



by
Sheikh Muslih-uddin Sa'di Shirazi (1258)

Translated by
Sir Edwin Arnold (1899)



World Famous Persian Poet of 13th Century



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Chapter 4



On the Advantages of Silence

Story 1

I said to a friend that I have chosen rather to be silent than to speak because on most occasions good and bad words are scattered concurrently but enemies perceive only the latter.

He replied: 'That enemy is the greatest who does not see any good.'

The brother of enmity passes not near a good man

Except to consider him as a most wicked liar.

هنر به چشم عداوت ، بزرگتر عیب است

گل است سعدی و در چشم دشمنان خار است

Virtue is to the eyes of enmity the greatest fault.

Sa'di is a rose but to the eye of enemies a thorn.

نور گیتی فروز چشمه هور

زشت باشد به چشم موشك كور

The world illumining sun and fountain of light

Look ugly to the eye of the mole.

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Story 2

A merchant, having suffered loss of a thousand dinars, enjoined his son not to reveal it to anyone.

The boy said: 'It is thy order and I shall not tell it but thou must inform me of the utility of this proceeding and of the propriety of concealment.'

He replied: 'For fear the misfortune would be double; namely, the loss of the money and, secondly, the joy of neighbors at our loss.'

مگوی انده خویش با دشمنان

که لا حول گویند شادی کنان

Reveal not thy grief to enemies

Because they will say 'La haul' but rejoice.

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Story 3

An intelligent youth possessed an abundant share of accomplishments and discreet behavior so that he was allowed to sit in assemblies of learned men but he refrained from conversing with them. His father once asked him why he did not likewise speak on subjects he was acquainted with.

He replied: 'I fear I may be asked what I do not know and be put to shame.'

نشیدی که صوفی می کوفت

زیر نعلین خویش میخی چند؟

آستینش گرفت سرهنگی

که بیانعل بر ستورم بند

Hast thou heard how a Sufi drove

A few nails under his sandals

And an officer taking him by the sleeve

Said to him: 'Come and shoe my horse.'

For what thou hast not said no one will trouble thee

But when thou hast spoken bring the proof.

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Story 4

A scholar of note had a controversy with an unbeliever but, being unable to cope with him in argument, shook his head and retired.

Someone asked him how it came to pass that, with all his eloquence and learning, he had been unable vanquish an irreligious man.

He replied: 'My learning is in the Quran, in tradition and in the sayings of sheikhs, which he neither believes in nor listens to. Then of what use is it to me to hear him blaspheming?'

آن کس که به قرآن و خبر زو نرھی

دهی آنست جوابش که جوابش ن

To him of whom thou canst not rid thyself by the Quran and tradition
The best reply is if thou dost not reply anything.

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Story 5

Jalenus saw a fool hanging on with his hands to the collar of a learned man and insulting him, whereon he said:

'If he were learned he would not have come to this pass with an ignorant man.'

ا نباشد کین و پیکاردو عاقل ر

نه دانایی ستیزد با سبکسار

اگر نادان به وحشت سخت گوید

خردمندش به نرمی دل بجوید

Two wise men do not contend and quarrel
Nor does a scholar fight with a contemptible fellow.
If an ignorant man in his rudeness speaks harshly
An intelligent man tenderly reconciles his heart.

دو صاحب‌دل نگهدارند مویی

همیدون سرکشی ، آزر م جویی

Two pious men keep a hair between them untorn
And so does a mild with a headstrong man.

و گر بر هر دو جانب جاهلانند

اگر زنجیر باشد بگسلانند

If however both sides are fools
If there be a chain they will snap it.

یکی را زشتخویی داد دشنام
تحمل کرد و گفت ای خوب فرجام

An ill-humored man insulted someone.
He bore it and replied: 'O man of happy issue,

بتر زانم که خواهی گفتن آنی

که دانم عیب من چون من ندانی

I am worse than thou canst say that I am
Because I know thou art not aware of my faults as I am.

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Story 6

Subhan Vail is considered to have had no equal in rhetoric's because he had addressed an assembly during a year and had not repeated the same word but, when the same meaning happened to occur, he expressed it in another manner and this is one of the accomplishments of courtiers and princes.

A word if heart-binding and sweet
Is worthy of belief and of approbation.
When thou hast once said it do not utter it again
Because sweets, once partaken of, suffice.

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Story 7

I heard a philosopher say that no one has ever made a confession of his own folly except he who begins speaking, whilst another has not yet finished his talk.

سخن را سر است ای خداوند و بن
میاور سخن در میان سخن
خداوند تدبیر و فرهنگ و هوش
نگوید سخن تا نبیند خموش

Words have a head, O shrewd man, and a tail.
Do not insert thy words between words of others.
The possessor of deliberation, intelligence and shrewdness
Does not say a word till he sees silence.

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Story 8

Several officials of Sultan Mahmud asked Hasan Muimandi one day what the sultan had told him about a certain affair.

He replied: 'You must yourselves have heard it.'

