

Man's Prestige in *Shahnameh*

Nasrin Mozafari

Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran

Faranak Siyanat

Bushehr University of Farhangiyan, Bushehr, Iran

Ali Akbar Khansir

Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran
(Corresponding Author)

=====

Abstract

The purpose of this brief paper is to examine Man's prestige in *Shahnameh*. Firdausi's *Shahnameh* is the most voluminous ancient Iranian epic. In *Shahnameh*, among God's whole creatures, human being is the only creature who has the divine spirit, willpower and wisdom. Human is the only one whose rank is superior and higher than the nature and the sphere. Human being is the only one who is mentioned as "the first nature" and "the next number". In the realm of mythological and heroic epic of the Persian language, the ideal man who is the symbol of the greatness and goodness are manifested in the champions whose missions are to reach the great aspirations of the Iranian people and to fight against inhumanities, devilish behaviors and evil deeds. The ordinary man in the saga or epic will become the one, who is "hero", but the hero is not alone, other heroes whom at the beginning are more or less equal to his power surround and compete against him. To "become unique", the main hero must pass and cross through many long twisting cliffs, to do self-help and become independent. Then he must try to make this "self-made person" acceptable.

Keywords: man, Firdausi, *Shahnameh*, epic

Introduction

In the history of human being, always the role of literature has been a key to guide man in order to get his aim in his life. Among the human literature, Iranian literature has good place. Iranian great poets and authors could show the beautiful and goodness of human being and his world. Iranian literature, as one of the richest literature, has played a vital role over the world. We can see the place of Iranian literature in human being literature.

According to this definition, Khansir and Mozafari (2014) mentioned that Persian language was one of the oldest languages over the world. Iranian language is recognized as directly a branch of Indo-European language family and Aryans group were an old group arrived in Persia area from western Asia.

The Iranian literature is divided into two eras: (1) The Pre-Islamic era and (2) The Post-Islamic era. According to Mozafari, et al. (2015), Firdausi's *Shahnameh* linked the pre-Islamic Iran to the Islamic era.

Man's Prestige in *Shahnameh*

Iranian ancient literature is full of valuable examples of the importance and value of the human. Every corner of this precious treasure of the Iranian literature shows portraits of the design of the noble human being's characters in accordance with the past conceptual models and also talks about the possibility of human excellence (Mokhtari, 1960). In all genres, writers and poets have spoken about human being. He was admired in different ways, but each of them admired the man with their own point of view. "Human being has a tremendous prestige and status in Persian epic poems and especially in Firdausi's masterpiece. In *Shahnameh*, human being is the only God's creature that has divine spirit, willpower and wisdom. The man only whose prestige is higher than of the nature and the sphere and is mentioned as the "first nature" and "next number" in the universe (Razmjou, 1967). He added that in the realm of mythological and heroic epic of the Persian language, the ideal man who is the symbol of the greatness and goodness are manifested in the champions whose missions are to reach the great aspirations of the Iranian people and to fight against inhumanities, devilish behaviors and evil deeds. The ordinary man in the saga or epic will become the one who is "hero", but the hero is not alone, other heroes whom at the beginning are more or less equal to his power surround and compete against him. To "become unique", the main hero must pass and cross through many long twisting cliffs, to do self-help and become independent. Then he must try to make this "self-made person" acceptable (Mohajerani, 1993).

From Firdausi's perspective, human being who is the ultimate cause and the result of the creation is God's representation on the earth, thus he needs to recognize and appreciate his dignity and keep to God's path. He should not stop his efforts to reach this destination.

ترا از دو گیتی برآورده اند به چندین میانجی
بپرورده اند

(Firdausi' Shah, 2003, vol. 1, 3).

"The purpose is that the human being is the fruit of both universes: this material world and the heaven, the material and the spirit, the unseen and the testimony, the universe and the paradise. Therefore, the human being is interpreted as not only the assembler of both universes but also as the community's purgatory. He supervises and oversees both universes.

