CHAPTER V
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SOME OF THE PROMINENT WRITERS OF THE
ARABIC LITERARY PROSE DURING THE EARLY
ABBASID PERIOD (132 A.H. TO 300 A.H.)

In the preceding chapter we have already discussed the development of Arabic Literary prose in general. The Abbasid period produced great prose writers who gave new colour to the art of Arabic Literary prose writing itself. The administrative offices of the Abbasid government were thronged with writers of repute and the job was considered the most respectable one. It was from here that some of them rose to the highest position of power under the Abbasid Caliphs like the family of Barmak and others. There is a long list of the reputed prose writers of this period and here we are mentioning only the most prominent of them like Abdullah bin Al-Muqaffa Ibnu Qutaibah, Sahl bin Harun, Al-Fadl bin Sahl Al-Jahiz, Amar bin Masada whose contribution to the Arabic Literary prose can never be forgotten.

1. Abdull bin Al-Muqaffa

Originally Abdull bin Al-Muqaffa was a persian and his surname was Abu Umar. His father was in the service of Umayyad government when he was punished severely for corruption in which his land got fractured. It is an account of this disability of his father that he was called Al-Muqaffa ( ).

Ibnu Al Muqaffa was born in the year 106 A.H. He was a magian and his name was Razbabin Al Muqaffa.

Ibnu Al-Nadeem writes about him

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1. Ibnu Al-Nadeem - Al-Fihrist, p. 178.
When he was serving under bin Ali Al Mansur's uncle at Basra he expressed his desire to embrace Islam as his religion and a gathering was arranged and he declared Islam as his religion. It was thus that he celebrated his change of religion. He loved humanity and helped the needy people generously. There are instances in his life that he could not see people in trouble and was ready to help them even at the cost of his life. When Abdul Hamid the great writer of the ummayad period and among the greatest among the writers of the Arabic literary prose was to be arrested after the fall of the umayyad dynasty incidently he was hiding with Ibnu Al Muqaffa who did not divulge his identity. On the contrary he offered himself as the man who was wanted by caliph Saffah's men. This spirit of sacrifice for other is a quality rarely found in human society. In those days when the atmosphere was surcharged with feeling of eliminating the opposition at every level in respective of moral justification or human considerations here is a man who honours him morals values for which he is prepared to risk everything. It is an established fact that those who are charging Ibnu Al-Muqaffa with the offence of zindiki had political motive behind it attributing to Qim such work which can not be his for the author of Al-Fihrist did not mention it. The record of the Abbasid rule shows that they killed scholars of divinity men of learning and talented men of letters without any regard to justice and morality. Abdul Hamid Ibnu Al Muqaffa, Imam Abu Hanifa are the examples of their merciless killing of great scholars in their own field of knowledge. It appears that in order to justify their action they framed baseless charges against Ibnu Al-Muqaffa. His adherence to certain customs of his forefathers may be due to his weakness in habits but on that account he can be called zindik as his opponent have done. How the murder of such a great men
of letters and his merciless killing is an act of wiketness which has few parallels in the history of Islam as a great loss to the growth of the literary Arabic prose in particular. Ibnu Al Muqaffa acts of benevolence are many the details of which we need not give here but this much we feel that he has strong ground for invoking the mercy of his lord because there are many sayings of the prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H.) which support sure view point in his case.

Dr. Abdul Latif has presented this aspect of Ibnu Al Qutaiba’s life in the following words:

Dr. Shauqi Daif writes about him:

Ahmad Amin says:

Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s mother language was persian but in Arabic also he was equally fluent and commanded mastery over expression we would not like to enter into the discussion of his religious beliefs since they are clouded in the political atmosphere of that period with a depodic ruler at the helm of affairs at whose behest anything could be managed falsely with political motive which was foremost in the minds of the people. However we would like to refrain from taking sides and leave it for others to go deep into the matter. No doubt many scholars have discussed this matter in depth. It will be appropriate to give here an extract from the article of Ahmad Aatish in urdu Dairatu Al-Maarif which supports our viewpoint regarding Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s religious belief:

\[2\] Abdul latif Hamza - Ibnu Al Muqaffa, p. 12.
\[3\] Dr. Shauqi Daif - Tarikh Al Adabi Al-Arabi, Vol. 3, p. 525.
\[5\] Dr. Tauqir Alam - Ahde Abbasi Kay Chand Ulamai Fun, p. 50.
His execution

The circumstances under which Ibnu Al Muqaffa was executed are of political nature in which Caliph Al Mansur is also involved. He was a victim of political vengeance. The fact is that Al Mansur had to face so many revolts not only from outside but also from his own family. His uncle Abdullah bin Ali who had played important role in establishing the Abbasid rule revolted against and in this struggle for power he was defeated by Al Mansur. He fled to his brother Isa bin Ali to seek his protection who was governor of Basra. Ibnu Al Muqaffa was employed by Musa to draft letters on his behalf. Isa bin Ali ordered to prepare a letter which will contains of reconciliation between Abdullah bin Ali and the caliph Al Mansur which was so nicely drafted that when Al Mansur's two others uncles Isa bin Ali and Sulaiman bin Ali went to Al Mansur with that draft, Al Mansur had no alternative but to accept the proposal because he could not overlook other powerful members of his family. But he was not pleased to read the writing and asked as to who had drafted the letter. When he was told that it was Ibnu Al Muqaffa he was enraged and that occasion prepared the ground for his opponent to manage his execution. They succeeded in their plan in 142 A.H. when he was brutally murdered and burnt. It was under these circumstance that the literary world of the early Abbasid rule lost such a great man of learning and literature at an early age of 38 years. When he had yet to unfold the extraordinary capabilities in him endowed by God Almighty.

Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s contribution to the world of learning

Ibnu Muqaffa was a persian by birth and persian language was his mother tongue but to the astonishment of all and jealousy of many he was equally good command over Arabic language. He could write Arabic prose
with ease and excellence in expression that was in fact a gift from God. He was not only a prose writer but also a born poet. But he did not pay required attention to this art of literature. It will be more appropriate to say that he directed all his talents in adorning his art of prose writing. He was a scientific writer. Before actually dressing his thoughts with appropriate words he would chalk out a plan for the subject he was dealing with. When his mental preparation is complete he sits to write engrossed in his job. As he has a wealth of words and phrases at his disposals it is with ease that he gives shape to his thoughts with beautiful language. His poetic talent adds poetic beauty to his prose. In his wisdom vast knowledge and sharp intelligence he was ahead of all his contemporaries.

Umar Faruk writes about him:

Some of the chief characteristics of the literary writings of Ibn Al Muqaffa are given below.

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6 Ahmad Amin - Duha Al-Islam, Vol I, p. 206  
7 For more details please see Ahmad Amin’s Duha Al-Islam, Vol I, p. 106  
8 Umar Farukh Tarikhu Al Adabi Al Arabi, p. 52.  
9 Abdul Latif Hamza Ibnu Al Muqaffa, p. 17
1. It is said that after the compassions of prophet (P.B.U.H.) Khalid was the most intelligent man of learning among the Arabs, while among the non Arabs Ibnu Al Muqaffa has no equal as an intelligent man of learning.

2. The second characteristic is the deep insight into the matter which he presents in his writings. In the context Umar Farukh writes:

Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s original writings as well as his translated works provide us with the evidence of his deep study of the topics on which he writes. His style of presentation is simple and clear which does not leave the meaning ambiguous. His approach is that of a philosopher who sees things in the light of reason.

3. The third quality of his writings is that his study is not restricted to a particular field of learning. His translated works as well as his original works exhibit his vast knowledge and his deep study of various sciences. He has written on different subjects which are political moral social educational and also religious and his approach and style presentation is most attractive.

4. The fourth characteristic of his writings in their charm of presentation which appeals to the readers and attracts their attention who feel a new life and new spirit awakened in them. His writings have a purpose and message who have regard for moral values. The words and phrases he uses have a sort of magic in them which have their own effect and which make his writings purposeful.

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10 Umar Farukh Tarikh Al Adab Al Arabi, Vol. II, p 52
The brief description of the some of the characteristics of Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s writings provides an ample proof of his being for ahead of his contemporaries as a man and also as a writer in the golden period of Islamic rule. He has no equal in many respects Jafar bin Yahya rightly said that Abdul Hamid and Sahl bin Harun are like branches and Ibnu Al Muqaffa is like its fruit while Ahmad bin Yusuf is like its flower.

We have already given a short account of the personality of Ibnu Al Muqaffa and some of the chief characteristics of his writings. Now we shall give in brief the artistic beauties in his writings.

Firstly his selection of appropriate words is always in accord with the meaning he wants to convey to his readers with all their linguistic beauties. Secondly he connects together small sentences by using relative pronouns and we find a chain of relative sentences in his expression. It is therefore that his reader to pause for a moment to fully understand the meaning he wants to convey. He does not use superfluous words and phrases just for the sake of beauty of language at the cost of the meaning by using less words and that is the chief beauty of his literary prose writing.

Dr. Mustafa writes about his style:  

Ibnu Muqaffa’s contribution to Arabic prose

His contribution to Arabic prose is divided into two parts. One is his translation work while the others relates to his original writings. The following are his translation works:

1. Kalila wa Dimna. It is a translation from the pahlvari book entitled punj tantar into Arabic. It is originally an Indian work which had reached

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11 Dr. Mustafa, Al Adab, p. 364.
Persian during the reign of Nawsherwan the first. This work can not be called mere translation. It has its own originality since the personality of the translator peeps through it. It contains a sort of preference in the beginning of the book which is written by Ibnu Al Muqaffa himself. The language and the style which the translator has used adds to the beauty of the original work.

2. The other translation is Siyar Al Muluk which is the translation of Khadi Nama.

3. The third is Kitabu Al Taj Fi Sirati Anawsherwan. This is the biography of Nawsherwan.

4. The fourth is Kitabu Mazdah which is related to the life of Mazdak.

5. Kitabu Al Baikar is another important translation work which is a collection of the historical short stories.

There are other translation works also that have been reported which include Philosophical works of greek thinkers.

The following are his original works:

1. Al-Adabu Al Saghir. It is a booklet in which moral lessons are given. In a way it is a book on ethics and morality.

2. Al Adabu Al Kabir Fi Taati Al-Muluk or Al Risalatu Al yatimah is his important work about which Dr. Mustafa writes:


Dr. Mustafa Al Adab, p. 364.
This book is a masterpiece of Ibnu Al Muqaffa’s works which brings into full view the personality of its author and proves how great really he was and what a great loss the Islamic world suffered on account of his death at the hands of those who claim to the protectors of Islam and its interest. We are going an extract from his book Al Adabu Al Kabir which will give an idea of his thinking as well as his style of writing.

Another extract from the same work will give an idea of his philosophical outlook on life. He says

His other works are

Rasil which is a collection of letters.

Risalatu Al Sahaba in which political matters are discussed. It is known as Resalatu Al Siyasah also.

Hikamu Ibnu Al-Muqaffa which is a collection of the sayings of its author.

We have given in brief the contribution of Ibnu Al Muqaffa to Arabic prose by way of translation and also as his original works. Now we shall add a note on his translated book Kilila wa Dimna whose fame is worldwide. As we have already said the book Kalila wa Dimna is a translation of the persian book panjtantey. Its translator is a great writer of persian and Arabic prose. He is a man of moral values a man who loves huminity who has philosophical outlook on life. The question arises as to why such a great scholar selected this persian book for rendering it into Arabic. He was himself capable of writing book of

14. Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p. 365.
15. Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p. 367.
wisdom. Yet he thought it wise to translate a book of a foreign country whose history was obscure to him.

It is in fact the usefulness of the book Kalila wa Dimna which induced Ibn Al Muqaffa to render it into Arabic. Those were the days of despotic rule and the gap between the ruler and the ruled was so wide that it was not possible to convey to the ruler the right thing in a straight way. It was therefore that the wise men of those days adopted a new method to achieve the purpose interesting stories were told to human beings in the language of the animals and birds. It was a novel way of giving moral lessons of wisdom to human beings who were created with the faculty of intelligence among the creation of their Lord the creator of the universe. However political conditions were such that the method was effective and this induced Ibn Al Muqaffa to select this book for translation. However the contents of the book clearly show that it is not merely a translation. Ibn Al Muqaffa’s mind and skill have changed the very face of the book. No doubt it is a new technique and a new method of presenting ones thoughts before the renders with a definite purpose in view. This work of Ibn Al Muqaffa has a great value not only as a story book but also as a philosophical and literary work.

Umer Farokh’s comment on the book is given below:

Commenting on the book Najeebullah writes:

Kalila wa Dimna is a selection of anecdotes and short stories about animals with ethical conclusions relating to human conditions.

The merit of the book can be judged from the fact that the story writer is no other than Ibn Al Muqaffa who has displayed in his work all the merits of a

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16 Umar Farukh Tarikh Al Adabi Al Arabi, Vol. II, p. 53
17 Najeebullah - Islamic literature, p 77.
versatile writer using select words and small sentences like pearls rolling from the mind of a saintly philosopher a man of many good qualities with eloquence at his command. The real merit of the book can be judged by only highly placed intellectual who are men thinking and who understand what human life is the following quotations from the book will give an idea of the themes treated in the book:

Here is another quotation:

The book is divided into a number of chapters with various headings some of which we are giving below:

There seem many more other chapters which need not give here in detail. The book well arranged and documented with a clear of the themes the author is dealing with.

I, believe in introducing the book Kalila wa Dimna we have its salient features and this will suffice for us to serve our purpose.

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18 Kalila wa Dimna, p. 159.
19 Kalila wa Dimna, p. 116.
20 Kalila wa Dimna, p. 175.
Though Ibnu Al Muqaffa left this world for ever under tragic circumstances and it is only this much what Al Mansur the despotic ruler of the so called Islamic Empire could do.

He eliminated him physically but his name remained alive for all time to come as a man of moral values, as a lover of humanity as one who could sacrifice his life for others and as a writer who has no equal. He had rightly said about himself when he was being executed by those who were people to lower class of the morality as compared to this great man whom the world of learning was losing. He sited the following verses:21

اذ ما مات مثل ما تحس بموت بمونيدان كذ ك
وانت موت يحيل بين يديين لموت لا مصير ولا بلي

2. Ibnu Qutaibah (213 A.H./828 AD 276 A.H./889 AD)

His name is Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Muslim bin Qutaibah Al Kufi. He was born in Kufa in the year 213 A.H. The author of Al-Fihrist writes about him:22

الإسمع الله بن محمد بن مسلم بن تيمور القدر إلى مولدما
سماع الدرب السامي لا يصدق أن تأتي لا يشير

Jurji zaidan has given his year of death as 276 A.H.23 Asmai, Abu Hatim, Abu Ubaida Ibnu Al-Arabi, Yunus and Abu Zaid are among his teachers. He is known for his vast knowledge in various sciences such as Quranic Studies, the science of Al-Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic Grammar and Arabic Literature and above all in literary criticism in which he has no equal. There is a long list of his works which the author of Al-Fihrist has given, we are giving only a few of them as under:24

21 Dr Mustafa Al Adab, p 356
22 Ibn Al Nadeem - Al-Fihrist, p 121
23 Jurji Zaidan - Tarikhu Adabi Al-Lughati Al-Arabiya, p 197
24 Ibn Al-Nadeem - Al-Fihrist, pp 121-122
This is a period when Mutigili scholars were active under the patronage of the ruling class of the society and Al-Jahiz the great scholar was their leader. Among the top scholars of that period it was only Ibn Qutaiba who could provide effective answer Mutazili line of thinking and he actively took part in literary as well as religious activity and in this respect his record is quite clean. Muhammad Zaghlal Salam thinks that while preaching moral values he aims at reforming the people by teaching morality. Ibn Qutaibah was the leader the Ahlu Al Sunna as opposed to the Mutazili section of the society. He is opposed to using reason in matters of beliefs. He has explained his viewpoint in clear terms.

The period in which Ibn Qutaibah lived was the period of degradation of morals and Mutazilis were taking full advantage of the support they were receiving from the rulers. To accept the leadership of Ahle Sunnah under these conditions required courage and strong faith in the cause he was pleading. This much is sufficient to dismiss the charge of pretended holiness or sanctionary or the charge of being irreligious. It is nothing but conspiracy against him by his opponents.

Contribution of Ibn Qutaibah to Islamic and other sciences.

