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CRITERIA FOR ISLAMIC LITERATURE
AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Mafaz Muajhid Mustafa

Abstrak


Ini diikuti dengan kajian mengenai ciri-ciri ulasan Islam dan pengulasnya yang merupakan antara elemen yang penting

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Abstract

Since Islamic literature and criticism are new areas in the vast field of literature and criticism, this paper mainly attempts to set criteria for Islamic literature and literary criticism in light of the positive efforts made by the contemporary figures in the field of Islamic literature and criticism. As an introduction to the paper, definitions of all the vocabulates related to literature, criticism, writer and critic were discussed. Following that are the similarities and differences between a literary writer and a literary critic. Before discussing any criteria of Islamic literature and literary criticism, some background on Islamic literature is discussed under different subtitles such as: The relationship between literature, life and Islam and Definition of Islamic literature before pointing out the similarities and differences between Islamic literature and other literatures. Furthermore, The role of criticism in a Muslim society, Morphology of Islamic literature and other issues related to Islamic literature and Islamic criticism are discussed. Under the Criteria of Islamic literature, relevant areas such as Islamic literature and literary critics, The Characteristics of a Muslim Writer, as well as that of Islamic literature are highlighted before attempting to set a criterion for Islamic literature under the heading Towards a Theory of Islamic Literature and Literary Criticism. The last major part of the paper deals with the Criteria of Islamic Criticism. This part discusses The need for a Theory for Islamic Literature, The characteristics of Islamic Literary Criticism as well as that of a Muslim Critic. Lastly, the conclusion highlights the significance of literature in general and Islamic literature in specific as well as the role in criticism in life sums up the whole paper.
CRITERIA FOR ISLAMIC LITERATURE AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Literature and criticism are two very related and important fields of knowledge that Islam has taken care of and paid much attention to. That is because stories, poems, and dramas can have a positive influence and a great impact on the psyche of man in a way that supports him while performing his duties as Allah’s viceroy on Earth. Therefore, literature and criticism can help build the intellect of man and aid him in enlightening humanity with the message of Islam.

The importance of Criticism lies in the fact that it decides what is good for mankind to accept and what is bad for them to reject. Therefore, criticism is not only related to Literature (literary criticism) but also the criticism of any ideology that can affect mankind positively or negatively. For Islam is a religion that cares for the well-being of individuals, societies as well as that of the Muslim Ummah. Furthermore, the best criticism is the one that emanates from the spirit of Islam – the perfect way of life – rather than unpractical theories or other selfish motives. However, it is important to point out that the Islamic criteria used to evaluate any new notions, is an evaluation that respects the original criteria of the versatile fields of life.

Accordingly, Islamic literature and criticism were born in the field of art and literature to improve on literature, criticism as well as spreading the message of God to all humanity.

This topic, **Criteria of Islamic Literature and Criticism** was chosen because Islamic Literature and Criticism are still considered new concerns or new sub-fields that have no fixed criteria yet, but only some attempts or theories and criteria. The notion of Islamic Literature started emerging during the sixties of this century as Naji Al-Khalil mentioned in the Introduction of his book *Al-Shafr Al-Adab Al-Islami*. Thus, to serve the purpose of Islamization of knowledge, and to contribute to a new theory or criteria of Islamic Literature and Literary Criticism, this topic is to be discussed in this paper.
DEFINITION OF LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

According to The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the word Literature means "writings that are valued as works of art, especially fiction, drama and poetry". It also means "writing on a particular subject", "writing of a particular country or period" and "pamphlets or leaflets".

As for Criticism, it refers to "looking for faults; pointing out faults" and "art of making judgments on literature, art, etc; literary criticism". Other related vocabularies to criticism are such as to criticizer; that is to "point out the faults in something" and to "form and express a judgment on a work of art/ literature." Moreover, a Critique refers to an analytical work or a "critical analysis".

Therefore, literature and criticism are highly related and dependent on each other. Without literature, criticism would have never existed. In fact, criticism is the efficient instrument that assesses literature.

Definition of a Writer and a Critic

According to the same dictionary, a 'writer' is "a person who writes or has written something" and "a person whose job is to write books, stories, etc; author". Another highly related word to writer is 'author' who is "a writer of a book, play, etc" and "a person who creates or begins something, especially a plan or an idea".

A 'critic' is "a person who expresses a low opinion of somebody or something, points out faults in somebody or something" and "a person who evaluates and describes the quality of somebody or something especially works of art, literature, music, etc".

