

Globalization and the Importance of Dialogue in Ferdosi's Shahnameh

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Abstract

As we march through this new millennium- the age of globalization and human communication, “dialogue” has been considered as one of the main needs of human beings to lead a peaceful life. Poets, philosophers and the artists are among those who play a vital role in the world society. A prominent figure in Iran culture and civilization with his universal ideas, Hakim Abolghasem Ferdosi has had a very crucial role in dialogue realm. Although Shahname depicts the fight of the good and the evil, it focuses on the recognition and mutual understanding because it is an extract of the events of a country with an ancient civilization. The purpose of this study is to show the characters following peace and dialogue and the factors developing and hindering dialogue in Shahnameh. It also aims introducing a plan based on Ferdosi's ideas.

Key words: globalization; Ferdosi's Shahnameh; dialogue.

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Introduction

The concept of “communication and world village” does not imply that all the countries and political regimes should live under a unified administration but it means the closeness and balance of ideas of human beings with the common needs.

In contemporary world, given the globalization and human communication, the concept “dialogue” is one of the needs and main necessities of human communication because having dialogue, human beings can lead a secure violence-free life. Poets, authors, philosophers and artists are among those who can play a vital role in world community as heroes of dialogue. In Iranian culture and civilization, Hakim Abolghasem Ferdoosi is one of those who played a very important role in dialogue among people, nations and cultures with his universal thought.

Hakim Abolghasem Ferdoosi, the 10th century poet, lived in an era when Iranians needed "epic stability". Pressure and cruelty were on the Iranian intellectuals and those who criticized against the lords of money and power were executed in the name of being against the religion (Rashed Mohassel, 1997). Witnessing fruitless wars and cruelties, Iranian nation were in hunger of freedom and prosperity and were nostalgic of their retrospect glorious days.

Adoring Iran and Iranian thoughts, Ferdoosi then versified Shahnameh (the letter of kings). Based on Iranians myths and epics, he inscribed a book that depicts not only chivalry of Iranians but also a comprehensive picture of moral, civil and cultural features of Iranian nation.

As Eslami Nodooshan (2005) put. "Shahnameh enjoys some features that no book in the world has and if I were not criticized, I would say that no book in the world has only one or few features no more but those all dimensional comprehensiveness is unique to this book. Unfortunately, due to the fact that Farsi is not an influential world language, I mean economy and politics do not support it, our great books could not make their our names household in the world as Noldeke, German Iranologist, said: "Shahnameh is a national epic that no nation has something like. The narrator is someone who knows the world literature" (p.12).

Although "Ferdoosi`s verse is an encyclopedia that depicts various dimensions of Iranian ancient tribes` lives" (Bertels, 1991: p.130), if looked deeply, this book includes all the angles of human thought. Therefore, this book does not belong to only one nation or tribe but it is a universal book in which all the nations can find their common dreams.

It can be concluded that Shahnameh is a world book and humanistic "[it] never ignores the great common values of human beings nor sacrifices it for a biased tendency to a tribe, race, religion and even gender and does not discriminate between "the same camp" and "different camp" and "man" and "women" but only considers the human basic qualities, good thought, speech and action as the criterion and acclaim them" (Doostkhah, 2005: p.86).

One of the important human issues in contemporary world is the discussion of "war" and "dialogue". Although Shahnameh is based on "the fight of the unmatched" and the opposition of the good and evil forces, one of Ferdoosi`s conclusions of this opposition is the wise recognition

and finding mutual understanding and interaction instead of war and fight because this book is an abstract of the country experiences and events with thousands of years of life.

In Ferdosi's *Shahnameh*, "dialogue literally means argument, struggle, conversation, talk, speech and greeting" (Dehkhoda, 1994, p:16928) but semantically speaking dialogue in *Shahnameh* is not a simple dialogue but a wise endeavor that interlocutors with their unique perspective based on moral and human reasoning try to know each other and come to a common thought. Since the purpose of dialogue is to reknow the people, nations and cultures, every person or nation presents his own thought and experiences to come to a universal wisdom so that they can meet their common needs.

As Khaleghi Motlagh (2009) states "In *Shahnameh*, the dialogue is based on unique philosophy and perspective usually not so long because mythological issues are enormously linked with philosophical and moral ones and the style is not a sheer narrative but in most cases are in dialectic dialogues and reasoning conversations" (p.100). The purpose of those dialogues is to show the conditions and contingencies of Ferdosi's time. Ferdosi would like to show the opposition of ideas by means of concepts of legends heroes. He put the history of human being as a mirror before their eyes via dialogues so that they can find their fate and destiny there and add to their wisdom and maturity.

Given the dominant thought on *Shahnameh*, the progressive and handicapping factors in dialogue will be discussed as follows:

1) *Wisdom*:

Wisdom has been used more than any other word in *Shahnameh*. Besides, it plays the most important role in understanding the ideas used in *Shahnameh*. "Wisdom" is a very wide concept. It is all the learning of human with accurate finding. Gathered in a person, they create wisdom, i.e. the way to continue a society.

Wisdom is the combination of ideas and practical experiences that are used as an instruction and guideline (Eslami Nodooshan, 2005, p.13). So it can be said that Ferdosi's *Shahnamh* is a book of wisdom. At the beginning of *Shahnameh*, he acclaims wisdom saying:

Wisdom is better that whatever God has granted
So wisdom should be acclaimed fairly.

Wisdom is the crown of the kings
Wisdom is the decoration for the famous.

Shahnameh is the field for the fight of Satan and Good ideas. *Shahnameh* shows that war does not settle the disputes but adds fuels to the flames.