Ibn Qutaibah is the product of the third century Hijri which is called the golden period of Islam on account of the economic and cultural

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25 Muhammad Zahlul Salam - Ibn Qutaiba, p 50
26 Ibn Qutaiba - Tawilu Mushkilat Al-Quran, p 17
development during that period. Among the prominent scholars of those days he was not a one sided scholar. His knowledge was vast covering many fields of learning. The famous orientalist Goldziher observes:

"He was a very many sided scholar a theologian, an expert of hadith, a philologist and historian. he wrote numerous works with the object that the evil servants and severally the educated people might acquire the necessary knowledge from them." 27

It was his endeavour to compile a history book on the basis of the poetic works collected by the grammarians of Kufa in order to provide the necessary information to the people. His work Uyunu Akbar is the most important work on the subject. Great historians like Ibnu Jarir Tabri and Masudi have acknowledged that they have used Ibnu Qutaiba's books as their sources of information. 28

As regards the science of criticism Ibnu Qutaibah belongs to that group of scholars like Al-Jahiz, Ibnu Jafar and Ibnu Al Mutaz who are the prioneers in this field

Jurji Zaidan writes: 29

Regarding the Quranic studies his contribution is most valuable. His book Mushkibu Al Quran Maani Al Quran Kitabun Fi Al Qirat, Irabu Al Qirat, Al Raddu Ala Al Qail li Khalgi Al Quran are his important works on the study of Al-Quran.

Ibnu Qutaiba was equally well read in the science of hadith in which he has written a number of books such as Gharibu Al Hadith, Tawilu Mukhtalifu Al hadith and others.

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27 Goldziher - A short history of Arabic Literature, p 62
28 Khwaja Ibadullah Akhtar - Khilafati Islamia, p 8
29 Jurji Zaidan - Tarikhul Adabi Al-Lughati Arabiyah, p 197
In addition to his vast knowledge in different sciences his contribution to Literary prose is no way meagre about which Zaghlol Salam writes:

Khatib Baghdadi is of opinion that Ibnu Qutaiba is the most famous scholar of all time to come occupies a very high place in literature.

Names of some of the works of Ibnu Qutaiba have been mentioned in some context or the other. Now we shall introduce some of his important books whose information has has reached us.

1. Uyunu Akbar. This book is divided into ten parts which is in fact, the subdivision of one and the same book. These ten books are entitled Kitabu Al-Sultan, Kitabu Al-Harb, Kitabu Al-Sudadi, Kitabu Al-Tabai wa Al-Akhlaq, Kitabu Al-Ilm Bi Akhbari Al-Ilm wa Al-Ulama, Kitabu Al-Zuhel, Kitabu Al-Akhwan, Kitabu Al-Hawaij, Kitabu Al-taam, Kitabu Al-Nisa.

About this book Jurji Zaidan says:

2. Kitabu Al Maarif - This book is a sort of general history which is a short account of the creation of life on this earth. It gives the history of the prophets of God (peace be on them) who were sent with a mission from their Lord. It also gives the history of the relationship among the Arab - with lineage. The biography of the prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H.) and his companions and also those who followed them is given. The book gives other information also relating to different religions and the kings of Arabia and other countries. This book was published in Egypt in the year 1300 A.H.

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30 Zaghlul Salam - Asru Al Quran Fi Tatawwuri Al-Naqdi Al Arabi, p. 31
32 Kirko Zaidan - Tarikhu Adabi Al-Lughati Al-Dabiyyah, p. 197
3. Kitabu Al-Sher wa Al-Shuara. This book is also called Tabaqatu Al Shuara or Kitabu Al-Shuara or Akhbaru Al-Shuara which are all one and the same. It gives the events of the life of those poets who are known to the literary world and whose reputation as great poets is established and whose verses are quoted as an authority to understand the meaning the words and phrases. This book was published in Egypt in the year 1905 A.D. The author has a purpose in writing, this book which he explains in the introductory part of the work. His purpose was to gather information about important people of those days and the values of the society of that time.

4. Al Imamatu wa Al-Siyasatu. This is the history of the caliphate of Islam beginning from the death of the prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of God be on him) to the end of the caliphate of Al-Mamun. The book was published in Egypt in the year 1900 A.D.

5. Kitabu Al-Sharal wa Al-Ashriba. This book deals with the problem of drinks which are lawful or unlawful according to the established law of Islam in the light of the Shariat. It was published in Egypt in the year 1907 A.D.

6. Kitabu Al Taswiya Baina Arab wa Al Ajam wa Tafdilu Al-Arab. As the name of the book suggests this had been the burning topic of the early period of the Abbasid rule in which many scholars of repute book interest in writing on the topic.

7. Taweelu Mukhtalafi Al-hadith. Its manuscript is preserved in the Berlin Library.

8. Kitabu Mushkilu Al-Quran. This book has been published in Cairo.

9. Kitabu Al Masail wa Al-Jawabat. This is mostly concerned with the Hadith.

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33 Please see Al-Sher wa Al-Shaura edited by Ahmad Muhammad Al-Shakir, Vol I, p 590
There are other books also which have been mentioned by the author of Al-Fihrist as the work of Ibnu Qutaiba\textsuperscript{34}.

As we have already said Ibnu Qutaiba was a many sided scholar who had given ample proof of his vast knowledge and intelligence and at the same time he had contributed to the art of literature in a big way. He was the most dominating personality of the third century of the Muslim era in the field of learning. In the list of Ibnu Qutaiba's works we have included his book, Adabu Al Katib also which concerns our field of study and it is therefore necessary to introduce this momentous work in greater detail so as to serve our purpose.

10. Adabu Al Katib. This is important work of Ibnu Qutaiba in which he discusses the art of writing both in respect of literary work, and scientific works. This is a guide book for writers in which he points out the mistakes generally committed by the writers in the use of words and phrases. This is the most important book on the phrases. This is the most important book on the subject. Its usefulness is felt for all time to come and even today it is a badly needed as it was during the days of its author.

During the later days of the early Abbasid period revolutionary changes took place in the processes of all round development of art and science both. It appeared as if the flood of words and phrases was invading the world of learning. Naturally the inflow covered such a large area of the field of learning unchecked that the need was felt to weed out the mistakes that had crept in. It was then that the competent scholars directed their full attention to this task, and it was Ibnu Qutaiba who led the team of scholars who contributed their shares in their own ways. His book under discussion is a momentous work on the subject which has no equal. It is no doubt an encyclopedia of information which covers all relevant aspects of the theme he is dealing with.

\textsuperscript{34} For details please see Jurji Zaidan Tarikhu Al-Lughati Al-Arabiyyah, pp. 198-199.
The great historian and critic Ibnu Khaladun commenting on the books writes\textsuperscript{35}:

In the above statement Ibnu Khaldun recognises the book Adabu Al-Katib as one of the four basis works of Arabic language and literature which are Adab Al Khatib of Ibnu Qutaiba Kitabu Al-Kamil of Al-Mubarrad Kitabu Al Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen by Al-Jahiz and Kitabu Al-Navadir by Abu Ali Al-Qali Al-Baghdadi. All other works he considers as off schools of only theme for books.

This book is known by different names. Some people call it Adabu Al-Kuttab, some of the scholar, are of opinion that it is Adabu Al-Qadi ( ) and others say it is Adabu Al-Katabata ( )\textsuperscript{36}. However the authors of the history of Arabic language and literature call it by the name of Adab Al-Katib only\textsuperscript{37}. Adab-Al Katib is divided into four parts as under:

A. Kitabu Al Maarifah. It is again sub-divided into 43 chapters some of which are

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6. 

\textsuperscript{35} Ibnu Khaldun - Muqaddama Ibn Khaldun, Vol I, pp 553-554

\textsuperscript{36} Ibnu Qadi Shabah - Tabaqatu Al-Nuhat, Vol II, p 52

\textsuperscript{37} A literary history of the Arabs, p 346 and A short history of Arabic literature by Goldzehir, p 62
B. Kitabu Taqweem Al-Yadd ( ). It is also divided into 46 chapters some of which are given below:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 

C. Kitabu Taqweemi Al-Lisan ( ). This part also contains 135 chapters some of which are:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

D. Kitabu Al-Abniyyah ( ). This part is also sub-divided as under:

These three parts are also divided under different headings the details of which we are not giving here as it will spread over several pages.

As we have already pointed out the book Adabu Al katib was the need of the time when it was written and even today for Arabi language and literature it has the same importance, with the advent of the Abbasid rule the Arabic literary prose writers were much in demand from all quarters of the educated society. The encouragement they received from the caliphs and their nobles was sufficient to prepare the ground for advancement of this art of writing which had become a source of income as well as a means to acquire political power and position. Side by side translation movement was going ground and books were being rendered into Arabic from foreign languages.
It was, therefore, necessary to provide a said book for these writers of Arabic language. Adabu Al-Katib served the purpose by providing the information in all its details a task which only Ibnu Qutaiba could.