Differences between a Literary Writer and a Literary Critic

Since both 'writer' and 'critic' contribute to the field of literature, they share some similarities yet based on the afore-mentioned dictionary definitions, they also have the following differences:
1. While a writer composes works of literature in any of its three forms: prose, poetry and drama, a critic is the one who evaluates and judges the quality of the form and content of such works.

2. The writer’s job has more to do with creativity and imagination, but the critic’s job is restricted to working on the literary material produced by a poet, a dramatist or a novelist.

3. The writer has to have the creative mind, but the critic has to have a critical and analytical mind besides the literary style.

4. A writer could write literary work that is critical of the society, culture, history or government in the form of poetry, novel or play. Whilst a critic can only produce a critique on something.

From the above, it can be clearly seen that it is the different objectives that differentiate the two. Otherwise, writers and critics are strongly related to the filed of literature. They share the same literary style, creative mind, and concern for the society.

Literature and criticism share similar relationships. Literature is broader and it includes criticism, as literature is the creative side of arts while criticism is the thinking mind or the creative arts and literature.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE, LIFE AND ISLAM

Literature represents events of everyday life. It portrays pictures and images that reflect and represent the different fields and sides of life. That is why when we miss witnessing or seeing some incidents directly, we can do so through the theme of literature, provided that the author does his job well. Then literature becomes the means for externalising some life incidents. In other words, through literature, man can have a better understanding of life and its different aspects. The vastness of literature enables man to have a better understanding of history as well as the present! 😄

Arabic language is one of the richest languages in the world. Its literature has lived for as long as twenty-five centuries. When Islam came with its values and themes, it became the most abundant source for Arabic language. Literature received Islam and carried it along till it became the mould of Arabic literature depicting its themes, culture and taboos. The fact that Islam is a religion of high concern to all aspects of human life had a great influence over the Arabic language and literature that continue to grow richer and flourish with time. However, Islamic literature is not only written in Arabic language, but also it all the different Muslims’ languages such as Urdu and Persian1.

**Definition of Islamic Literature**

According to Muhammad Qasim, Islamic Literature is “the art that paints the picture of existence from the Islamic point of view for this existence”. In addition, it is “the beautiful expression of the universe, life and man, through the perception of Islam to this universe, life and man.”3 It is also “the art that prepares for full understanding between ‘aesthetics’ and ‘truth’, for beauty is the reality of this universe, and truth is the peak of this beauty. That is how they meet at the peak where all realities of this existence meet at”.4 This is what Prof. Dr. Jaber Al-Karb meant when he defined Islamic Literature as “the literature that originates from the Islamic perception for universe and life in attractive artistic moulds”. According to *Kitaab Al-Adab Al-Islami* (The Language of Islamic Literature), the definition of Islamic literature is “the artistic expression that aims at man, life and the universe according to the Islamic perception.”5

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1 Al-Adawi, p 18
2 Ayta, Sadiq Bark Al, Haqiqat Al-Adab Al-Islami (The Reality of Islamic Literature) an article from the magazine *Maghale Al-Adab Al-Islami*, issue no. 25, p 45.
3 Ayta, p 45.
4 Ayta, p 45.
5 Ayta, p 45.
6 Ayta, p 45.
7 Ayta, p 45.
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISLAMIC LITERATURE AND NON-ISLAMIC LITERATURES

According to Al-Nadawī, the differences between Islamic literature and other literatures are as follows:

1. Islamic Literature cares for the well being of humanity while other literatures do not.

2. Islamic literature observes the different forums of work in this universe as it distinguishes between the beneficial and suitable for man and the non-beneficial. On the other hand, non-Islamic literature does not really care for the different fields of working in the universe and enters any place with our any control, and does not distinguish between what is good and what is bad.

3. Islamic Literature does not like revealing faults and defects of people, while other literatures do not really care about the subject it is talking about whether faults and defects there are. It also does not have any limits and its main objective is to stir up emotions by any means no matter how corrosive that may be.

4. While Islamic Literature derives its spirit and guidance from Islam, and from the life of the prophet, non-Islamic literature does so from man's desires and wishes.

When the ugly or negative corrupted side of literature is omitted (by Islamic literature), what is left is an open dimension for literature of many different varieties, sides and of different colors and types. In other words, Islamic literature is not narrow and limited in scope; rather it is broad and comprehensive. It would help those who practice Islam in their life.

