

Reflection of Science, Reason and Religion in Shahnameh

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ABSTRACT

Shahnameh is undoubtedly one of the unparalleled works of Persian literature and one of the greatest achievements of humankind in the form of an epic. Praise of wisdom in Shahnameh is really high. If the words of reason, rationalism and related concepts are taken from Shahnameh, this book would fall from freshness and revitalizing the spirit. Every researcher who does research in Shahnameh finds out that the wisdom and spirituality have always been adjacent in a midst of poems. So, in fact, examining the rationality of these poems in Shahnameh can be found that the poet, in his mind, how much values the intellect, while he bestows religion.

KEYWORDS: Ferdowsi, Reason, Religion, Epic, Science.

1. INTRODUCTION

What is agreed between men of science, scholars and philosophers alike, is that philosophy was the 'mother of science'. However, this belief which prevails in Western culture does not have a place in an Islamic setting. Thus, philosophy has never been regarded as the 'mother of science' in the field of Islam. Here it is the judicio-religious sciences based on the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet (the *sunnah*), which are the supreme sciences, and the basis of all the sciences (Zhino, 2012).

Since Copernicus, religion has struggled with science's explanation of reality, whereas, science has had to struggle with religion's explanation; this has resulted in an apparent conflict between the so-called 'hard' sciences and religious knowledge. Between the 18th and mid 20th centuries, there were many who provided solutions to the conflict. These solutions usually took one of two forms, either, religion and science had two competing understandings of the same problem ('conflict'), or they were 'independent' because both of them addressed two independent types of knowledge; however plausible either argument may seem, both arguments have their strengths and weaknesses (Ian, 1997).

Hakim Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi mostly mentions the Almighty God as "God of wisdom". This indicates that the value of wisdom in this book is unique in Persian literature. Ferdowsi, in Shahnameh, is representative of the true lover of rationalism. This case even causes that he pays little attention to other cases. The reason is that wisdom has dedicated his mind in shaping and writing his poetry, so that the wisdom could dominate human himself and his destiny.

Ferdowsi understands that the wisdom (intellect) is the reason of human superiority to any other non-human creatures and even he regards it as the best gift of God to humanity. Also he believes that rationalism spreads the good, justice, religion, and humanity in the human world. And this makes the man to avoid wrong doings so that acquire worldly and here after prosperity.

The proposed questions in this study are: What is reason and rationalism? How deep is the sense of reasoning and rationalism in Shahnameh? What is the relationship between reason and human destiny? What kind of connection is there between rationalism and other elements of poetry?

DISCUSSION

Rationalism in Shahnameh

Shahnameh is a book full of traditions, beliefs, national customs, patriotism, Iranian culture and civilization. (Reza, 2007).

The thought and idea in Shahnameh always revolve around reason and rationalism and teaching intellectual lesson to Iranians. Hakim Ferdowsi himself is a rationalist and reason oriented. With a deep thought he begins his works (Shahnameh) by the name of God of soul and wisdom. Rationalism constitutes his intellectual infrastructure. Reason (wisdom) in Ferdowsi's ancient letter as well, is superior to all things (Shahnameh, Vol.I).

In Ferdowsi's vision success and prosperity mean following the one who has wisdom and in the poet's workshops of thoughts, joys and sorrows are measured with the existence or inexistence of wisdom and rationalism (Javanshir, 2001).

In Bozorgmehr's aphorism wisdom is known as in the good deeds, the best attributes, the best cultures, demon and evil fighting means, the body and soul refinement and comfort of life (Thageb Far, 1998).

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Ferdowsi's concept of wisdom and its relationship with Ismailian's theory are entirely different. His intention of wisdom is human wisdom and has no relevance to the Ismailian's absolute Intellect (Parham 1998).

Ferdowsi recognizes wisdom as the source of breeding soul of savant, navigator of guidance seekers. So Ferdowsi believes there is no reason to break wisdom away from the heart, because it leads to fame and an ultimate prosperity of the man.

Wisdom in Ferdowsi's opinion is the asset of all beauties, goodness, man's mentor to the right path and element of salvation in after life. Ferdowsi generally reckons man as honored creature; a wise man is a man who accepts intelligence and counts wisdom as superior (Javanshir, 2001).

In Shahnameh, the world is based on reason and wisdom which God first created. Whatever in the universe is based on wisdom is stemmed from God's inspiration. And whoever lacks wisdom in the realm of insanity as the universe can be handled by the power of wisdom and can own the whole universe by the power of wisdom. (Taffzoli, 1975).

Masterpiece of God's creation is the wisdom and consequently masterpiece of Shahnameh is the wisdom. Wisdom is the most valuable dress that the creation has ever considered decent for human stature. In the spiritual world as well wisdom is the essence of insight and soul. Therefore, Ferdowsi believes that if wisdom claims any without any reason it will cause displeasure and discomfort (Shahnameh, Volume VIII).

Ferdowsi's consideration of wisdom has characters, including: justice, being just, means of understanding good and evil, crowns of the kings and celebrities' decoration, cognitive of the mysteries of the being, fear of committing as in. In Shahnameh wisdom has two bases: Justice and tolerance that are important religion teachings (Shahnameh: Volume VII).