"Greed" is the opposite of wisdom and is a handicapping factor in dialogue. It is the name of a demon; i. e. demon of ambition and greed. In *Shahnameh*, war, violence, ambition, arrogance, jealousy and lie are rooted in greed. Rostam, Siavash, Iraj, Keikhosro, Bozorgmehr are good samples of wisdom and Salm and Toor, Afrasiab, Zahhak and Goshtasb are samples of greed.

Fereydoon`s story and his three sons can clarify the issue better. After Zahhak, Fereydoon divided the world into his three sons based on their qualification. Rome, china and Tooran were given to Salm and Toor and Iran was given to the youngest son, Iraj. But Salm and Toor were not satisfied with this division, thus, they made a plan to invite Iraj to kill. Fereydoon informed his son of their mischievous plan but Iraj with his spiritual character wisely negotiated with them and talked to them about the lessons of history and reminds:

I don't want Iran, nor East nor China neither kingdom nor the territory of the earth
The high position that has miserable ending deserves crying

If you promote to even the heaven
Finally, you will be graved by the earth

I do not have a bone to pick with you
I do not bother myself for the sake of it (Ferdoosi, 2009, p.120)

But greed and ambition that are the cause of all of the wars and massacres in the history do not let Salm and Toor understand Iraj`s peace message so they killed their brother. "Iraj is the first martyr of peace in Iranian epic. Thus, taking revenge of people like Salm and Toor who reply peace with blood is one of the themes of Shahnameh as a structural element of Iranian national epic" (Salasi, 2008, p.177).

Iraj`s death created two fronts of satan and divine as Tooran and Iran in Shahnameh and includes most epic parts of Shahnameh. Here were killed a lot of people. Finally, Manoochehr, descendent of Iraj, took revenge and killed Salm and Toor.

2) *Self knowing:*

Ferdoosi believes that in order to know himself, one should refer to the deepest source of knowing, i.e. the legends so that he can find out the deepest thoughts of human being. Shahnameh helps us understand that we are all descendents from Kiumars- he was the first king in Shahnameh- the borders between the countries have been created politically as the world was divided by Fereydoon. All countries are united and all humans equal. It is the reason why Vaheddoost (2002) states, the vigorous and most permanent belief is that in the unity of the world and human. In myth worldview, they are not separated from one another. They are equal in "existence" and only in "appearance" are they far and separated (p.98).

3) *Avoiding racism and prejudice:*

Although Shahnameh acclaims Iran and Iranians, it does not necessarily mean that Iranians are all always good and non Iranians bad. Whatever is good and considered humane is acclaimed so if Iranians do not observe it, they will be blamed. Therefore, good and evil borders in Shahnameh are of moral ones not racist. As it can be seen in Shahnameh, Viseh, the leader of Toorian and Aghrires, Afrasiab`s brother and the blatant enemy of Iranians are considered good while Gashtasb, Iran`s king, and Salm and Toor, Fereydoon`s sons are among the evil characters of Shahnameh.

Therefore, Shahnameh respects all the human beings and believes that race and tribe are not and dialogue.

4) *Religious tolerance, Religion unity:*

Although a muslim, Ferdoosi respects all religions. He praises Allah who has created life and wisdom. He praises God who is beyond our thought, wisdom and imagination. He even acclaimed some other religions in his poems. For instances, he acclaims Zartosht, Iranian prophet and considers him monotheist and just while saying:

He accepted the clean religion
And cruelty and ignorance were concealed
(Ferdoosi, 1975: p.256)

Elsewhere he talks about the disciples` patience:

If you are angry with others,
You are not acting based an Christ`s thought and belief (Ferdoosi, 1975, Vol.4, p.404).

His pluralisms appeared when he lived in the era when Soltan Mahmood Gaznavi was fanatic in his religion and killed the enemies of his religion! Ferdoosi was so tolerant in accepting different religions that his corpus was not received permission to be engraved in Muslims` cemeteries.

5) *Justice:*

In Shahnameh, everyone a right who should receive based on his qualifications. Otherwise, the society will lose its balance and war, indubitably, endangers the society. According to Shahnameh, a fair government is one that enjoys a wise discipline, is not cruel with the people and supports the people (Ferdoosi, 2000, Vol. 8, p.67).

Zahhak`s administration is a sample of not fair one in Shahnameh. He governed unfairly and was cruel with the weak people. No one dared to criticize. In Ferdoosi`s words:

The good people`s actions have been hidden
The stupid`s intentions have been widespread.

Art turned to be useless and witchcraft got valuable
Honesty disappeared and harm got appeared

Government took power with cruelty
Goodness is talked just privately

It is time when dialogue is closed and war is gaining power. Kaveh rose up against Zahhak and made him fall from throne. On the other hand, in Anooshirvn`s administration that is well known for its justice was dialogue open. He consulted with governors every day. In Ferdoosi`s word:

No one expected even water and bread of others
And people could sleep every place at any time

No one knew theft and plundering
No one violated others` privacies

Even when money was on the way of people, they did not steal it.

Calmly people of different classes slept
and wolf and sheep drank from the same spring. (All were in peace and quiet).

The heroes were not damaged by daggers anymore
Nothing was heard except the voice of happiness (Ferdoosi, 2000, Vol. 8, p.154).

The peace and quiet observed in Anooshirvan`s administration is because of justice and the wisdom of dialogue.

Conclusion

The information and communication age has made people of different nations close to each other. If different races and nations were not considered as the main policy of administrations, undoubtedly, the security and peace would be missing in the society. The terrorist evil actions throughout the world may show that these groups saw themselves in an unjust position. If the world did not take lessons of the history, it would expect to witness more oppositions and wars.

It is hoped that once no one at any place of the world be a victim of war and the people of different nations in the globalized world enjoy peace and quiet.

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