THE ROLE OF CRITICISM IN A MUSLIM SOCIETY

Since criticism is concerned with evaluating and judging the quality of literary works, there is not much difference between Literary Criticism of any school, language and culture and Islamic Literary Criticism, except for the fact that criticism had originated differently in the Muslim world.

While criticism in the western conception had always to do with literary production, in the Muslim world, it originated from the teachings of Islam. The ancient writers and critics were influenced by the methodology of the Nahadisheen (Hadith Suyuq) when it comes to adjusting and correcting narrations about the prophet (PIBUIH), and they followed the early methodologies of tracing the narrations by using the criteria of criticism and Tajreeb (finding faults in the narrations).

Regarding the role of criticism, it is mainly concerned with studying and analyzing literary works from many different points of view. This is to illustrate the value of the topic through the components of the critic’s character, his inclinations, experiences and tendencies. This evaluation aims at showing the importance of the literary work, research and literary criticism in relation to the Islamic perspective.

THE HORIZON OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE

The role of literature in serving the message of Allah is undeniable, as it shapes the individual’s existence. The undeniable truth is that Muslims should think of new ways of Islamic Da’wah that suits the contemporary time. A modern man in today’s world watches TV, listens to the radio and goes to the cinema. Therefore, Da’wah (through literature) should no longer be restricted to motivating speeches by Imams, or influential poems. As a matter

9 Al-Habeed, Khalid Al-Dabhi, Fasliyya Ta’ayseh Al-Mahubh fi Al-Naqsh Al-Islami (On Establishing a Methodology in Islamic Criticism) an article from the magazine: Majallat Al-Adab Al-Islami, issue no. 23, p. 64.

10 Mahboub, Abbas, Ra’iyat Ithna’iyya fi Ta’ayseh Al-Naqshiyhainda Al-Araba (An Islamic Perspective of the Arab’s Critical Orientation) an article from the compilation of Al-Adab fi Al-Naqsh Al-Adab, p. 85.

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of far, the big cinema-screen, small TV-screen, articles, books and theaters must all be used for the purpose of Islamic Da'wah.

The market is filled with corruptive literary works with negative values that highly influence people's attitudes and values. These values mocked the human existence (spirit) and corrupted the children of the Ummah, as they become disoriented and strange in their makeup and imagination. They would grow up to be like the characters of the movies who refuse to listen to any call except to their personal desire, which were inclined to greed, selfishness, and hatred.

Ignoring the needs of the present time and the new tools of communication, Muslims would lose an intelligent weapon in their fight their enemies (local and foreign). Hence, the horizons of Islamic literature are vast and unlimited, and a Muslim writer can well utilize them to reach out for the lost people in this world. A Muslim literary writer is guided by his Islamic principles and values, as he sees man, society, and the universe through the Islamic telescope. The psychological, emotional, and social matters, as well as the clasps of the local and international affairs will be under his pen. He could become a specialist in any forum and be innovative and creative in his style of literary production. That is why, it was important to establish the league of Islamic literature or the club of Islamic pen, and if any strong Muslim country were to support this league, Muslims would control the pen to people's mind and heart. These are the horizons that Islamic literature wishes to achieve.

ISSUES RELATED TO ISLAMIC LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

When we talk about Islamic literature, we cannot ignore other related topics and issues. These topics are not only related to literature but also to Islam. In fact, they are the outcome of the natural combination of Islam and literature. In other words, when literature is used as a tool for the sake of Allah and Islam, it sheds light on all sorts of human concerns.

\[75\] Al-Kulmi, Al-Sa'id Al-Adab Alislami, p 41-45
One of the most prominent issues is the theory, methodology, doctrine, school or criteria of Islamic literature and literary criticism, as well as theories on Islamic poetry and drama. Islamic literature conferences and related interviews make some of their lengthiest discussions on this issue. Another significant issue is related to implementation and practices of Islam in the lives of Muslims, how convenient and pivotal are Islam and culture in daily affairs is portrayed in stories, poems and drama. Islam’s concern for women is another serious area well dwelt upon in Islamic literary works. Children, the future’s hope, is another major issue well tackled by Muslim writers, as they realize the significance of having their own children literature, rather than importing them as destructive material from Western literature. Moreover, Muslim critics have been discussing certain criteria for children’s literature and how it should be. The daily sufferings of Muslims in war-stricken countries such as Palestine is another chief case depicted in Muslim’s literature.