نخستین فطرت پسین شمار تویی خویشان را به بازی مدار
(Firdausi' Shah, vol. 1, 3).

The above mentioned verses referred to the Prophet's Hadith «نحن الآخرون السابقون» , which means human being is the ultimate cause of the creation and it has logical priority in the creation of the universe, although human being's creation has lagged behind in comparison to the other creatures "(Azmayesh ,2001 , p.157). Since the essence of the wisdom appointed in human's nature, he rules over the savagery and the world is also subservient to his free will. Unlike animals that live by their instincts and can never make any significant change in their material life, human, in addition to the material nature, has a divine one too. However, according to the material essence and beauty of creation, human being is created as the last ring or as Firdausi's interpretation "late number", the fact that flame of wisdom - the wisdom of his creator's soul - is within him, he is considered as the "first nature" (Mohajerani, 1993). Shahname's man is a progressive one and through his words and actions, he will try to have a better life than before (Ranjbar, 1961). Mascub also noted this point: thanks to the culture (wisdom), man can overcome the world in which he lives and will organize his life. He will save "the microcosm world" from the wandering of "macrocosm world". As he gives meaning to the world, human will recreate his existence too (Mascub, 2005, p.31).

From the introduction of Firdausi on his epic, one can see his unquestionable devotion to humanity. He knows human as the starter of the nature, though he is the last link. In his belief, human beings are the squeeze of both worlds of material and divine, and everything will exist by our motivations. At the beginning of *Shahnameh*, we are informed that this epic is the long history of human and humanity. *Shahnameh's* human is similar to a tree which has rooted deeply in the soil and on the other hand reaches out to the peak of its ascent (Serami, 2002, Introduction). Firdausi in his introduction tells us indirectly: "The

administrators and managers of the world are: God, heaven, human being, and wisdom which are the bond between God and human. Human being is the representative of God on the earth. He will do his duty by the help of wisdom. The world by God's order has to do its duties without any wisdom and rules upon human destiny. The man, although is lower than the world in capabilities, he is greater in the knowledge than the world" (Serami, 2002, p. 113).

In *Shahnameh*, human being has directly relationship with God and there are no intermediates. By praying and paying attention to God, he will ask for God's favor. Human efforts are in its place, of course, because when he knows what is good or bad, he can do his best. But final approval is up to God's will. The combination of will and constraint are part of the essence of human's life. Human being is subjected to these will and is constrained; he is restricted both to the bonds of his nature and also to the external events. *Shahnameh* has such a climate that human endeavors can be seen in every part of it. Whatever is cumbersome is related to the consequences which man cannot handle or manage. For example, in the Qadsia war, because the wind blew in front of Rustam Farrukhzad and a lot of dust covered him, the result of war changed, and along with that the fate of Iran changed too (Islami Nodoushan, 2002, p. 16).

Mythical Man, Epic Man and Historical Man

In *Shahnameh*, we encounter three types of men: Mythical man, Epic man and Historical man. Their features would be discovered as you read the stories of *Shahnameh*. Each has his own characteristics. But they all have a common goal and that is to reach the summit of life: "to reach the summit or peak means that one does all his best efforts and makes benefits of all his talents to advance toward it" (Islami Nodoushan, 2002, p. 17).

Although these three types have some specific characteristics, and in some cases are different from each other, in general, they all follow a specific purpose and the purpose is to reach the evolution.

Mythical

The human mind in the realm of myth mixed and joined with the spiritual and transcendent nature and its effects (Mascub, 2005). During the epic, epic man "is neither

stranger to the world nor far from the Creator and the creation; he lives strongly on the earth. He also has strong supports in the upper world too, his God is alive. He feels his departure from the metaphysical world - especially with constant alerts of death – and for the proof of his existence, he stands against the world. According to Firdausi, human being is as brave as a lion, ready to face difficult and dangerous situations, the examples are: Rustam and Esfandiyar's seven Khans, the killing of monsters, wolves, lions and dragon, breaking spells, being in deserts, facing difficult times in snow, and being thirsty (Mascub, 2005).