If reason and faith come together in Shahnameh spiritual wisdom can be observed amongst the lyrics. In Ferdowsi's believes whoever owns spiritual wisdom has been praised even if he is a foe. The reason being is that amidst the poetry of Ferdowsi reason is associated with religion (Shahnameh, Volume I).

Theology in Shahnameh

Ferdowsi is a unique Persian epic story telling poet who holds a unique place in worshiping God and monotheism. He invites everyone, everywhere in Shahnameh, to worship God. He understands that the only way to human prosperity and happiness is monotheism. Although Ferdowsi according to certain mentality is a patriot, he honors the Prophet and calls down himself under the feet of Heidar (Imam Ali) (Rastgar Fasaii, 1990).

One of the features of Ferdowsi's poem is his adherence to the principles of ethics. Ferdowsi is one of the politest poets. No attack is seen in his works except Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavi's attack (Minuii, 1987).

Ferdowsi always implies so that in many cases he point out to the concepts and verses and hadith and cites them eloquently in a simple language. Since Ferdowsi had a tender nature and good temper, his words were without lies, abuse, invective and flattery. He did not use despicable, ugly, mis-constructive and immoral words in his works (Zarrinkoub, 2005).

Ferdowsi beliefs are deeply reflected from his religious beliefs. Ferdowsi warns people not to abstain of the divine religion, because the fruit of conviction to the faith of God is having a clear reflection. Therefore, following the path of divine is necessary and disobeying the truth, causes anger and wrath of God (Shahnameh, Volume I).

Many important issues such as honesty and integrity call to affection, chastity, moral refinement, peace and reconciliation, prayer and God fearing which are recommended in religious teachings are frequently observed in Shahnameh (Shahnameh, Volume I).

Importantly, although Ferdowsi appreciates variety of knowledge and he ingratiate scientists who gather knowledge. But he identifies the divine epistemology as the true knowledge that will bring closer its holder to eternal kingdom (Ranjbar, 1984). Therefore, whenever Ferdowsi gets the opportunity he praises and thanks God. Looking at Shahnameh and wondering through the poet's thoughts, we note that his faith in God is seen in all his poems.

The name and reminiscence of the Lord has come out in various ways through all the stories and narratives. Monotheism has penetrated deep into the poet's Soule. Ferdowsi names the Lord as *yazdan*, *davar*, *jahanafarin*, *davarkerdgar*, *dadar*, *Kerdgar Sepehr*, *Jahandavar*, *Khodavand* and *Khoda*. In fact, when we look closely at Shahnameh there is nothing except the major battle with Sepehr, and finally his refuge in God's doorstep (Sarami, 2005).

Certain principles of order of Islam and school of Shia Muslims which is the same as believe in the prophecy of the Prophet (PBUH) and consequently, the pontification and vicar ship of Ali (AS) and the immaculate Imam have been proposed as the theoretical basis of Shahnameh. Ferdowsi expresses his whole hearted conviction in God and his Prophet (PBUH) and his sincere devotion to Imam Ali (AS) with no pretension and hypocrisy. And he calls himself as the servant of prophet's family and immaculate Imams. Unitarianism of poet's, led not only to praise for the Prophet (pbuh) and Hazrat Ali (AS) also the other companions of the Prophet (Shahnameh, Volume I).

Knowledge in Shahnameh

The value of knowledge in Islam is so much that the first word of God sent the Prophet (PBUH) was the word: READ. Without doubt, value of a person in the Quran is in having knowledge which frees him from ignorance and neglect. The title of Hakim that is given to Ferdowsi has been attributed to his having knowledge (Ranjbar, 1984).

Religion and knowledge are the two main pillars of Ferdowsi's ideology. In other words, Shahnameh has been established on two important foundations of the faith and knowledge. Religion in his view is based upon the knowledge and wisdom which is born of sapience (Shahnameh, Volume I).

In Ferdowsi's thought, knowledge leads capability. Shahnameh accounts strength and greatness in sapience. Dynamics and development is possible only with wisdom, integrity and learning. In Ferdowsi's opinion knowledge is the grace of God, which is granted to whom he desires to. The knowledge which Ferdowsi worships is aligned with religious because only that knowledge can lead to monotheism and religious. It distances humanity from the evil and contains them from militancy and committing sins. Nonetheless, human knowledge versus endless glory of God and the praise worthy of him is crippled. Ferdowsi calls all people to acquire knowledge and warns people from avoiding knowledge of science. He recommends them to learn at all times in any places yet he prohibits acquiring knowledge mixed with greed. And he accounts conceit one of the most important factors damaging to learn the knowledge (Shahnameh, Volume VI).

Conclusion

Hakim Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi is an Iranian epic poet in his literary masterpiece (Shahnameh) which represents the cultures, experiences and Iranians thoughts invites all human to rationality, knowledge, piety, justice and other human spirituality.

Ferdowsi's Shahnameh invites everyone to superior intellect, knowledge, courage, freedom and liberation and good deeds. Shahnameh is a book which Hakim Ferdowsi begins it with praise of soul and wisdom and ends it with the name of Almighty God. Religion and knowledge constitutes the basis of Ferdowsi's ideology. And also Ferdowsi knows wise man as theologians who with sufficient knowledge praise the Lord. Ferdowsi is a Shiite Muslim and monotheist who loves Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and Hazrat Ali (AS) and he states that the salvation and mankind prosperity stems from rationalism, religion, and knowledge.

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