

# The Unique Characteristics of Eastern Rhetoric

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the unique characteristics of Eastern rhetoric by examining its formation, moral and educational foundations, artistic and aesthetic aspects, and comparing it with Western rhetoric. It highlights how Eastern culture, religion, Sufism, and literature have influenced the art of oratory.

**Keywords:** Eastern rhetoric, Western rhetoric, moral foundations, Sufism, artistic-aesthetic style, art of speech.

**Introduction:** Eastern rhetoric is an essential part of the rich cultural heritage that evolved over centuries. Its roots trace back to ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and China. Eastern rhetoric emerged not merely as an art of speech but as a moral and spiritual system that governed social life.

With the rise of Islamic culture, Eastern rhetoric reached new heights. The Quran and Hadith became primary sources of rhetorical excellence. The verses of the Quran are admired not only for their religious significance but also for their artistic and philosophical depth.

Moreover, ancient Persian and Arab scholars — like Al-Farabi and Al-Ghazali — developed the theoretical foundations of rhetoric. They viewed the essence of rhetoric not only in the beauty of words but in the ability to persuade and educate the audience.

The development of Eastern rhetoric went through several stages. In the early stage, rhetoric emerged through oral traditions. Wise men and elders in ancient Eastern communities showcased their oratory skills when discussing important matters. The primary goal of speech during this time was to convey customs, values, and life experiences from generation to generation.

In the next stage, with the spread of Islam, rhetoric flourished significantly. The sermons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) became an exemplary model of eloquence, while the hadiths — filled with moral lessons — deeply resonated with people's hearts.

The third stage of Eastern rhetoric's evolution coincided with the golden age of science and culture in the 9th to 12th centuries. Regions like Mavaranahr and Khorasan became cultural hubs. Scholars such as Alisher Navoi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) thoroughly analyzed the art of speech, highlighting its aesthetic and philosophical dimensions. Particularly, Navoi demonstrated the power of words and their profound influence through his masterpieces.

Artistic beauty and aesthetic appeal hold a central place in Eastern rhetoric. Eastern thinkers believed that speech should not merely convey ideas but serve as a form of art that touches the soul. Therefore, various artistic techniques became widespread in Eastern oratory.

Figurative expressions and artistic imagery. Eastern rhetoric extensively uses metaphors, similes, and allegories. Orators sought to convey ideas indirectly through vivid imagery, encouraging the audience to think more deeply. For example, Alisher Navoi described words as "sweet sugar," creating a sensory experience that enhances the listener's emotional response.

Wise sayings and proverbs. Another essential feature of Eastern rhetoric is the frequent use of wise sayings and proverbs. These short, meaningful expressions — rooted in wisdom and life experience — leave a lasting impression on the audience. For instance, Sa'di Shirazi's "Gulistan" is filled with brief but powerful aphorisms that inspire kindness and virtue.

Poetic speech and musicality. The musical quality of speech — its melody and rhythm — is also vital in Eastern rhetoric. In Arabic and Persian traditions, rhyme and repetition were common tools to create a pleasant, rhythmic flow, making the speech more captivating. Alisher Navoi masterfully blended rhythm and tone, elevating his prose to the level of poetry.

One of the most distinctive features of Eastern rhetoric is its strong ethical and educational focus. For Eastern orators, the purpose of speech was not merely to express ideas but to inspire goodness and elevate the listener's moral and spiritual state.

Wisdom and lessons in etiquette. Eastern orators often relied on life experience to shape their speeches. Their words were rooted in wisdom, encouraging listeners to embrace virtues like patience, generosity, and kindness. For instance, Imam al-Ghazali emphasized moral purity and human dignity through his rhetorical teachings.

Philosophical depth and spiritual meaning. For Eastern orators, words were more than a tool for communication — they were a powerful force capable of touching the soul. Speeches often carried hidden philosophical messages, revealing profound truths about life. Jalal al-Din Rumi, in his *Masnavi*, sought to guide his listeners' inner worlds and lead them toward spiritual enlightenment through his poetic sermons.