The purpose of writing this book is explained by the author in the following words in its introduction:

This part of the introduction makes it clear that this book serves the purpose of linguistic to knowledge by discussing Arabic grammar and it also gives the minute details of the structure of the Arabic language. not only that but the author of Adabu Al-Katib and affection manliness and courage, huminity and refinement are the integral part of the literary beauties of the good literature.

Some of the characteristics of Ibnu Qutaibahs book Adabu Al Katb are given below:

Ibnu Qutaibah’s main purpose of writing this book is to connect the mistakes that had crept in Arabic language on account of their association with the non Arab population of the Muslim society and to provide guide lines for those who were in government offices and other literary centres without having the necessary knowledge of the peculiarities of the language that they were using. The book points out the words that should discarded and also the appropriate words which should take their place. In support of his view point he quotes the Quran and verses of the poets along with the sayings of the people who are recognised as authority on the subject. In example he discusses the word Al Rabi ( ) which people are as the name of the season which comes after the winter season and we call it Mausami Bahar. But it is not so with the Arabs who think that during this season fruits refer and they call this season as kharif also. It is after kharif that winter season sets in which is followed by

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Ibnu Qutaibah Adabu Al-Katib, pp 9-10.
summer season and the season in between the winter and the summer is called by the Arabs as Rabi. It may be kept in mind that Arabs are unanimous in their opinion that it is kharif ( ) which is Al Rabi.

The other words are Al-Faqir and Al-Miskeen ( ) which people generally use in and the same sense, though these two words are used in the Holy Quran with a difference in meaning as in the following verse³⁹.

Al-Faqir is one who earns so much as to be able to provide food while Al-Miskeen is one who has nothing to maintain. he quotes the following verse in support of his argument⁴⁰.

Another interesting example is that of the word Ibn ( ) in which Hamza is used. Though Hamza is preserved in writing but is not pronounced as in the following sentence.

Hamza is not preserved of the word Ibn comes between the name of the son and that of the father (and not at the beginning of a line) e.g. بب ء
If the أ is predicative the Hamza is preserved e.g. أب
Zaid is the son of Amr. Similarly Hamza falls out of writing in the expression.

The discussion is lengthy and we have not given its details. However this much will be sufficient to give us an idea of how Ibnu Qutaiba has treated the subject.

Abu Al Katib has been playing key role for centuries in correcting and reforming the Arabic language and its utility has not diminished even after so many centuries. Even today it is as useful as it was during the days of Abbasid rule as it was widely used by those who were working in the offices and also those who were students of Arabic language and literature. Ibnu Qutaibah lays

³⁹ Ibnu Qutaiba Adabu Al-Katib, pp. 63-64.
⁴⁰ Ibnu Qutaiba Adabu Al-Katib, p 36
stress on the correct use of words and phrases who adds to the beauty of the expression. Another quality which Ibnu Qutaibah thinks necessary for a writer is his moral slative. It is necessary to be a good man first in order to be a good writer.

Moral values have very much to do with the effective beauty of the language he asserts. Ideas come from within and inwardly one should be pure of heart, liberal in dealings, just in all matters of life and humble before his Lord. These are the four cardinal qualities of a good man and consequently of a good writer. His approach is just and he is not inclined towards to any particular school of scholars. His judgement is always in favour of those whom he considers to be right irrespective of the school to which they belong. He has a new approach and new style of presentation with a purpose in new which is nothing other than reforming the language. First of all he points out those words which are generally used by the public and he gives his comments on them quoting in his support the verses of the poets, sayings of the learned people and also the Holy book of God. Yet our society is such that some times the narrow minded so called scholars do not tolerate even the vast knowledge of their contemporarian and they try to find fault with the work in one way or the other. When they failed in their attempt in the case of Adabu Al-Katib they coined such remark as is reported by Ibnu Khalikan who says:

After quoting what people say about Adabi Al Katib Ibnu Khalikan remarks:

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41 Ibnu Qutaiba Adabu Al-Katib, p. 42.
42 Ibnu Qutaiba Adabu Al-Katib, p. 32.
There is no doubt that the way in which he has presented his views in his momentous is most attractive and appealing. The criticism is baseless which only exhibit the narrow minded of our so called scholars.

3. Sahl Bin Harun

Now that we have entered the period of Al-Mamun. We find Sahl Bin Harun as the most famous writer of his time. The author of Al-Fihrist writes about him:

His date of birth is not known. He died in the year 215 A.H. First he shifted to Basra, then he went to Baghdad and he was employed by Yahya Ibn Khalid Al-Basmaki as his writer. It was during the caliphate of Al-Mamun that was transferred to Dara-Al-Hikmat where he served till his death in 215 A.H. He was also looking after the translation work which were rendered into Arabic from Greek. He was close to Al-Mamun and he was invited to attend the gatherings of the Caliph. He was known as a philosopher and a prominent writer of his time.

Dr. Sharqi Daif writes about him:

\[\text{Dr. Sharqi Daif - Al-Fannu Al-Nathri wa Madhabihu Fi Al-Nathi Al-Arabi.}\]
He was a man of charming personality. Al-Hasan bin Sahl who was Al-Mamun’s minister pays him tribute in the following words:\(^{47}\):

Sahl bin Harun’s wit and intelligence has its own charm in attracting the attention of learned people. One day when he was granted audience with the caliph he told him:

O commander of the faithful you have not been just to me as well as to such and such scribe. Al-Mamun asked, In what way? Sahl replied; “You have, promoted him to a position which is above his qualifications for that, while you have demoted to a position which is below my qualification for that and in this way you have made him the laughing stock of the people and made my humble

\(^{47}\) Dr. Sharqi Daif - Al-Fannu Al-Nathri wa Madhabihu Fi Al-Nathi Al-Arabi, p. 528

\(^{48}\) Ibnu Al-Nadeem - Al-Fihrist, p. 180
self an object of pity”. The caliph laughed and paid tribute to his eloquence by saying⁴⁹:

١٨٤ \( 	ext{قلت} \) \( \text{لله} \) \( 	ext{ما أهيه} \) \( 	ext{ل} \)

It is here that such a great scholar as Al-Jahiz has recognised his talents in many ways. Like Ibn Al-Muqaffah he has written on themes relating to politics and morality and appealed to wisdom in a novel style of presentation. His book *kitabu Thaalah wa Afraqa* which was written on the life of Kalila wa Dimna and contained themes relating to politics and morality but it is unfortunate that it did not reach us. We are giving below an extract as reported in the book *Zahru Al-Aadab* by Al-Hasri quoted by Muhammed Abdu Al-Munim⁵⁰:

No doubt the technique of presenting the truth and realities of life in the language of the animals and birds was borrowed from the Indian wisdom. In *Kalila wa Dimna* of Ibn Al-Muqaffah some improvements were made which were beyond what the style of presentation changed in a big way. Now it was philosophy and logic which dominated along with the charm of the language. Al-Gahiz and all other top ranking have praised the style and the language of Sahl and they have recognised his merit as a great writer of the Abbasid period.

The main characteristic of Sahl bin Harun’s writings is that they have the element of philosophy and logic in them, and they have their own charm for

⁴⁹ Muhammad Abdu Al-Munim Khafaji Al-hayat Al-Adabiyyah Fi Athri Al-Abbasi, p. 147.
⁵⁰ Muhammad Abdu Al-Munim Khafaji Al-hayat Al-Adabiyyah Fi Athri Al-Abbasi, pp. 148-149.
the people to accept the view point of the writer. Reason was his main weapon in those days to beat the adversary with. This power of reason made them bold to advocate the wrong cause thereby proving the right as wrong. This was chiefly the way of the Mutakallimen in presenting their point of view. For example one writer writes about gold and he showers his all praise in favour of gold and gives all the reasons at his command.

Then the other writer Sahl contradicts the points and writes in favour of glass in a booklet the extract of which is given below:

Another example of this style of Sahl’s writings is given by Al-Gahiz in which he tries to advocate the cause of the miserly people and does not recognise the superiority of the virtuous generous people. He advances all the reasons with his power of advocacy at his command. No doubt he tries to make his argument round and the style of presentation appealing. We have avoided giving details of his argument which is lengthy and some times misleading. Our purpose here is only to show his power as an advocate who accepts the brief of his client and exerts all his ability to see that he proves the case in favour of his client.

As regards Sahl bin harun’s literary letters they are lengthy which have their own literary charms. The contents of his friendly letters are also attractive

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51 Muhammad Abdu Al-Munim Khafaji Al-hayat Al-Adabiyyah Fi Athri Al-Abbasi, p 152
52 For details please see Dr Shauqis Al-Fannu wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 536
apart from their literary excellence. We shall quote below an extract from his letter to one of his friends who had regained his health after his illness.

