



A reading of the novel “Labbaik: Pilgrimage of the Poor” by Malik Bennabi.

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Abstract

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The novel "Labbaik Pilgrimage of the Poor" by Malik Bennabi is considered one of the first works of fiction in Algeria, despite the fact that it did not receive much study nor criticism. Its events revolve around the main character, “Ibrahim”, through which Malik Bennabi wanted to show the extent to which the Algerian man clings to his identity despite the pressures he is experiencing under French colonialism, which strives to strip him of his Arabism and Islam. This character, who woke up from her negligence and made the intention to perform the pilgrimage to the House of God, despite the state of loss and drunkenness in which she was living, this change made Ibrahim the focus of the novel and led to the frequency and development of events, and it ends with the fulfillment of the wish that Malik Bennabi had always dreamed of. But it did not happen, which is to settle in the Hijaz and take care of the upbringing of an orphan child.

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1. introduction

Malik Bennabi was known for his many writings that mainly dealt with issues of civilization, and the reasons that led to the decline of the Arab-Islamic civilization, but the latter was not known as a writer and critic, and he was the one who had an attempt in his novel "Labbaik Pilgrimage of the Poor", this novel that he wrote in French, It was translated into Arabic by Dr. Zidan Kholev in 2009, this narration through which Malik Bennabi embodied the pains of the hero of his novel "Ibrahim", and how he was able, despite the miserable conditions in which he was living under the oppression of the brutal French colonialism, to preserve the Islamic identity and spirit.

2. Highlights on the author's personality:

Malik Bennabi was born on January 1, 1905 in Constantine, eastern Algeria, into a conservative, poor family. His birth was "at a time when it was possible to communicate with the past through those who remained alive from its witnesses, and to look forward to the future through the first of its pioneers " (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 5). From the cradle, he received educational care from parents who were keen to take care of him for fear of the colonizer who sought to obliterate religious traditions in Algeria the colonized.

Malik Bennabi lived important historical events such as the French colonial presence in Algeria, the outbreak of World War I, the fragmentation of the Ottoman caliphate, and the occupation of Palestine by the British.

In the summer of 1934, he grieved the death of his mother, one year before he graduated. He continued his studies and graduated in 1935 as an electrical engineer.

Malik Bennabi moved between France and Algeria while doing simple jobs here and there whenever he had the opportunity to do so, and in fact he began during this period to specialize as a writer who made a living by marketing his books and articles. He contributed regularly and effectively to the press at the time, such as the Algerian Republic, mouthpiece of the Democratic

Union Party for the Algerian statement of Farhat Abbas, and the Muslim Youth magazine of the Association of Muslim Scholars, which was supervised by Sheikh Al-Bashir Al-Ibrahimi. His contribution left a great impact and continued until 1956. And they were all collected after his death in two books.

He decided to contribute to the revolution with a pen and his own means so that the world would hear about it in a request for material and moral support, so in 1957 he wrote an article entitled "Algeria to the Help" «Algérie. Sos », highlighting the brutality of the French colonialism in terms of torture and mass killing of the Algerian people. This article was a strong cry that resonated around the world.

When Malik arrived in Algeria in 1962, after many years of expatriation, he assumed several positions, including advisor for higher education, director of the University of Algiers, and general director of higher education. Then he resigned from his position in 1967 and devoted himself to intellectual work and organizing intellectual seminars in his home, attended by university professors and students. He also lectured in all parts of Algeria and in its universities and higher institutes, and participated in forums of Islamic thought, which he had great credit for establishing. Thus, he continued what he started before in Cairo, which is to train the rising generations and educate them to address the problems of culture and civilization, and to understand the mechanisms of intellectual conflict and civilizational construction, not only in the Islamic world but across all of humanity. In 1972 he performed the Hajj, and on his way he stopped in Damascus and delivered two lectures that had a distinct impact on the hearts of those present. Those two lectures were titled "The Muslim's Role and Mission in the Last Third of the Twentieth Century" and "The Muslim's Message in the Last Third of the Twentieth Century" and some considered them as if they were his last will (Noura Khaled Al-Saad, 1997, p. 29).

One year after his return from the Holy Beqaa, and during his trip to the city of Laghouat, where he was giving some lectures there, his

illness became severe and he had contracted prostate cancer that had spread to the brain through the spine. So he traveled to Paris for treatment, so he underwent an operation, and after that he regained his health somewhat for twenty days, then the disease became severe, so the attending physician advised him to return to his country, so they returned him to Algeria, and after eight days he died on October 31, 1973 after the age of nearly sixty-eight years, and was buried in a cemetery "Sidi Muhammad" in Belkour, and the eulogy was delivered by his eldest student, Professor Rashid Bin Issa . (Noura Khaled Al-Saad,1997, p. 29)

Professor Malik Bennabi i left several books in the form of books, articles, lectures and notebooks, including audiovisual ones, most of which were published during his life and others after his death, and many were reprinted. Most of the articles, lectures and notebooks were collected in multiple books, and Professor Malik Bennabi left a will to Dr. Omar Meskaoui in 1971, where he held him morally and materially responsible for his books, including Arabic ones in particular, and to undertake the translation into Arabic of the works that were published in French, and he has accomplished that trust to this day.

