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A New Look at Rhetoric

Language, when used in a wider sense than usual, that is, as a means of conveying some information from one person to another, consists of a mental and a physical aspect.

Expression is, in fact, a physical realization of the mental aspect, since any mental image must somehow be represented externally in order to be communicatively effective. Expressions are either of a natural or of a conventional character.

Natural expressions usually have bodily manifestations, such as smiling, crying, etc., which may imply satisfaction, sorrow or similar emotions.

Conventional expressions are either verbal or nonverbal. Nonverbal expressions, such as gestures, traffic signs and so on, are abundant in every society and serve useful purposes. What we are concerned with here, is verbal expression which is called language in a narrow and technical sense. Language is materialized either in spoken or in written form.

Aspects of Rhetoric

What has been treated under Rhetoric in traditional

books belongs either to a semantic domain (which has more of a mental character) or to a formal domain (which has more of a verbal or physical character). For example, simile belongs more to the semantic domain as it is based on a mental activity, to discover a kind of similarity, either felt or imagined, between two things or two phenomena and the subsequent transferring of it from one to another. But rhyme, on the contrary, makes use of the sound values of the sound values of the language in question.

What has traditionally been termed *jenās* (جناس) in Persian books on rhetoric falls into four subdivisions: One is homonymy which requires that two or more homonymous words be identical in sound and in spelling. A second kind is homophony which rests only on the identity of sounds. Third is homography which involves sameness of two linguistic forms in orthography. Still another kind makes use of the visual shape of two words disregarding their diacritics.

The classification presented here seems more natural with regards to language and literature and it is hoped that it may be of some value in reconsidering the art of rhetoric in the Persian language.

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