As appears from the above extract Sahl has used rhymed prose also but this he does rarely. His concentration is more on the meaning that he wants to convey and he uses only that language which serves his purpose.

Ibna Al-Muqaffa and Sahl both were the great scholars of their time, but the difference between the two is that Ibna Al-Muqaffa was not only a translator but a writer who made the Arabic language flexible in accepting foreign element in it while Sahl is great writer of the Literary Arabic who is superior to his contemporaries in this respect.

4. Al-Fadl Bin Sahl

Administrative apparatus and the government office the Abbasid empire were thronged by the literary prose writers who were much in want. This profession had become their source of promotion in life. It was from here that the scholars rose to high position. Fadl bin Sahl is also one of them who occupied the chair of the prime minister in the government of Al-Mamun. It is said that he was introduced to Harun Al-Rashid by Yahya bin Khalid who was running the government in practice. When Fadl was granted audience he was subfounded in the presence of the emperor and he did not open his mouth which Harun Al-Rashid did not like and looked at Yahya disapproving their presence of a young man who is not able to a word. Al-Fadl bin understood the situation and immediately he addressed the emperor in the following words:

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For details please see Dr Shauqis Al-Fannu wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 540
Dr Mustafa Al-Adab, p 415
The emperor replied, 'If you were silent in order to coin this sentence then it is a fact that you did it very beautifully and if it is extempore that you spoke it is all the more praiseworthy. Al-Fadl bin Sahl was attached to Al-Mamun as his advisor since the days of Harun Al-Rashid when he was appointed as governor of the eastern region of the empire. Fadl remained all his life a faithful servant of Al-Mamun and helped him in his administration honestly. After the death of Harun Al-Rashid Al Fadl bin Al-Rabi was the supreme administrator who liked Al-Amin and disliked Al-Mamun. It is he who advised Al-Amin to undo the order of succession for which Harun Al-Rashid had taken oaths. Al-Fadl bin Sahl had read the situation correctly and it is he who advised Al-Mamun to be on guard.

When Al-Amin was killed in the civil war and Al-Mamun succeeded him as caliph of Islamic empire, Al-Fadl bin Sahl was appointed his prime minister who ruled so efficiently for many years. Fadl was not only a good administrator but also a good commander of the army and as we have said a famous literary figure. He was the product of the family of Barmak in this field. Yahya knew his merit and it is he who introduced him to the emperor Harun Al-Rashid as we have stated above.

Al-Mamun had full confidence in him and he had great regard for him on account of his morals and his personal charm. Al-Mamun trusted him so much that he wanted to give one of his daughters in marriage to him but Al-Fadl said in reply that will not dare even to think of that as his position is much lower as to be so near the emperor. He was by nature a gentle man and Al-Mamun the great emperor and also a great man of learning had read him correctly Al-Mamun had given him vast lands as Jazirs and he was the richest among the rich people. He would not say 'no' if some body asked for his
favour nor he will say yes but he will say and then he would grant his prayer in practice.

Al-Fadl bin Sahl was managing the empire and he was fully occupied with the engagements and the nature of work he was doing did not allow him time to devote to scholarly work. Yet as a man of letters and learning he was among the most prominent figures of his time. He has been praised for his learning and writing by such eminent scholar and writer as Ibrahim Al-Abbas Al-Suli who said:

After his death the caliph went to his house to condole with the family he found his mother weeping. Al-Mamun while sympathizing with her said I am your son in his place. The mother replied the son who left for me a son like you deserves to be mourned.

Al-Fadl bin Sahl is famous for writing Tawqiat and we have already given some of his nothings and remarks in the previous chapter under the heading Tawqiat. However we shall give here one which we have not reported previously.

He writes to Ibnu Khazim:

There is not much to report on the literary achievements of Al-Fadl bin Sahl and we shall close the topic after commenting on his personal qualities.

No doubt Al-Fadl bin Sahl rose to the highest position and politically he was the most powerful minister whose orders could be questioned. It was not only because he was the most prominent writer of the time but because he had the other qualities in him. Firstly he was the most obedient servant of the

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55 Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p 417
56 Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p 417
caliph. He knew his limitations. He never took advantage of the absolute power which the caliph had given him. He had beloved on him many favours. Not only that he was called ‘Dhu Al Reyasatain’ (ذو الرئاسات) but also he was favoured with the little of ‘Al-Amir’. He was the greatest land lord of the empire with enormous wealth. The caliph, in honouring him, went to the extent of giving him one of his daughters in marriage. It was not because he was a great man of letters. There were other factors which were working in his favour. Firstly because he was honest to the core. Inspite of his power and position he remained on humble man who feared God. He treated all with respect and he never gave an impression that he was all powerful and free to do anything he liked.

He never committed those mistakes which Jafar bin Yahya had committed. The pleasure of his master, the caliph, was his first concern and he was observing strictly the rules which govern the relations of the master and his servant. He was witness to the tragic fate which the family of barmak suffered on account of not learning the lessons of history.

It was in fact the safacity, wisdom honesty, selflessness, high morals and many other good qualities that paid him in life and not merely because he was a man of letters who had full command over expression.

Lastly we are quoting the verses of the prominent poet Abdullah bin Ayyub who has given the true picture of this great man praising him he says:

5. Al-Jahiz (الجحيز) d 255 A.H.

His name is Abu Uthman Amar bin Bahr bin Mahbub Al-Kinani Al-Laithi known as Al-Jahi as his eyes were protruded which gave him ugly look.
He was born in Basra in the year 160 A.H. His father died when he was a child and he lost his source of financial means. When he was able to work he started earning his living by selling fish and bread. In spite of all his financial difficulties his interest in learning increased with the passage of time and he was always fond of reading books. He would not leave a book without finishing it.

The ugliness of Al-Jahiz was a great handicap for him to be associated with the royal family. However his love of learning and acquiring knowledge gave him such a high position in the literary world to which few people reach. He has no equal in his field of learning. Ibn Al-Nadeem writes about him:

It is evident from the above statement that his love for reading was so great that he would take on hire the shops of the book sellers. A man so devoted to learning was bound to reach the goal he was aiming at. Basra was the centre of gathering for the scholars and Al-Jahiz was the people who were great scholars of their time. Al Jahiz took full advantage of their company. He had the privilege of being in the company of such great scholars as Asmai, Abu Ubaid and Abu Zaid. His study of the Greek philosophy along with his study of other sciences was deep and his extensive reading had given him vast knowledge in different sciences. But he was not one of those who could be satisfied with the accumulation of knowledge provided by others. He would examine his study critically and would test it in the light of reason. He would not follow others blindly. Reason was his main guide. Thus he advanced forward in pursuit of knowledge unfazed by the people around him, not

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58 Urdu Dairaul Maarif Islamia, Vol VII, p. 17
59 Ahmad Amin - Dua Al-Islam, Vol III, p 128
60 Ibn Al-Nadeem Al-Fihrist, p 175
61 Urdu Dairai Maarif Islamia, Vol VII, p 17
caring for what they thought about him. He was detached from the ruling clan of the society and I believe his being ugly was a factor in his favour because he devoted himself to a task for which he was created by his Allah the Almighty. However it may not be concluded from our statement that the path of reason that he was following could not lead him astray. As a Mutazli he had his own views about many problems that in itself is a sectarian way of thinking which can never lead us to ultimate truth.

As we have said Al-Jahiz was a free thinker and not the blind follower of others while people who followed him had formed a separate group who are mentioned by Nicholson as Al-jahaziya.

“Amar Bin Bahr Al-Jahiz of Basra was a celebrated thinker and gave his name to a sect of the Mu’Tazilites Al-Hahiziya”\(^\text{62}\). Inspite of his philosophical approach he is the victim of examine and uncalled for reliance on reason even in matters of religious beliefs. In fact he has not fully applied his mind to understood the limitations of human thinking. The only criterion which he uses is reason and here he fails to understand the true nature of the problems we are facing in life. However here we are not so much concerned with the philosophical aspect of his thinking as we are concerned with his literary capabilities. Judged by the standard of morality no doubt.

Al-Jahiz possessed many good qualities. He loved humanity. He helped his friends and the needy. He was generous in spending his wealth for the poor. He was polite in his behaviours. Towards all. All moral values were dear to him. He was liberal in his dealing with the people. He observed basic moral rules of conduct strictly. Above all he was alive to his duty towards the society in which he lived.

