

**UNDERSTANDING THE STRUCTURES AND PATTERNS OF AN EPIC:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF *RAMAYANA* AND *SHAH NAMEH***

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

**By
MEHDI RAHIMI**



**Center for Comparative Literature
School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad-500 046
Andhra Pradesh
India
October, 2011**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mr. Mehdi Rahimi** Reg. No: 08HCPH05 has worked under my supervision for his Ph.D degree at the center for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad. His thesis entitled “**Understanding the Structures and Patterns of an Epic: A Comparative Study of *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh***” represents his original work and doesn’t constitute part of any material submitted for a degree elsewhere.

Date: 24.10.2011

Hyderabad.

Signature of the Supervisor

Director,
Center for Comparative Literature

Dean of the School

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this dissertation entitled “**Understanding the Structures and Patterns of an Epic: A Comparative Study of *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh***” is my original work carried out under the supervision of prof. Tutun Mukherjee. I also declare that I have obtained and presented all information in this dissertation in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct and that I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Hyderabad

Date: 24.10.2011

Name: Mehdi Rahimi

Reg. No: 08HCPH05

Signature:

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my parents and my Sita-wife Mahboubeh to whom I owe everything that is good, noble, and worthwhile in my life and work.

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Introduction

The epic, in the classical formulation of the three genres, referred exclusively to the "poetic epic." It was of course in verse, rather lengthy and tended to be episodic. It dealt in elevated language with heroic figures (human heroes and deities) whose exploits affected whole civilizations or even, by implication, the whole of mankind. Its lengthiness was properly a response to the magnitude of the subject material (Martin 9). Within the original sense of the term, critics tend to distinguish between primary (traditional) and secondary (literary) epics, while some scholars speak of tertiary epic as well. Primary epics are direct expressions of the culture they depict, composed orally for performance before an audience. Among these are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that the Greeks ascribed to Homer; the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*; the French *Chanson de Roland* and the Spanish *Poema del Cid* in the twelfth century; and the thirteenth-century German epic *Nibelungenlied*. Secondary epics are written compositions that use the primary form as a model. Of this kind is Virgil's Latin poem the *Aeneid*, which later served as the chief model for Milton's literary epic *Paradise Lost*. Abrams believes that, "The literary epic is certainly the most ambitious of poetic enterprises, making immense demands on a poet's knowledge, invention, and skill to sustain the scope, grandeur, and authority of a poem that tends to encompass the world of its day and a large portion of its learning" (77).

Regarding categorization of the Persian epic *Shah Nameh* as primary or secondary, there is an ongoing controversy among scholars which returns to the sources of *Shah Nameh*. Ferdowsi's epic is probably based on an earlier prose version which itself was based on a much older source *Khvatay- Namak*, that reached back to Sassanid dynasty. There is also without doubt a strong influence of oral literature since the style of the *Shah Nameh* shows characteristics of both written and oral literature (Shamisa 57). In this regard John Miles Foley holds that "the much-discussed Persian national epic called the *Shahnama*, apparently reached its present canonical form through the work of a poet named Ferdowsi but which certainly owes an enormous debt to prior and contemporary oral traditions" (206). As Ulrich Marzolph observes,

...the relationship between written and oral tradition is further complicated by the fact that the oral performers of the *Shahnama*-recitations often employed as a written medium

small booklets or rolls of paper (*tumar*). These *tumars* did not contain a text to be recited verbatim but rather supplied a comprehensive outline to be memorized (282).

In the prologue of some stories, Ferdowsi declares that he has heard this story from a *dihghan* or says that he narrates the story from the *name-ye bastan* (an old source).

Significance of the Study

Certain patterns and themes are present in all epics of the world. These constitute the normative and definitive features of the genre. Most epics reflect these common features. Yet, every genre contains within it the possibility of destabilizing or transgression of the norms. Only then can generic borders be extended. There have therefore emerged through the ages many epic types in poetry and prose which illustrate the exploration of new structure, style and content. This dissertation, by tracing the history of the genre and then focusing on two epics from Asia, will make an effort to understand the ways the epics *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* share and reflect common features of the genre and at the same time manifest particularities of their socio-cultural contexts and literary traditions which distinguish them.