Epic

Razmju in his book *Epic* described the characteristics of the ideal warrior (epic) man. Here some features are mentioned in brief: National ideal epic man was born in the imaginations of the ancient Persian people and it was made by their ancient and epic narrators. This man embodies moral individualities of Iranian people and meet the aspirations of them in the middle of nowhere and ideal cities...- Ideal epic man's aspirations limit to the border of his nationality, and his ideology bases on the ethnic, racial and seeds of patriotism, values and essence.

- Ideal epic man is God-fearing. - Ideal epic man is extrovert and harmonious with the environment and nature. The extent of his activities is the society, battlefield and banquet events, kings ' courts and heroes 'pavilions. - Ideal epic man is manifested in the face of mighty kings and justice heroes. - Ideal epic man considers science as the finest life capital.
- Ideal epic man is a brave warrior, and his athletic prowess will be manifested when he faces his enemies and ill-wishers. Ideal epic man considers his power as the divine glory which has radiance of God together with superhuman strength. - Ideal epic man pays remarkable attention to the efficiency of the physical pleasures in life (Razmju, 1967)

Hisrorical

Shahname's historical epic man has another nature, this man deals with the actual history not the ideal one, rather than the epic. Historical man, "in the story of this period [date] also receives a new structural diagram of immediate reality, neither a sublime nor an ideal person. He passes through the ordinary life, such as Ardeshir's biography and the story of how he became a king, the stories of Bahram Gur's wars, festivities, trips and hunting or the story of chess set "(Mascub, 2005,

p. 243- 244). Islami Nodoushan (2003) believes that "human being has relationship with three elements in his life: his ego, community and nature and he should pay attention to three of them.

On Activism, Not On Success

Shahnameh's world is based on activism not success, if something can be called success that surely be hard working to do well. To reach to the complete success is not in human's destiny, because nature is not going entirely according to his wishes. Such destiny was assigned to man to struggle against all difficult life stages. So he obeyed this destiny.

Shahnameh is a realistic book. Human being lives on the earth, the sky and the earth each has its own position. Whatever is his fortune, it should be earned in this world (Islami Nodoushan, 2003, p. 10). Javanshir (2005) expresses the prestige of human being from Firdausi's point of view as this: "Firdausi did not generally consider human being as the noblest creature. Firdausi believed that the highest and noblest ones are those who are wise, and eager to receive intelligence and wisdom. Firdausi's man deals less with "divine spirit" and belongs more to the earth. What separates Firdausi's ordinary man from the noblest creature is his desire to fight. Pay attention to some of the verses of *Shahameh* to understand how passionately and lovely Firdausi described human being and how he invited him to fight and self-understanding:

شد این بندها را سراسر کلید	چو زین بگذری مردم آمد پدید
به گفتار خوب و خردکار بند	سرش راست بر شد چو سروبلند
مرا او را دد و دام فرمان برد	پذیرنده هوش و رای و خرد
که مردم به معنی چه باشد یکی	ز راه خرد بنگری اندکی
جز این را نشانی ندانی همی	مگر مردمی خیره خوانی همی
ترا از دو گیتی بزر آورده اند	به چندین میانجی پیورده اند
تویی خویشان را به بازی مدار	نخستین فطرت پسین شمار

These keys, the "people" whom God granted are intelligent, and wisdom, need to know and understand their own values. O mankind! The first nature and the last number, you are created for two worlds. You do not have the permission to look yourself down on. O man, the nature and God, granted many things to you, it's all you have, and it's your duty to live in honor and be proud of yourself. You should not surrender yourself to the unstable life problems "(Javanshir, 2005, p. 68-69).

In other words, "Wherever there is a tie, and there is a confusion, the key to solve the problem will be in the hands of the man who has faith and believes in God. Great treasure has been endowed inside him, He is the only creature with amazing creativity capability and this power rests on his free will and active thought. The man with such a surprise power cannot concern himself with the childish game's.....Firdausi worried that such a human being with immortal divine wisdom and love could not appreciate these values (Mohajerani, 1993).

