfahani* (d. 967 A.D.) are highly remarkable. *'Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffâ'* translated the history of the ancient kings of Persia into Arabic, as well as *Kalilah wa-Dimnah* from *Panchatantra*, an Indian book in the form of animal fables. This book has been regarded as one of the oldest prosaic works in the history of Arabic literature. Ibn Qutayba’s (d. 889 A.D.) famous works like “*Kitab al-Ma’arif*” (Book of General Knowledge), “*Adab al-Katib*” (Accomplishments of the Secretary) and “*Kitab al-Shi’r wal-Shua‘ara*” -(Book of poetry and poets) all are regarded as models of elegant style of classical Arabic literature. Al-Jâhiz (d. 869 A.D.) composed numerous books of an anecdotal and entertaining character as *Kitab al-Hayawan* (Book of Animals), *Kitab al-Bayân wal-Tabyin* (Book of Eloquence and Exposition) etc. of popular treatises on rhetoric. Ibn ‘Abdi Rabbihi (d. 940 A.D.) of Cordova, has left for us a miscellaneous anthology entitled *al-’Iqd al-Farid*—“The Unique Necklace” and then Abul Farâj al-Isfahâni (d.967 A.D.) created an invaluable book *Kitab al-Aghâni*—“Book of Songs” which may be described as a history of Arabian poetry. Thus, the prose literature used to take a new shape in Arabic during the Umayyad period.

During the *Abbâsid* period, Baghdad was regarded as the highest seat of learning and knowledge. The Abbasid dynasty opened a new era in domain of Arabic literature, science and its culture. The ‘Abbasid Caliphs were great patrons of learning and they nourished and nurtured a
galaxy of brilliant scientists and scholars who made their most valuable contributions to the literature as well as the culture of the world. In medicine, philosophy, alchemy, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, geography, law, theology and philology the developments of this period were no doubt great and impressive. Caliph Al-Mamūn opened a translation department for the preservation of foreign science and culture. Several books and extant materials were collected by him from all countries. Different types of works in Sanskrit, Pahlavi, Greek, and Syriac were started to translate into Arabic. This work of translation is no doubt important in the history of Arabic prose literature. Therefore, this period is called its golden age in the annals of Arabic literature. Aleppo of Syria was another centre of learning where Arabic works began to flourish very fast. Then Arabic reached Africa by way of Cairo. Even it was spread to Spain too. Not only this, but it was adopted by non-Arabic speaking peoples as well. Even the Persians who take pride of their race and culture, took to learning Arabic and produced several unforgettable works in different fields of its literature. In consequence, Arabic literature was also influenced by Persian literature and culture. ‘Umar Khayyam, Fariduddin Attar (d.-1230 A.D.) and Maulana Rumi all were great scholars of Persia and their themes and styles were taken up in Arabic literature. Moreover, the translations of Greek philosophy and Sanskrit works into Arabic provided a great impetus for the growth and development of Arabic prose literature during Abbāsid period.

1.3. (a) MAQĀMAT (RHYMED PROSE) LITERATURE:

The tenth century witnessed the creation of a new form in Arabic literature, the maqamat or rhymed prose. It can be said as the starting point of Arabic prose literature. The original meaning of Maqamat involves a place of standing or the sessions. Maqāmat was the title of a work by
al-Hamadhani, called Badi' al-Zaman (968 - 1007 A.D.), "The Wonder of the Age." His *Maqāmat* (Sessions) is a series of episodes written in rhymed prose concerning the life of Abu al-Fath al-Iskandari, a sort of confident trickster, a master of disguise, who takes on a different personality in each story and always succeeds in tricking his victims. These stories are witty and packed with action, and were immediately popular amongst the people. After about a century, al-Hamadhani was imitated by Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri (1054-1122 A.D.) of Basra. His *Maqāmat* is such a masterpiece which for eight centuries has been esteemed as next to the holy Qur'ān, the chief treasure of the Arabic tongue.\(^{17}\) Al-Harirī was a genius in linguistics and his *Maqāmat* was filled with obscure words, alliteration, witticism, and wild metaphors. He too was extremely popular and many learned commentaries were written on his *Maqāmat*. This purely Arab form can most closely be compared with the Spanish novels, which it may have influenced.

The *Maqāma* genre is a first attempt to create prose literature in the history of Arabic literature. It is called rhymed prose and this style was followed by Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri (d. 1058 A.D.) in his "Message of Forgiveness", one of the best known of Arabic prose works. Al-Ma'arri lived in the eleventh century, leading an ascetic life in his native Syrian village. Blind from the age of four, he possessed an extraordinary memory and great intellectual curiosity and scepticism. 'The Message of Forgiveness' is cast in the form of a journey to paradise; the narrator there interrogates the scholars and poets of the past regarding their lives and works, receiving surprising and often ironic responses. The book is an extended critique of prose literature and philology and represents a high point of classical Arabic culture.
1.3 (b) NON-FICTION LITERATURE - COMPILATIONS:

