

٤٥٥. وَسُئِلَ (عليه السلام) : مَنْ أَشْعَرُ الشُّعْرَاءِ؟ فَقَالَ (عليه السلام) :

455. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, was asked about the greatest poet and he said:

إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ لَمْ يَجْرُوا فِي حَلْبَةٍ تُعْرَفُ الْغَايَةُ عِنْدَ قَصَبَتِهَا فَإِنْ كَانَ وَلَا بُدَّ فَالْمَلِكُ الضَّالِّيلُ.

The whole group of them did not proceed on the same lines in such a way that we can know the height of their glory; but if it has to be done then it is the “al-Mālik aḍ-ḍillīl” (the mislead king).

قال السيد الرضي: يريد امرأ القيس

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says : Amīr al-mu'minīn means Imriū'l-Qays. [1]

Footnote :

[1] This means that a comparison can be made among the poets when their imagination runs in the same field; but when the expression of one differs from the other, and the style of one varies from that of the other it is difficult to decide who is defeated and who has won the field. Consequently, from various considerations one is preferred over the other and someone is considered greater for one consideration and the other for other consideration, as the famous saying goes :

The greatest poet of Arabia is Imriū'l-Qays when he rides; al-A'shā when he is eager for something and an-Nābighah when he is afraid.

Nevertheless, despite this categorization Imriū'l-Qays is regarded to be in a high position among poets of the first era because of the beauty of his imagination, the excellence of his description, his inimitable similes and rare metaphors, although many of his couplets are below moral standards and speak about obscene subjects. But in spite of this obscenity the greatness of his art cannot be denied, because an artist looks at a poetic production from the point of view of art ignoring the other factors which do not affect art.