

NO. VIII.

A MASNAWI, SATIRIZING MIRZA FAKHIR MAKEEN.*

It is reported, that a person was relating a story, saying, "His Honor, Mirza Fakhir Makeen, thinks himself equal to Sheikh Ali Hazeen,† and has adopted all his ways of etiquette, rather, he thinks himself better than him in excellence and goodness, and has corrected many of his verses." The following Masnawi accordingly sets forth the state of the Mirza.

* Fakhir Makeen was a Shiar poet of Lucknow.

† Sheikh Ali Hazeen was a celebrated Persian poet, who was present at Delhi during the massacre of Nadir Shah; from there he went to Lucknow, where he flourished for some years, being received with much honour by Asuf-ood-daulah, the ruler; Sauda was his cotemporary. From Lucknow, he went to Benares, and spent the rest of his life there, having determined to die at that place, as he says in the lines,

"Az Banāras narawam marja i āmast eenjā
Har brahman bacha i Lachman o Rām ast eenjā."

"I will not go from Banaras, here is the place of departure of all;
Every Brahman here is the son of Lachman and Rām."

Ali Hazeen was a most learned man, very refined in his ways and habits, and master of many languages, and surpassed all the poets of his day in his Persian verses. He died quite young, but, to this day, is regarded as the Poet Laureate of Persia and India, and his name is handed down with much respect and honour. His poetical titular name was Hazeen, "the sad" which he assumed on account of the solitary life he preferred leading; his custom was to sit in a room with his back to the door, and a mirror before him, that he might be able at once to retire, on seeing any one approach. Sauda once got an opportunity of paying him a visit in this room, through the instrumentality of a Chobdar; when Khwaja Ali Hazeen saw him entering, he addressed him in poetry thus,

"Dar in bazm rah nīst begāna rā"
"In this assembly there is no entrance for strangers,"

Sauda, without the least hesitation, replied instantler,

"Kih parwāngi dad parwāna rā"
"Who has given permission to a moth?"

Meaning, that as the moth, without permission, was allowed to hover round a candle, so he too, moth-like, delighted to hover round the light of the world, and needed no permission either. Hazeen, on hearing this, was extremely delighted and pleased with the answer, and, rising to receive him with much warmth and friendship, made him sit down by his side, and asked him to read some of his poetry; upon which Sauda quoted this couplet,

"Nāwak ne tere said na chhorā zamāne men
Tarpe hai murgh-i-kibla numā ashiyāne men"
"Your darts have left no sport in the world;
The bird, that points to Mecca, is even writhing in its nest."

These words are addressed to the fair sex, and darts here mean their heart-rending glances. The Khwaja, being a foreigner, did not understand the meaning of tarpe, and was obliged to ask it; on being informed of its meaning, he approved of the verse very much, and the two became great friends. Sauda then asked him to read some of his poetry, on which the Khwaja recited the following verse,

"Siyah choorī badast i an nigāri naznīn dīdam
Ba shāk i sandalīn pechīda mār i 'ambarīn dīdam."
"The black bracelet I saw on the hand of that delicate lovely one,
(Was like) an amber-like (*i. e.* black) snake I saw twisted on a branch of sandal."

Sandal is white, and the branch of it is compared to the arm.

MASNAWI.

A story now has come to my memory,
 I know not if it be true, or some one's invention.
 There was a schoolmaster in the reign of Shah Jahan,
 Who was neither a very good, nor a very bad, scholar,
 But he knew a little moderately,
 And used to teach children in the school.
 As he was excused being wise,
 The children were happy and contented with him,
 And their hearts had no fear of him ;
 The courtyard of the school was their play ground.
 Amongst them (the children) was one intelligent and clever,
 Who thus advised the other boys,
 " Friends ! we play a hundred kinds of games,
 But I perceive they are all useless ;
 I have now invented a new game,
 Which is quite distinct from all games."
 The boys asked, " Dear Brother ! tell us
 And show us, what that game is."
 He said, " Kings and Ministers
 When big and little boys play at,
 Then O friends ! there is not much pleasure in it ;
 But this is a good deal better than it.
 Let us take in the master by some means or other,
 And all, uniting, make him out Shah Jahan."
 Laughing, they replied, " How can this be done ?"
 He said, " Do ye listen ! this is the way.
 (To-morrow) whoever comes to school in the morning to read,
 Let him keep his eyes fixed on the master's face ;
 And if he ask, ' What is the cause of your staring at me so,'
 Reply, ' I am now beholding the power of God ;
 In the night your appearance has become
 Wonderfully changed ; how great is the skill of the Almighty.
 What shall I say, that it resembles to-day ?
 For it is like the appearance of Shah Jahan.
 I am drowned in the ocean of astonishment at seeing this,
 For their remains not a hair's difference between the two of you.'
 But this is a condition, that whoever shall go near him,
 Shall say this, and take his oath to it without the least hesitation.
 You truly know the extent of his intellect and wisdom ;
 By persevering, he will become whatever ye make him out."
 The plan, that he (the boy) had formed,
 Was successfully executed by the boys ;

Sauda did not quite approve of it, but suggested the following as an improvement.

Siyah choori badast i an nigāre
 Ba shāk i sandalīn pechida māre.

The Khwaja was much pleased, and at once corrected this, one of his chosen verses, in his *Biyaz*.

Nothing was wanting, he (the master) was deceived to such a degree
(that he thought)

“I am without doubt like Shah Jahan in appearance.”

Moreover this idea entered his heart,

“When Shah Jahan shall die,*

His nobles, not being able to bear separation from him,

Will all become anxious to see me,

And will come to my house to behold me ;

Therefore it is best for me,

That I should create in myself those qualities and dispositions,

That the people may regard me as Shah Jahan,

And may make their obeisances, respects, and salutations to me ;

Then I will not pay any respect even to an angel.”

In short, let him, who in the world has wisdom,

Understand this story, as representing him (Fakhir Makeen) ;

In his own fancy he has made himself a Sheikh,†

In the same way as the Mulla made himself Shah Jahan ;

He possesses neither the fortune nor the excellencies of the Sheikh ;

It would indeed be an impossible matter for him to be a Sheikh.

* Lit, “When there shall be a meeting for Shah Jahan.” The meeting with The Almighty is here referred to, and hence it comes to mean “death.”

† Sheikh is here the short for Sheikh Ali Hazeen.