Introduction

Anybody who dares to dig the origin of the earliest stage of dramatic form in Arabic drama or in general drama in Egypt, a number of critics and literary expert are different views regarding this. Passing through various formal and informal forms of literature, like the folklores, the various religious and cultural social occasions the drama proper has got its current form. It will not incorrect if we take Greek civilization itself. Because there is very limited source of historical evidence or archaeological remains to support the core of Greek drama. Whatever source and information is available based on that it can be assumed that 534 B.C. is the formal beginning of competition among the playwrights, but its progress was slow.

For the Egyptian crisis and for the Greeks Dionysus Became a primary theme in Greek Drama the birth and rebirth of this Greek God of agriculture and life- power and king of Egypt's memory of birth and rebirth is buried deep in the Greeks imagination. During the harvesting time of the grapes the entire Greece celebrates the festival of Greek god of wine Dionysian with great splendor. This festival is the ever known greatest and majestic one for the Greeks. So no body can deny the indispensable role of this festival in the development of Greek drama.

But the theoretical beginning of the European tradition in general takes the influence of one milestone that is 'poetics' by Aristotle. Poetics is the only unparalleled masterpiece of its kind which covers almost all aspect of drama with highest possible authenticity. As drama is the most public of all literary

general, the Greek theatre gave the creative people a great platform to convey their message to the entire area Napoleon's Egypt invention in 1798 was also a historically important event.

What is Drama?

Drama is an art of increasing level of believe. It attracts children as well as adults from all walks of life. Increasing the level of believes through the acting out of events that have already happened or that we imagine of their happening in future. Drama consists of representing those actions which may please others. The primary ingredients of drama are characters, represented by players, actions, described by gestures and movement, thought implied by dialogues and actions, spectacle, represented by scenery and costume and finally audiences, who respond to this complex mixture.

Aristotle had said that Dramatic illusion is an imitation of activities though we know it is only dramatic illusion. Drama is more or less based on imaginative experience as well as personal experience of human life. But the Greek drama had its root in the Greek mythology with little settings and costume which the audience found easier to understand. Medieval drama different ages have had different approaches toward representing reality an stage whether the verse speaking Greek actors or the Elizabethan among the crowd, heroes or Shakespeare's romantic and practical actors in each age dramatist tried to come closer to the audience. Through his *Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare said that even fantastic realities have significance for us. But e can not concise the dramatic illusion as the reality of our life rather, it ranges widely to explore multiple realities, some of which may seem very close

to our own and some are improbably removed from our everyday experience. Audience is the most important and indispensable element of a play. Audience is not only meant to crowd the theatre wide their presence. For a loyal audience drama is one of the most powerful artistic experiences while watching a play the audience involved in every action, emotion and the entire thing that the drama unfolds. This is a magical bond between the theatre and mysterious phenomenon. Unlike today's advanced theatres in the earlier days of drama it was with the help of candles. There was not any particular time or venue for staging a play. Sometimes it was performed.

By the work of the previous decades the root of theatre became firm in the Egyptian said by the year of 1930. Egyptian audience got full entertainment against their valuable time and money spent in the theatre. Tawfiq al-Hakim, Egypt national dramatist and some other playwright gave a positive aura to the dramatic writing. But the beginning of verse drama came in to the forefront with Ahmad Shawqi who is known in Arabic literature as the prince of poets.

In 1930s a school of dramatic arts was set up under the direction of the properly trained Zaki Julaymat. By thirties drama and acting had acquired some respectability for various reasons, which include the increasing number of well-educated or highly born individuals who became involved in the theaters and the growth of theatre criticism published first in national newspapers or week lines and then in many magazines devoted almost exclusively to the theatre which began to flood the market in the twenties. Another relevant factor is the interest taken in drama, ancient and modern, by the highly esteemed author and critic Dr. Taha Hussayn. Furthermore, the fact that the prince of poet Ahmad

Shawqi with such a enormous reputation in the Arab world. Ahmad Shawqi wrote the classical Arabic tradition turned to writing verse drama during the last four years of his life (1928-1932) helped to render drama an acceptable form of literature. Shawqi followed mainly from French classic theatre, Racine Corneille in particular and Shakespeare.

Ahmad Shawqi had made an attempt to write verse play as early as 1893, when he published the first version of his poetic play *Ali Bey al-Kabir*, however, he completely revised this play, republishing it in 1932 under the same title.

It is an established fact that modern Arabic drama was borrowed from the West independently By Marun al-Naqqash in the Lebanon in 1847 and by Yaqub Sannu in Egypt in 1870. Both men had been inspired by the example of Italian Opera and influenced by European drama, particularly French comedy.

Classical drama did not have drama as genre. Dramatic from as it is known to Western audiences first appeared in the Middleast in the mid-nineteenth century; indeed, there is no equivalent Arabic word for drama; the Greco Latin term is phonetic zed. Theatre historians including Muhammad Mustafa Badaw, Ali al-Rai and Ken Whittigham, tell us that drama was imported from the West. The reason behind this absence is too wide and varied to examine in full here but the renowned Arabic and Shakespeare scholar Tabra Ibrahim. Tabra informs us that as the Arabs become more politically alienated there thought and literature became subject to a mounting impact from the West. Interestingly though Arabic writers turned to Western traditions for inspiration; they began to express their own hopes and fears by Arabacizing

European literature, the works of Shakespeare (English), Moliere (French) and Goethe (German) were among the most popular. But more significantly and since classical Arabic literature did not have drama as a genre, the importation of dramatic works was urgently required to help formulate an Arabic dramatic tradition. Shakespeare's works among others were assimilated into the language and he, like other European playwrights played a significant role in establishing an Arabic dramatic field of study.