During the Abbasid period, one of the most common forms of literature was the compilations. These were collections of facts, ideas, instructive stories and poems on a single topic and covers subjects as diverse as house and garden, women, gate-crashers, blind people, envy, animals and misers. In the late 9th century Ibn al-Nadim (d.995 A.D.), a bookseller from Baghdad, compiled a crucial work “Kitāb al-Fihrist” or ‘Index’ for the study of Arabic literature. “Kitāb al-Fihrist” is a catalogue of all books available for sale in Baghdad and it gives a fascinating overview of the state of the literature at that time. Another most distinguished compiler was al-Jāhiz (d. 869 A.D.), who compiled a few valuable books on different topics as Kitāb al-Bukhālā’ (The Book of Misers) and Kitab al-Hayawān (Book of Animals) etc. Al-Jāhiz was a famous essayist, anthologizer, stylist, wit, polemicist and he was acknowledged as the master of classical Arabic prose. Ibn Qutaybah (d.889 A.D.) compiled a book ‘Uy’un al-Akhbār’ (Choice of Histories or Springs of Information) in which he offered instructions in subjects like etiquette, how to rule, how to be a bureaucrat and even how to write. In the context of the development of tradition of compilations, Ibn Qutaybah’s this book is most significant. He also compiled “Kitab al-Ma‘ārif” (Book of General Knowledge), one of the earliest histories of the Arabs, drawing together biblical stories, Arabic folk-tales and more historical events from Arabia to Iran. These compilations also created a situation for the growth and development of Arabic prose literature.

1.3 (c) FICTION AND EPIC LITERATURE:

Fiction and epic literature played an important role for the progress of Arabic prose literature. There was comparatively little fictional
prose in Arabic literature during the ‘Abbasid period, although many non-fictional works contained short stories, yet a large proportion of the fictions were probably made up or embellished. The lack of wholly fictional works is partially due to a distinction between al-fusha or quality language and al-ammiyyah or the language of the common people. Some of the writers bothered to write works in this al-ammiyyah or common language and it was felt that literature had to be improving, instructive and purposeful rather than just entertainment. This did not stop the common role of the hakawati or story-teller who would retell the entertaining parts of more instructive works or one of the many Arabic fables or folk-tales, which were not usually written down.

The most famous example of Arabic fiction is the “Alf Lailah wa Laila” (One Thousand and One Nights) easily the best known amongst all Arabic literatures and which still stimulates many of the ideas on the minds of non-Arabs having about Arabic culture. Although regarded as primarily Arabic, it was in fact developed from a Persian work and the stories in turn may have their roots in India. A good example of the popular Arabic prose fiction is that the stories of Ala Uddin (‘Ala ‘al-din) and Ali Baba, usually regarded as part of the tales from “Alf Lailah wa Laila” were not actually part of the tales. They were first included in French translation of the tales by Antoine Galland who heard them from a traditional storyteller and before that, these existed in incomplete Arabic manuscripts. The other great character from Arabic literature is Sindbad, the sailor of most famous tale of travelling, which is added to this core collection.20

The “Alf Lailah wa Laila” is usually placed in the genre of Arabic epic literature along with several other works. They are usually like the tales, collections of short stories or episodes chained together into a long
tale. The extant versions were mostly written down relatively late on, after the 14th century, although many were undoubtedly collected earlier and many of the original stories are probably pre-Islamic. Types of stories in these collections include animal fables, proverbs, stories of jihad or propagation of the faith, humorous tales, moral tales, tales about the cunning con-man Ali Zaybaq and tales about the joker Juha. Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* considered as a great epic of Italian literature, derived many features and episodes about the hereafter directly or indirectly from Arabic works on Islamic eschatology (divine theology): 'The Hadith' and the ‘Kitāb al-Mirāj’ (The Book of Muhammad's Ladder) translated into Latin in 1264 or shortly before as Liber Scale Machometi, "The Book of Muhammad's Ladder" concerning Muhammad's ascension to Heaven and the spiritual writings of Ibn Arabi. These developments also contributed immensely for the creation of Arabic prose literature into a new formation.

### 1.3 (d) GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT OF BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY:

Biography, geography and history also play a great role in the development of Arabic prose literature. Apart from the early biographies of Muhammad (sm) "Siratu Rasulillah" compiled by Ibn Ishâq, the first major biographer was the Persian scholar Ahmad b. Yahya al-Baladhūrī (d. 692 A.D.) with his "Kitāb Ansāb al-Ashraf" or Book of the Genealogies of the Noble, a collection of biographies. Then, Abu Ja’far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (838-923 A.D.) was the most eminent of all. He devoted himself deeply to this branch of Arabic literature. His great works "Ta’rikh al-Rusul wal-Muluk" or Annals of the Apostles and the Kings, and his "Tafsir" or Commentary on the Qur’ān, are most prominent. In the context of geography, Ibn Khurdadhbih, a Persian,
apparently an official in the postal service wrote one of the first travel books and the form remained a popular one in Arabic literature. His "Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamālik" (Book of the Roads and Countries), an official guide-book, is the oldest geographical work in Arabic. Abū Ishāq al-Farsi is known as "Istakhri" wrote a book called "Masalik al-Mamalik" (Routes of the Provinces) which was afterwards revised and enlarged by Ibn Hawqal. Al-Muqaddasi (b. 946 A.D.), Yaqut b. ‘Abdullah (1179-1229 A.D.), al-Idrisi (d.1154 A.D.) all were greatest geographers of this time. Ibn Battutah (d.1377 A.D.) of Tangier occupies a peculiar place in this area. He wrote a great book "Tuhfat al-nuzzâr fī ghara‘īb al-amsâr wa-‘aja‘īb al-asfâr" or Delight of the Beholders Regarding Exotic Cities and Remarkable Journeys, in a less complicated style. These works give a fascinating view of development of Arabic prose literature in a gradual manner.

