
Aḥmad Shawqī's Poetic Legacy: Unveiling the Symbolism and Nationalistic Themes in His Magnum Opus

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Abstract

This research paper comprehensively explores the multifaceted legacy of Aḥmad Shawqī, a prominent Egyptian poet and literary figure pivotal in the 19th-century literary landscape. Renowned for his poetic prowess marked by profound depth, captivating beauty, and intense passion, Shawqī's contributions transcend traditional boundaries, profoundly impacting Arabic literature.

The study delves into the thematic richness of Shawqī's works, encompassing diverse subjects, from expressions of love and nationalism to profound reflections on faith and spirituality. His nationalistic poems, like "I have ridden on the coals of anger thousands of times," reveal deep-seated frustrations with foreign colonization and the political unrest of his time. Beyond his poetic endeavours, the paper thoroughly examines Shawqī's active involvement in public and political life, highlighting his instrumental role in the Egyptian national movement against British colonization. This involvement underscores the poet's multidimensional impact, extending to literary criticism, where he advocated for the renewal of literary forms and global cultural awareness.

Furthermore, the research delves into Shawqī's scholarly interest in history and ancient Arabic literature, shedding light on how his unique ability to infuse classical poetry with a modern touch garnered widespread respect from intellectuals. The study also emphasizes the ongoing popularity of Shawqī's poems, both within the Arab world and internationally, evidenced by translations into various languages, serving to disseminate his literary legacy globally. Shawqī's poems are recognized not only as artistic expressions but also as a significant cultural and historical

record, reflecting the spirit of his era and addressing universal themes resonating across time and borders.

The research underscores Aḥmad Shawqī's enduring significance as a literary and political icon, portraying him as a multifaceted figure whose work continues to inspire contemporary poets and enrich the cultural identity of the Arab world, contributing to his lasting legacy.

Keywords: Aḥmad Shawqī, Arabic literature, Nationalism, Poetry, Cultural legacy, Egyptian national movement etc.

Introduction:

Aḥmad Shawqī stands out as one of the eminent poets and literary figures in Egypt and the Arab world during the 19th century. Born on October 23, 1868, in Cairo's Amiriyah district, he passed away on October 28, 1932. Regarded as a trailblazer of the literary and cultural renaissance in Egypt, Shawqī left an indelible impact on Arabic poetry and literature. His poems are characterized by profound depth, exquisite beauty, and fervent passion, wielding a profound influence on subsequent generations of poets. Themes of love, nationalism, Arab identity, and faith permeate his work, distinguished by a refined poetic style and an artistic mastery of the Arabic language.

Aḥmad Shawqī gained widespread recognition for his nationalistic poems, exemplified by *Rakibtu 'Ala Jamr al-Ghaḍab Ulūfā* (I have ridden on the coals of anger thousands of times), where he articulated his anger and frustration towards foreign colonization and the political circumstances of his era. Additionally, his romantic poems, including *Amā bi-Rahīlika* (As You Depart) and *Al-Maḥbūba* (The Beloved), have become renowned for eloquently conveying emotions of love, separation, and the poignant experience of pain.

Beyond his contributions to poetry, Shawqī played an active and influential role in public and political life. Holding various government positions, he became a proactive participant in the Egyptian national movement. His influence extended into the realm of literary criticism, where he offered unique and valuable insights to the cultural dialogue of his time. Emphasizing the importance of literary renewal, Shawqī underscored the necessity of staying abreast of global cultural and literary developments.

Aḥmad Shawqī's multifaceted contributions encompassed not only his poetic brilliance but also his engagement in shaping the socio-political landscape. His legacy endures as a testament to the enduring power of literature to influence cultural and national identity.

Aḥmad Shawqī's diverse interests extended beyond poetry, encompassing a profound fascination with history and ancient Arabic literature. Drawing inspiration from revered poets and writers such as Abū Tayyīb al-Mutanabbī and Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, Shawqī demonstrated a remarkable ability to renew classical poetry, infusing it with a modern touch that garnered respect from intellectuals of his time.

Influenced by Islamic Sufism and philosophy, Shawqī's poetry occasionally delved into spiritual themes, exploring the quest for spiritual truth. His repertoire also included religious poems reflecting his deep faith and adherence to Islamic teachings.

In addition to his literary and critical contributions, Aḥmad Shawqī led a captivating personal life, serving as a cultural exemplar for intellectuals of his era. Having been married twice,

first to Rûzînâ al-Bayâtî and later to Jamîla Sulaimân, both from prestigious families in Cairo, Shawqî exemplified the refinement expected of cultured individuals.

