

AÍN I AKBARI

BY

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AÍN 34.

THE ARTS OF WRITING AND PAINTING.

What we call *form* leads us to recognize a body; the body itself leads us to what we call *a notion, an idea*. Thus on seeing the form of a letter, we recognize the letter, or a word, and this again will lead us to some idea. Similarly in the case of what people term *a picture*. But though it is true that painters, especially those of Europe, succeed in drawing figures expressive of the conceptions which the artist has of any of the mental states,* so much so, that people may mistake a picture for a reality: yet pictures are much inferior to the written letter, inasmuch as the letter may embody the wisdom of bygone ages, and become a means to intellectual progress.

I shall first say something about the art of writing, as it is the more important of the two arts. His Majesty pays much attention to both, and is an excellent judge of form and thought. And indeed, in the eyes of the friends of true beauty, a letter is the source from which the light confined within it beams forth; and in the opinion of the far-sighted, it is the world-reflecting cup* in the abstract. The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate; it contains the secret of the word, and is the tongue of the hand. The spoken word goes to the hearts of such as are present to hear it; the letter gives wisdom to those that are near and far. If it was not for the letter, the spoken word would soon die, and no keepsake would be left us of those that are gone by. Superficial observers see in the letter a sooty figure; but the deepsighted, a lamp of wisdom. The written letter looks black, notwithstanding the thousand rays within it; or, it is a light with a mole on it that wards off the evil eye.* A letter is the portrait painter of wisdom; a rough sketch from the realm of ideas; a dark night ushering in day; a black cloud pregnant with knowledge; the wand for the treasures of insight; speaking, though dumb; stationary, and yet travelling; stretched on the sheet, and yet soaring upwards.

When a ray of God's knowledge falls on man's soul, it is carried by the mind to the realm of thought, which is the intermediate station between that which is conscious of individual existence (*mujarrad*) and that which is material (*máddí*). The result* is a concrete thing mixed with the absolute, or an absolute thing mixed with that which is concrete. This compound steps forward on man's tongue, and enters, with the assistance of the conveying air, into the windows of the ears of others. It then drops the burden of its concrete component, and returns as a single ray, to its old place, the realm of thought. But the heavenly traveller occasionally gives his course a different direction by means of man's fingers, and having passed along the continent of the pen and crossed the ocean of the ink, alights on the pleasant expanse of the page, and returns through the eye of the reader to its wonted habitation.

As the letter is a representation of an articulate sound, I think it necessary to give some information regarding the latter.

The sound of a letter is a mode of existence depending on the nature of the air. By *qara'* we mean the striking together of two hard substances; and by *qala'*, the separation of the same. In both cases the intermediate air, like a wave, is set in motion; and thus the state is produced which we call *sound*. Some philosophers take sound to be the secondary effect, and define it as the air set in motion; but others look upon it as the primary effect, *i. e.*, they define sound to be the very *qara'*, or the *qala'*, of any hard substances. Sound may be accompanied by modifying circumstances: it may be piano, deep, nasal, or guttural, as when the throat is affected by a cold. Again, from the nature of the organ with which man utters a sound, and the manner in which the particles of the air are divided, another modifying circumstance may

arise, as when two piano, two deep, two nasal, or two guttural sounds separate from each other. Some, as Abú 'Alí Síná, call this modifying element (*'áriz*) the sound of the letter; others define it as the original state of the sound thus modified (*ma'rúiz*); but the far-sighted define an articulate sound as the union of the modifying element and the original state modified. This is evidently the correct view.

There are fifty-two articulate sounds in Hindí, so and so many* in Greek, and eighteen in Persian. In Arabic, there are twenty-eight letters represented by eighteen signs, or by only fifteen, when we count the joined letters, and if we take the *Hamzah* as one with the Alif. The reason for writing an *Alif* and a *Lám*, (<Arabic>) separately at the end of the single letters in the Arabic Alphabet, is merely to give an example of a *sákin* letter, which must necessarily be joined to another letter; and the reason why the letter *lám* is preferred* as an example, is because the letter *lám* is the middle letter of the word *alif*, and the letter *alif* the middle letter of the word *lám*.

The vowel-signs did not exist in ancient times, instead of which letters were dotted with a different kind of ink; thus a red dot placed *over* a letter expressed that the letter was followed by an *a*; a red dot in front of the letter signified a *u*; and a red dot below a letter, an *i*. It was Khalíl ibn i Ahmad,* the famous inventor of the Metrical Art of the Arabians, who fixed the forms of the vowel-signs as they are now in use.