Al-Jahiz belongs to that period of Muslim rule which is called the golden period of Islam. But the rule was despotic and one man’s rule. Power

\(^{62}\) Nicholson Reynold Allyme - A literary history of the Arabs, p. 373
was concentrated into the hands of a few. The moral values were changing and the society was going through the process of cultural revolution. There was scant regard for human life and heads could be served at the behest of one man any time. The economic prosperity had changed the values of life in practice civil war and strife in the royal family had made life insecure. Al-Jahiz lived long to observe the conditions prevailing in the muslim society and his thinking was working within to study the phenomenon not like a common man but as a philosopher who tries to understand what life is as created for how the society is observing in practice the rules of moral values preached by the religion of God called Islam.

Aman of ugly indeed not attracting the people of upper class of the society to that extent he was shaping his personality beautifully within.

In the words of Jurji Zaidan\textsuperscript{63}:

\begin{quote}
أمان بالسيئة، من الرأياء فحودة، وقوة العارضه، والتفاوت ما حمله من لجأ أهمة الأدب
\end{quote}

Goldziher says:

"The first great genuine representative of Arabic artistic prose Amin bin Al-Bahr Al-Jahiz. He was a many sided and sharp witted writer who contributed largely the philosophical view of his age\textsuperscript{64}.

Some of the characteristics of his writings are given below:

We have to hear in mind that Jahiz had equipped himself with vast knowledge of various sciences which is reflected in all his writings. The information he gives covers all aspects of the theme he deals with. The words and phrases he uses are neither less than what are actually required.

In his Kitab Al-Hayawan\textsuperscript{65} he explains this aspect of his writings while explaining Ijaz ( ). He says that Ijaz does not mean using less words

\textsuperscript{63} Jurji Zaidan, Tarikh Adabi Al-Lughati Al-Arabiyya, p 194
\textsuperscript{64} Goldziher, A short history of Arabic iterature, p 62
\textsuperscript{65} Please see Kitabu Al-Haywan, Vol 1, p 91
only. It means one should not unnecessarily use as many words as he is capable of. If only one sentence in sufficient to conveys the full meaning the writer it is foolish to go beyond that. It should be neither less nor more. It is the quality that counts in this regard and not the quantity. The other special feature of his writings is that he had selected novel themes in the sense that none else had written on those subjects which he treated. He is the first in this field of writing.

Again he has a purpose in introducing new themes to his readers. He wants them to understand what life is and what it should be. Like a teacher who has sympathy for his student he tries to make his writings interesting for all he introduces the element of light literature while treating serious topics. His purpose in doing so is to make his writings more interesting and acceptable to all. He wants to depict the events of life as they are for the readers to take advantage of his writings at their level of understanding.

Al-Jahiz does not play with words and he does not use simities metaphor just for the sake of making the language more beautiful. It is the meaning which he tries to convey in preference to the rhetorical beauties with the result that result the sometimes he does not hesitates in using words which are not Arabic.

The most prominent feature of the writings of Al-Jahiz is that all based on logic and reason and therefore all his writings are dressed in the philosophical way of presentation and therefore they have an appeal for the readers who use their wisdom in understanding the problems of life.

Inspite of all the good points in favour of Al-Jahiz which have been pointed out above we can not overlook some defects in his writings. As observed by the critics some times the author does not maintain coherency in his writings and deviates from the systematic way of presentation which defect is reflected by others also who followed Al-Jahiz. For example his book Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is the first book of its kind in literature who has
influenced all writers who followed Al-Jahiz. It is therefore that all the defects and short comings that we find in this work are reflected in the literary works of the later period and were justified to conclude that is the result of the legacy left by Al-Jahiz in the realm of the prose literature of Arabic Language.

In the following pages we propose to introduce some of the famous works of Al-Jahiz which have reached us.

We know Al-Jahiz suffered from many handicaps in his life and he waded through all the sufferings from his childhood to the end of his life. This is in itself a proof of his determination of reaching the highest he had set before him with meagre means at his disposal. No doubt he had to overcome the natural feeling of inferiority complex of an orphan whose father had left no means of living for him and he had to struggle hard to earn his living by selling bread and fish and yet devoting all his life in his persuit of knowledge. He knew well as a born philosopher that human facts ugly or beautiful are all going to fade away for they are all from dust and to dust they will all return. But the great beauty he is endowed with his intellectual brilliance will ever remain bright for all time to come. It is indeed his philosophical way of thinking that made him great which could not be surpassed by even the greatest scholars of learning who lived during his time.

1. Kitabu nazmi Al-Quran is a marvellous work of Al-Jahiz which gives an ample proof of Al-Jahiz understanding of the holy Book and his deep insight into the manifold hidden aspects of Arabic language which out which one can not appreciate the miraclous nature of the Quranic language. No doubt Al-Jahiz has not deviated from his usual way of presenting things in the language of logic and reason. Yet his approach and his convincing method of presentation is all appealing which has bestowed on him the honour of being the chief and the leader among those who have written on Al-Quran as the miracle of the

prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of God be on him). Some scholars have
gone to the extent of asserting that for the proof of the Al-Quran being a
miracle it is sufficient to say that it is the conviction and faith of Al-Jahiz also.
2. Kitabu Al-Bukhla in another book written by Al-Jahiz in which information
about the miserly nature of people from different section of the society has
been provided. Apart from its being an important addition to the literary prose
literature of Arabic language it provides useful information regarding the
people who are known for their excellence in many field of learning.
3. Kitabu Al-Haywan is another important work which provides useful
information about the animals. In addition to that different topics have also
been included in this book. For example the problem of leadership called
Imamat and other topics such as atheism, christianity, Islam and other religious
have been discussed by the author giving useful information to the readers. It is
chiefly the cultural aspects of different religious which have been presented in
this book which no doubt give use very useful information about different
religion of the world.
4. Kitabu Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen is Al-Jahiz last book as his literary work. In
this book the author has quoted the Quranic verses, sayings of the prophet of
Islam (peace and blessings of God be on him) and sayings of otherwise people.
The book is divided into different chapters treating different subjects one
chapter is devoted to the beauties of the language which he considers a great
favour of God which He has betowed on mankind. Then he discusses Arabic
language with all its details as spoken by different tribes of Arabia. He has also
mentioned the orators of Arabia who were famous in the art of oratory one
chapter is devoted to only literature as an art in which prominent literary people
have been discussed. Another chapter is related to potics, oratory, prose with
the rhetorical divices etc. which covers a wide range of such topics.
About this book the great historian Ibnu Khaldun writes that it is one of four books of Arabic literature which are the source books for all other such works which were written during the later period\textsuperscript{67}.

Goldziher the French orientalist writes about him.

“Strictly speaking, Al-Jahiz was the ancestor of that kind of Arabic literature which is usually styled as adab\textsuperscript{68}.

Dr. Shauqi Daif thinks that Al-Jahiz fame is not confined to a particular period on place. It is above time and place. His works are like trees laden with fruits\textsuperscript{69}.

Inspite of his vast knowledge of all aspects of literary beauties of both prose and poetry he would not give importance to any other style except that of the Quran, for he believes that it is Al-Quran the provides best examples of linguistic beauties of Arabic language and literature. Al-Jahiz wants every critic to be free from partial view. He should try to see things as they are and he should form opinion only after the deep study of the subject. He should not be influenced by the opinions of others. For him that is the only way of judging the real merit of the art.

Al-Jahiz was not only a prose writer. He was also a poet but this talent he used rarely. However some of his verses that are reported are given below\textsuperscript{70}.

\begin{quote}
لطب العصي ان لم تسي حلام – كنارا العلم والعموم الطبيع
فكن في ملك سمي حلام كل علم، ومست العلم لعمره الله
\end{quote}

Al-Jahiz has written extensively on various subjects relating to philosophy, history literature and others. We are giving a list of his important books some of which have been published.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibnu Khaldun, Muqaddamai Ibnu Khaldun, Vol I, pp 553-554
\textsuperscript{68} Goldziher - A short history of Arabic literature, p 62
\textsuperscript{69} Dr Shauqi Daif - Al Fannu wa Madhahibuhu Fi Al-Nath Al-Arabi, p 97
\textsuperscript{70} Farid Rifai - Asru Al-Mamun, Vol II, p 426
1. Kitabu Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen which is mainly concerned with literature and about which we have already written in brief. It was published in Egypt in the year 1312 A.H.