In the public sphere, Shawqî emerged as a beloved and renowned figure, surrounded by writers, artists, and thinkers of his time. His role in directing culture and nurturing young talents extended to offering lectures and participating in public debates. Despite his identity as a poet and writer, he wielded a powerful and influential voice in the political arena. Actively participating in the Egyptian national movement against British colonization, Shawqî passionately advocated for freedom and social justice.

Aḥmad Shawqî's legacy transcends his literary contributions, portraying him as a multifaceted figure who left an indelible mark on both literature and politics.

His poems continue to resonate, enjoying significant popularity in the Arab world. Characterized by profound meanings, emotional impact, and expressive power, Shawqî's poems have been translated into numerous foreign languages, contributing to the global dissemination of his literary legacy. His poetry holds widespread appeal in the Arab world, forming an integral part of the Arab literary heritage. Distinguished by depth, beauty, and emotional intensity, his poems resonate with readers, conveying feelings of love, nostalgia, and national pride, while addressing issues of life, death, and spirituality in a poignant manner.

Translations into English, French, German, Spanish, and other languages have expanded the reach of Shawqî's literary legacy, making his works accessible to a global audience and endearing him to literature enthusiasts worldwide. His poetry stands out for its expressive power and captivating poetic imagery, influencing poets and writers across the Arab world. The new generations encounter his poems through educational curricula in schools and universities, serving as a continued source of inspiration for contemporary poets and writers.

In addition, Shawqî's poems reflect the spirit of the era in which he lived, expressing the aspirations of the people and the challenges of that time. They serve as a historical and cultural record, underscoring the importance of literature and poetry in shaping cultural and national identity.

Aḥmad Shawqî's poetry remains a testament to the enduring significance of literature in capturing the essence of a people and their collective experiences. As a prominent Egyptian poet and literary figure, he has left an indelible mark on Arabic literature. His beautiful, emotional, and patriotic poems continue to inspire new generations, reminding us of the importance of freedom, love, and nationalism. Aḥmad Shawqî stands as a shining personality in the world of Arabic literature, making significant contributions that serve as a model for refined writers and critical thinkers. His impact and literary legacy persist in inspiring contemporary generations of poets and writers, enriching Arab culture with his timeless works.

Although Aḥmad Shawqî passed away in 1932, his literary influence and legacy remain present to this day. Shawqî is considered a symbol of classical Arabic literature, enriching the cultural landscape with his exquisite works. His poems serve as a valuable reference for students, researchers, and literature enthusiasts, being studied in Arab schools and universities. Aḥmad Shawqî's death marked the end of his physical presence, but his literary contributions have

immortalized him as a significant figure in the history of Arabic literature. His enduring impact underscores the timeless relevance of his poetry and its continued importance in shaping the cultural and literary landscape of the Arab world.¹

Description:

Aḥmad Shawqī stands as a prominent figure in modern poetry, recognized as one of the preeminent literary talents in history. Bestowed with the title of the Prince of Poets (*Amīr al-Shu‘arā’*), he earned this accolade through a remarkable career that unfolded over more than four decades. Shawqī's impact on poetic art is extensive, influencing linguistic nuances, cultural expressions, intellectual currents, and even the emotional and national facets of his audience. Notably, his engagement extended beyond poetry, delving into Arab literary drama, and leaving an imprint on the realm of singing.

In fact, Aḥmad Shawqī's literary legacy is vast, comprising a rich collection of both poetry and prose. An exploration of his works unveils his adeptness at portraying the events of his era, capturing the essence of the surrounding environment, and offering glimpses into his personal experiences. His writings are a testament to a profound cultural background and progressive ideals, emphasizing the need for perpetual renewal and development.²

His Birth and Early Life:

Aḥmad bin ‘Ali bin Aḥmad Shawqī was born on the 20th of Rajab, 1287 A.H. corresponding to the 16th of October, 1868, in the Heliopolis district of Old Cairo. His father was of Kurdish descent, and his mother had Turkish-Circassian roots. His maternal grandmother served as a maid in the palace of Khedive Ismā‘il and enjoyed considerable wealth, undertaking the responsibility of his upbringing. He was raised in the palace by his grandmother.

At the age of four, Shawqī joined the "Kuttab of Shaykh Ṣālih" in the Sayyīda Zainab neighbourhood, where he memorized some verses from the Quran and learned the basics of reading and writing. He later entered the elementary school, known as "Madrasat al-Mubtadiyan," where he displayed exceptional talent. In recognition of his abilities, he was exempted from school fees. Shawqī immersed himself in the works of Arab poets, committing them to memory and reciting them with eloquence.

