



## Image of Philosophical Thought in the writings of Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad : A Brief Discussion

*Al-Aqqad's position was between the philosophy of poets in one side and philosophy of critics on the other side. He was away from the style of artificiality and philosophy of Al-Misal who gave importance on Plato and on the style of Al-Hads and philosophy Al-Zawahar to the philosopher of Dikar in the style of criticism and philosophy of Al-Ta'ali' who followed the philosophy of Kant which was close to the philosophy Al-Mu'arri and Tagore and in the judgment of Iqbal whatever relate to pioussness his view was that the sense organ and the intellectual together are not enough to reach the reality of large universe but the way from cosmic consciousness to emotional power which is followed by the pious persons in their test and existence. The tools of philosophy accomplishes when the power of innovation the justification and relationship among the natural pure sense organs gathered together to purify the general tools to reach the themes of internal life, the life of consciousness in different general direction the thought of al-Aqqad witness him to be a philosopher.*

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### Introduction :

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad is considered as one of the most influential person in modern Egypt. He was a famous journalist, an ideal philosopher, a skilful translator and an admirable critic of modern Arabic literature. He was known for his patriotic views toward the country that he used to spread his pro-democratic beliefs. He was also known as the leading innovator of 20th century Arabic poetry and poetic criticism. Statement may be made here that he was not only a giant of Arabic literature but also a giant of philosophical thought. Actually, he was a liberal thinker in the true political and human sense of liberty whose treatments and handlings were marked by the desire to upgrade human liberty. He did not confine himself to the philosophical method in order to search for the truth.

### Short biographical sketch of al-Aqqad :

The renowned Egyptian philosopher Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was born in 1889 in the district of Aswan of Upper Egypt. He grew up with a broad perspective of life and universal love of men. At the age of seven his father sent him to the village school; from where he completed his early education in 1903. During this time he used to attend Maktab (religious School) and learnt there the basic principles of the Quran and the basics of Arabic language. Due to the lack of financial support he left his formal education but all his life never left studying. He taught himself from the Arabic classics

and mastered English in which he read European literature and philosophy.

Abbas Mahmud Al-Aqqad was largely self taught person. When he became fourteen years old he was half way through his secondary School he left his native town Aswan for Cairo, seeking employment. He got job in a junior post in the civil service but he spent some time at the job and he decided to take up journalism. He also did some School teaching, which gave him the opportunity to meet his future friend Ibrahim Abdul Qadir Al-Mazini. After the First World War, they gave up School teaching to devote their time to journalism. He visited Cairo many times to attain the special books which could not find near the general seller the book was Rakh al-Karn al-Ishreen.

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was passionate to the wide study of books as he preferred to purchase books, rather than food, fruits and so on. He was not satisfied with the book he brought himself rather he studied many of the books. Some of these books were on the duties and worship and some other were in the history, particularly on the history of prophet (PBUH) and the life history of great nobleman. He studied English literature as a whole particularly the poetry and got benefit to a large extent from the collection of Golden Treasury which is a famous collection of English poetry. He was benefitted by the thought of the School of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Hazlitt. As a result, he was able to write the

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influence of English literature on modern Arabic poetry. He was influenced by English lyrical poetry in general particularly by the English romantic imagination in Arabic verse. The new movement was a great impact on his poetical works.

#### **Philosophical thought of al-Aqqad :**

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad studied the western philosophy and adapted it in Arabic philosophy; so, we find the Arabic thought and western philosophy in his writings and also find that he bounded with the sides of philosophy and thought. He is said to have settled permanently in Cairo at that point, having lived and worked in various cities throughout Egypt. His first professional writing was reportedly as a journalist, he became an editor of the newspaper *Al-Dustur* in 1907 and *Al-Bayan* in 1911 and then he became the first Egyptian journalist to interview Sa'd Zaghlul, a nationalist leader of modern Egypt. Al-Aqqad perhaps, driven to writing as a primary method of intellectual self expression. One of the earliest themes of his written works was freedom of thought and expression which under threat from political and religious repressive force in Egypt in the early 20th century. Although he worked as writer for living, he wrote during his spare time as well and in 1915, he published his first *Diwan* (collection of poems) entitled *Bit and pieces and Shazarat*. The following years the 37 year old Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad published *Yagzat al-Sabah* a political commentary in poetic form also as a philosopher. He criticized his own strain of existences which he would come to call universal consciousness. He died in 1964.

On philosophical thought al-Aqqad wrote more than hundred books. His most famous philosophical books are *al-Abqariyat*, a series of book on geniuses' of Islam started with *Al-Abqariyat Muhammad*; a book on Islamic theology namely Allah and a novel *Sarah*. Some of his books were translated into English, French and other leading languages of the world. He was known for his use of ornamental and complicated prose style.