Thus, this dissertation attempts to investigate two enormous poetic texts of world literature: *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh*. The first one, the *Ramayana* is one of the few great epics of ancient India (Buck and Nooten xiii). The story of Rama is ranked as one of the most popular stories of India and South Asia and forms an important part of the Hindu canon (*smṛti*), considered to be *itihāsa* (Datta 1753). Thus the importance of *Ramayana* is not limited just to its literary features but functions as a fundamental part of Hinduism. *Ramayana* is one of the sacred books of the subcontinent illustrating Hindu ethics. This important aspect leads Hindus to learn the epic as a holy book from their childhood. Holding such respect, Hindus believe that reading or hearing of *Ramayana* blesses the reader or listener. Traditionally, the *Ramayana* is attributed to the Sanskrit poet Srimad Valmiki but the story of Rama has a great diversity and along with this version there are hundreds of other tellings and renderings of the story of Rama in India, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Frank E. Reynolds states that even “in the history and literature of religions few stories have been told as many different ways as the story of Rama” (50). However this Sanskrit version of *Ramayana*, dating to approximately the 5th to 4th century B.C is known to be “the most extensive early literary treatment of the life of Rama”. Asserting of this, in her

introduction to *Many Ramayanas*, Paula Richman writes:

Many later Ramayana authors explicitly refer to it either as an authoritative source or as a telling with which they disagree. For centuries it has been regarded as the most prestigious Ramayana text in many Indian circles. It has also drawn the most attention from western scholars (5).

Robert P. Goldman general editor of a new English translation of Valmiki's Ramayana, says: "Few works of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated, and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit epic poem, the Valmiki Ramyana" (x). Valmiki's *Ramayana* has been arranged into six books or kanda, and was originally a 24,000 couplet-long epic poem.

The second epic discussed in this dissertation, *Shah Nameh* (The Book of Kings) is 'The Crown Jewel of Persian literature'. *Shah Nameh* has been a source of inspiration for countless artists for almost 10 centuries and its influence on culture can not be overestimated. *Shah Nameh* is an encyclopedia of Iranian traditions and customs, where it gives to the readers, fruitful knowledge and perspicuous image of Persia's ancient. Ethics, rites, ceremonies, sports, events, values, myths and histories, arts, jobs, geographical places and cities, ... can be inferred of the book (Sarrami 1993). Also it reflects ancient religions by tracing the history of Zoroastrian religion from its beginnings up to the defeat of the last Zoroastrian king by Arab conquerors. At the same time, it reflects Islamic principles and values, ethical beliefs and admiration of virtue, referring Ferdowsi is a Muslim who has a strong belief to Prophet Mohammad and his family (Ahl-e Beit). *Shah Nameh* recounts myths and history of Persia, beginning with the creation of the world and the introduction of the arts of civilization (fire, cooking, metallurgy, law) to the Aryans and ends with the Arab conquest of Persia. The work is not precisely chronological, but there is a general movement through time. The *Shah Nameh* has 62 stories, 990 chapters, and some 60,000 rhyming couplets, making it more than three times the length of Homer's *Iliad*, and more than twelve times the length of the German *Nibelungenlied*. It took Ferdowsi 30 years to compile *Shah Nameh*, who started his composition in the Samanid era in 977 A.D and completed it around 1010 A.D. during the Ghaznavid. Of the principal and highest importance of *Shah Nameh*, is the impact of the epic on Persian language. All Persian scholars are unanimous in its agreement that *Shah Nameh* has played a major role in reviving of this language after the Islamic conquest of Persia, and subsequent influence of Arabic language.

Ramayana and *Shah Nameh* however belong to two ancient civilizations of the East. They are expressions of the culture they depict. *Ramayana* as an impressive monument of poetry glorified traditional Indian virtues and tell us of the heroes, gods and goddesses of India. *Shah Nameh* reflects Persia's history, cultural values, ancient religion (Zoroastrianism) and ethno-national history of Iran.