His Education:

At the age of fifteen, Shawqī enrolled in the School of Law and Translation, later becoming the Faculty of Law. After graduating, he travelled to France in 1887, sponsored by the Ottoman Khedive of Egypt, Tawfiq Pasha. In France, he pursued legal studies at Montpellier, delving into the masterpieces of French literature. He returned to Egypt in 1891.

His Occupations and Responsibilities:

Upon his return from France, Shawqī was appointed as the head of the French section in the Dīwān of Khedive Abbās Hilmī. In 1896, he was delegated to represent the Egyptian government at the Orientalists' Conference held in Geneva, Switzerland.

His Literary Experience:

Shawqī's poetic talents began to garner attention while he was still a law student. Even during his time in France, he consistently sent poems praising Khedive Tawfiq. Upon his return to Egypt, he

became the "Poet of the Palace" (*Shâ'ir al-Qaṣr*), closely associated with Khedive 'Abbâs Ḥilmî, who assumed power after the death of his father, Tawfiq. Shawqî's influence was threatened by the dominance of the British occupiers.

Critics attribute Shawqî's allegiance to the Khedive to several factors. One key reason is the Khedive's role as a benefactor, offering patronage and support to Shawqî. Additionally, religious motivation played a significant role, as poets felt compelled to defend the Ottoman Caliphate, considering it an Islamic caliphate.

Shawqî strongly condemned the British occupation of Egypt, resulting in his exile to Spain in 1914. During his time in exile, he delved into Arabic literature and explored the facets of Islamic civilization in Andalusia. This experience inspired him to compose numerous poetic masterpieces that praised these cultural elements. His verses often expressed a deep sense of nostalgia for his homeland, Egypt, and he returned there after spending four years in exile.

Many consider Shawqî to possess a rich imagination, sincere emotion, and vivid sentiments. He was a poet of exceptional talent, continuing the mission initiated by the Egyptian poet Maḥmûd Sâmi Al-Bârûdî to revive Arabic poetry and restore it to its elevated status in its golden ages. However, the critical school led by the likes of Professor Sayyid Quṭb targeted Shawqî and his poetry, directing painful insults towards them.

Shawqî, one of the most prolific Arab poets, wrote over 23,500 lines of poetry. In 1927, all Arab poets collectively bestowed upon him the title "Prince of Poets" (*Amîr al-Shu'arâ*) in a grand ceremony held in Cairo. Following this, Shawqî turned his attention to dramatic poetry, becoming its foremost exponent at the Arab level.

His collected works are compiled in the "*Shawqiyât*," which was published in four parts. Dr. Muhammad al-Sarbûnî later gathered poems not included in the original collection into two volumes titled *Al-Shawqiyât al-Majhûla* (The Unknown Shawqiyât).

Renowned as the Prince of Poets (*Amîr al-Shu'arâ*), Aḥmad Shawqî gained fame for his poetry on social and national occasions, as well as for his religious poetry, including *Nahj al-Burda* (The Path of Al-Burda), *al-Hamziyya al-Nababiyya* (The Hamziyya of the Prophet), and *Salû Qalbî* (Ask My Heart). He composed a long narrative poem titled *Duwal al-'Arab wa 'Uḡamâ' al-Islâm* (Countries of the Arabs and the Greats of Islam), consisting of 1726 lines, during his exile in Andalusia.

Shawqî authored numerous poetic plays such as *Maṣra' Kiliobatrâ* (The Death of Cleopatra), *Majnûn Laylâ* (Layla's Madman), "Qambîz, 'Ali Bek Kabîr (Ali Pasha the Great), *Amîra al-Andalus* (Princess of Spain), 'Antara (Antara)," *Al-Sitt Hudâ* (Lady Huda), *Al-Bakhîla* (The Miser), and *Shari'a al-Ghâb* (Shari'a of the Forest). He also wrote novels, including *Al-Fira'ûn al-Akhîr* (The Last Pharaoh) and 'Adhrâ' al-Hind (The Virgin of India), and ventured into prose with the book *Aswâq al-Dhahab* (Gold Markets) adopting the style of literary *maqamât*.