Al-Aqqad was greatly influenced by the reforming ideas of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and became his ardent follower and disciple, trying to emulate his voice and character, and expanding his effort and struggle. Al-Aqqad's world of socio-political activism has broadened his philosophical enquiry to embrace thinking, theology, law, social and political science and mysticism, which strengthen the radical change and the reform in Arab intellectual domain.

Al-Aqqad himself was an intellectual and liberal character. He had a strong influence on Syed Qutb's thought, especially on literary views, socio-political issues and Islam, whom he clearly mentioned in many of his writings. Al-Aqqad wrote some poetical collections starting from 1916, and indulged into many intellectual confrontations against numerous well-known Egyptian thinkers caring his principles about poetry and literature. Recognizing the intellectual efficiency of al-Aqqad his disciple Syed Qutb

has mentioned that al-Aqqad was a man of pure intellect; he would only examine a problem through reason and intellect, so, he (Syed Qutb) should proceeded to quench his thirst at other springs nearer the spirit. He then took the trouble to study the poetry of Orientals such as Tagore. He used to believe that someone likes al-Aqqad, with his great wisdom and personality, would not submit to such necessities and confusions as the government and the authorities, but he reconciled himself to them.

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad concurs with the former Sheikh of al-Azhar Mahmoud Chaltout in rejecting the association of the Qur'an with modern scientific theories. In this regard he said that all that the Muslim needed to believe in is that the Holy Quran urges him to reflect and seek the truth. It does not enjoin against pondering the secrets of existence and the mysteries of the unknown, of whatever nature it is. It does not order him to create affinities between Qur'anic texts and scientific theories that appear to be definite when they emerge and soon after seem to be flawed or in need of amendment. It does not either instruct him to align the laws explained by science with those approximated by the mind to understand universal issues at their beginnings and as they meander into the depths of the unknown. We must not consider, neither by reason nor by faith, that a day when attributed to God or to the age of the universe, can be perceived as a day in the life of man before he came into existence and before the creation of the earth. We are requested to understand the Holy Qur'an, to ponder, and in pondering put to contribution the sciences of our age. But we are not requested at any time to make our faith conditional upon the interpretations of scientific theories as these never settle for any stretch of time on an explanation that is not open to reversal, change or amendment. The Holy Qur'an is the Heavens ultimate message and Allah's eternal book until the Day of Judgment. It is a book for yesterday, tomorrow and all times. This eternal attributed makes the Holy Qur'an an all-time constitution for humanity to believe in, understand and unravel its secrets a generation after another.

The two opposing groups of pro-women and anti-women tendencies in Islamic theology and jurisprudence had their champions in Fatima Mernisi of Morocco, and Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad of Egypt, respectively. Al-Aqqad expresses his total contempt for women of all societies by denying them any role other than raising children. According to al-Aqqad, women have never been a source of ethics or good conduct and men are the sole source of these things. Syed Qutb refutes al-Aqqad's hostile opinion against women by asserting the distinction in their primordial nature has no inherent value so far as their capacity to act or think.

Regarding the extensive meaning of literature al-Aqqad is considered as a philosophical author, the philosophy in old and present days. If the philosophy of old and modern days is taken into consideration then, al-Aqqad is the perfect writer with strength of evidence and easy of opinion and a poet full of sensibility with imagination along with this two

external adjective in his literature. He was a thoughtful man with a markfull brain and a person of letters. He divided into the reality of universe and narrating the interpretation of history. He was among the limited thinkers like Zoster, Tolstoy and Tagore. Dush Haksili could not differentiate between their literature and philosophy because their literature was of conscious in its stage. He did not exert the Arabic literature only but also the Western literature in splendid manner. He got the national prize in literature considering his activities and contribution to literature in 1960.

### Conclusion :

Al-Aqqad's position was between the philosophy of poets in one side and philosophy of critics on the other side. He was away from the style of artificiality and philosophy of Al-Misal who gave importance on Plato and on the style of Al-Hads and philosophy Al-Zawahar to the philosopher of Dikar in the style of criticism and philosophy of Al-Ta'ali' who followed the philosophy of Kant which was close to the philosophy Al-Mu'arri and Tagore and in the judgment of Iqbal whatever relate to piousness his view was that the sense organ and the intellectual together are not enough to reach the reality of large universe but the way from cosmic consciousness to emotional power which is followed by the pious persons in their test and existence. The tools of philosophy accomplishes when the power of innovation the justification and relationship among the natural pure sense organs gathered together to purify the general tools to reach the themes of internal life, the life of consciousness in different general direction the thought of al-Aqqad witness him to be a philosopher.

For his philosophical thought, al-Aqqad was honoured by the college of Arabic language of Azhar University naming one of the halls of the college after him. Prof. Ismat Mahdi has stated that for his service to literature al-Aqqad was awarded the State Prize Al-Ja'iza al-Dawliya in 1960." In the early 1980s, an Egyptian television series was produced about the life of al-Aqqad, which was titled Al-Imlaq (The Giant).

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