

Ferdowsi and the Ethical Values of Persian Literature

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Abstract—Ferdowsi (940-1020 A.D) is one of the greatest impressive poets of the world. Some classical scholars deem him to be the supreme of them all. The present article is an overview of the ethics of war and peace is the most important and normatively influential work of epic Persian literature. Ethical qualities are in the midst of the pillars of human bliss as well as the font of sublimation, matter and sacred progression. Numerous of the experts deem that the admirable distinctiveness and personalities are the source of accountability and the precise standard for apposite existing. During spirit the human sort can reach gleeful and contentment beneath the luminosity of ethics. Ethical elegance is partial to make an effort that is human never gets ethical merits except make endeavor and adequate actions emerges when the sinfulness is eradicated and deracinated. The invaluable influences of Ferdowsi and Persian literature are very rich and plentiful and it is full of encomium for virtues and condemnation of vices whose allusion is pleasing at any time.

Since the purpose of the Persian literature is to instruct in order to reach the excellence of courage by referring to these virtues and vices therefore in the present piece of writing with an importance on the study some of the popularly used virtues such as untrustworthiness of the world, inescapability of the death, admiration of the time, staying away from avarice and covetousness, advising satisfaction, gaining knowledge, rationalism are examined. With the purpose of, reminding the significance of education which is the main approach of most of the Persian literature.

Key Words: Ferdowsi, classical, ethical qualities, Persian literature, untrustworthiness of the world, inescapability of the death, admiration of the time, staying away from avarice and covetousness, rationalism.

INTRODUCTION:

Among variety of literary education forms Persian literature is the most widespread one which shows issues such as ethics, religion and philosophy as literature. From a variety of literary, the epic kind is the most genius for the insertion of characteristics of educational form

Ethics (Akhlag) is an Arabic term which means the internal force and structure of the human which is only comprehensible via cognizance and invisible understanding. It is necessary to understand the meaning of ethics and morality.

Ethics has been a matter of great concern for philosophers, social reformers, academicians and concerned citizens of any given society from the ancient civilizations till date. The word 'ethics' traces its roots to the Latin 'ethicus' and the Greek 'ethikos' meaning character or manners. However, the Greek Philosophers used the term ethos as the value-principle-orientation of good custom, conduct and behavior. (Susan, (1999), 80

Ethical virtues or moral virtues are the characteristics that give high ranks of sublimation. The moral criteria that Islam introduces to identify and differentiate between righteous from wrongdoer are called as the ethical virtues. The necessity of ethics and attending to it after the science of monotheism and knowledge of God are among the most invaluable sciences. Because its subject consists of spirit and the reality of human and the ultimate outcome of it is the achievement of human happiness

In short, we can say that ethics is a branch of philosophy in which we study about human actions, attitude and behaviors as good or bad, right or wrong. Ethics formulates ethical theories or principle under which individual actions are evaluated as right or wrong. It is also called moral values. The main focal point of this paper is to define the relevance of ethical values in Persian literature and in the human life. (Susan, (1999), 80-81

Discussion/Education and Ethical Values in Shahnameh or Persian Literature:

In the late 10th century, Abu-UI-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi (940 – 1020 A.D) was a greatest Persian poet and the author of Shahnameh which is the world's longest epic poem created by a single poet, and the national epic of Greater Iran. Ferdowsi is celebrated as the most influential figure in Persian literature and one of the greatest in the history of literature. He was called "The Lord of the Word" and "The Savior of Persian Language". (Browne, (1956), 129-138)

According to the Chahar Maqla Ferdowsi was one of the land owners of Tous, from the village called Bazh in the district of Tabaran (Tous, a town in North Eastern Iran, in the province of Khorasan). The Shahnameh-e-Ferdowsi is structured according to the mythical and historical reign of fifty Persian Kings. The epic can be roughly divided into three

parts, the first part tells of the mythical creation of Persia and its earliest mythical past; the second part tells of the legendary Kings and the heroes Rustam and Sohrab; the third part blends historical fact with legend, telling of the semi-mythical adventures of actual historical Kings. (Nizami, (1921), 54).

Ferdowsi Tusi, the greatest Persian Poet, who revived the Persian language, culture, and philosophy, wrote:

“If learning is what you would hold most dear,

With wisdom you will stride the turning sphere.”

Ferdowsi Tusi dedicated thirty years of his life to write his epic poem, “The Book of Kings” or *Shahnameh*. Through sixty thousand lines of poetry, the *Shahnameh* revived Persian language, history, philosophy and culture almost four hundred years after the Arab invasion of the Persian Empire.

“I endured thirty years of hardship

and revived the Persian nationality with the PARSİ language.”

Ferdowsi begins his majestic book in the name of knowledge, and starts by saying:

“In the name of the Lord of the soul and wisdom,”

Ferdowsi not only considered knowledge and wisdom the main essential pillar of human life, but also he expresses the same belief about art and culture:

“Those who have knowledge, art, and culture why worry if they lack treasure?”

Likewise:

“Art was created more precious than jewels.”

Similarly:

“So said the wise master, culture is worth more than diamonds.”