Encouragement and gentle admonition. Eastern rhetoric also included methods of encouragement and mild admonition. However, criticism was rarely harsh or direct; instead, it was presented in an artistic, reflective style. For example, Sa'di Shirazi's "Gulistan" and "Bustan" condemn cruelty and injustice, but his criticism is wrapped in gentle wisdom, guiding listeners toward righteousness without causing offense.

Eastern and Western rhetoric developed along different paths, shaped by their unique cultural, philosophical, and social values. Let's break down the key differences and similarities:

**Purpose and essence.** Eastern rhetoric: Focuses on spiritual elevation, moral education, and inner growth. The speaker aims to inspire goodness, guide the audience toward truth, and nurture their soul. For example, Sa'di Shirazi and Jalal al-Din Rumi's speeches are rich with philosophical and ethical meaning.

Western rhetoric: Primarily aims to persuade, defend opinions, and win arguments through logical reasoning and evidence. The speeches of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian emphasize structure, proof, and effective delivery.

**Style and structure.** Eastern rhetoric: Often poetic, filled with artistic imagery, allegories, and wise sayings.

The speech is meant to be melodic, leaving an emotional and aesthetic impact. Alisher Navoi's rhetoric, for example, blends moral teachings with artistic beauty.

Western rhetoric: Focuses on clear logical progression, supported by facts and emotional appeals. Cicero's speeches, for instance, are known for their strong structure and compelling arguments.

**Impact on the audience.** Eastern rhetoric: Aims to touch the listener's soul, encouraging deep reflection and spiritual contemplation.

Western rhetoric: Seeks to motivate the audience into action, convincing them to adopt a certain viewpoint or take a specific course of action.

**The role and status of the orator.** Eastern rhetoric: The orator is seen as a sage, a moral and spiritual guide, admired for their wisdom and personal integrity.

Western rhetoric: The orator is often a politician or lawyer, using speech as a tool to influence, argue, and lead the audience to their side.

Eastern rhetoric is rooted in moral depth, philosophical insight, and artistic expression, while Western rhetoric emphasizes logical analysis, persuasion, and immediate influence on the audience. Both traditions hold invaluable lessons for modern public speaking, complementing each other with their distinct strengths.

Eastern culture, with its rich philosophical roots and diverse traditions, has profoundly shaped the art of rhetoric. Let's analyze its key influences:

Eastern culture, particularly Islam, played a vital role in shaping rhetoric. The Qur'an's verses and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are filled with deep meanings and powerful rhetorical techniques. These sources emphasize wisdom, moral guidance, and spiritual elevation in speech.

Sufi teachings, on the other hand, view speech as a means to address the heart and soul. Figures like Jalal al-Din Rumi and Yunus Emre infused their rhetoric with messages of love, patience, humility, and divine truth. The idea emerged that an orator should not merely inform but also guide and uplift spiritually.

Eastern culture is inseparable from literature. Writers like Alisher Navoi, Ferdowsi, and Sa'di Shirazi enriched rhetoric with artistic imagery, symbolism, and poetic expressions.

Eastern speeches often incorporate proverbs, metaphors, and allegories. For example, Navoi's work "Mahbub ul-qulub" presents speech as a tool combining artistic, ethical, and educational elements.

Family values, respect for elders, justice, and patience

are cornerstones of Eastern culture — and they shape rhetoric too. The orator isn't just a speaker; they are a moral guide who aims to cultivate ethical and spiritual virtues in the audience.

Rhetoric manifests not only in formal settings like political or scientific speeches but also in everyday life through proverbs, moral stories, and advice.

In Eastern culture, the beauty of speech matters as much as its content. Melodiousness, rhythm, and musicality of speech are considered essential to leave a lasting emotional impact. Eastern rhetoric combines intellectual enrichment with aesthetic pleasure, creating a harmonious balance.

Eastern culture profoundly influences rhetoric through religion, Sufism, literature, traditional values, and aesthetics. An Eastern orator is seen not just as a speaker but as a wise guide, leading the audience toward moral, spiritual, and aesthetic enlightenment.