The beauty of a letter and its proportions depend much on personal taste; hence it is that nearly every people has a separate alphabet. Thus we find an Indian, Syriac, Greek, Hebrew, Coptic, Ma'qalí, Kúfí, Kashmírí, Abyssinian, Raihání, Arabic, Persian, Himyaritic, Berbery, Andalusian, Rúhání, and several other ancient systems of writing. The invention of the Hebrew characters is traced in some poems to A'dam i Hafthazárí,* but some mention *Idrís** as the inventor. Others, however, say that Idrís perfected the *Ma'qalí* character. According to several statements, the Kúfíc character was derived by the Khalífah 'Alí from the *Ma'qalí*.

The difference in the form of a letter in the several systems, lies in the proportion of straight and round strokes: thus the Kúfíc character consists of one-sixth curvature and five-sixths straight lines; the *Ma'qalí* has no curved lines at all; hence the inscriptions which are found on ancient buildings are mostly in this character.

In writing we have to remember that black and white look well, as these colours best prevent ambiguities in reading.

In I'rán and Túrán, India, and Turkey, there are eight caligraphical systems* current, of which each one is liked by some people. Six of them were derived, in A. H. 310, by *Ibn i Muqlah* from the Ma'qalí and the Kúfíc characters, *viz.*, the *Suls*, *Tauqí'*, *Muhaqqaq*, *Naskh*, *Raihán*, *Riqá'*. Some add the *Ghubár*, and say that this seventh character had likewise been invented by him. The *Naskh* character is ascribed by many to *Yáqút*, a slave of the Khalífah Musta'çam Billáh.* The *Suls* and the *Naskh* consist each of one-third* curved lines, and two-thirds straight lines; the former (the *suls*) is *jalí*,* whilst the latter (the *naskh*) is *khafí*. The *Tauqí'* and *Riqá'* consist of three-fourths curved lines, and one-fourth straight lines; the former is *jalí*, the latter is *khafí*. The *Muhaqqaq* and *Raihán* contain three-fourths straight lines; the former, as in the preceding, is *jalí*, and the *Raihán* *khafí*.

Among famous copyists I must mention 'Alí ibn i Hilál, better known under the name of *Ibn i Bawwáb*;* he wrote well the six characters. *Yáqút* brought them to perfection. Six of *Yáqút*'s pupils are noticeable; 1. Shaikh Ahmad, so well known under the name of Shaikhzádah i Suhrwardí; 2. Arghún of Kábul; 3. Mauláná Yúsuf Sháh of Mashhad; 4. Mauláná Mubárik Sháh, styled *Zarrín qalam* (the golden pen); 5. Haidar, called *Gandahnawís* (*i. e.*, the writer of the *jalí*); 6. Mír Yahya.

The following caligraphists are likewise well known: Çúfí Naçrullah, also called Çadr i 'Iráqí; Arqún 'Abdullah; Khájah 'Abdullah i Çairafí; Hájí Muhammad; Mauláná 'Abdullah i A'shpaz; Mauláná Muhí of Shíráz; Mu'inuddín i Tanúrí; Shamsuddín i Khaţáí; 'Abdurrahím i Khalúlí (?); Abdulhay; Mauláná Ja'far* of Tabríz; Mauláná Sháh of Mashhad; Mauláná Ma'rúf* of Baghdád; Mauláná Shamsuddín i Báyasanghur;

Mu'ínuddín of Faráh; Abdulhaq of Sabzwár; Mauláná Ni'matullah i Bawwáb; Khájagí Múmin i Marwárid, the inventor of variegated papers and sands for strewing on the paper; Sultán Ibráhím, son of Mírzá Sháhruk; Mauláná Muhammad Hakím Háfiz; Mauláná Mahmúd Siyáúsh; Mauláná Jamáluddín Husain; Mauláná Pír Muhammad; Mauláná Fazlulhaq of Qazwín*

A *seventh* kind of writing is called *Ta'líq*, which has been derived from the *Riqá'* and the *Tauqí'*. It contains very few straight lines, and was brought to perfection by Khájah Táj i Salmání,* who also wrote well the other six characters. Some say that he was the inventor.

Of modern caligraphists I may mention: Mauláná 'Abdulhay, the Private Secretary* of Sultán Abú Sa'id Mírzá, who wrote *Ta'líq* well; Mauláná Darwísh;* Amír Mançúr; Mauláná Ibráhím of Astarábád; Khájah Ikhtiyár;* Munshí Jamáluddín; Muhammad of Qazwín; Mauláná Idrís; Khájah Muhammad Husain Munshí; and Ashraf Khán,* the Private Secretary of His Majesty, who improved the *Ta'líq* very much.