His Death:

Aḥmad Shawqî, the Prince of Poets (*Amîr al-Shu'arâ*), passed away on the 14th of Jumâdâ al-Akhirah, 1351 AH, corresponding to October 14, 1932, after completing an extended poem

commemorating the *Mashrû' al-Qirsh* (Shark Project), which symbolized the youth-led revival in Egypt during that period.³

Shawqî as a Poet Laureate:

After his return, Shawqî emerged as the poet laureate of the nation, expressing its issues and never missing a patriotic occasion to contribute his verses. The nation received him with great appreciation, elevating him to a high status. His fellow poets acknowledged him as the leader of poetry in the year 1927 A.D. during a ceremony held at the Opera House to celebrate his appointment as a member of the Senate and the reissue of his collection "*Al-Shawqiyât*." The event was attended by delegations of Arab literary figures and poets. Hafiz Ibrahim declared their allegiance to him as the leader of poetry, of which translated version goes as follows:

"O nightingales of the Nile Valley in the East, sing praises,
With the poetry of the prince of the two realms, let your melodies soar.
Reintroduce to the ears what Shawqî eloquently composed,
In the artistry of his beginnings and the finesse of his stanzas.
Prince of eloquent verses, I have come to pledge allegiance,
And here, the delegations of the East have pledged with me."⁴

Position of Shawqî:

It must be admitted that the Almighty God endowed Shawqî with a brilliant poetic talent, a fluid and instinctive eloquence that effortlessly wove verses where meanings flowed like rainfall. Whether strolling or seated among companions, he appeared physically present yet mentally distant. This is why he stands out as one of the most prolific poets in the Arabic language, with a poetic output surpassing twenty-three thousand five hundred lines—an achievement unparalleled by any ancient or contemporary Arab poet.

Shawqî was a versatile intellectual, immersing himself in the study of Arabic poetry during its flourishing periods. He associated with its eminent poets and maintained a keen interest in language and literature, possessing a prodigious memory that effortlessly retained what he read. It was said that he memorized entire sections of certain dictionaries, and his passion for history was evident in his poems, which often included historical references known only to those deeply versed in the study of history. His masterpiece, "The Great Events in the Nile Valley," composed in his youth, attests to his extensive knowledge of both ancient and modern history.

He possessed a refined linguistic sensibility and a musical intuition for selecting words that harmonized, creating a melody that evoked joy and captivated listeners. His poetry emerged as a pure and magnificent tune, a rarity matched by only a few Arabic poets.

In addition to his deep connection with Arabic culture, Shawqî mastered French, enabling him to explore its literature, draw inspiration from its poets, and introduce new elements to Arabic poetry. This influence is evident in some of his works, including his pioneering efforts in poetic drama in Arabic literature.

Shawqî composed Arabic poetry for various purposes, such as praise, elegies, love poetry, description, and wisdom. His brilliant verses elevated him to the summit of Arabic poetry. He also left prose writings at the beginning of his literary career, including "Virgin of India" (*'Adhrâ' al-*

Hind), and "Gold Markets" (*Aswâq al-Dhahab*). In these works, he engaged with Al-Zamakhshari's (*Atwâq al-Dhahab*), incorporating prevalent moral admonitions into concise and poetic expressions.

He compiled his lyrical poetry into a collection called "*Al-Shawqiyât*," and Dr. Muhammad Şabrî Al-Sirbûnî later gathered the poems not included in this collection, creating a new anthology in two volumes titled "The Unknown Shawqiyat." ⁵

A brief introduction to his Anthology *Al-Shawqiyât*:

In the midst of a diverse political and social landscape marked by tension and change, the poet Ahmad Shawqî emerged, sculpted by his environment, a reflection of which can be found in his poetic works, capturing the intricate shifts and contradictions of his surroundings. Each factor, whether political or social, etched a profound impact on both his life and poetry. Despite Shawqî's educational journey through Egypt and later Europe, where European society and poetry left an indelible mark on him, the echoes of his upbringing resonated in both his life and poetic expressions. Examining parts of his collection, one is seemingly confronted with two distinct individuals, disconnected yet both revered poets ascending to the highest realms, sharing an unwavering devotion to Egypt, bordering on sanctity and worship.

Beyond this apparent duality, one persona stands apart—the devout believer, a Muslim sanctifying Muslim brotherhood, envisioning the caliphate as sacred, influencing every facet of life, including poetry. A sage who perceives wisdom as life's essence, preserving language and acknowledging Arabic's expansiveness to encompass every conceivable form, meaning, idea, and imagination. The other persona represents a worldly man, viewing life's pleasures and joys as the ultimate goals of existence, tolerant of human nature and embracing the entirety of existence while satirizing people and their aspirations. Shawqî's poetry encapsulates this duality from his youth to the twilight of his life.

