Introduction to Arabic Grammar

Lesson 8

إسم التصغير Diminutive Nouns

Diminutive *ism* – اَلْاِسْمُ الَتَصْغِيرُ

<u>Definition:</u> It is an *ism* which is used to express the diminutive form of an *ism*. Sometimes, the purpose is to show affection or contempt.

<u>Rules:</u>

1. A three-letter *ism* would come on the *wazn* of فُعَيْلٌ (or فُعَيْلَةٌ for feminine).

    e.g.   رَجُلٌ   becomes   رُجَيْلٌ (a little man)

              عَبْدٌ   becomes   عُبَيْدٌ (a little slave)

Diminutive Nouns إسم التصغير

2. A four-letter *ism* would come on the *wazn* of فُعَيْعِلٌ.

   e.g.   جَعْفَرٌ   becomes   جُعَيْفِرٌ

3. A five-letter *ism* without a و, ا or ي as the fourth, would also come on the *wazn* of فُعَيْعِلٌ. The fifth letter would be dropped.

   e.g.   سَفَرْجَلٌ   (name of a plant)   becomes   سُفَيْرِجٌ

   A five-letter *ism* having a و, ا or ي as the fourth letter, would come on the scale of فُعَيْعِيلٌ.

   e.g.   قِرْطَاسٌ   (paper)   becomes   قُرَيْطِيْسٌ

إسم التصغير Diminutive Nouns

<u>Notes:</u>

1. In the diminutive form, the hidden ة of a مُؤَنَّثٌ سَمَاعِيٌّ becomes apparent.

    e.g.   شَمْسٌ   becomes   شُمَيْسَةٌ

2. In the diminutive form, the last letter of an *ism* which has been dropped becomes apparent.

    e.g.   اِبْنٌ   (originally بَنْوٌ)   becomes   بُنَيٌّ

    (بُنَيٌّ was originally بُنَيْوٌ, and underwent a morphological process to become بُنَيٌّ)

iv.   كلب   i.   عقرب

Definite and Indefinite Nouns المعرفة والنكرة

اَلْمَعْرِفَةُ وَالنَّكِرَةُ – Definite and indefinite *isms*

اَلنَّكِرَةُ (indefinite *ism*): It is an اِسْمٌ which denotes something unspecified.

e.g.　　رَجُلٌ　　**a** man

اَلْمَعْرِفَةُ (definite *ism*): It is an اِسْمٌ which denotes something specific. There are seven types of مَعْرِفَةٌ.

Definite and Indefinite Nouns المعرفة والنكرة

1. ضَمِيْرٌ : It is a personal pronoun.

2. عَلَمٌ : It is a proper noun, i.e. the name of a specific person, place or thing.

    e.g.   زَيْدٌ   مَكَّةُ   زَمْزَمُ

3. اِسْمُ الْإِشَارَةِ : It is the demonstrative اِسْمٌ.

Definite and Indefinite Nouns المعرفة والنكرة

4. اَلْاِسْمُ الْمَوْصُوْلُ : It is the relative pronoun.

5. اَلْمُعَرِّفُ بِاللَّامِ : It is an اِسْمٌ which has ال (definite particle) at the beginning.

    e.g.   اَلرَّجُلُ   **the** man

6. That indefinite *ism* (نَكِرَةٌ) which is *mudaaf* to any of the above five definite *isms*.

    e.g.   كِتَابُكَ   كِتَابُ زَيْدٍ

                   كِتَابُ الَّذِيْ   كِتَابُ هٰذَا الرَّجُلِ

                   كِتَابُ الرَّجُلِ

7. اَلْمُنَادٰى : It is the vocative اِسْمٌ, i.e. an اِسْمٌ which appears after a حَرْفُ نِدَاءٍ.

    e.g.   يَا رَجُلُ

Masculine and Feminine Nouns الإسم المذكر والمؤنث

اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُذَكَّرُ وَالْمُؤَنَّثُ – Masculine and feminine *ism*

<u>اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُذَكَّرُ - Masculine *im*</u>: It is an اِسْمٌ which does not have any sign from amongst the signs of femininity (عَلَامَاتُ التَّأْنِيْثِ).