2. Kitabu Al-Haiwan. It was published in Egypt in seven volumes in the year 1906 A.D.

3. Kitabu Al-Mahasin wa Al-Addad wa Al-Ajaib wa Al-Ghairab. It was published in Egypt in 1906 A.D.

4. Kitabu Al-Bakhla was published in Europe and Egypt a number of times.

5. Kitabu Sehru Al-Bayan.

6. Kitabu Fadailu Al-Atrak. It was published in Egypt in the year 1898.

6. Amar bin Masada

Amar bin Masada originally belongs to the Turkish race who had adopted the religion and culture of the Islam during the reign of the umayyad dynasty. Since his son Sad was active in the movement against the umayyad rule he had a special position in the administration of the Abbasid ruler and consequently Sad’s son. Masad was appointed as a scribe in the royal court of Al-Saffah and Al-Masur. Later on he was promoted as head of the department in the charge of correspondence in the administrative apparatus for drafting letters. It was during this period that his son Amar was born. He was brought up under the direct care of his father. He was the most intelligent industrious and hard working student who quickly learnt many Islamic sciences and equipped himself with the knowledge of the Arabic Language and literature. Amar’s father Masad was already a static scribe in charge of the department of drafting official letters. He associated his son Amar with the work.

71. For details please see Tarikhu Adabu Al-Lughati Al-Arabiyyah by Jurji Zaidan, pp. 195-196

72. For details please see Ibnu Khalikan Wafayatu Aayan, Vol. I, p. 492
account of his vast learning and extraordinary intelligence Amar he got opportunities in life in quick succession one after the other until Jafar bin Yahya appointed him to write Tawqiat in his presence. It was here that the real merit of Amar was tested and recognized. During the reign of Harun Al-Rashid he was appointed as royal scribe. Later on he served in the court of the caliph Al-Mamun.

Regarding the personality of Amar the historian Farid Rifai quotes the statement of Al-Hasan bin Sahl in some context as under:

It was a glowing tribute paid to Amar and he proved to be what Al-Hasan bin Sahl had described the qualities of an able and good man. He served under Al-Hasan bin Sahl when he was appointed as Al-Mamun minister after the death of Al-Fadl. There he was assigned the duty of writing down Tawqiat in company with the caliph. He died in the year 217 A.H. After his somebody sent a written complaint against him that he had boarded enormous wealth which was eighty million Dirham. When Al-Mamun read it he wrote on the back of the paper:

The complaint was dismissed by the caliph with the remark that it was a small amount as compared to the service he rendered to the caliph. Such was the regard of no less a person than the emperor himself which Amar had earned for him.

Amar bin Masadah was not only a scholar of vast learning and the best writer of literary Arabic prose among the top writers for all time to come but he

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73 Farid Rifai - Asru Al-Mamun, Vol II, p 60
74 Shauqi Daif - Al-Fannu wa Madhahibul Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p. 554
was also a man of high morality. Some poet had rightly said in his praise which we are quoting below:

There is no doubt that Amar’s father Masadah like his son was the most prominent writer of his line. When Al-Mansur the caliph called all his scribes and asked them to write a booklet on Islam it was only the script of Masadah which was approved by the caliph Al-Mansur. We have already given some extracts from this booklet elsewhere in the previous chapter. It was under him that Amar was trained for the purpose and the son took full advantage of the company of his father.

The letters which Amar wrote are both short and long official and private congratulatory and condolence and in each of them he displayed his art of writing. Every one from the caliph to his ministers and official have a word of praise for him as a writer of great merit. Al-Fadl bin Al-Rabia ( ) who is himself a great writer and occupies high place in the first rank of the prominent writers holds very high opinion about his merit.

We are quoting below his opinion which he expressed.

This is the best tribute one pays to a writer who is understood by all with his simple language and attractive style yet he can not be copied. This is what the great persian and urdu poet Ghalib said about the beautiful literary language.

We have already given in detail in the previous chapter Al-Mamun was also one of the admirers of Amar’s writings and as an evidence we have quoted

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75 Shauqi Daif - Al-Fannu wa Madhahibul Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 553
76 Ghalib - Diwane Ghalib, p 69
another great writer, Ahmad bin Yusuf who said that he was in the audience of the caliph Al-Mamun who was holding a letter in his hand, which was from Amar bin Masad to the caliph and appreciated its language very much. We have already quoted the letter in the preceding chapter.

Amar’s way of presenting the matters before the caliph was also unique. It is related that some one from Syria to meet the caliph Al-Mamun but he did not out for a pretty long time that day. At last when the visitor was tried he asked Amar to do something for him. Amar wrote a brief note to the caliph in which he said

ان رأى امیر المومین ان يفک اسرعیه من رقیة اسله لعفاء جاحد

When Al-Mamun read this letter he called Amar and he praised the way in which had placed the matter before the caliph using such a beautiful language.

Amar had the ability to write as brief as possible and he could express the meaning in only a limited number of words. For example it so happened that Al-Mamun wanted him to draft a letter which should contain only a few words and short be as short as possible. In compliance with the order of the caliph Amar bin Masad wrote

كما اليل كتب وأنا من كنت الديه. من فم كتب لى ولن ن捆绑

The style in which Amar bin Masad writes is simply charming and has a lasting effect on its reader. For example he writes to his benefactor Al-Hasan bin Sahl.

اAppearance ماك ادا اسس دا ادا اسا كي لنم نسري أسيه وميري

Amar had read the environment as a philosopher to know the secrets of life.

77 Dr Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhahibhu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 557
78 Dr Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhahibhu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 558
79 Farid Rifai, Ahtri Al-Mamun, Vol II, p 61
Some of his sayings that have been recorded present him as a great thinker who arrives at the root of the truth of human life. His reading is so appealing that one has to believe what he says. I am quoting below some of his sayings:

اَلْعَلَّمُ الْبَشَرِّيُّ أَهْرَأَوَ اَلْعَلَّمُ الْبَشَرِّيُّ أَهْرَأَوَ اَلْعَلَّمُ الْبَشَرِّيُّ أَهْرَأَوَ اَلْعَلَّمُ الْبَشَرِّيُّ أَهْرَأَوَ

These are some of the sayings of Amar bin Masada

The sayings of Amar that we have quoted above sound like eternal truth of human life which are confirmed by our practical experience in life.

One of the letters of Amar bin Masada which is recognized as the best specimen of his literary prose writing is given below. It was written to console one of his nobles whose mother had married and which the son did not like. He starts in his usual using the convincing language. He writes:

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80 Farid Rifai, Al-Ahtri Al-Mamun, Vol II, p 61
81 Farid Rifai, Al-Ahtri Al-Mamun, Vol II, pp 62-63
82 Farid Rifai, Al-Ahtri Al-Mamun, Vol II, p 64
Amar bin Masada was by nature sympathetic towards the people and he was always ready to help them. When debate was saying throughout the empire regarding the question of created Quran Abdul Aziz of Mecca challenged this view and he was ready to enter into debate on this point. The debate was fixed and the Mutazili scholars were ready for the purpose. Amr knew that Abdul Aziz was alone against the team of the government scholar and if he is defeated he will be executed under the orders of the caliph. Amar sent his men to Abdul Aziz and called him to talk to him. When Abdul Aziz met him before the debate was to commence he advised him, rather requested him to give up the idea of opposing the view of the caliph and promised to help him financially since Abdul Aziz was a poor man. However Abdul Aziz was adament and was ready to sacrifice his life for the cause. However it so happened that Mutazili scholars were badly defeated in the language of logic and philosophy itself which the official group of the Mutazili scholars were using as a weapon to beat with and Al-Mamun declared the debate closed. The role played on this occasion by Amar Masada is no doubt admirable.

Amar’s sheet of life was clean. When he died people mourned his death. The caliph himself expressed his grief. When people complained that he had huge wealth Al-Mamun replied that it was nothing as compared to the services he had rendered to the empire.

For details please see Dr Musta’s Al-Adab, pp 397-398
7. Ahmad bin Yusuf

His name is Ahmad bin Yusuf bin Sabeeh Al-Katib Al-Kufi. His father was working as a scribe in the offices of the government in Kufa during the Umayyad rule, when the family of Abbas assumed power he got an opportunity to work under the nobles of the Abbasid family and also in the administrative apparatus of Al-Mansur, Al-Mehdi and Al-Hadi. It was during the reign of Harun Al-Rashid that his father rose to fame. He was appointed to work as a scribe in the offices of the royal palace when his merit came to light. It is not known when Ahmad bin Yusuf was born. There is no record to show his date of birth. It can be gathered from the information available to us that probably he was born in middle of the second century Hijri. His father took care to see that Ahmad was highly educated so as to be able to work in the offices of the state. Ahmad was also very intelligent, hard working and serious abour his studies. It was soon that Ahmad acquired proficiency in a number of sciences. Then he paid full attention to the Art of writing under the care of his father.