In fact, this volume, organized around themes curreted by the poet, comprises two parts. The first delves into politics, history, and society, while the second explores relationships and encompasses various miscellaneous topics. The second volume features Shawqî's poetry, with the initial part dedicated to miscellaneous beliefs praising notable figures of his time. The subsequent section includes diverse pieces on politics, history, and society; prescribed (formal) poetry; tales; a children's collection; poetry of adolescence, and finally, the concealed poems. ⁶

Symbolism in the Poetry of Shawqî (*al-Ramziya fî Shi'r Shawqî*):

Symbolism in modern Arabic poetry is characterized as a literary and artistic trend where imagination takes precedence over other elements. This dominance transforms the symbol into a semantic reference encompassing a spectrum of intellectual meanings and emotional nuances. Symbolism has gained prominence in the contemporary era, giving rise to a new poetic style, particularly in free verse or modern poetry. It is prominently featured in the works of numerous writers and pioneers, including Nâzik Al-Malâika, Badr Shâkir Al-Sayyâb, 'Abd al-Wahâb Al-Bayyâtî, Şalâh 'Abd al-Şabûr, 'Abd al-Rahman Shukrî, Ahmad Zakî Abû Shâdî, Adonis, Amal Dunqul, and others. In their poetry, symbolism transcends mere phenomena, engaging with the essence of things, diverging language from its ordinary meanings. Within their literary creations,

language serves as both a sign and a hidden conduit, alluding to latent dimensions beyond the textual surface.⁷

The emergence of Symbolist poetry was a crystallization of the Arab Renaissance movement. The aesthetic philosophy of modern Symbolist poetry fundamentally differs from other poetic schools, relying on the poet's personal experience and granting them the freedom to use language. The poet is empowered to establish their own aesthetic standards. This renewal was comprehensive, impacting various aspects of modern Arabic poetry. Poets focused on linguistic innovation, adopting new techniques that aligned with the spirit of the era. The contemporary poets' connection to the events they witnessed led to significant interaction with them. The characteristic of modern Arabic poetry is the introduction of mystery, a result of using symbols in poetry.

Modern poetry thrives on limitless experimentation, marked by intricate complexities that demand thorough analysis and interpretation. The revitalization of modern Arabic poetry through the incorporation of symbols has given rise to a fresh paradigm in Arabic poetic expression, breaking free from the aesthetic norms of ancient Arabic poetry. The roots of symbolism in Arabic poetry can be traced back to the verses of Gibran Khalil Gibran. While some critics attribute the early introduction of symbolic elements to Mikhail Nu'aima and Ilya Abû Mâdî, the prevailing consensus identifies Gibran Khalil Gibran as the pioneer of the Symbolist school in modern Arabic poetry. His innovation in poetic expressions, such as the winged self and the field of the heart, along with his use of a dialogical movement inspired by ancient civilizations like the Greeks, solidify his foundational role in the Symbolist approach.⁸

It has been observed that some poets used to employ symbolism in their versification for drawing reality in social, political, and religious aspects, which can be done easily and away from complexity, making it understandable for everyone, educated or simple. In fact, poet present stories through the voices of animals in meaningful and wise frameworks. Animals in the stories serve as symbols; for example: The Fox symbolizes cunningness, the lion is meant for power and authority, while a horse represents the issue of arrogance, and a wolf is token of greed and betrayal and the list goes on. In this respect, we may cite the translated version as follows:

The lion is the king of the infidels,
And the deserts cannot hold him.
Once, the subjects sought refuge with him,
On a day of complete surrender.
They said, "Live on and endure, O blood-shedder!
The minister died, so who now
Will govern the affairs of the wild?"
The donkey said, "I am your minister,
He chose me for this role."
She laughed and then said,
"What did he see in the donkey?"
She left him and flew away,

Spreading the amusing news.
 Until, when the month departed,
 Whether it was night or day,
 The lion only realized
 That his kingdom was in ruin.
 The monkey was on his right,
 And the dog on his left.
 The cat, between his hands,
 Played with a mouse's bone.
 Then, one within his boundaries,
 Like me, devoid of dignity,
 Said, "Where is my power,
 My might, my majesty,
 And my esteem?"
 Then, the monkey secretly approached,
 And said, after an apology,
 "O lofty one among us,
 Be lofty in your gaze."⁹