<u>اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ - Feminine *ism*</u>: It is an اِسْمٌ which has a sign from amongst the signs of femininity. This sign could be apparent or hidden.

الإسم المذكر والمؤنث Masculine and Feminine Nouns

عَلَامَاتُ التَّأْنِيْثِ: The signs of being feminine are of two types:

1. لَفْظِيٌّ (in words): It is a sign which is visible in words. These signs are of the following three types:

    ▪ ة: This renders the word اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ even if the ة appears in a masculine proper noun.　　　　　e.g.　　سَيَّارَةٌ　　طَلْحَةُ (a masculine proper noun)

    ▪ (ىٰ) اَلْأَلِفُ الْمَقْصُوْرَةُ　　　　e.g.　　صُغْرَى　　حُبْلى

    ▪ (اء) اَلْأَلِفُ الْمَمْدُوْدَةُ　　　　e.g.　　حَمْرَاءُ　　بَيْضَاءُ

    If a word has any of these three signs it will be اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ.

Masculine and Feminine Nouns الإسم المذكر والمؤنث

2. تَقْدِيرِيٌّ (assumed): It is a sign which is not visible in words and is assumed to exist. This is determined by looking at the diminutive form (تَصْغِيْرٌ) of a particular word. This reveals the original letters of the word.

e.g.   أَرْضٌ   The diminutive form is أُرَيْضَةٌ. Therefore, it is اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ.

شَمْسٌ   The diminutive form is شُمَيْسَةٌ. Therefore, it is اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ.

Masculine and Feminine Nouns الإسم المذكر والمؤنث

Based on the signs of femininity being لَفْظِيٌّ or تَقْدِيرِيٌّ, اَلِاسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ is of two types:

1. اَلْمُؤَنَّثُ الْقِيَاسِيُّ (according to rule): It is a feminine اِسْمٌ which has a لَفْظِيٌّ sign of femininity.

2. اَلْمُؤَنَّثُ السَّمَاعِيُّ (according to usage): It is a feminine اِسْمٌ which has a تَقْدِيرِيٌّ sign of femininity.

الإسم المذكر والمؤنث Masculine and Feminine Nouns

In terms of ذَاتٌ (essence), اَلْاِسْمُ الْمُؤَنَّثُ is of two types:

1. مُؤَنَّثٌ حَقِيْقِيٌّ: It is a feminine اِسْمٌ which has an opposite masculine.

   e.g.   اِمْرَأَةٌ (woman). Its masculine is رَجُلٌ (man).

2. مُؤَنَّثٌ لَفْظِيٌّ: It is a feminine اِسْمٌ which does not have an opposite masculine.

   e.g.   ظُلْمَةٌ (darkness)   عَيْنٌ (eye)

Masculine and Feminine Nouns الإسم المذكر والمؤنث

Notes:

1. The following are used as feminine (مُؤَنَّثٌ):

    a. Name of females.

    e.g.   مَرْيَمُ   زَيْنَبُ

    b. Words denoting the feminine gender.

    e.g.   أُمٌّ   أُخْتٌ

    c. Names of countries, cities, towns and tribes.

    e.g.   مِصْرُ   قُرَيْشٌ

    d. Parts of the body found in pairs.

    e.g.   أُذُنٌ   يَدٌ

    Note: There are exceptions to the rule. خَدٌّ (cheek), حَاجِبٌ (eyebrow) etc. are masculine.

Masculine and Feminine Nouns الإسم المذكر والمؤنث

e. Names of various types of winds.

e.g. رِيْحٌ صَرْصَرٌ

f. Various names of *Jahannam* (hell).

e.g. جَهَنَّمُ سَقَرُ

g. Letters of the alphabet (اَلْحُرُوْفُ الْهِجَائِيَّةُ) are generally used as مُؤَنَّثٌ. They can also be used as masculine.

e.g. ا ب ت ....

2. There are some words that Arabs use as feminine without regard to the presence or absence of signs of femininity. Examples include the following:

| دَلْوٌ (bucket) | حَرْثٌ (tillage/field) | بِئْرٌ (well) |
| نَفْسٌ (self) | نَارٌ (fire) | دَارٌ (house) |