In the 1st chapter of this thesis I am going to introduce drama in general and its kind's tragedy and comedy. Here comedy will discuss elaborately with its elements. In the most literary application, a comedy is a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us: the characters and their discomfitures engage our pleasure attention rather than our profound concern, we are made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur and usually the action turns out happily for the chief character. The term comedy is customarily applied to plays for the stage or motion pictures; it should be noted however that the comic form so defined also occurs in prose fiction and narrative poetry.

Two kinds of comedy developed among the ancient Greeks: old comedy which reflects Farce often spokes fun at the individuals who think of themselves as very important; and new comedy, which is a more suave, refined commentary on the condition of modern society. Comedy is usually thought to be funny. We laugh at Midsummer nigh dream as well as Shakespeare's other comedies, but comedy is not a prisoner of laughter, because laughter is not the only end of comedy.

The stating of the thesis with the basic elements of drama and its kinds. In this chapter I am trying to explain each and every aspects of a drama. How plays are written at any given time depends on many factors: the intended audience and purpose; the playwright's current views about the human condition, and how the playwright perceives the truth around him. A playwright must understand and know the established artistic and theatrical conventions of the theatre. A playwright must appreciate the working procedures, materials, and technical aspects of a production. Because the script is the starting point of the theatrical production, the process through which it comes into being is of primary importance. There are many ways to write a play. Sometimes a playwright starts with an idea. Another playwright may begin with a single character in mind. Some playwrights base their work on spectacle. Plays can be tightly structured or episodic. Regardless of the original inspiration, the work of the playwright is not just to set forth an idea, to create characters, or tell a story. A playwright recreates and restates the human experiences and the universal mirror of mankind. The script or plot is the heart of the theatrical event. It must be respected.

In the 2nd chapter of this thesis I am going to discuss about the origin and development of modern Arabic drama and verse drama. The growth and development of verse drama through the works of Ahmad Shawqi and his successors', elaborately in this chapter. Modern Arabic literature is generally assumed to begin with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. This is significant because with it marks then dramatic change in the Arab world, leading to momentous consequences in its political, economic and cultural development.

Due to the fruitful meeting of the indigenous Arabic literary tradition and the cultural forces of the West, modern Arabic literature came out. This was a slow and gradual process, hedged round with doubts and uncertainties and characterized by as pioneering enthusiasm and radical favour. For many causes it began to make it felt in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon from which it spread gradually to the rest of the Arab world that is the entire Arab world.

In every play, the elements of drama will work differently, sometimes giving us the feeling that character is dominant over theme, or plot over character, or setting over both. Actually every playwright feels that character plot and theme are the most important elements of drama and setting, dialogue music and movement come next. But in a best drama all the elements are required. The interaction of the elements of drama, their balance and their harmony all imply excellence in the theatre.

In the 3rd chapter I will discuss the contribution of Ahmad Shawqi to modern Arabic literature. Ahmad Shawqi is one of the greatest Arabic poets laureate. He was an Egyptian poet and dramatist who pioneered the modern Egyptian literary movement, most notably introducing the genre of poetic epics to the Arabic literary tradition. He was nicknamed Amir al- Sho'araã which literary means the prince of poets. Shawqi was the first in modern Arabic literature to write poetic plays.

He wrote eight verse dramas, among them six are tragedies and two are comedies. Among them three are on Egyptian historical subject- *Masra Kilyubatra* (the fall of Cleopatra, 1929), *Qambiz* (Cambyses 1931) and *Ali Bey al-Kabir* (Ali Bey the great, 1932). Three more on ancient Arab themes-

Majnun al-Layla (Mad lover of Layla, 1931), *Antra* (Antara, 1932) and *Amirat al-Andalaus* (the princess of Andalusia 1932). The seventh and eight were a verse comedy- *Al-Sitt Huda* (Lady Huda) and *Al-Bakhila* (the misery woman). In this chapter I have introduced all of his dramas thematically which were related with Egyptian society. It would be unfair to say that modern verse dramas developed and got its impedes with the growth of Ahmad Shawqi as a playwright. In this chapter I also introduced historical dramas.

In this chapter I want to show the writing skill and how Ahmad Shawqi used the art of a drama. Shawqi's writings reflected his historical touch; he derived his themes either from the history of ancient Arabs or from Islamic history or from the current social life.

In the 4th chapter I have tried to show the comedy elements of Ahmad Shawqi's verse dramas, particularly in his two verse dramas *Al-Bakhila* and *Al-Sitt Huda*. In this chapter I have been discussed these dramas with its comedy elements.

Comedy in the days of Shakespeare had a very different meaning than the comedies of today. It usually meant the play had a happy ending, such as a marriage, and not a tragedy as most stories of Shakespeare time had.

Shawqi's plays are important historical documents since many poems are said relating to many events. He was also careful and perspective observer who occupied an important position among the descriptive poets of all eras.

The term comedy in fact is derived from a Greek word *komoidia*, meaning revel-song, and revelry always finds its way into comedy, whether in the form feasts dancing, tricks and joking, sex and loving –or all of them

combined. Although the characters themselves may feel temporarily threatened, the festive air makes us sense that ultimately no permanent damage will be done.

In the 5th chapter of the thesis both verse dramas *al-Sitt Huda* and *al-Bakhila* are compared with the basic elements of comedy.

In the last part of this thesis the concluding chapter I have been presented the findings about the contribution of Ahmad Shawqi to the development of modern Arabic verse drama, especially with his two comedies. In Short, Ahmad Shawqis more appreciated by most of the Arab playwrights and commentators. In Arab world Shawqi's works were really master pieces of modern Arabic literature.