

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Arab prosodians have divided Rhetoric into two parts, viz :—

(1) علم بدیع also called بدائع و منائع also called علم معنی = the figures of speech.

(2) علم بیان also called علم ادب also called علم کتابت = the explanatory science.

Combined, they comprise what we understand by the word rhetoric, *i.e.*, the science underlying all effective composition whether in prose or verse.

Here, again, at the outset one is amazed at the detail with which the Arabs, Persians and Indians have classified these figures of speech. Compared with the few which are noticed in any book on English rhetoric, their name is legion.

Some are genuinely worthy of consideration but many are extremely futile and only give the reader a sense of the mental travail that must have attended their birth and not of any polish or epigrammatic style.

As has been said before, the Oriental has a passion for anything in the nature of a cryptograph or acrostic and a species of literary gymnastics whereby a poet composes a line of poetry containing only dotted letters followed by a line of entirely dotless letters, will draw from the Indian reader an involuntary gasp of admiration such as could never be extracted from him by any superb simile inspired by real poetic fancy. This indictment, hard as it may seem,

is no whit as severe as that of one of the greatest literary critics India has ever produced, Azad of Delhi (not to be confused with the author of the *Fasani-i-Azad*), who in the *Ab-i-Hayat* expostulates against this slavish following of poetical tradition stolen from the Persians and boldly says that ingenuity may exist but originality cannot.

Some of the Urdu epic verse (notably the "marsias") is indeed very fine, very graphic and stirring, but their lyric verse nearly always strikes the English reader as laboured, lifeless, pedantic and second-hand. This last, it must assuredly be since the poets of old have sanctioned and adopted as "sealed patterns" certain comparisons and similes which alone are permissible today, and woe betide the luckless bard who tries to strike out a new line for himself.

The figure of the mistress is straight and tall as the cypress; the drooping eyelashes of the coquette resemble the narcissus; her lips are rose buds; her eyes put the eyes of the gazelle to shame; her raven locks are black snakes guarding the treasure of her breasts.

"Very fine!" you say? Yes, as invented by the Persians or Arabs but served up *rechauffé* for the millionth time by some latter day poet they cannot possess any real charm of their own.

Neat, Urdu poetry can certainly claim to be, since in the first place the intricate system of metres calls for good "workmanship" and secondly the method by which the poet works up to and introduces these "standard similes" needs considerable ingenuity.

The second great fault, to a Western reader, in Urdu verse lies in its lack of continuity. One is bound to ex-

perience a feeling that the poet has lit upon a rhyming dictionary and is slowly and laboriously working his way through it.

From this indictment I exclude "Hali," "Akbar," "Iqbal" and their disciples who have deliberately broken away from this "gul o bulbul" tradition and, allowing themselves to be attracted by the verse of other climes, and opening their minds to modern thought, have struck out on a new line for themselves. For this courageous act they have been acclaimed as pioneers by the discerning few but have suffered much opprobrium at the hands of the conservative intelligentsia of India.

Continuity, however, does exist, with a vengeance, in one type of poem the "sar a pa" (lit. head to foot) which is an eulogistic survey of the bodily charms of the beloved. In this, as the expectant reader may realize, there is ample scope for ingenuity.

On arrival, so to speak, at the "terra incognita" the bashful bard (albeit with his tongue in his cheek) protests that he is confronted with a riddle which he is powerless to guess, and, leaving it unanswered, starts away again on safer ground with praise of the shapeliness of the lady's lower limbs. Others poetically say that they must perforce miss a stage in the journey of love while others aver that they must turn over unread one page in the book of love.

I once heard a story concerning "Ranjur" and a "sar a pa" on which the censor looked unfavourably; but I forbear to relate the tale—"de mortuis nil nisi bonum."

The third great drawback to the enjoyment of Urdu verse is the vileness of the bazar lithographed copies of the works of the poets than which none better are obtainable.

Colonel Peart has commented on this in no uncertain terms in his introduction to the official text book edited under his supervision.

I remember thinking very hard-hearted an examiner who did not accede to my request that he should tell me what word was represented by an inky smudge in one line of a lithographed copy of a poet's works, which was given me to translate as unseen Urdu verse. In vain did I urge that paleography found no part in the examination, in vain was my plea that MSS. reading was a separate test. His only reply was that this was a recognized difficulty in Urdu verse which the student must overcome unaided. As in scansion, the student will require some practice in recognizing and classifying these figures of speech, I have, therefore, selected such verse as specimens of metre, that contains in addition many figures of speech.

These and the examples in Chapters 2 and 3 ought to prove sufficient.

CHAPTER 2.

THE FIGURES OF THOUGHT. (صنائع معنی)

The figures of speech are divided into two categories, viz:—
صنائع معنی = the figures of thought; and صنائع لفظی = the figures of words. In this chapter the former category will be discussed. They are as follows:—

1. تضاد or مطابقة or تطبیق or طباق = antithesis.

This may be of nouns, adjectives, verbs, or particles, or mixed, positive (ایجابی) or negative (سلبی). Example:

”گھٹانا وصل کی شب بڑھانا روز ہجران کا“

“Shortening the night of union lengthening the day of separation.”

گھٹانا	} are in antithesis, respectively, to	بڑھانا
وصل		ہجران
شب		روز

2. ایہام تضاد = ambiguous antithesis. Example from the Persian poet Faqir:—

”شب وصلِ توبہ پایان آمد صبح میبخندد و من میگیریم“

“The night spent in thy arms is ended: Dawn smiles, but I weep.” There is no real antithesis between the dawn and the poet; such antithesis is brought about by a metaphorical idea of the dawn smiling.

3. مقابلہ, if two or more words joined by conjunctions are placed in antithesis, the figure of speech is called مقابلہ. Example: