# 3  The Predicative Relationship (*isnād-i ḫabarī*)

**Summary**    3.1 Predication. – 3.2 Informative Content (*fāyida*). – 3.3 Attitude of the Addressee. – 3.4 Outward Requirements (*muqtaḍā-yi ẓāhir*). – 3.5 Literal (*ḥaqīqī*) and Figurative (*maǧāzī*) Predication.

## 3.1  Predication

The study of the science of meanings begins by setting the basic tenets that guide the production of informative utterances (*ḫabar*). Information rests on the combination of two non-optional interdependent constituents. In this regard, the basic notions of *ḫabar*, *musnad ilayh*, *musnad* and *isnād* have been introduced before (see § 2.3). Here, I will consider some additional points.

While predicand and predicate are speech elements, the predicative relationship (*isnād-i ḫabarī*) does not correspond to spoken elements in the sentence. The idea of *isnād* is an abstract notion. Its existence is theoretically assumed to justify how information is provided by combining two elements, a predicand (*musnad ilayh*) and a predicate (*musnad*). The two, *musnad ilayh* and *musnad*, maintain a special status: if one of them does not appear in the utterance, it should occur elsewhere at some underlying level (see also § 4.2 and § 5.2). Each of them is essential. Additional elements, if any, are optional.

The origins of the terminology on predication can be traced back to the early Arabic linguistic tradition. The theory of *isnād* 'predica-

tion' coined by the Arabic grammarians made it possible to simplify the analysis of the proposition. By implementing the categories of *musnad ilayh* and *musnad*, grammarians invented a binary model to describe the predicative structure of the Arabic sentence. In this way, they could account for the different formulations of Arabic nominal clauses (topic/comment) and verbal clauses (predicate/subject). The Arabic science of meanings reconceptualised the original notion of *isnād*, emphasising that the speaker plays a central role in establishing the relation between the predicand and the predicate.[1]

The predicative relationship, according to the science of meanings, reflects the judgement (*ḥukm*) expressed by the speaker when he declares something. It establishes a relation between the predicand and the predicate in terms of affirmation (*iṯbāt*) or denial (*nafy*). Two examples of affirmation were given in § 2.3. In addition to those positive examples, the corresponding negative examples below are also utterances of the *ḫabar*-type that may be analysed in terms of *musnad ilayh* and *musnad*:

| *Bahrām* | *namīniwīsad* | *Bahrām* | *niwīsanda nīst* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bahrām | does not write. | Bahrām | is not a writer. |
| ↓ | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ |
| *musnad ilayh* | *musnad* | *musnad ilayh* | *musnad* |

The binary model could easily be adapted to the Persian science of meanings. The existence of the copula in Persian, in addition, simplifies many of the problems that Arabic linguistics has had to tackle in order to account for the difference between nominal and verbal predicates. In Persian, the copula is generally expressed as in *Bahrām niwīsanda ast* 'Bahrām-noun' + 'writer-noun' + 'is-copula', 'Bahrām is a writer'. In Arabic, on the contrary, the nominal predicate has no copula; for example, *Zayd kātib*, that is 'Zayd-noun' + 'a writer-noun', means 'Zayd is a writer'. The fact that in Arabic the juxtaposition of two nominal elements resulted in a well-formed utterance had to be justified in some way.

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[1] On the concept of *isnād* in the Arabic grammatical tradition, see Levin 1981 and Bohas, Guillaume, Kouloughli 1990, 123.

## 3.2 Informative Content (*fāyida*)

The science of meanings supplies an idea of good speech in which the speaker tends to be as informative as possible. Informativity, at the most basic level, means conveying new information. Thus, a *ḫabar* utterance is generally the expression of a piece of information that the addressee does not already possess. Consequently, an essential factor influencing the formulation of an utterance is the level of awareness that the speaker attributes to the addressee. The state of the addressee, informed (*ʿālim*) or uninformed (*ǧāhil*) about a fact, plays a role in the formulation and decoding of the utterance. The speaker generally notifies new facts to someone uninformed. However, it also happens that the speaker deliberately expresses content that the addressee already knows. Below I will clarify how manuals justify these redundancies on the grounds of the possibility of expressing additional meanings beyond a sentence's literal value.

The science of meanings recognises two outcomes of any informative utterance. The first is to state some fact and the second, which occurs simultaneously, is to show that the speaker is informed about that fact. The discipline has special terms to describe the two levels. The elementary level is called *fāyida-yi ḫabar* 'statement's information, import, what one gains in terms of information'. The secondary level, which necessarily follows the first, is called *lāzim-i fāyida* 'the necessary consequence of the information'. Which of the two is the actual communicative goal of the speaker depends on the context. Consider the example *tu dīrūz az Šīrāz āmada ī* 'You have arrived from Shiraz yesterday'.[2] Obviously, the addressee is already informed about his own journey and schedule. The speaker here wants to show that he is informed about it as well. Assuming that an informative utterance should add new information, for an uninformed addressee the new information will generally be the *fāyida-yi ḫabar*, while for an informed one it might be the *lāzim-i fāyida*.

In addition, the speaker may have other goals (*ġaraḍ*, plural *aġrāḍ*) in mind, including expressing one's feelings or provoking an emotional response in the addressee. These are the very essence of certain utterances. Aḥmadnižād (2003, 91-5) gives dozens of lines of poetry whose aim, he writes, is to show *ḥasrat* 'grief, regret', *andūh* 'sadness', *šādī* 'joy', *ḍaʿf* 'weakness', *bīčāragī* 'helpless state', *istirḥām* 'plea, entreaty, urgent serious or emotional request', *mufāḫara* 'boasting', *madḥ* 'praise' and the like. Yet the suggestive power of language, and of poetry in particular, seems to have been barely touched on by the authors of the manuals. And what exactly makes a statement evoke one emotion instead of another, or one effect instead of another, is not clearly stated in the manuals.

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**2**  Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 49.

The idea of feelings in relation to language is rather explored in terms of secondary meanings. In this respect, expressions of emotion may emerge in the context of a statement with a low level of information. When the information given is neither new nor intended to show the speaker's factual knowledge, the purpose of the utterance may be to express or evoke feelings. For example, an utterance such as *Ḥasan murd* 'Ḥasan died!'[3] in response to someone who has already been informed of the sad news is typically a way of expressing sadness. There are also side effects, ranging from humour to harsh reproach, when a speaker reports widely known facts and thus behaves towards an informed addressee as if the addressee did not know the facts. In summary, playing on the 'mismatch' between the assumed and the actual level of awareness of the addressee helps to express subtle additional meanings.

## 3.3 Attitude of the Addressee

In addition to the level of awareness of the addressee, which has been mentioned before, the speaker should also consider the attitude of the addressee. In fact, different addressees will be more or less receptive towards the information given in the utterance. Some of them will willingly accept it. Others will have doubts or be openly opposed to it. In order to achieve a desired effect, the speaker should apply more or less emphasis (*ta'kīd*).

The science of meanings recommends that the speaker should anticipate the disposition of the addressee, and adjust the phrasing accordingly. The manuals suggest the existence of three possible mindsets in the addressee, corresponding to three different ways of formulating statements. The addressee is, thus, either *ḫālī-yi ḏihn* 'neutral, open-minded', *mutaraddid* 'uncertain' or *munkir* 'denying', while the utterance best suited to each attitude is called *ibtidā'ī* 'initial, opening (speech)', *ṭalabī* 'requestive' or *inkārī* 'denying'. A non-emphatic utterance is best suited to a well-disposed interlocutor. Mild emphasis is appropriate to answer the possible doubts of a hesitant counterpart. Finally, stronger emphasis responds to someone who supports the opposite opinion.

Utterances differ in the degree of emphasis applied. Examples of devices of emphasis found in the Persian manuals include repetition (*tikrār*), oaths (*qasam*, *sawgand*), and specialised function words and phrases such as *albatta* 'certainly', *ba-durustī ki* 'sure that', *ba-taḥqīq* 'in truth', *har āyina* 'at all events', *hamānā* 'surely', *ḫwad* 'itself, indeed', *musallaman* 'certainly', *rāstī rā ki* 'surely that', *āgāh bāš* 'be-

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[3] Quoted in Šamīsā 1994, 67.

ware!'. In terms of the device of emphasis in use, oaths and *hamānā* seem to pertain almost exclusively to statements in response to a denial. Other devices better suit requestive and denying utterances.

The requestive utterance (*ṭalabī*) is so named because it responds to a possible request (*ṭalab*) for clarification, be it explicit or implicit. In both cases, the manuals recommend gentle emphasis.[4] An example is how the poet Awḥadī adds the emphasis marker *ḫwad* in response to the implicit question, 'Is the world loyal or not?':

> *ḫwad wafā nīst dar nihād-i ǧahān*[5]

> Indeed, loyalty is not in this world's habit!

The speaker adopts more robust devices of emphasis when he intends to assert his view while refuting a contrary opinion. For example, Niẓāmī's oath *ba Yazdān* '(I swear) by God!' refutes 'rumours' about his morality in:

> *ba Yazdān ki tā dar ǧahān būda am*
> *ba may dāman-i lab nayālūda am*[6]

> I swear by God that, as long as I have been in this world,
> I have never stained my lips with wine.

In Persian, the choice between different emphatic devices seems to depend on the speaker's preference. On this point, a comparison between Persian and Arabic approaches is appropriate. According to an interesting anecdote narrated by ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Ǧurǧānī, the philosopher al-Kindī complained to the grammarian al-Mubarrad about redundancies in Arabic. By redundancies, al-Kindī meant three examples of nominal head sentences that he felt were almost synonymous: one unmarked, one with *inna* 'indeed', and one with *inna* and *la* 'actually'. The grammarian replied that the three sentences were not equivalent because a change in form corresponded to a change in meaning.[7] This narrative was not necessarily part of the later established Arabic science of meanings, but it fits ideally in it. The scanty Arabic examples given in the manuals by al-Sakkākī, al-Qazwīnī, and

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4    However, Šamīsā (1994, 74) observes that in Persian also a lack of emphasis markers would fit this case.

5    Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 56. Awḥadī 1961, 587, *Ǧām-i ǧam*, v. 12707.

6    Quoted in Kazzāzī 1991, 59. Niẓāmī 1956, 855, *Šarafnāma*.

7    The same anecdote is discussed by Aḥmadnižād 2003, 97 and Harb 2020, 230-2 among the others.

al-Taftāzānī[8] are consistent with those given in the anecdote. The examples may implicitly suggest that no device indicates neutrality, one (either *inna* or *la*) indicates uncertainty, and two (*inna* and *la*) indicate denial. While in Arabic there seems to be a clear choice of formula according to the situation, in Persian the choice is not so clear.

## 3.4 Outward Requirements (*muqtaḍā-yi ẓāhir*)

A fascinating aspect of the science of meanings is its capability to lay down general rules and at the same time be open to their contradiction. As we have seen, the speaker must first identify the level of awareness and the attitude of the addressee. Then, he should adapt his utterance accordingly. Some basic rules will guide the speaker to an appropriate formulation. However, the speaker must distinguish between the most evident requirements and the eventual more subtle aims he may wish to pursue. Has the speaker correctly guessed the addressee's disposition but deliberately chosen not to follow the basic phrasing? A mismatched utterance, though not conforming to what would be obvious, is not necessarily imperfect. On the contrary, eloquence depends in large part on the effects that unusual phrasing can convey. As already mentioned in § 2.5, the science of meanings labels many of these cases as *bar ḫilāf-i muqtaḍā-yi ẓāhir* 'in opposition to the requirement of the outward (meaning)'. The speaker chooses between the obvious and the non-obvious as different responses to the requirements of the situation.

Manuals offer various examples of felicitous mismatches. I will mention just two. Consider a man who agrees that prayer is obligatory but does not pray. The speaker might remind him *namāz wāǧib ast* 'Prayer is compulsory'. Since the speaker and the addressee already have this information, the utterance does not add any new data. What is also striking is that the speaker treats the addressee as if he were unaware of the fact that prayer is mandatory. This mismatch is used to rebuke the addressee and censure his behaviour. The second example is the use of emphasis where it is not necessary. With this technique, the speaker makes a neutral addressee look like a denier. The possible intended effects are to refresh the information, to highlight its importance, or to catch the addressee's attention. Notice how Saʿdī adds emphasis with the word *albatta* 'certainly' in:

> *īn sarāy-ī-st ki albatta ḫilal ḫwāhad yāft*
> *ḫunuk ān qawm ki dar band-i sarāy-i digar-and*[9]

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8 See Simon 1993, 79-80, Jenssen 1998, 67-8, and al-Taftāzānī 1911, 47-8.

9 Quoted in Šamīsā 1994, 73. Saʿdī 1941, 123, 19ṭ, [v. 5].

This is the house that will certainly go to ruin.
Blessed are those who prepare their home for the next world!

Those who neglect their spiritual life in this world, claims the poet, seem to deny that there is an afterlife. Hence the need for emphasis. The believers already know the information, but the effect of the utterance is to refresh their memory. As the two examples show, there are often good reasons for going against expectations. At the same time, a good reason is generally required whenever one wishes to speak out of the ordinary.

## 3.5  Literal (*ḥaqīqī*) and Figurative (*maǧāzī*) Predication

At this point, the science of meanings generally introduces a distinction between *ḥaqīqī* 'literal, used in proper sense' and *maǧāzī* 'figurative, used in a non-literal sense'. The same dichotomy dominates the *'ilm-i bayān*, the branch of rhetoric concerned with metaphor, simile, comparisons, and metonymy, among other devices.[10] However, the focus of the two disciplines is not the same. Where *bayān* discusses the figurative use of words, *ma'ānī* explores the figurative use of informative predication.

The predicative relationship (*isnad-i ḫabarī*) is discussed here in terms of the relation between the verbal predicate (*fi'l*) and its agent (*fā'il*). It all relates to the question of whether the predicand is the real agent or not. Does the utterance credit the action to the one who performs it? If not, then the predicand is not the actual doer but is somehow related to the action. On this basis, manuals distinguish between literal (*isnād-i ḥaqīqī*) and figurative predicative relationships (*isnād-i maǧāzī*).

The identification of figurative language requires an intellectual effort. Since there is not always agreement on the actual agent of an action, the distinction between *ḥaqīqī* and *maǧāzī* depends largely on the speaker's convictions. Utterances such as 'God makes the meadows bloom' or 'Spring makes the meadows bloom' will be assessed differently depending on whether the speaker believes in God.[11] The choice of how to interpret the statement depends on the ability of someone's mental faculties to discern the difference in the speaker's mind. Then, in parallel to the terms *isnād-i ḥaqīqī* and *isnād-i maǧāzī*, also *ḥaqīqa-yi 'aqliyya* (or *ḥaqīqat-i 'aqlī*) 'rational literality' and *maǧāz-i 'aqlī* 'rational figurativeness' occur in the manuals.

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[10]  On *ḥaqīqa* and *maǧāz*, see Heinrichs 1984.

[11]  Kazzāzī (1991, 60) and many other Iranian scholars quote similar examples in Persian.

Such terms refer to literal or figurative expressions that are intellectually based.

Expressions of time (*zamān*), place (*makān*), or cause (*sabab*) replacing the actual agent are examples of a figurative predicative relationship (*isnad-i maǧāzī*). The cause instead of the actual agent appears in examples such as *Šāh ʿAbbās masǧid-i šāh-i Iṣfahān rā sāḫt*[12] 'Shah ʿAbbās built the mosque of the Shah of Isfahan'. The expression indicates that Shah ʿAbbās ordered the construction of the mosque, although a very literal interpretation might suggest that he built it with his own hands. Similarly, the poet Niẓāmī attributes the action of flowing to the streams. However, it is not water that flows but the blood from the battlefield:

*zi ḫūn čandān rawān šud ǧūy dar ǧūy*[13]

Streams upon streams of blood began to flow…

Inevitably, some contextual evidence should make it clear that literality is inconsistent in these cases. In other words, to be properly understood, the utterance should rely on a *qarīna* 'contextual reference'. Three circumstances may reveal that the expression has a more imaginative meaning than its ordinary one: absurdity, customariness, or unsuitability to the co-text.

The first, the more elementary circumstance, is absurdity. It implies that the mental faculties (*ʿaql* 'reason, intellect, intelligence', here probably meant as sound practical thinking or common sense) recognise that the relation between predicand and predicate, if taken literally, has no basis in physical reality. An example of absurdity is traced in *maḥabbat-i man ba tu ma-rā pīš-i tu āward*[14] 'It is the love I have for you that has brought me to you'. Reason cannot imagine how an abstract entity like love could physically transport someone from one place to another. The relationship between 'love' and 'bringing' is illogical and can only make sense in a figurative way.

Sometimes the relationship between predicand and predicate is not patently absurd, but it is the custom (*ʿādat*) to intend it in a figurative sense. The intellect can accept at face value statements like *amīr laškar rā šikast* 'The commander defeated the army'. However, the defeat of an entire army by a single exceptional warrior is a rare occurrence. It is customary to use this expression to mean that the army led by the commander defeated the enemy's army. Literal interpretation could not be excluded *a priori*, but it is usually rejected because it is uncommon.

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12  Quoted in Humāyī 1991, 96.

13  Quoted in Raǧāʾī 1961, 36. Niẓāmī 1956, 229, *Ḫusraw wa Šīrīn*.

14  Quoted in Raǧāʾī 1961, 38.

Finally, the co-text (i.e. the surrounding words) is a significant force that enables the detection of figurative meanings. An example appears in *pīr kard ḫurdsāl rā wa nābūd kard kuhansāl rā bar gaštan-i ṣubḥ wa guḏaštan-i šām*[15] 'The breaking of the dawn and the passing of the evening have made the young man grow old and the old man die'. It is the reference to the young man and the old man that makes it clear that the dawn and the evening metaphorically represent the beginning and the end of life. Given what the speaker is saying, a literal use would be inaccurate.

Furthermore, the single components of a predicative relationship (i.e. predicand and predicate) can be used literally or non-literally. The combination then becomes increasingly entangled and, it seems, requires considerable decoding effort. As the following chapters will further confirm, evaluating the import of the utterance requires breaking it down into smaller parts for analysis. Each single linguistic element is a driver of meaning in its own right.

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**15**  Quoted in Rağā'ī 1961, 38.