Review of Literature and Relevant Topics

A good number of studies have already been done about the epic in general and about *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* in particular. Much has, therefore, already been said (and much more, no doubt, will go on to be said) on this subject. In the area of comparative epic studies also a long list of researches already exists, but they are almost all Eurocentric and their main focus is on epics of the West. Therefore this research proposes to conduct a comparative study between two great sources of the East. The attempt is to explore the implications of parallels and contrasts between two epics. The following books include some useful and relevant topics for addressing the research problem. For example, *Epic Grandeur: Toward a Comparative Poetics of the Epic* by Masaki Mori (1997) divides the study into two parts. The first part, consisting of three chapters, offers a comparative poetics of the epic. It presents a number of views on the nature of the genre by critics such as Plato, Aristotle, Vico, Schiller, Nietzsche, Lukács, Hegel, and Bakhtin before focusing on the three elements which Mori considers essential to the definition of epic. It also discusses transformations of traditional epic, including Milton's denunciation of martial virtue in *Paradise Lost* and the grand narrative told from the perspective of the vanquished in the medieval Japanese Tale of the Heike. *Homer And The Nibelungenlied: Comparative Studies In Epic* written by Bernard Fenik (1986) is another genuinely useful book about narrative shaping in the epic. He begins by grappling with the issue of epic diction, which is part of the dilemma of all theories of reading. His primary emphasis in this book is on similarities in structure among many different works and not on the peculiarities of narrative technique that separate them from each other. *Epic Interactions: Perspectives on Homer, Virgil, and the Epic Tradition* edited by M. J. Clarke, B. G. F. Currie and R. O. A. M. Lyne (2006) is a collection of essays investigating the vibrancy of the classical epic tradition. The book considers the uses made by writers at widely different times and places of the literary form to explore the author's place in literary and cultural history. The book's tripartite structure considers 'epic

interactions' first within ancient Greek literature (Chs. 1–4), within Latin literature (Chs. 5–8) and in the vernacular literatures of medieval, renaissance and modern Europe (Chs. 9–11). A *Companion To Ancient Epic* edited by John Miles Foley (2005) is another collection of essays. The essay on *Shah Nameh* discusses some parallels between Persian epic and *Iliad*. Dean A Miller's comprehensive book titled *The Epic Hero* (2000) studies the hero in almost all notable heroic poetries and traces the epic pattern of 'hero's son is killed by his father' to Persian epic *Shah Nameh*. *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (1991) edited by Paula Richman includes some comprehensive essays about different versions and the multivocal nature of the *Ramayana* and is considered as one of the basic references on *Ramayana* studies. Richman's compilation provides a nice set of lenses to the great epic. *The Morphology of the Tales of Shah Nameh* written by Ghadam Ali Sarrami (1993) is a useful sourcebook about the Persian epic from different points of view.

Though numerous studies already exist, there haven't been satisfactory comparative studies on two Eastern epics from an Eastern/Asian perspective. It seems they are incomplete in some way. To my knowledge, few studies have been done on *Shah Nameh* and *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but till now no comparative study exists for *Shah Name* and *Ramayana*. Therefore this research is the first in the subject.

Aims and Objectives

This research proposes to conduct a comparative study of the two great heroic poetries of the East. The aim is generally to explore the implications of parallels and contrasts between two epics. The discussion will consider the common structures and patterns of the epics to understand how the world of epic in East is close yet far from each other. Due to the belief that 'culture and history of a nation or race is often reflected in an epic, the research also aims at creating mutual understanding and respect for the two cultures.

My interest, therefore, is twofold: to uncover similarities in themes, structures and style between two authors not primarily associated together, and to examine the criteria usually applied in comparative studies. The research will have a worthy objective: to redefine epic from a global perspective, and to point towards what such a genre might look like in the multicultural future.

Research Questions

This research will attempt to acquire answers to the following questions:

1. Considering the distance between lands, is it possible to base the epic of different nations or tribes on similar and common structures?
2. To what extent do common characteristics exist between the two and if any why so?
3. Are the features of an epic relevant to its geographical environment?
4. Do any similar characteristics exist between the Indian and Persian epic?
5. To what extent has the formation of new cultures and geographical environment impact in the behavioral changes among the common Indian and Persian epic characters?

Methodology

My approach for the proposed research has been analytic and comparative poetics. The attempt of my argument is to trace parallels and contrasts between the two epic poems: *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh*. Through this comparative research, I try to understand their similarities and differences in terms of content, structure, language and style. This research includes the study of the data gathered from different sources on aspects like mythology, etymology, stylistic features as well as the content and semantic features.

Chapter Plan

This research is planned to proceed as follows: The introductory section offers the framework of the study and is followed by five chapters. Chapter I titled “Epic as a Genre” discusses the genre and its different forms in Persian and Indian in terms of the specifications and features of the epic form. Chapter II on “Tracing The Epic Through The Ages” considers the ancient to medieval to modern transformations of the genre. We know that epics are of national significance in the sense that they embody the history and ideals of a nation and there are many kinds of epics to be found worldwide. Since it is difficult to discuss all epics in their details, this chapter will review some of them based on the dates of their composition, such as *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the Greek epics, *Gilgamesh* the Sumerian epic, and Virgil’s *Aeneid* in Latin as ancient epics; medieval epics such as the old English epic *Beowulf*, French epic *The Song of Roland*, the