It is of crucial importance to highlight the fact that Islamic literature goes against other literary trends such as Capitalism and Communist, aside from the major intellectual and literary trends such as naturalism, realism, symbolism, Arabism and existentialism. All these trends emanate from their writers’ perception of life and society. Whilst capitalism believes in the individuality of man and absolute freedom in fulfilling all his physical needs and lost as well as living in poverty, even if it is at the expense of others.

On the other extreme were the communists, who believe in the right of the country and its government to enforce full authoritarian control over individuals along with their intellectual perception of life.

Therefore, Islamic literature varies tremendously from the aforementioned western schools of thought and requires to be based on the Islamic methodology, as Muslims are encountering western intellectual, existentialist and cultural invasion. In fact, globalization has already invaded every corner of this world and Muslims do realize the challenge it puts before them.

17 Al-Busha, Abdul Rahman Za’it, Najwa Mudahi Al-Isa and Nisar Naqui (Towards An Islamic Ethic in Literature and Criticism), an article from the magazine of Khatat Allah Al-Arabiya, issue no. 114, p. 329.
All these issues and more are frequently discussed in magazines and periodicals such as *Najdat Al-Adab Al-Islami* (Magazine of Islamic Literature), *Islamization of Knowledge, Al-Muslim Al-Ma'sur* (The Contemporary Muslim), and The International Institute of Islamic Thought in addition to numerous books and booklets. Some of the main figures related to Islamic literature and criticism are: Sayed Q שא, Moha Q שא, Najeb Al-Kالان, Al-رفيق, Al-Wاد, Etoad Al-Sهن Al-Kالان, Al-أحمد Al-الك lick, Mohammad IQREA, Dr. Abdul-Rahman Al-Fafi Al-Sال and many others.

**THE CRITERIA OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE**

The "criteria of Islamic literature" is a topic frequently discussed by literary writers and critics as well as by *Rabita Al-Adab Al-Islami* (The League of Islamic Literature). However, this criterion can be seen through the characteristics of Islamic literature and that of a Muslim writer to be illustrated in another section of this paper. It is necessary to highlight the fact that the three terms: 'theory', 'methodology', and 'doctrine' are very related and relevant to 'criteria'. A theory is a rule or a number of rules and regulations used to design or limit an idea or an aspect. Whereas, a methodology is a plot or scheme designed to reach a goal, and using the methodology, the theory can be fully implemented. Therefore, theory and methodology must fit in the framework of the Islamic doctrine, which revolves around formulating political, economical, social and cultural ideologies through individualistic perceptions. On the bases of this doctrine forms a school, which comprises of a mixture of opinions merged together to form a single opinion that the scholars approve of.

Therefore, the theories and methodologies on Islamic literature are but steps towards forming the criterion of Islamic Literature which is the mission of the League of the Islamic Literature.

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ON ISLAMIC LITERATURE AND ITS AUTHORS

The relationship between authors, societies and believers is a dynamic one, as authors were firmly influenced members of the society before turning to be influential. The society receives and reacts along with its writers and their ideas while the dogma feeds the existence and thought of the literary critics and the society members. This complex relationship obliges us to believe in the significance of developing an understanding for Islamic literature which is not easy to practice as it would not be true in expression unless literary authors and critics were good mirrors of their Islamic values. That does not mean that artistic literary production has come automatically. It requires determination and mental capacity in addition to some ideas. There is also the issue of understanding the old and the new worldly incidents and experiences. Moreover, if literature was a talent, it would still need to be well nurtured and focused to be used as an artistic tool in order to bring about changes. That is why the success of a writer or an artist depends on his response to such complicated equations. For Allah (S.W.T) said in the Holy Quran:

فَأَلْهَنَّ أَثْنَىٰ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ أَنَا وَيَدُوَّرُونَ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُ

وَمَا أَنَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ مَلِكٌ

O Muhammad this is my way; I invite unto Allah (i.e. the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) with sure knowledge, I and whosoever follows me (also must invite others to Allah. And Clarified and Enhanced is Allah (above all that they associate as partners with him).

And I am not one of the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, and disbelievers) in the oneness of Allah; those who worship others along with Allah or set up rivals or partners to Allah (NasrI 108).!