Eastern rhetoric places a strong emphasis on moral and educational principles. The orator is seen not merely as a speaker but as a guide who reaches the listener's heart and soul, leading them toward spiritual and moral development. Let's dive into the key foundations:

**Truthfulness and justice:** In Eastern rhetoric, speaking the truth and standing against injustice are essential. The orator must distance themselves from falsehood and promote fairness. For instance, Alisher Navoi's works glorify the figure of the just ruler and the honest individual.

**Integrity and purity:** Eastern culture holds that an orator's words must align with their actions. The speaker must embody the values they preach, serving as a living example of moral righteousness.

**Humility and patience:** Arrogance and self-praise are condemned. The orator should prioritize the truth over personal glory. Sa'di Shirazi, for example, highlights how humility elevates a person's greatness in his wise sayings.

**Positive intentions and goodwill:** Eastern rhetoric's core goal is to inspire people toward goodness. Every word from the orator should uplift the listener, guiding them to improve their life. Jalal al-Din Rumi's mystical teachings emphasize cleansing the soul, promoting love, and fostering tolerance.

**Lessons in manners and ethics:** An orator must teach moral conduct and ethical values. In Eastern tradition, the ideal person is virtuous, honest, and compassionate. Farid al-Din Attar, in his speeches, conveys the idea that moral refinement brings a person closer to the divine.

**Spiritual elevation of the audience:** Eastern rhetoric doesn't stop at conveying information — its deeper

purpose is to awaken the soul and empower the spirit. The orator must inspire hope, strength, and faith in their listeners.

The moral and educational foundations of Eastern rhetoric focus on appealing not just to the intellect but also to the heart and soul. The orator is expected to be wise, just, and virtuous, guiding the audience toward goodness, ethical purity, and spiritual growth.

Eastern rhetoric stands out with its rich cultural, philosophical, and traditional foundations. It goes beyond mere logic and persuasion, focusing on moral education, spiritual elevation, and aesthetic impact.

Eastern rhetoric is an art form that influences both the mind and the soul, awakening the listener's inner self. An orator is expected not only to be eloquent and knowledgeable but also to embody justice, honesty, and moral integrity.

Religion and Sufism transformed speech into a tool for moral and spiritual enlightenment. The goal is not just to convince the audience but to guide them toward goodness and self-awareness.

Literature and artistic thought infused rhetoric with poetic beauty, imagery, and symbolism, ensuring that the speech touches the listener's heart as well as their intellect.

Traditional upbringing and moral values placed the orator in the role of a moral mentor, promoting ethical development and virtuous behavior.

Eastern aesthetics emphasized rhythm, melody, and emotional resonance, ensuring that speeches are not only intellectually enriching but also emotionally uplifting.

When comparing Eastern and Western rhetoric, the contrast becomes clear: Western rhetoric prioritizes persuasion and winning arguments through logic and evidence, while Eastern rhetoric emphasizes moral cultivation and spiritual growth.

In Eastern tradition, the orator is a sage — a spiritual and moral guide. They don't just influence the audience with words; they inspire them to embrace virtue, reflect on life, and pursue inner harmony.

Thus, Eastern rhetoric is more than a speaking art — it is a harmonious blend of moral education, spiritual enlightenment, and aesthetic expression.

Eastern rhetoric is not just an art of speech; it is a powerful heritage that serves human spirituality, moral upbringing, and intellectual growth. At its core lie artistic beauty, aesthetic elegance, wisdom, and moral purity. The great figures of Eastern rhetoric viewed speech as a tool to influence listeners. An orator's duty extended beyond eloquence — they sought to inspire

goodness, reveal truth, and uplift the human spirit. Even today, the legacy of Eastern rhetoric remains relevant. It holds value not only in literature and art but also in pedagogy, psychology, and even diplomacy. The wise words of Eastern orators still have the power to touch hearts and guide minds. Studying Eastern rhetoric allows us not only to appreciate this rich heritage but also to adapt its principles to modern life, keeping its timeless wisdom alive.

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