"The Arabs are a very ancient people, but their history is more or less uncertain. They are generally divided into two classes - pure and mixed. The former are described from Joktan or Qahtan (the son of Eber mentioned in Genesis x), while the latter trace their origin to Ismael (Ismail), a son of Abraham (Ibrahim) by Hajrah an Egyptian lady. The Arabs find references in the old testament as well as in classical literature, which point to their antiquity and past glory. These references are further supplemented and confirmed by archaeological research. ..."

"Arabia rose to very great importance about the beginning of the 7th century of the Christian era as the birth place of a religion - Islam - which spread over a vast area of the then known world within a century of its inauguration and which is now professed by more or less one-sixth of the human race, and also as a place of revelation of a book - Quran - which (in the words of Washington Irving), "contains pure, elevated and benignant precepts", which (in the words of Dr. Steingass)" is one of the grandest books ever written", which (in the words of Goetha) "attracts,
astounds and enforces our reverence" and which (in the words of Hirshfeld) "is unapproachable as regards convincing power eloquence and even composition."

"The Quran was originally intended to be a guide to Arabia and through Arabia to the whole world. The Arabs had long been immersed in polytheism, and idol worship, besides being addicted to drinking, gambling and other immoral acts. When the prophet first announced that his mission was to lead the people to the hight path, the purge them of their vices and to assure them of their ills, the entire country rose against him. For so stubborn a people the sudden revelation of a book of the size of the quran could not be suitable. The quran was, therefore, revealed piece-meal and by instalments, and its revelation covered the whole period of the Prophet's apostolic career. It took the Qur'an some thirteen years to prepare the ground and clear up the atmosphere of the country, and it was only in the later half of the period of Prophet's mission that the verses of the Qur'an began to be appreciated by the bulk of the people. The quran is, in the words of Johnson, "a Prophet's cry, Semitic to the core, yet of a meaning so universal and so timely that all the voices of the ages take it up, willingly or unwillingly, and to echoes over chosen
hearts to world conquests, then gathering itself into a reconstructing force that all the creative light of Greece and Asia might penetrate the heavy gloom of Christian Europe when Christianity was but the Queen of the night. " (1)

Thus with the rise of Prophet Muhammad and the revelation of the holy Quran the history of Arabia undertook a new course. Arabia was known to the ancient people - like the Jews and the Hellas - the Jewish literature like the Torah consisting five books - Genesis, Exodus, Levitiens, Numbers and Deuterouomy, the Nebhiim, the Kethubim, the Tarqum, the Midrash, the Talmud told us of Arabia. Likewise the Greek classical literature of Herodotus, Eratosthenes, Diodorees, Strabo pliny and ptolemy also told us of Arab land we have reference of this land and its people in the old Testament. During the time of Solomon in 1000 B.C. we first found the mention of the term Arabia and afterwards it was frequently used in Hebrew, Greek and Roman books of history.

With such an antiquity the Arabia and its people lived - but lived in somewhat oblivion. The christian west found little in them to be coppied. Then came Muhammad, the prophet with his mighty creed-Islam.
The Prophet was the greatest of all religious leaders of the world in the sense that he not only softened the hearts of the most violent people of the distinctly toughest tract of the world, but at the same time, imbued them with a unique sense of self-respect, unity and sincerity the Prophet combined in him the activities of a social reformer, religious preacher, of a statesman, a teacher, a philosopher. He was the greatest conqueror who conquered and enslaved thousand and thousands of people - not in the blood pouring battle fields; he conquered the hearts of man, his sword was his love and blessings, his banner was the Islam. For the first time, the people of Arabic - who embraced Islam, arose from their slumber and to make the people of the world feel their existence, their antiquity, their contribution. The stage of oblivion was over. The prophet died. But the way he paved for his posterity was wide open now - free from all hazards. And through that chosen way his successors, the later caliphs, trailed forth. After the reign of four pious caliphs - Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali came the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs. The Prophet died in 632 A.D. But till 1258 A.D., when Baghdad, the capital of Abbasid dynasty was conquered by the Mongols, it was the Islamic people who had the ultimate command in the events of the history.
of the world. They conquered the whole of Middle East, Spain, Straits of Gibraltar and established absolute supremacy in the Mediterranean region. This political supremacy enabled them to consolidate the Islamic culture and paved ground for its further elaboration and development. This was too hard for the Christian west to resist and eventually they were influenced, directly or indirectly willingly or unwillingly, by it.

This influence was greatly felt on four specific wings of culture - on languages, on literature and literary activities, on science and scientific ideas and on historiography. As regards finer arts - in the realm of art of paintings and sculpture it was the Islamic people who borrowed from the west but failed to provide any commendable present to the west. The Arabs accepted certain ornamental leaf designs of the ancient world and developed them into a new type of ornament called the arabsque. This arabsque did not influence the western artists though this new style was greatly followed by the Persian, Turkish and the Indian artists. As they had no pictorial tradition of their own, the early Islamic artists used the mode is provided by the cultures of the conquered territories, particularly those of Byzantium and Iran. Gradually they fashioned
an art of their own which was neither Byzantine nor Persian, but a new combination of all the cultural traditions.