13 Al-Kalhim, Ajarq Al-Adab Al-Islami, p 24
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MUSLIM WRITER

A Muslim writer is bound to the principles and values of his religion when it comes to producing a literary work. There are ten criteria of a literary writer, but a Muslim writer has the following characteristics:

1. A Muslim writer always lives in a special aura, due to his faith, which is the source of his happiness, tranquility, and confidence. However, he is anxious and keen to be the "example," to make people fight evil while affirming the pillars of goodness to win the battle of life. He feels the sufferings of all classes of people, regardless of their faith and knowledge, as countless people are victims of their societies and upbringing.

2. A Muslim writer is eager to achieve his dreams and disapproves of any deviation other than that of God's absolute control of life and society.

3. A Muslim writer is not confined to ancient history. He is very aware of the problems of his time and has a good understanding of his aims and pains, for he has a fixed criterion through which he looks at incidents.

4. A Muslim writer can see well and choose between good and bad, enlightened by his experiences. He has the literary confidence that makes him a master of his lane.

5. According to Ashraf, a good Muslim writer must not be dogmatic. For the most popular works of literature are characterized as non-dogmatic. An example that would illustrate the idea would be that of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In this play, Shakespeare presents the conflict between good and evil but saves himself from dogmatization by presenting love as a creative and destructive power. For instance, the two suicides -

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Al-Kāmil, Al-Jāy Al-Adab Al-Islāmi, p. 21-23.
I. Drinking poison and Juliet killing herself. From his manner of presentation, it is obvious that the audience’s sympathy is aroused and they do not condemn the characters for sinning. In fact, the audience feels that though they have committed suicide, they have achieved selflessness through love. This attitude could be seen as anti-religious had Shakespeare evoked an admiration for the principle of suicide. Instead, he presents it as a tragic waste of two young people because of forces beyond their control. Whereas love should be creative and joy giving, prevention from its consumption has led to this frustration and disaster. Thus, this picture of Shakespeare’s is highly compatible with the religious concept of life.

Every society has its moral limits or religiously controlled ethics, whether urban or rural. They dominate people’s sayings and opinions as well as that of literary writers. A good example is Communist literature, which is limited to emptiness and dizziness.

6. Since no literary critic is free from limitations, a Muslim critic is tied to his principles and values of Islam which control the morals and lessons of his literary production.

7. A Muslim writer has strong faith and he is realistic and optimistic.

8. A Muslim writer is free to choose the form of writing as long as his content is Islamic, and contributes to the Islamic Da’wah.


18. Baldr, Abdul Basit, “Al-Mafidhoom Al-Mustamayn lil ‘Adhab Al-Islami” (The Outstanding Concept of Islamic Literature) an article from Majalah Al-Adab Al-Islami, vol no. 25, p. 36.

19. Al-Khalisi, Ruhul Ma’ Al-‘Adab Al-Islami, p. 212.
Therefore, from the previously discussed characteristics of a Muslim writer, it can be clearly seen that a Muslim writer’s criteria is an Islamic Criteria that he would use in order to check the quality of his work.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE

From the previously given definitions of Islamic Literature and the characteristics of the Muslim literary writer, the following characteristics about Islamic Literature can be concluded (deduced):

1. Islamic Literature is guided and directed by Islamic values and principles as man, life and the universe are all seen through the telescope of Islam in Islamic Literature.

2. It is a very broad and comprehensive literature, because Islam is a comprehensive religion that deals with all the different subjects and affairs of life. Islam frames life, as it has a judgment for each behavior of man. Therefore, the topics that Islamic literature deals with are related to the positive and negative affairs of men and women and the different issues of the nations, societies, and even some very sensitive topics. They are dealt with in a very polite manner.

3. Islamic literature treats the problems and sufferings of the Muslim and non-Muslim societies. In other words, it deals with all the different problems of life in a general sense.

4. It has a mission, which is to preach for Islam (the order of Allah for mankind or this earth). It promotes Islamic values, and good education for the generation.

5. Islamic literature is not that of a certain social class, or any specific group of people, or a specific Ummah or nation. It is not related to one era or one language. It is

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20 Hade, p 35.
21 Hade, p 35.
a universal literature, open to all people and languages provided that literary figures are Muslim individuals or groups.

6. Islamic literature is clear in its mission and message to the whole world. This is in the spirit of the Holly Quran's teachings, known for its simplicity and clarity.

