In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the transitory stage lies between the present which has its history and depth on the one hand and the future which is desired on the other. The distinguishing features of this stage become manifested through arduous effort. Burden of this effort mostly falls upon the shoulders of those who look forward to stabilize and popularize new values in order to lead the society to advancement and upon those who possess the characteristics which qualify them to perform their important role in this regard. The most salient of these characteristics are: insight, clear conception of what is meant to be done and then patience and capacity to communicate the new ideas to the people in such a form which wins them over to modernism. The persons who devote their energies to the fulfilment and materialization of this task depend on contemplation of the real situation which surrounds them and at the same time they seek guidance from the achievements of those who arrived at a higher stage of development and a better understanding of life.

Beginning of the present century was considered as a stage of transition, not only in Egypt but in the eastern Arab countries as a whole. For, people, at this stage, witnessed a stronger connection being established.
between the Arab world and the West and got themselves acquainted with the western achievements in various fields and hence the windows of their minds were opened. At the same time, the Ottoman constitution was promulgated in the year 1908. This constitution brought about freedom of thought and expression, though this freedom again disappeared after a short while.

The Arabic poetry at this time was directed to the ancient methods of composition and had reached the zenith of its revivalism. But to continue to be restricted to the frame prepared by the predecessors or to preserve the old system in composing poetry meant to remain behind the new developments in life. Consequently, it became necessary to change people's conception of poetry if its development was desired.

The standard of this movement has been carried in Egypt especially by three persons. They are 'Abd al-Rahmān Shukrī, 'Abbas Mahmūd al-'Aqqād and Ibrāhīm al-Māzīnī. These litterateurs belonged to the middle class which led the movement of social and cultural change in Egypt which included literature also. They were later denominated as Jama‘at al-Dīwān and were known by this denomination among the Arab litterateurs and critics.
They were indeed well educated and were thoroughly acquainted with the literature of the Arabs as well as with that of the West. By virtue of this acquaintence they derived new concepts of poetry and its problems and tried to popularize them particularly through theoretical statements. They decidedly were the first to hold aloft the flag of modernization of both poetry and literary criticism in Arabic in the beginning of this century. They, therefore, deserve to be considered as the outstanding persons in this field and to be placed in the position which is their due in the history of modern Arabic criticism.

However, they are called Jamâ'at al-Dîwân as al-'Aqqâd, in collaboration with al-Mâzînî, published in the year 1921, a book of literary criticism entitled al-Dîwân. Though Shukri was not a partner in bringing out this book, yet he is also counted among them as he shared most of their ideas as a whole.

Al-'Aqqâd and al-Mâzînî wrote in this book bitter criticism on some of the most important litterateurs of the time including Abûr Râhîm Shukrî, 'Ahmad Shawqi and Muš-tâfâ Lutfî al-Manfalûtî are the two other outstanding who fall in this category.
It was expected that the above mentioned book would consist of ten volumes as the authors had planned and had mentioned on its cover. But they, anyway, gave up the task after publishing only two volumes due to certain unknown reasons.

Prior to that a number of litterateurs had endeavoured for their ability to extricate Arabic literature from the backward condition in which it was. But they lacked a clear and ripe concept of literature. ... they had turned to the Arabic heritage in order to seek guidance from it. Or otherwise they had expressed, according to their capacity, some new ideas which mostly were imperfect. Before taking up the group of al-Dīwan, I have tried to draw a clear picture of those ideas in the first chapter of the thesis in order to make the reader acquainted with the nature of literary criticism in Arabic from the second half of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The members of the al-Dīwan group overcame the deficiency of the litterateurs whose views have been discussed in the first chapter and proceeded in a more forceful and effectual manner to modernize poetry and criticism of the Arabs.
The members of this group met one another in Cairo as they studied or served in various institutions there. Within a short period of time they realized that they were the offsprings of the same social class. Similarity of their ages as well as of their literary taste and the fact that all of them were poets brought them together all the more and cemented the bond of their friendship firmly. It was natural therefore that they exchanged visits and held meetings during which they discussed various literary problems. They also wrote prefaces to the divans of one another. Al-'Agqād has written two prefaces, one of them to the first collection of al-Māzini's poetry and the other to the second collection of Shukri's poetry. Besides this, they wrote prefaces to their own poetical works. In all these prefaces they have stated their ideas about and understanding of poetry.

What is worth mentioning here is that neither this group was a formal organization nor its members assigned to themselves specific literary activities. Instead of this they agreed upon the fundamental principles of poetry but every one of them dealt with its problems in his own way. This is the reason why some one of them discusses certain details which the others do not take into account.
Perhaps the only thing two of them did in collaboration with each other was that al-'Aqqād and al-Māzīnī collected the criticism they wrote separately on various literateurs and published it in the book al-Dīwān to which we have already referred. This book, however, resulted in Shukri's separation from his associates for containing bitter criticism on him written by al-Māzīnī. This did not stop the other two from continuing their activities in relation to literary criticism. But after some time they indulged in politics and devoted much of their time to it though this devotion lasted only for a few years. Due to this fact I have limited my work only to the year 1925 when they ceased to function as a group though the association between al-'Aqqād and al-Māzīnī continued even after this year. Indeed what they achieved during the first quarter of this century served as a foundation on which they built their critical thought regarding poetry even after 1925. In my opinion what they wrote later on did not deviate from the original path moved by them.

No doubt, the al-Dīwān group injected successfully new ideas into the literary and critical movement in Egypt which was considered as a source of social and cultural uplift in the Arab countries. They influenced the succeeding generation so much so that a number of poets adopted the new trend. These poets inherited the traditions set by
al-Dīwān group and continued the process of modernization and in the year 1932 formed an organisation with the name "Apullū" under the leadership of Dr. Ahmad Zaki Abū Shādī (d. 1955) to propagate their ideas.

I have already indicated that the members of al-Dīwān treated the details of the problems of poetry individually. Accordingly I have assigned a separate chapter to every one of them and have tried to draw a clear picture of their views and ideas. These chapters have been arranged according to their relative importance with regard to literary criticism in the period under study. Every chapter consists of various sub-titles. In writing these chapters descriptive method has been followed. Then an attempt has been made to depict the understanding of the English romantics regarding these problems and a comparison has been made between the two groups. For this purpose I have specially chosen two great personalities out of the English romantics, i.e. Coleridge and Wordsworth. For, these two are considered as the persons who laid down the foundation of English romanticism. They are so important indeed that either the English critics who followed them depended on their theories or just explained them. I have, therefore thought it proper to make comparison with the originators of the romantic criticism in English. This comparison, however,
has been made only when it has appeared to me that there is some connection between the two, i.e. al-Dīwān group and the English romantics, be it one of similarity or of dissimilarity.

As far as the last chapter is concerned, it has been devoted to applied criticism written by al-'Aqqād and al-Māzinī. Shukri has made no contribution in this field. In this chapter my aim has been to find out to what extent these two critics have been able to adhere to the theoretical principles enunciated by them in their writings. Here no comparison has been made between them and the romantics because the latter have not left any impact on al-'Aqqād and al-Māzinī in this regard. Their impact has indeed been restricted to the theoretical aspect of literary criticism alone.

I have placed the Arabic quotations translated into English at the end of the thesis as a supplement. In the text I have put Indian numerals before them for the purpose of reference.

Lastly, this thesis is a humble attempt to serve modern literary criticism in Arabic. If I have been able to achieve my goal even to some extent, I would feel that I have been rewarded sufficiently for my endeavour.