Furthermore, it has been observed that the poet Aḥmad Shawqī, employs symbolism in his poems aimed even at children, and one such poem is 'The Nation of the Elephant and the Rabbits' (*Umma al-Fīl wa al-Arānīb*). The symbolism in this poem represents an intriguing vision of the world and life through a unique and enjoyable journey. The elephant symbolizes greatness and strength, while the rabbits symbolize vitality and activity." In this connection, a translated version of Aḥmad Shawqī is brought for consideration as follows:

"They tell the tale that the nation of rabbits
 Has taken from the soil beside,
 Rejoicing in the generous homeland,
 The dwelling place of families and women.
 The elephant chose for them a path,
 Tearing our companions apart.
 Among them was a clever rabbit,
 His wool gone through experimentation.
 He called out to them, O assembly of rabbits,
 From a knowledgeable, poetic, and writer.
 Unite against the dry enemy,
 For unity is the strength of the weak."¹⁰

The verses describe a narrative where the nation of rabbits has taken a portion of the land, finding joy in their homeland and the place of residence for families and women. The elephant chooses a path for them, causing discord among their companions. A clever rabbit, having

experimented with losing all his wool, calls upon the assembly of rabbits, urging them to unite against a common, dry enemy. The verses emphasize the strength of unity in the face of adversity.

Here it is worth mentioning that the rabbit represents the colonized Arab nations, and the elephant symbolizes the oppressive power used against those nations. The poem calls for the unity of these countries, suggesting that through such unity, the oppressive force will be defeated. Similarly, in the same poem, Shawqî uses the fox as another symbol for a different colonizer that covets our nation, of which translated version goes as follows:

"The rabbits spoke eloquently, saying:

'This is more harmful than the worst of horrors.

The second one leaped and said,

I pledge allegiance to the fox, the master of cunning.

Let us allow him to enlighten us with his wisdom

And reward him with two in return for his service.

It was said, No, O noble one,

The enemy is not repelled by another enemy."¹¹

Shawqî's National Poetry:

In fact that the poetry related to nationalism almost seems to be a landmark in the realm of modern Arabic literature. It begins by contextualizing the emergence of national poetry, attributing its departure from traditional forms to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The shift from panegyric poetry to a more populist and nationally-oriented theme, exemplified by poets like Al-Barûdî and Ahmad Shawqî, is acknowledged as a breakthrough in Arabic poetry.

It has been observed that national poetry emphasizes its roots in the early stages of national consciousness and resistance to occupation. The focus on the occupied homeland, its history, and ancient glories becomes a recurring theme, reflecting sentiments of nostalgia, pride, and a commitment to liberation and dignity. The passage notes that national poetry, inherently political, originated during the colonial period and served as a tool for liberation.

The discussion on the concept of "pride" in national poetry adds depth to the understanding of this genre. Pride, both personal and ancestral, is explored as a significant thematic element, blending tribal and national pride. The text raises awareness of how this pride, when emphasized, can border on latent racism, showcasing the complexity of identity within national poetry.

The national poetry also asserts origin, ethnicity, and history of a great nation. It positions nationalism as the assertion of everything embodied by the nation and its homeland, particularly in relation to its past. Anything less than a full affirmation is seen as a potential stigma or betrayal, creating a sense of urgency and competition with the occupier.

The evolution of national poetry is traced through influential poets such as Maḥmûd Sâmi Al-Bârûdî and Aḥmad Shawqî, marking a rich period of nationalist sentiments against Ottoman rule and Western dominance. The discussion extends to the Palestinian catastrophe, which revitalized and evolved national poetry, adding a layer of painful nostalgia to the genre.¹²

National poetry is defined as a modern genre within Arabic poetry, with its themes primarily revolving around the homeland. The poet praises the homeland for its beauty and majesty, mourns its tragedies, immortalizes its heroes, and exposes its enemies. It goes beyond mere spatial connection to encompass emotional and spiritual bonds, to the extent that a reader might initially mistake the poem for a romantic ode. Human values constitute a fundamental pillar of the content of national poetry. These values are encapsulated in the advocacy for freedom and independence, defending the homeland, and rejecting humiliation and subservience. Undoubtedly, these themes sharpen the resolve of citizens, especially the youth. In this article, we will delve into these aspects in some detail.