We state here his writings in stages : (Noura Khaled Al-Saad,1997, p. 40)

The stage	The Book	The date of publication
Algeria - Paris 1950-1956	-Quranic phenomenon.	1947
	-Labbaik Pilgrimage of the Poor (Novel)	1947
	-Conditions of the Renaissance	1948
	-The Destination of the Islamic World	1954
		1956
		1957
		1959
	-The idea of Afro-Asian.	1960
	-Help, the Algerian people are being exterminated.	1960
	-The Question of Culture	1960
Egypt 1956-1963	-A Talk on the New Construction	1960
	-Intellectual conflict in the colonial countries.	1961
		1962
	-Difficulties: mark growth	1962

The Algerian Independence 1963-1973	in Arab society	
	-Colonialism resorts to assassination by means of science	1964 1965
	-The idea of an Islamic Commonwealth	1969
	-Contemplations on Arab Society	1970
	-Blown Battle	
	-The Birth of A Community	1972 1972
	-Algerian prospects	1973
	-Memoirs of a witness to the Qur'an (part one, the child)	1973
	-The production of orientalist and its impact on modern Islamic thought	
	-Memoirs of a witness to the Qur'an (part two, the child)	
	-The problem of ideas in the Islamic world.	
	-The Muslim in the world of economics.	
	-The role of the Muslim and his message in the last third of the twentieth century.	
	-Between guidance and wander	

Malik also left a group of manuscripts that have not yet been printed, including:

- An open letter to Khrushchev and Eisenhower.
- Damascus councils.
- Thinking boards.
- Memoirs of a witness to the Qur'an - Part Three -
- Social relations and the influence of religion on them.
- A model of a revolutionary approach (in French).
- The Jewish problem.
- Mold (was written at the end of his life in French).
- An Islamic society state.
- Judaism or Christianity.

- Study on Christianity . (Zaki Milad,2009, p. 71)

In order to dive into the depths of this novel, we must first present an artistic card of it.

Technical card for the novel: The novel was written by Malek Bennabi in 1947 and translated by the Algerian researcher Dr. Zidane Kholif, who discovered it when discussing his doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne University Paris 3 in 2006 under the title "The Life and Works of Malik Bennabi from 1905 to 1973" under the supervision of Dr. Burhan Ghalioun Zaidan found and translated Malik Bennabi's novel written in French, and it was published for the first time in 2009 AD_1430 AH by Dar Al-Fikr in Damascus, and it is located in 156 pages of intermediate pieces.

3. Read in the novel:

3.1 The title: "Labbaik, Pilgrimage of the Poor." The title is the gateway through which any literary work opens, and it becomes clear through the title of the novel that the topic will deal with a ritual and an obligation of Islam, which is the Hajj, that duty with which a Muslim meets the call of his Lord, where all ranks and titles fall. And positions, and people are equal in clothing and housing, so they are all poor for the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, and in Hajj, the poor forget his poverty, and the arrogant abandons his pride and arrogance, as if it is a scene that simulates that of the gathering on the Day of Resurrection.

Malik Bennabi prefaced the address with the word "Labbaik", which is the word that Muslims repeat in response to the call of Allah Almighty, as Malik Bennabi allocated Hajj to the pilgrimage of the poor. Refers to the exorbitant costs of Hajj and the difficulty faced by the poor in securing the cost of Hajj.

3.2 The place: The place in the novel is divided into two parts. The first is the Algerian city of Bouna (currently Annaba), and it is the one in which most of the events took place, either instantaneously or by recall. As for the other, it is the deck of the ship that the pilgrims boarded, destined for the Sacred House, and its events were simple in line with the short travel period.

3.3 Time: The events of the novel took place during the colonial era, during which the writer lived with the characters of his novel.

3.4 The idea: The idea around which the events of the novel revolve is summed up in that transition that a drunk man witnessed in his life,

where a dream turned him into another person, so he divorced the life of drunkenness and orgies that earned him the title "Bouqraa" relative to the bottle of wine that he wanted to carry and drink, and he moved to the life of faith And the piety that earned him the title of "Si Hajj", and his social and family life transformed from a divorced person to an orphan sponsor.