Some writers concentrated solely on history like al-Ya'qubi and al-Tabari, (838-923 A.D.) whilst others focused on a small portion of history such as Ibn al-Azraq (d.834 A.D.), with a history of Mecca "Ta’rikh Makkah", and Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur (d.893 A.D.), a strangely anonymous figure of this period, reflected the prominence of Baghdad in the "Kitāb Baghdad" or Book of Baghdad. Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406 A.D.), the greatest historical thinker of Islam, wrote a marvellous history "Muqaddama" (Prolegomena). His Prolegomena is a work of brilliance and originality; the author analyzes human society in terms of general sociological laws and gives a lucid account of the factors that contribute to the rise and decline of civilizations. Ibn Khaldun's style is innovative, simple, and very personal, and perfectly suited to the expression of his often difficult ideas. All these developments made a base for the growth of Arabic prose Literature.
1.4 LITERARY CRITICISM:

Criticism also has played an important role in the development of Arabic prose literature. "Criticism" Francis Bacon says, is reason applied to the imagination." It has been inherent in Arabic literature from its inception. The poetical festivals of the pre-Islamic period often fielded two poets against each other in a war of verse in which one would be deemed to have won by the audience. The subject adopted a more official status after the revelation of the Qur'an. Although rule of literary criticism could be applied to a work, which was considered i'jāz or matchless and divinely inspired still analysis was permitted. This study allowed for better understanding of the messages and facilitated interpretation for practical use, all of which helped the development of a critical method of prose literature in Arabic. A clear distinction regularly drawn between works in literary language and popular works has meant that only part of the literature in Arabic was usually considered worthy of study for criticism. Some of the early studies of criticisms are "Qawā'id al-shīr" (The Rules of Poetry) by Tha'labi (d.904 A.D.), a grammarian of al-kufah and "Naqd al-shīr" or Poetic Criticism by Qudamah ibn Za'far (d.948 A.D.), a famous figure of criticism. Viewed in the sequence of events, the works of the writers such as Ibn Saallam and Ibn Qutaybah cannot be regarded as literary criticism, as the modern Egyptian critic, Muhammad Mandur (d.1965) points out in his important study of classical criticism, "Al-Naqd al -manhaji 'inda al- 'Arab" or Methodical Criticism Among the Arabs, 1948. They do, however, serve as important transitional figures.
1.5 DOWNFALL OF ARABIC LITERATURE:

There began a period of decay in Arabic literature after the downfall of Abbasid empire in Baghdad in 1258 A.D. in the wake of aggression on Iraq by the Mongols under the leadership of tyrant Hulagu b. Tuli b. Chingiz Khan. The Mongols demolished the historical city ‘Baghdad’ and killed several lakhs of innocent people. Most of the valuable stocks of Arabic literature were destroyed by the Mongols. In historical terms, Hulagu’s aggression of Baghdad in 1258 A.D. marks the beginning of the decline of Arab power. In 1260 A.D., the Tartars suffered defeat at the hands of Mamluks who were Turks by race. The Tartars patronised Arabic by learning it and encouraging its writers. Muhammad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Tabataba, surnamed Ibn Al-Tiqtaqa, (b.1262 A.D.) wrote a significant book entitled “al-Fakhri”, Ahmad al-Ghabrini(1246-1314 A.D.) also compiled a book under the title of “Unwan al-diraya” and Ibn Taimiyya (1263-1328 A.D.) wrote “Takhjil ahl al-Injil” during this period. Faced with the massive destruction of books by the invasions of Chingiz Khan and Hulagu and later of Tamerlane, the scholars compiled volumes and abridgments of works that had survived in order to ensure their continued existence. So this period is known as the age of encyclopaedias, commentaries and dictionaries.

Afterwards the Tartars were defeated by the Ottoman Sultân, Salim-I (1512-1520 A.D.), in 1516 A.D. With the Ottoman Turks coming to power and getting full control over the occupied Arab lands, Arabic received again a severe blow. The earlier rulers, who displayed a keen interest in promoting Arabic, were tolerant to a great extent. Due respects were offered to some of them such as Sultân Ahmad- I (1603-1617 A.D.), to whom an ode is also ascribed in Arabic. But after Mahmûd-II (1808-
1839 A.D.), the situation drastically changed and the policy of tolerance almost ended. Turkish was declared official language of the country instead of Arabic.

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