The role of national poetry in uplifting spirits lies in exposing the facets of corruption and unveiling the crimes of the colonizer, igniting fervour in the hearts of the youth to demand freedom, independence, and resist the steps of the enemy. It incites citizens to defend the homeland, sacrificing their wealth, lives, family, and children, as the homeland is more precious than all of these. It shapes the conscience of the people and their emotional stance towards contemporary events in the political arena. It awakens the dormant conscience within every individual by nature. It increases the people's confidence in their ability to bring about change and reform for a dignified life. It directs the energy of the youth towards jihad and resistance, steering them away from surrender and acceptance of the status quo.¹³

It has been observed that the poet Aḥmad Shawqī stressed the importance of the national and social issues during his life time, and versified on different issues of his motherland. To evaluate the definition of freedom, Aḥmad Shawqī says as follows:

"O seeker, what is freedom?

You asked about the precious gem, Saniyya,

That illuminates pure and noble souls for us,

Oh, the blessing of life lies in freedom,

A pure and untainted delight;

It instils in our hearts a sense of protection,

Infusing them with resolute determination,

It confronts worldly challenges.

And embraces elevated abodes;

All the glory lies in freedom."¹⁴

In fact, the verses of Shawqī expresses the concern for the oppression faced by women, conveying a poignant message about the need for support and advocacy for the oppressed, particularly women facing injustice. In support of the above stand point, the poet Aḥmad Shawqī says as follows:

"Men have oppressed their women and acted unjustly,

Do the women in Egypt have any supporters?

O people of the Scriptures, where is your righteousness?

Where is the clarity and the correctness of thoughts?

Are you indifferent, and does it not concern you

The construction of morals without a foundation?

I have news about the oppression of free women among you,
A story that stirs the consciences of the free."¹⁵

The poet Aḥmad Shawqî gave admonition to the women of Egypt for getting out into a broader world, having a comparison with a bird which strives to escape from the cage into the vast sky. In this connection, he says as follows:

"O bird, if it were not for your determination to fly,
I would say: Stay; I told you to reconsider.
Listen, perhaps a patient approach will benefit you;
Beauty alone will not avail you.
Endure what you suffer
Or what appears difficult to you;
If you fly away from my protection,
you may fall into the vultures of ignorance." ¹⁶

For upliftment of education in Egypt, Shawqî reminds the value and importance, responsibility and national commitment to the people of Egypt. In this connection, we may underscore the following translation of Shawqî's verses:

"Stand up in honour of the teacher, and show him respect;
the teacher almost resembles a messenger.
Did you teach anyone more noble or greater
In constructing and nurturing minds and intellects?
Glory be to you, O Allah, the best of teachers;
You taught with the pen in the earliest generations.
You brought this mind out of its darkness;
And guided it with clear light on the right path.
You stamped it with the hand of the teacher;
sometimes like the clang of iron, and sometimes polished.
You sent Moses as a guide with the Torah;
And the son of Mary taught the Gospel." ¹⁷

Furthermore, it appears from the verses of Ahmad Shawqî that he conveys a message of collective strength, unity, and a reliance on faith in the pursuit of common goals in overall social aspects. In this respect, we may mention the following translated version of Aḥmad Shawqî:

"Rise, unite the tribe of fatherhood, and elevate
The voice of youth, beloved and accepted.
How distant are the goals? Except that
I find Firmness for you in them as a guarantee.
So, entrust success to Allah and strive,
For Allah is the best guardian and advocate." ¹⁸

It appears from his life achievements that Arab poets pledged allegiance to the excellence of Aḥmad Shawqî as prince of poets in 1927. Following this period, Aḥmad Shawqî devoted

himself to poetic theatre to the great extent. In this reference, we find the finest poem of Aḥmad Shawqī about the homeland as follows:

"O my homeland, I found you after despair,
As if I have found youth in you.
Every traveller will return one day,
When granted safety and the journey back.
If I were invited, I would consider it a duty,
To respond with the inevitable and accepted.
I turn my face toward you before the house,
When I understand witnessing and the oath." ¹⁹

Ahmed Shawqī's legacy remains highly relevant today, not just in Egypt but across the entire Arab world. His poetry continues to strike a chord with many, tackling themes of freedom, justice, and national dignity. Beyond its poetic excellence, Shawqī's contributions to the evolution of modern Arabic poetry and his endeavours to promote Arabic literature globally are commendable. His works have been translated into numerous languages, enjoying widespread readership and appreciation across diverse cultural backgrounds.

Shawqī's influence transcends the boundaries of poetry; he served as an inspiration for poets and writers, urging them to emulate his path and utilize their writings as a vehicle for social and political change. As a staunch nationalist and advocate for independence, his legacy extends into the realms of education, culture, and the arts, underscoring their crucial role in forging resilient and united nations. Presently, his ideas and values continue to hold relevance, particularly motivating the youth navigating the complexities of social and political transformations in their respective countries.