3.5 Characters: The novel revolves around a main character and many secondary characters.

***The main character:** The main character appears in the person of Ibrahim, this name that was associated with the Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, who established the rules of the Sacred House with his son Ismail. His parents left him a house and a shop to sell coal, but he soon took the path of drunkenness and orgies, wasting most of this wealth. Even his wife, Zahra, left him after she was fed up with his miserable life. Ibrahim lives a humiliating life, as even the boys began to call him a "Bouqraa", but soon another personality was created from this misguided man.

Ibrahim becomes a devout worshipper, goes to the Sacred House to perform the rituals of Hajj, teaches the child Hadi how to perform ablution and pray, and fiercely defends his religion when confronting a Christian sailor.

***Secondary characters:** There are many, but we will mention only the important ones, according to their importance in weaving the threads of the plot of the novel.

- Si Muhammad: An elderly man, friend and neighbor of Ibrahim's family, defends Ibrahim despite all the inconveniences that come from him

He offers him help and advice out of gratitude for the memory of his parents. He provides Ibrahim with material and moral support, especially in overcoming difficulties, in order to fulfill his dream of pilgrimage to the House of Allah.

-Zahra: Ibrahim's wife, who was not present in the novel except by recalling memories in Ibrahim's mind, and she is the symbol of the Algerian woman who shares with her husband the sweet and the bitter. She remained faithful to the memory of her husband, "this well-mannered wife whom his parents chose for him, and who shared the two matters with him... Although she was divorced, she refused to marry again, in honor of the memory of her in-laws, who recommended their son to her on their deathbed". (Malik Bennabi,1984, p. 68)

- Hajja Fatima, the wife of Ammi Muhammad: the symbol of the affectionate woman who "had maternal feelings for him because she saw him grow up and also because of his good family whom she accompanied until the last moment of their lives". (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 37)

She was their neighbour, and she made bread for Ibrahim and brought him fruits as provisions for his journey.

-Hadi: An Algerian orphan child, who was curious about a dangerous adventure, as he boarded the boat heading to the pilgrimage without identification papers, and without anyone realizing it, except for Sheikh Hajj, who colluded with him when he threw him the rope with which he infiltrated the boat.

3.6 Events: The novel begins with an introduction in which the writer describes the atmosphere of Hajj and its impact on the souls and feelings of Muslims. And the yearning that a Muslim feels towards this holy place, then he mentions the people's impression when they see the group of pilgrims preparing to leave, saying: "You are the first and we are the next, Allah's willing, Allah's willing". (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 21)

Then he describes the place of the novel, giving an impression of the atmosphere that prevailed in Annaba that day "The evening was fine, and the Mediterranean night was light and transparent, like a bejeweled veil covering the city and the port." (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 36)

He arrives at the hero of the story, Ibrahim, whose drunkenness that night was not like the previous ones for him. He describes him with characteristics including staggering, a poor drunkard, swaying. He is thirty years old, his skin is pale, he wears a long apron, he wears canvas shoes, and a worn gauze over his head.

The character of Ammi Muhammad appears, who came to help Ibrahim enter the charcoal store before the neighbors woke up and Ibrahim became in trouble, helping him to get to his bed to sleep. But he did not know that that night, Ibrahim's soul, which was lost behind the knock of a bottle of wine, would wake up, and his soul would return to its true nature. He saw himself wearing the clothes of Ihram, the clothes worn by the Muslim pilgrim, declaring the divorce of the world and its desires and the ascent to the afterlife and its bliss. "He was trying to catch the first thread of his

dream that left in his soul a vague pleasure". (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 51)

When he was hearing the call to prayer, he felt that he was hearing it for the first time, and he felt that it "wakened him up from a slumber that had lasted for many years". (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 7)

So he decided to achieve the dream with all his might. He started with the first barrier, which is the financial one. He decided to ask Ammi Muhammad for help, hoping that he could benefit from his experience. He offered him to sell the house in those remaining hours before the ship set off. Ammi Muhammad knew that this was impossible, but he offered a suitable solution to Ibrahim. Which is to write a power of attorney for him to enable him to dispose of the house while he goes to borrow money from one of his acquaintances after he gives him the guarantee. Ibrahim agreed without hesitation and joy, because the signs of realizing his dream began to appear on the horizon, and the second step or obstacle came, which is no less difficult than the first, which is the Hajj passport. But Ibrahim remembered that he knew one of the elected, so he decided to go to his house and ask for help, and what enabled him to do so when he said He knocked on the door, "Can I see your master? I am a pilgrim and would like to see him so that he can help me complete an administrative procedure." It was only for the elected to make things easier for him, and there was nothing left but to prepare now for the remarkable journey, which the wife of Ammi Muhammad refused except to celebrate Ibrahim like the rest of the pilgrims, so she prepared food for the guests, and prepared a basket of provisions for Ibrahim, as she presented him with his mother's rosary, which his ex-wife, Zahra, kept. For him for such a day, Ibrahim was very pleased with her and considered it evidence that Zahra still had love for him. Ibrahim climbed the boat and he felt that he had crossed a new world. He let out a sigh of satisfaction: Praise be to Allah. (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 76)