Ferdowsi celebrates art of all kind, emphasizing poetry, literature, and philosophy as critical representatives of a society’s conscience for humanity and life in general. He highlighted values such as wisdom, knowledge, art, justice, integrity and respect, including towards one’s enemy. His writings influenced all other great Persian poets, for centuries to come. Throughout his sixty thousand lines of poetry, Ferdowsi Tusi repeatedly recommends patience, peace, forgiveness, justice, and honest dissent, even with one’s enemy. Even though he strongly advocates peaceful behavior, Ferdowsi is aware of human flaws; throughout the pages of his book he recommends humane, compassionate, and civilized conduct during time of war:

“Do not behave like a vicious tiger, ready to attacking everyone.

Be patient, tolerate dissent, and search for truth.”

He recommends that:

“If one’s enemy asks for peace, with honesty and grace,

Be decent, accept it, avoid revenge, and let him save face.”

“In victory avoid bloodshed, if your enemy retreats,

and if he surrenders, forgive, and do not look for revenge.”

Four hundred years later, Hafez Shirazi, one of the many Persian students of Ferdowsi school of thought, writes:

“When good men speak in Persian, the stream of life runs well;

This good news to the wise men, my friend, hastens to tell.

What keeps this twofold world in peace let the twofold sentence show:

“Give amity to every friend, courtesy to every foe!”

Through Ferdowsi tale of the Seven Labors (*haft khan*) of Rustam, he revived the ancient Persian Gnostic and mystical illuminations philosophy, paving the way for ‘Attar’s Seven Valleys of Love, and Suhrawardi, the master of illumination philosophy. In the Seven Labors of Rustam, Iran’s great mythological hero Rustam defeats and kills the White Dragon a symbol of greed. Rustam then drops the dragon’s blood in the eye of the corrupt, greedy and materialistic King Kay Kaus and cures his moral and spiritual blindness. This theme inspired another great Persian poet, *Sadi Shirazi*, to write:

“The greedy eye of the man who loves this world

will be filled either with contentment or the earth of the grave.”

Ferdowsi advised all to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, as reflected in following line:

“A tongue that is joined to a lie receives no radiance from heaven’s fortune.”

Three centuries later, *Awhadi Maraghai*, another great Persian poet and a follower of Ferdowsi School, said:

“Be truthful, for the truthful ones are free; in this world the truthful ones are mighty.”

The mystical thinkers of Iran have agreed that the ancient story of Jamshid’s world-revealing cup is a mystical symbol for the interior of the soul and its spiritual connections to the heavens and the world of illumination. In the same way, *Omar Khayyam* says:

“We are the root of happiness, and we are the mine of sorrow;

we are the fund of justice, and the product of oppression.

We are low and high, we are perfection, and we are less
we are the rusty mirror; we are the cup of Jamshid.”

So the experience of the “rusty mirror” applied to the cup of Jamshid would be the cause of his downfall, when in his later years he became a tyrant. In a similar fashion, Hafez alluded to this central symbol of divine knowledge in a memorable passage:

“I brought my problem to the Magian master last night,
So he could solve the riddle with his powerful vision.

I said, ‘When did He give you the world-seeing cup, O master?’

He said, ‘On the day He made this shining dome!’”

These later examples bring out meanings that are implicit in the writings of Ferdowsi. Firdausi’s *Shahnameh* is considered Persia’s national epic poem. It spans the history of fifty generations of rulers and subjects, where races and nationalities change, but culture, justice, humanity and human values remain the same. Ferdowsi Tusi is not only the voice of Persian consciousness and character, but also a universal voice of humanity’s core values across all races and cultures:

“Be pure and do well, and don’t break the hearts of the needy.”

Conclusion:

Epic literature has been and is in a close relationship with ethical and educational literature. Persian literature is filled with deep human concepts, moral and nurture teachings. It has as well a lot of wise and religious messages. These wisdom teachings as exemplification in the form of story have come for the warning of others because these wisdom and teachings in the stories are told from the side of the narrators and heroes of the stories.

Ferdowsi has also explicitly brought out intuitionist or revolutionist theory of knowledge. Most importantly, the *Shahnameh* is a goldmine of ethical values stressing especially the ideals underlined by classic philosophers preceding Persian literature.

Ferdowsi’s style throughout *Shahnameh* is didactic and pedagogical. He imparts profound spiritual insights through application of allegories, similes and metaphors. The language used in *Shahnameh* is amenable to understanding of the commoners and yet the intellectual elite can discern profound thoughtful insights into it. He has employed many stories in *Shahnameh* with a view to imparting ethical, social, cultural, spiritual and moral lessons to his readers.

In fact, *Shahnameh-e-Ferdowsi* is one of the greatest ethical, spiritual and literary masterpieces of the Persian language and literature as well as world. Ferdowsi through this masterpiece has given an abiding moral, ethical, social, cultural, spiritual and moral direction to mankind. It is because of this abiding moral and ethical relevance of *Shahnameh-e-Ferdowsi* that he is celebrated as a universal ethical and cultural genius even in tenth century. In fact, Ferdowsi as well as Persian language and literature are timeless and his perennial significance can hardly be overemphasized.

Source:

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