In a world still contending with issues of inequality, injustice, and oppression, Shawqī's legacy stands as a poignant reminder of the transformative potential embedded in the union of poetry and nationalism, shaping our collective future.

Findings:

1. The poet Aḥmad Shawqī proved himself as a trailblazer in Arabic poetry and literature with a lasting impact on subsequent generations of poets.
2. He covered diverse themes, including love, nationalism, Arab identity, faith, and spirituality.
3. His notable works such as "Rakibtu 'Alâ Jamr al-Ghaḍab Ulûfâ" express frustration with foreign colonization, while romantic poems like "Amâ bi-Rahîlika" and "Al-Maḥbûba" showcase his versatile range.
4. He actively participated in public and political life, holding various government positions.
5. He played a role in the Egyptian national movement against British colonization.
6. He advocated for freedom, social justice, and used his influence to shape the socio-political landscape.
7. He made extensive contributions beyond poetry to literary criticism, a fascination with history, and ancient Arabic literature.

8. He was engaged in cultural dialogue, emphasizing the importance of staying informed about global cultural and literary developments.
9. He was influenced by Islamic Sufism and philosophy, and his poetry delved into spiritual themes, exploring the quest for spiritual truth. And he wrote religious poems reflecting deep faith and adherence to Islamic teachings.
10. He led a captivating personal life, being married twice to women from prestigious families in Cairo.
11. His educational journey included legal studies in France, immersing himself in French literature.
12. He faced exile to Spain in 1914 due to strong condemnation of British occupation, exploring Arabic literature and Andalusian civilization during exile.
13. His poems have been translated into numerous languages, expanding the reach of his literary legacy globally.
14. His poetry continues to resonate, addressing universal themes and emotions, and is studied in schools and universities.
15. He is considered a symbol of classical Arabic literature, known as the "Prince of Poets" (*Amîr al-Shu'arâ*). As such, he received widespread recognition for both his literary and political contributions.
16. His anthology entitled *Al-Shawqîyât* reflects two distinct personas: one focused on politics, history, and society, and the other exploring relationships and miscellaneous topics, addressing both worldly pleasures and the sanctity of Muslim brotherhood and the caliphate.
17. Posthumous Recognition: Even after his death in 1932, Aḥmad Shawqî's literary influence and legacy persist, with continued recognition as a symbol of classical Arabic literature.

Conclusion:

Aḥmad Shawqî, born in 1868 and passing away in 1932, stands as a towering figure in the realm of Arabic literature, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural and political landscape of his time. His life, literary contributions, and engagement in societal and political affairs paint a comprehensive picture of a multifaceted individual whose influence transcends borders and generations.

In the literary arena, Shawqî's prowess as a poet is showcased through a diverse body of work that spans themes such as love, nationalism, faith, and spirituality. Notably, his use of symbolism, as observed in the discussion on modern Arabic poetry, adds layers of meaning to his verses, elevating them beyond mere descriptions to profound explorations of societal and political dynamics. His ability to navigate diverse themes, from expressing frustration with foreign colonization to crafting romantic poems, underscores his versatility and deep understanding of the human experience.

Shawqî's active involvement in public and political life further cements his legacy. Holding various government positions and actively participating in the Egyptian national movement against British colonization, he leveraged his influence to advocate for freedom, social justice, and the

betterment of society. His impact extended beyond the literary realm, encompassing cultural dialogue, literary criticism, and a keen interest in history and ancient Arabic literature.

The spiritual and philosophical dimensions of Shawqî's poetry reflect his profound connection to Islamic Sufism and philosophy. Through his verses, he delves into the quest for spiritual truth and expresses a deep faith, contributing religious poems that resonate with his spiritual convictions.

On a personal level, Shawqî's captivating life, including two marriages to women from prestigious families and his educational journey to France for legal studies, adds a human dimension to his legacy. Experiencing exile to Spain due to his strong stance against British occupation, he used this period to explore Arabic literature and Andalusian civilization, enriching his perspective and contributing to his intellectual breadth.

The global impact of Shawqî's poetry, translated into numerous languages, highlights its universal appeal. His work continues to be studied in educational institutions, attesting to its enduring relevance and timeless resonance. He emerges as a multifaceted literary luminary whose contributions extend beyond the boundaries of literature. His poetry, political engagement, cultural influence, and exploration of diverse themes collectively position him as a symbol of classical Arabic literature, a "Prince of Poets" (*Amîr al-Shu'arâ'*), whose legacy persists as a source of inspiration for generations to come.

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