They rejoined: 'What he says to thee he does not think proper to communicate to the like of us.'

He answered: 'Because he trusts that I shall not reveal it. Then why do you ask me to do so?'

نه سخن که برآید بگوید اهل شناخت

به سر شاه سر خویشتن نباید باخت

A knowing man will not utter every word which occurs to him.

It is not proper to endanger one's head for the king's secret.

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Story 9

I was hesitating in the conclusion of a bargain for the purchase of a house when a Jew said: 'Buy it for I am one of the landholders of this ward. Ask me for a description of the house as it is and it has no defect.'

I replied: 'Except that thou art the neighbor of it.'

خانه ام را که چون تو همسایه است

ده درم سیم بد عیار ارزد

لکن امیدوارم باید بود

که پس از مرگ تو هزار ارزد

A house which has a neighbor like thee

Is worth ten dirhams of a deficient standard

But the hope must be entertained

That after thy death it will be worth a thousand.

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Story 10

A poet went to an Amir of robbers and recited a panegyric but he ordered him to be divested of his robe.

As the poor man was departing naked in the world, he was attacked from behind by dogs, whereon he intended to snatch up a stone but it was frozen to the ground and, being unable to do so, he exclaimed: 'What whore-sons of men are these? They have let loose the dogs and have tied down the stones.'

The Amir of the robbers who heard these words from his room laughed and said: 'O philosopher, ask something from me.'

He replied: 'I ask for my robe if thou wilt make me a present of it.'

We are satisfied of thy gift by departure.

امیدوار بود آدمی به خیر کسان

مرا به خیر تو امید نیست ، شر مرسان

A man was hoping for the gifts of people.

I hope no gift from thee. Do me no evil.

The robber chief took pity upon him, ordered his robe to be restored to him and added to it a sheepskin jacket with some dirhams.

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Story 11

An astrologer, having entered his own house, saw a stranger and, getting angry, began to insult him, whereon both fell upon each other and fought so that turmoil and confusion ensued.

A pious man who had the scene exclaimed:

تو بر اوج فلک چه دانی چیست؟

!که ندانی که در سرایت کیست؟

'How knowest thou what is in the zenith of the sky
If thou art not aware who is in thy house?'

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Story 12

A preacher imagined his miserable voice to be pleasing and raised useless shouts, thou wouldst have said that the crow of separation had become the tune of his song; and the verse-

for the most detestable of voices is surely the voice of asses-

appears to have been applicable to him.

This distich also concerns him:

When the preacher Abu-I-Fares brays
At his voice Istakhar-Fares quakes.

On account of the position he occupied the inhabitants of the locality submitted to the hardship and did not think proper to molest him. In course of time,

however, another preacher of that region, who bore secret enmity towards him, arrived on a visit and said to him: 'I have dreamt about thee, may it end well!'

'What hast thou dreamt?'

'I dreamt that thy voice had become pleasant and that the people were comfortable during thy sermons.'

The preacher meditated a while on these words and then said:

'Thou hast dreamt a blessed dream because thou hast made me aware of my defect. It has become known to me that I have a disagreeable voice and that the people are displeased with my loud reading. Accordingly I have determined henceforth not to address them except in a subdued voice':

دوستى برنجم از صحبت
كاخلاق بدم حسن نمايد
عييم هنر و كمال بيند
خارم گل و ياسمن نمايد

I am displeased with the company of friends
To whom my bad qualities appear to be good.
They fancy my faults are virtues and perfection.
My thorns they believe to be rose and Jessamine.

كو دشمن شوخ چشم ناپاك
تا عيب مرا به من نمايد

Say. Where is the bold and quick enemy
To make me aware of my defects?

He whose faults are not told him
Ignorantly thinks his defects are virtues.

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Story 13

A man used to shout superfluous calls to prayers in the mosque of Sinjar and in a voice which displeased all who heard it. The owner of the mosque, who was a just and virtuous Amir, not desirous to give him pain, said: 'My good fellow, in this mosque there are old muezzins' to each of whom I pay five dinars monthly but to thee I shall give ten, if thou wilt go to another place.'

The man agreed and went away.

Some time afterwards however, he returned to the Amir and said: 'My lord, thou hast injured me by turning me away for ten dinars from this place because where I next went they offered me twenty dinars to go to another locality but I refused.'

The Amir smiled and said: 'By no means accept them because will give thee even fifty dinars.'

به تیشه کس نخرشد ز روی خارا گل
چنانکه بانگ درشت تو می خراشد دل

No one can scrape the mud from gravel with an axe
As thy discordant shouting scrapes the heart.

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Story 14

A fellow with a disagreeable voice happened to be reading the Quran, when a pious man passed near, and asked him what his monthly salary was. He replied: 'Nothing.'

He further inquired: 'Then why takest thou this trouble?'

He replied: 'I am reading for God's sake.'

He replied: 'For God's sake do not read.'

گر تو قرآن بدین نمط خوانی

ببری رونق مسلمانی

If thou readest the Quran thus
Thou wilt deprive the religion of splendor.



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