Understanding the Depth of Human Emotions, Images and Colorful Spirit

Firdausi's tremendous strength in understanding the depth of human emotions, images and colorful spirit is amazing. "When based on the scientific criticism, and accepted principles of the showmanship world, the stories of Shahnameh are studied, it will be noticeable that every man and woman has clear and natural behavior appropriate to his/her own age and character. The champion is doing and saying the same thing that is expected from his character in each situation. Rostam's actions and words showed Iranian virtue, wisdom, magnanimity, generosity and courage that deserves a perfect and worthy world Iranian champion. His father's speeches, Zal speeches, in everywhere embodies the wisdom of the elders.

Esfandiar did, and said the same things that deserve an ambitious young prince. Kavus's life and characters represented the life of a selfish or capricious ruler's (Riahi, 2007).

From Torabi's point of view the man who is referred to what is called in Shahnameh is a "superior human nature", "Firdausi's ideal human has pure nature with true family love and affection together with a culture like a tall tree, powerful and brave, faithful and determined, and decisive to save his society. Firdausi's ideal human loves art and culture and he considers them more valuable than gem. Firdausi's ideal human is wise and right-thinking man whose knowledge and trustworthy will guide and guarantee him at various ups and downs stages of individual and social life (Torabi, 1997). The poet's ideal man is "the best man" that Firdausi himself introduced him:

خرمست	و	پاکی	که	خنک در جهان مرد برترمنش
				پیرامنش
آسان		زندگانش	همه	چو جانش تنش را نگهبان بود
				بود

بماند بـــــدو رادی و راستی نکو بد در کژی و
کـــــاستی

(Firdausi' Shah, 2003, vol. 1, p. 1528)

From Firdausi's view, a perfect man is one who loves and respects art and culture, and for him the essence of the race is in the second rank. Firdausi himself refers to this issue as these:

ز دانا بـــــپرسید پـــــس دادگر که فرهنگ
بهر بود یـــــا گهر
چنین داد پـــــاسخ بـــــدو رهنمون که فرهنگ باشد ز
گوهر فزون
که فرهنگ آرایش جـــــان بـــــود ز گوهر سخن گفتن
آسان بـــــود
گهر بی هنر زار و خوار ست و سست به فرهنگ باشد
روان تندرست

(Firdausi' shah: Vol. 2, p. 1531)

Emphasis is on Individual Self-Understanding

Firdausi emphasis is on individual self-understanding and is not on proud of the essence and the race. "He believes that people should try to know themselves better .For the salvation of their body and soul, he should bear austerity which if it is based on knowledge, and surely it will be useful.

شنیدم زدانا دگـــــرگونه زیـــــن چـــــه
دانیم راز جهان آفریـــــن
نگه کن سرانجام خود را ببین چو کاری
بیایی ازین بـــــه گزیـــــن
به رنج اندر آری تنت را رواست که خود رنج بردن
به دانش سزااست

(Firdausi shah, Vol. 1: 3)

Reaching to the development and perfection is so precious for the master of Tous, Firdausi, that in different situations he tries to remind man to be humble and avoid being proud and selfish (Amin Dehghan, 2006 , p. 24).

نـــــگر خویشتن را نیابی بزرگ و گرگاه یابی نگردي
سترگ

(Firdausi'shah, vol. 2, 1252)

"Firdausi in the moments of anger against everything gave this right to himself as a wise man to doubt about the truth order of the world. At the beginning of beautiful and painful tragedy of Sohrab, Firdausi started cursing:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Nasrin Mozafari, Faranak Siyanat and Ali Akbar Khansir

Man's Prestige in *Shahnameh*

اگر تند بادی برآید ز کنج به خـــــــاک
 افکند نارسیده ترنج
 ستم کاره خوانیمش ار دادگر هنرمند دانیمش
 ار بی هــــنر
 اگر مرگ دادست بیداد چیست زداد این همه بانگ و
 فریاد چیست