Ahmad was brought up in a highly cultured society where he was surrounded by top scholars and scribes. The political atmosphere in which he moved taught him all the manners of a cultured society. The greatest advantage for him was the company of his father who was attached to the royal family so closely. It is said Ahmad’s father Yusuf had associated him with the work of writing during his early age by keeping him in his company in the administrative apparatus of royal family. It is said that he started drafting letters before the eyes of his father. Then he was picked up by Al-Fadl bin Sahl to be in service of Al-Mamun at Merve which was the capital of the eastern as its governor. There he was employed as the scribe of the prince. Al-Fadl bin Sahl had read in his face the signs of nobility and scholarship and he knew that he will rise to fame as a great writer and it so happened that Al-Amin was killed in an encounter with the commander of Al-Mamun Tahir bin Al-Husain who sent
Amin's head to his brother Al-Mamun in the year 198 A.H. Al-Mamun was
moved to see the head of his brother Al-Amin. For the public and others it was
a case of a brother killing his own brother which Al-Mamun did not approve.
He wanted to make his position clear relating to the act of his military
commander.

Al-Mamun ordered his minister Al-Fadl bin Sahl to invite all the scribes
together in order to clear the position of Al-Mamun in this episode. All the
scribes of the royal court prepared their drafts. It is Ahmad bin Yusuf's draft
which was approved by Al-Fadl bin Sahl who praised the young scribe Ahmad
and showered favours on him. It was here that his merit was known to all.
When Al-Mamun's minister Ahmad bin Khalid died in the year 211 A.H. the
caliph consulted Al-Hasan Ibn Sahl regarding the appointment of his minister in
his place. Al-Hasan advised him to appoint Ahmad bin Yusuf. It was under
these circumstances that Ahmad bin Yusuf rose to the high position. But
Ahmad bin Yusuf did not live long to enjoy his high position and he died in the
year 213 A.H.

We have mentioned the letter which was drafted by Ahmad bin Yusuf
after the execution of Al-Amin and which was considered the best among the
letters drafted by other scribes and which pushed him to higher position in life
until he was appointed Al-Mamun's minister. This letter was written on behalf
of Tahir commander of Al-Mamun to satisfy the public in general and to justify
the action taken by the administration of Al-Mamun. The letter runs thus:

\[
\text{إِمَّا لَعْبَاءَتُكَ لَمْ يُدْخُلَكَ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ قَسَمُ إِمَّا لَمْ يَخْبَثَكَ فَرْقُ حَكَمِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ سَيْبَاءُ بَيْنِي وَلَيْسَ بِاللَّهِ عَلَّمَةُ اسْتِحْبَاطَهُ}
\]

For more details please read Dr. Shauqi Zaid book Al-Fannu wa Madhabihu Fi
Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, pp. 541-543.

Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p. 430.
The letter depicts the real nature of the tragedy. It is not only by drafted in terms of language it also shows the political of the written and the psychology of the people. This little brought before the caliph the hidden ability of the scribe which he utilised later on. Ahmad bin Yusuf wrote on a number of topics relating to social life from congratulation on the birth of a baby and the recovery of the patient to many other private matters. However he is at his best when he writes the administrative letters and remarks on the official files called Tawqiat.

The letter quoted above is the best that could be written under the circumstances. It contains not only the political wisdom and statesmanship, but also his knowledge of the minds of the people and their way of thinking. He treats them psychologically using all his intelligence and ability of expression. He belongs to that class of the writers who have their own originality like Abdullah bin Al-Muqaffa and Abdul Hamid. They were born writer and so was Ahmad bin Yusuf.

We have already pointed out the gradual development in the art of writing from the Islamic age to the Abbasid period and we have seen how it development wonderfully. It was not confined to the beauty of the language and style of the presentation only. I had expanded in many ways for example no speech could be delivered and no writing could be recorded without first praising God Almighty. It was considered a religions duty and only a formality and quotation from the Quran and Al-Hadith were sufficient to provide material for the purpose. This instructory portion of the speech or writing was as short as possible. It goes to the credit of Abdul hamid Ibnu Al-Muqafa that they
added novelty to that this portion of the literary prose so much so the language written in praise of Allah Almighty had become an art in it own right. It is here that we find Ahmad bin Yusuf much more advanced. This is one of the most important peculiarities of his prose writings in his letters as well as in his booklets which he contributed.

Before commenting on different aspects of Ahmad bin Yusuf’s writing I would mention his booklet Al-Khamis. The history of writing Al-Khamis during the Abbasid rule is an old one. For every caliph a booklet was written to justify his right to role giving all the reason, at their command, religions, moral, political and social. When Al-Mamun ascended the throne he also ordered the letter to be written on the lines on the previous such letters. This work was entrusted to Ahmad bin Yusuf. This document was meant for public in general and the people of Khurasan in particular for khurasan was the beeding ground for the recruitment of the caliphs fighters. Ahmad bin Yusuf gave a new shape and colour to his writing on this subject and he wrote so exhaustively that it spread over fifteen pages. It was in fact a booklet or pamphlet. It was written so nicely that every one praised its contents. Ibnu Al-Nadeem praising the letter writes about it.

The booklet is no doubt a piece of literary beauty in Arabic prose and its contents are based on solid logical ground appealing to the readers. It is recognized as one of the best prose writings which serves the purpose of the ruling dynasty for which it was ordered to be written. But the work is more a testimony to the eloquence and power of advocacy of its writer than a work of moral truth based on justice. It is a political writing indeed with which we are not concerned. We are giving below some extracts from Risalatu Al-Khamis.
which give an idea of its style of writing as well as the time of argument adopted by the author. He writes:

The introductory part of the letter which is in praise of Allah, is very lengthy and it contains the logical proofs of the existence of Allah the creator of the universe. As we have already said this is a novel way of writing Hamd in praise of Allah. Under the guidance of such writers as Ahmad bin Yusuf this art development so much that it is considered as one of the kinds of the literary prose.

Ahmad bin Yusuf had become so famous and popular as a writer that Al-Hasan bin Sahl who was himself a good writer asked him to draft a letter of thanks for him when he was appointed minister of Al-Mamun after the death of his brother Al-Fadl bin Sahl. While drafting the letter of thanks Ahmad bin Yusuf he began with the praise of Allah and his prophet (peace and blessings of God be on him) and then he mentioned his brother Al-Fadl bin Sahl who was so much attached to the caliph and in whose place Al-Hasan was appointed. Then he thanks the caliph for favouring him with the office. The letter is long and we have avoided giving its text.

What we have given above relates to his political writings. Now we will discuss his private letters which he had written to many of his friends. While congratulating his friend on the birth of a baby he writes.

88 Dr Mustafa Al-Adab, p 438
89 For details please see Dr Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhabihu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, pp 547-548
90 For details please see Dr Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhabihu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 549
One of the characteristics of Ahmad bin Yusuf’s writings is that sometimes he writes rhymed prose also as in the case of one whom he praised in the following words:

Ahmad bin Yusuf devoted all his energies in the service of the Abbasid empire. He was writing for the caliph till his death. His political letters were very much appreciated by not only because of their literary beauties but mainly because the writer had the political sagacity and extraordinary intelligence to see the political matters in their true perspective. Besides the political letters he was writing extensively to his friends, his relations and also in reply to the letters of other people. He knew the art of treating the people with kindness and politeness. Inspite of his many activities and high position he had not forgotten his old relations and friends and always tried to keep the contacts alive. He was constantly writing to them. See him he writes to his friend.

Dr. Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhahibu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 550
Dr. Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhahibu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, p 551
Some of remarks by way of Tauqiat which were recorded by Ahmad bin Yusuf have reached which display his literary talent or the literary excellence as well as his correct way of thinking in taking just decisions. For example we are giving here one of his Tawqiat which in the case of a person who had possession of the land of some other person who was its owner. When the case was placed before Ahmad bin Yusuf he wrote the following remark:

As we have seen in all his letters his power of advocating a cause is very great to the extent that he is capable of proving a wrong thing right and a right thing wrong but his power of judgement in deciding the matters of the people is always on the right side. No body can find fault with his judgement as we have seen in the above example. Ahmad bin Yusuf was not inclined towards writing poems, but some of his verses that have been reported are considered the best by the critics. We are giving here two of his verses:

93 Dr. Shauqi Daif, Al-Fannu wa Madhahibu Fi Al-Nathri Al-Arabi, pp. 551-552. Dr. Mustafa Al-Adab, p. 547.