But the impact of western borrowing from Islam is felt when we look at the languages of the west - specially English. In the relevant chapter on this we have seen how the western world now freely use those terms which are essentially Arabic and they have now become so much inseparable that no one ever thinks of its originality while using the term freely to express his ideas. There are some words which still carry the Arabic names - though rather destorted, again there are some things which are not accompanied by names or the names are incidental and fragmentary and again there are names which are neither bluntly advertised or obvious, nor is lost or distorted by advertisement. It is, in fact, mainly Spain who received much from the Middle East specially the Arab world and transmitted them to most of Europe.

In the sphere of literature and literary works we have witnessed the west to have borrowed from the Middle East. During the Abbasids reign from 750 to 1258, the capital Baghdad became the centre of learning and every kind of literary activities. The scientific
philosophical and other studies developed in which Arabia made significant, original and lasting contributions. This development was found in every sphere of literary activities - poetry, prose, secular literature, story telling, romances, folk-tales. The Spanish Muslims, (whom the Arabs called Andalus) poets, had great influence on Medieval European poetry, particularly the poetry of Provence. It has been admitted that a treatise on love, written by the theologian Ibu Hazm of Cordova (d. 1064) - called the Dove's Neckring" seems to had considerable influence on the concept of medieval love in Europe and still has great appeal. The Arab mystic or Sufi poets like Ibu 'Arabi, the Andalusian, Ibu al-Farid of Cairo (d 1235) and woman mystic Rabiah of Basra (d 801) - had influenced the western philosophical and literary ideas too. Prof. R.A. Nicholson aptly remarked - "That in some departments they made valuable additions to existing knowledge must certainly be granted, but these discoveries counts for little in comparison with the debt which we owe to the Arabs as pioneers of learning and bringers of light to medieval Europe. " (2)

But the greatest Islamic contribution to the west was in the realm of Science and in histography or art of history writing. In the chapter concerning the scientific
contribution of Islamic people I have tried to show how, the Arabian Islamic people was imbied with scientific knowledge and ventural for its further development when the Christian world was yet to know the meaning of the very word science. "The comparison of several Biblical and Qur'anic narrations of the same subject shows the existence of fundamental differences between statements in the former, which are scientifically unacceptable, and declarations in the latter which are in perfect agreement with modern data, this was the case of the creation and flood, for example. An extremely important complement to the Bible was found in the text of the Quran on the subject of the history of the exodus, where the two texts were very much in agreement with archaeological findings, in the dating of the time of the Moses."

Everything connected with modern science like many other subjects dealt within the Quran. Maurica Bucaille wrote" .... it is inconceivable for a human being living in the seventh century A.D. to have made statements in the Quran on a great variety of subjects that do not belong to his period and for them to be inkeeping with what was to be known only centuries later. For me there can be no human explanation to the Quran." The western scientific knowledge found its base not only in the Quran; the ideas and knowledge of medicine, mathematics and astronomy
of the Islamic people between 900 - 1100 A.D. had enriched them. What the western scholars of modern science learnt - they learnt it from these people of Saracane.

The most copious branch of Arabic literature was the history. The Arabs were the earliest nations to record history after they became civilised. Since they were always interested in historical narrations, it was the Arabs who produced the vast extent of literature in this field. Histography among the Arabs began with the advent of Islam, and gradually it became a wordly the 'Abbasid' period historical works became the missor of the most progressive phases of the Muslim renaissance. Arab histography achieved a definite advance beyond previous historical windings in the socio-logical understanding of history and the scientific systemisation of historography. The greatest historical philosopher of Islam; Ibu Khaldun, was the first man to explain thoroughly and apply some of the basic principles of sociology. He propounded the critical theories of histography by which man could analyse the past of the mankind, - to understand its present - its future. He was the first philosopher of history and it was he was speculated on which we would call to-day the methods of
historical research. He was the first profounder of the critical theory of histography and had no equal in any age or country until vico appeared in the western world more than three hundred years later. He was the first representative of an intellectual tendency which manifested itself in the west only five hundred years afterwards. As the western research became more and more interested in Ibu Khaldun and his social theories, they found in the legacy of the Muslim thinkers many, philosophical social and economic theories, which Europe came to know only long after Ibu Khaldun. In the sphere of philosophy of history and principles of sociology and political economy he had long preceded the west. Even today the social theories of Ibu Khaldun afford a subject of study and comparative analysis for many social critics.

Therefore, the Islamic people had cast great impact on the western culture and language, science and literature though in the sphere of arts and painting they themselves were influenced by the west. Yet what they gave to the west surpassed in volume, weight and worth than what they received in turn. Here lies their magnanimity - the magnanimity of Islam, the Prophet and the Quran.