He looked around the boat as it left the port, as if he felt that he had left behind Ibrahim the drunkard who had buried him in the dirty coal shop. He soon gathered his strength and started his new life on the boat, joining a group of pilgrims, as is the custom of any pilgrim, so he must belong to the group, because In our religion, it is

considered one of the necessities that give a Muslim a sense of security and belonging. On the deck of the boat, he met personalities such as the imam, the sailor, and some Tunisian pilgrims. He also got acquainted with Hadi, who heard the sound of his distress after one of the sailors found him and handed him over to the captain. Hadi, that child who “was disheveled, his legs were bare, and he wore pants with many holes, like most of the children of Bouna” (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 118)

Hadi fell into a dilemma that he thought at first glance that he would not get out of it safely, but the pilgrims stood up and supported him by paying the travel costs on his behalf, and in order to atone for the guilt he had committed, he was placed as an assistant in the kitchen throughout the journey. The little boy was happy with this solution, hence the bonds of the relationship between him and Ibrahim, who allotted a share of sweets for him and took it to him in the kitchen while he was wondering whether Hadi was praying.

The child rejoiced at the visit and made an appointment with Ibrahim at the afternoon prayer to teach him ablution, that purity that precedes every prayer, while he “was experiencing paternal feelings towards the child mixed with admiration that he felt without realizing it.” (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 126)

And Hadi, in turn, “was eager to taste the flavor of family life that he had always missed in Bouna when he saw children entering or leaving their homes where their parents were” (Malik Bennabi, 1984). And this familiarity that Hadi felt among his new family encouraged him to tell the story of his childhood and how he lost his mother, who used to raise some chickens to sell their eggs and buy food for her child, whose father’s humble work was not enough, then he told them about the father’s illness, which began to cough and blood came out of his mouth. Who forced him to beg so he could feed him, but he died and left him alone, where he sought refuge with homeless children like him, who taught him to wipe the shoes that became his profession, until the day came when he saw the pilgrims riding the ship, so his friends challenged him that he could ride the ship without paying the return, and he challenged him to mastermind the plan in which one of the pilgrims helped him execute.

Then the narration narrates the pilgrims’ readiness to enter the Holy Land by trimming their nails, shaving or cutting their hair, and wearing the Ihram dress, which Hadi did not own, but Ibrahim and the Imam ensured that he would secure sufficient cloth for that.

Then the events move directly to narrate the return of the pilgrims’ ship to Bouna and the message that Ibrahim sent to Ammi Muhammad. He sent a package to Fatima, so the pilgrim said, “There is a rosary for you and another for your husband, and this ring is for Zahra” (Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 154)

He also delivered a message to Ammi Muhammad from Ibrahim, which Malik Bennabi made as a conclusion to the novel, in which he tells him that he performed the rituals of Hajj as he taught him and prayed for him and the residents of Bouna, and that he had settled in Medina, where he became a coffee seller, and that he sponsored Hadi and took him as his son, as he requested. In order for him to hand over the remainder of the price of the house to Zahra, so that she may go on pilgrimage to him and join him if she wants to. He also expressed his gratitude for her patience with him, and he concluded the letter by saying:

“I ask God to bring us together with happiness in this world or in the hereafter.

Medina 25 Dhu al-Hijjah 13. Hajj Ibrahim who prays for you “((Malik Bennabi, 1984, p. 156)

This conclusion makes you feel that you are facing a wish that Malik Bennabi fulfilled through the personality of Ibrahim, because Malik Bennabi wished to settle in the Hijaz with his wife, but he failed to do so and expressed this wish by saying: “I have the idea of traveling to the Hijaz, fleeing from living in a colonized land, because I am tired of faces and prospects” (Abd al-Latif Ubadah, 1983, p. 15)

He also says: “I began to think seriously about emigrating to the Hijaz to settle in Taif” (Abd al-Latif Ubadah, 1983, p. 17)

But circumstances prevented his wish from being fulfilled.

5. Conclusion

Malik Bennabi, through this narration, insisted on affirming that the Algerian Muslim has an identity and fixed values that are impossible to obliterate. These same values protect our civilization from dissolution, decomposition, and decay. A Muslim

may deviate from the path of truth and live lost, alienated from his true identity. But he soon responds to the call of his soul with a divine call, and our civilization may live for a short or long period in decline and stagnation, but it is like a seed that lies in the earth, as soon as the conditions for life are met, it grows, blooms and greens again.

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