7. It is realistic, because Islam is a religion that cares for all aspects of life. That is why its realism differs from that of Communism, and is much better because it relates to everyday life. Furthermore, Islamic literature is optimistic, and its optimism is inspired from Islam and the possibility of finding happiness or satisfaction whether on Earth or in Heavens. Unlike the western literature that has pessimistic view on life as a result of the many difficulties and the different trends of the society.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE

Dr. M.M. Badawi has drawn an outline for the literary genres seen through the Islamic perspective. His theory is an analysis of the three literary genres and other very related and frequently mentioned topics from the Islamic perspective.

POETRY: According to the Islamic perspective, it can be argued that poetry is neither a divine revelation nor a psychic disturbance. It is a human exercise, which could be good or evil.

COMMITMENT: Islamic commitment comes from the deep realization and attachment to the cause of Islam and from the artist who strives to gain God's satisfaction. It is therefore, a comprehensive commitment that comes from the holistic view of man, life and the universe.

23 Khan, English and Islamic Creative Encounters 1996 p 58.
24 Khan, p 59.
AESTHETICS: According to Islam, beauty is not the ultimate goal of literature and it is not its own justification. It has to be tied to the Islamic system of values, and when it clashes with man’s interest in life, then propriety is for what is good and conducive to man’s well being.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM IN POETRY: The Islamic literary tradition does not encourage imposing certain style upon the poets. It also does not preach clarity and simplicity in poetic expression. However, poetry is advised to stay away from excessive ambiguity while at the same time avoiding falling into prosaic clarity.

POETIC MUSIC: Islamic literary tradition encourages a healthy correspondence between the subject matter and the rhythm to produce a unified impression.

DRAMA: According to Islam, theatre is a legitimate mode of artistic and literary expression. However, it cannot again clash with Islamic values such as creating a Godless universe or a universe ruled by an unjust God. In fact, it should depict good as good, evil as evil without confusing good with evil.

FATE, FREEDOM AND GOD-MAN RELATIONSHIPS: Islam sees fate as the workings of God’s will in everyday life; and that God is the “Most Compassionate, Most Merciful”. Therefore, a Muslim feels that whatever he encounters in life is for his ultimate good even if it looks otherwise and accepts his fate with satisfaction. Therefore, a play or any literary work should not depict themes that confuse the audience with different understanding of these concepts.

FICTION: is concerned with the following two issues:

Khan, p. 61.
Khan, p. 62.
Khan, p. 62.
Khan, p. 63.
Khan, p. 64.
CHARACTERS AND THE POINT OF VIEW: According to the Islamic perspective, the characters of the novel, especially the central character cannot depict values that oppose Islamic values. Again, Islam would rather see good depicted as good and vice versa without creating any confusion in the mind of the readers.83

MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIPS: Islamic literary tradition does not mind depicting forbidden relations in fiction as they are admittedly part of our life. However, they should be presented as abnormal and corrupt behavior and not the opposite.84

THE CRITERIA OF ISLAMIC CRITICISM

The Need for a theory of Islamic literary Criticism

Muslims need to establish their own theory of literary criticism in order to:

1. Respond to literary challenges such as that presented in Salaman Rushdie’s *Satantic Verses*.
2. Defend the frontier of Islam. Art and Literature are the essential parts of Islamic Literature and early Muslim literary figures wrote extensive criticism on the theoretical and practical levels that lay down the rules for artistic expression during their days. In doing so, they served Islam by defending one of the important fronts of struggle between Islam and its opponents’ ideologies. Today, this front is left defenseless in the face of serious challenges from the opponents’ quarters and that is why Muslims are looked upon as terrorists. In other words, defending the front of Islam is the duty of all the Muslims and by not doing so; the message of Islam is being greatly threatened.

83 Khan, p 66.
84 Khan, p 67.
The Characteristics of Islamic Criticism

The characteristics of Islamic Criticism are as follows:

1. Islamic criticism dealt with works of the past or present whether presented by a Muslim or a non-Muslim in any language.

2. It can take the literary critique tools from other trends or schools to achieve a better understanding of a work of art.

3. It must be looked upon as subservient to the teachings of the religion with certain objectives that are to improve the quality of man's life and provide him with guidelines in order to attain happiness whether here or in the Hereafter.

4. Since Islamic literature takes into account all the faculties of man: spiritual and physical, literary criticism should concern itself with all these aspects.

5. Islamic critics must not be entirely based on individuals' tastes and opinions but should have a systematic method that ensures its consistency and clarity. The tenants of literary criticism should be perfectly compatible with the concept of man, which Islam provides.