But soon he calmed down and accepted the secret that there is no way to it: If you believe in faith light, as a servant of God, try to be silent. According to Firdausi, man is slave only to God and his mystery, and that, in all the other spheres, man is superior and he should appreciate the value of this point. "(Javanshir, 2005). Firdausi also believes in "every human being has the ability to pass through spiritual evolution and this ability granted to all human beings and it is not limited to specific individuals. Goodness and generosity - not people's race - are necessary to reach the summit of spirituality and humanity:

فریدون فرخ فرشته نبـــــــود ز مشک و ز عنبر
 سرشته نبـــــــود
 به داد و دهش یافت آن نیکویی تو داد و دهش کن
 فریدون تویی»

(Chubineh, 1990, p. 115).

In *Shanameh*, Firdausi describes human's most beautiful dignities so far as to say he is the guardians of human's promoting dignities and values. "The people and the heroes he admired and loved in *Shanameh*, all are free, wise, dear, righteous andPeople with good humanistic characters. Firdausi studied man from diverse views and considered various dimensions for him which could be the signs of the ideal man.

Conclusion

Shanameh is one the best Iranian literature books which focus on human being epic. In *Shanameh*, men are classified into three groups: Mythical man, Epic man, and Historical one, whose characters will be discovered through the stories. Each has his own features, but they all have one thing in common: their goal is to reach the summit of life. "To reach the summit of life means that one should do all his best efforts and use all his talents to advance toward the summit." Although these three types have special features, and in some cases are different, in general they follow the same purpose and that is to reach the evolution.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Nasrin Mozafari, Faranak Siyanat and Ali Akbar Khansir
 Man's Prestige in *Shahnameh*

References

- Amin Dehghan, M., (2006). The comparison of charismatic man with a guardian, in Masnavi, Tehran: Haghighat Press.
- Azmayesh, M. (2001). With Firdausi the mystical journey to the land of Phoenix. Tehran: Truth Press.
- Chubineh, S. (1990). Philosophy of Practicable and Theoretic in Firdausi' Shahnameh. Shiraz : Navaid Publisher.
- Firdausi. A. (2003). Shahnameh Based on Moscow's edition .Tehran: Hermas Press.
- Islami Nodoushan, M.A. (2002). Four conscience spokesmen of Iran (Firdausi, Molavi, Hafez, Saadi). Tehran: Ghatreh Press.
- Islami Nodoushan, M.A. (2003).Iran and the World According to Shahnameh. Tehran: Amir Kabir Press.
- Javanshir, F.M. (2005).Daad's Epic. Tehran: Hami Press.
- Khansir, A.A. and Mozafari, N. (2014). The impact of Persian Language on Indian Languages. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4 (11): 2360-2365.
- Mascub, S., (2005). Moore gift, Tehran: Nei Press.
- Mohajerani. A. (1993). Firdausi's Epic: Review and Interpretation of Namvar. Tehran: Etelaat Press.
- Mokhtari, M., (1960). Man in contemporary poetry, Tehran: Tous Press.
- Mozafari, N Siyanat , F, and Khansir, A.A. (2015). Social Classes of People in Mahabharata and Shahnameh. *Language in India*, 15(7): 159-162.
- Ranjbar, A., (1961). Firdausi's intellectual attractions, Tehran: Amir Kabir Press.
- Razmju, H., (1967). 'Perfect man in epic and mystical literature, Tehran: Amir Kabir Press.
- Riahi, M. A., (2007).The origins of understanding Firdausi, Tehran: Institute for Humanities Press.

Serami, Gh., (2002). From flowers color to the thorn pain, Tehran: Academic Press.

Torabi, A.A. (1997). The sociology of literature. Tabriz: Frugh Azadi Press.

=====

Nasrin Mozafari
Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran

Faranak Siyanat
Bushehr University of Farhangiyan, Bushehr, Iran

Ali Akbar Khansir
Corresponding Author
Bushehr University of Medical Sciences, Bushehr, Iran
ahmad_2004_bu@yahoo.com