The Characteristics of a Muslim Critic

Before discussing the characteristics of a Muslim Critic, it is important to highlight the relationship between a literature teacher and a Critic. Those who teach literature are critics by the virtue of their profession. Therefore, it is

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35 Khan, a paper presented on the conference English and Islamic Creative Encounters 1996, p 56-57.

36 Nuss, Philosophy, Literatures and Fine Arts, p 27.
important for them to assume a good understanding of the methodology of teaching literature in a positive way that promotes good values. Islamic values. Moreover, literature is a forum for manifesting people's sensibility. Through studying literature, students could realize the universal values through literary work – personal experiences and matters. Furthermore, students will benefit from the teachers' critical analysis of literature and get the correct understanding of literature and literary criticism.

The characteristics of a Muslim Critic that represent the criteria of Islamic Critics are:

1. A literary critic must have a good understanding of the concept of good and evil. However, since there is a universal recognition on this concept, it is not difficult to get a judge or a critic to understand it. Nevertheless, since Islam claims to be the one universal religion, the universal code of the literary critic has to fit that of Islam, without having to mention it.

2. Since the literary critic/literature teacher want people/students to realize the goodness of literature, he cannot be dogmatic in showing the conflict between good and evil. He should only follow the universal code of humanity in his criticism.

3. He should highlight to people/students of literature the dogmatic mentality of some writers. He should condemn writers who go beyond the limits of natural and normal realizations of truth through human experience into philosophy and dogma where literature is used as a tool to convey certain philosophies or ways of life that a religious man cannot accept.

4. A Muslim critic should criticize those who propagate certain philosophies from the intellectual point of view.

5. A teacher of literature should hold on to the same basic knowledge and understanding of any literary critic. This
sincere non-dogmatic literature teacher needs to have the same attitude when he writes any critique, so that it would be universally accepted. So far, dogmatic literature and literary criticism do not live for long. They merely survive for a short time and although the same cannot happen with Islam, dogmatic literary material still tends to be ignored once the social trend changes overtime.

6. A literary critic has to be able to remove the prejudices, occult dogmas and partial metaphysics in order for him to see the truth about humanity. 

7. However, when this critic/literature teacher is also a religious leader, he has to have a sensitive soul and a good understanding for what humanity means, and what its meaning is.

8. He should not only know the principles of Islam but also practice them, because only when he does so can he get the best realisation for the human perspective and mission on Earth as the viceroy of Allah. 

Although Syed Ali Ashraf thinks that a good Muslim critic and a literature teacher should not be dogmatic, in his article he mentions that literature cannot be given complete independence; otherwise, all the other human sciences would get this independence too. This attitude would lead to the disintegration of human personality, which has already taken place in the west. This is opposing the Islamic integrated concept of human personality governed by the Islamic laws or the universal code of absolute values. The greatness of literature can be seen through literature itself, especially the long living universal literary production such as that of Homer and Shakespeare.

57 Nasr, Philosophy, Literature and Fine Arts, p. 21-32.
58 Nasr, p. 32.
59 Nasr, p. 33.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, literature can never replace the morality or religion, as one of its basic functions is to provide enjoyment. The pleasure that people get is derived from their realization of the different human conditions and from their appreciation of the method of presenting these situations through artistic means. The critic should help people in judging the situation of the presented literature from an Islamic point of view or at least highlight the dogma, if any, without being dogmatic.37

The question of having a literary theory and literary criticism is theoretical in investigation, as it relies on everyday life and initiates trends in the ways of living that are reflective of people’s way of thinking. That is why it is compulsory to try to improve the state of this world by taking positive interests in the field.

Art is a double-edged weapon that can become highly instrumental in spreading good as well as evil. Art has to be attached to a value system so that its ultimate message is conducive to mankind. Art should not be allowed to corrupt the quality of life. This can only be done through a good idea and beneficial demonstration.38

From the previous discussion of the various sections, it is apparently crucial to constitute the criteria of Islamic Literature and criticism. There are already a few attempts, set by some scholars of the field. However, these criteria must be in accordance with the Islamic values and morals illustrated by the Holy Qur’an and the prophetic Sunnah. A Muslim literary writer or a critic should be concerned with these criteria and should be keen to practice it in order for the anticipated Islamic literature and criticism to be born.

37 Nair, p. 56.
38 Khan, English and Islamic Creative Encounter 1994, p. 69.
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