German epic *Nibelungenlied* and the great Italian epic *Divine Comedy*; modern epics such as the 18th-century works of Richard Blackmore, the epic poems of the 19th-century author Walter Scott, and the late 20th-century *Omeros* by Nobel Prize winning author Derek Walcott. Chapter III focuses on Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*. The Iranian epic tradition has its roots in the general Indo-European epic tradition, and has been closely identified with the Iranian people and embodies the history, the ideals, and the values of the Iranian nation. Chapter IV is devoted to the Indian epic *Ramayana*. While the story of Rama has great diversity, the Sanskrit text ascribed to Valmiki is base for this work. The Synopsis of the epic, its language and style, main characters, variations of *Ramayana*, Persian versions of the *Ramayana*, and eventually its impact on art and culture have been discussed in this chapter. Chapter V offers a comparative study of *Shah Nameh* and *Ramayana* as the main research argument of the dissertation. The Conclusion is open-ended. It tries to weave the threads of the arguments and indicates avenues for further work on the subject.

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CHAPTER I: EPIC AS A GENRE

Epic is a broadly defined genre of poetry, and one of the major forms of narrative literature consistently described as “the master-genre of the ancient world” (Foley 1). Epics played a significant role in the primeval societies, and functions that ranged from the historical and political to cultural and didactic. Epic as a genre has been discussed ever since Aristotle’s *Poetics*. It was ranked by Aristotle as second only to tragedy, but many Renaissance critics rank it the highest of all genres (Abrams 77). European literature was described by Samuel Johnson as a series of footnotes to Homer. In his poem “On first looking into Chapman’s Homer” Keats expresses delight in Homer’s creative transcreation (Fowler 68). Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* asserts that Homer established for his successors the "demonstration that the fall of an enemy, no less than of a friend or leader, is tragic and not comic," and that with this "objective and disinterested element," the epic acquired an authority based "on the vision of nature as an impersonal order" (319). Dryden and Pope chose to translate rather than to emulate Virgil and Homer; Arnold discussed the epic in his essays, and his *Sohrab and Rustum* (based on Persian epic, *Shah Nameh*) is so saturated with Homer that his essays On “the Modern Element in Literature” and “On Translating Homer” almost seem to be continuing by other means a debate which the poem initiates (Jenkyns 301).

Epic as a word derived from the Greek adjective ἑπικός (*epikos'pi*), from ἔπος (*epos*) meaning ‘word, story, poem’. Epic as one of the oldest and widely popular poetic genres is a traditional form of narrative poetry that portrays heroic and marvelous deeds of great heroes and the intervention of gods in human life. An epic is a very long poem that uses elevated or majestic language to create a sense of sublimity. Aristotle in his definition of differences between epic and tragedy says:

Epic poetry resembles tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of what is morally worthy: they differ in that the epic has only one meter and is narrative in form. They also differ in length, for tragedy tries to confine itself, as much as possible, within one revolution of the sun or a little more, whereas the time of an epic is unlimited (11).

The culture and history of a nation or race is often reflected in an epic. For instance, Homer’s great epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* draw upon Greek mythology and reflects Greek culture. The same

thing goes for Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* through which Indian culture is portrayed as well as the Persian epic *Shah Nameh* which opens a wide window for its readers to Iranian culture and myths.

Epic retells in a continuous narrative the life and works of a heroic or mythological person, communities or groups of people. It comprises a description of pre-history and early life and societies. So ‘epic’ or ‘heroic poem’ in the descriptive generic term is applied to a work that meets at least the following criteria: “it is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or (in the instance of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) the human race” (Abrams 76). Epic speaks of time when people try to mould civilization. It reconstructs the time when tribes got unified into a nation. So, the epic of each nation narrates the ideals and desires of that nation and relates the story of efforts of that nation to consolidate for further. Epic is the poem of nations in the time of nations’ childhood, when history and mythology, reality and imaginary were mixed to each other and the epic poet became the historian of the nation (Shamisa 115).

An epic raises primary questions like: How fire was discovered? How scripts were born? How were subjects like life, death, love, hate and devotion faced?

Although in its original sense, the term refers to long narrative poems which speaks in a rich and superior style, about serious matters of ancient people, In modern times, epic has come to denote a work in prose, verse, theater, or film that exhibits action on a large scale and treats a significant historical event. Such works are usually referred to as belonging to the epic tradition (Quinn 140).

Persian Epic

In different cultures and literatures there are some generic terms for epic which are different from court epic and own some distinctive features. In Persian for instance, the word for epic is *hamaseh* which is originally an Arabic word means a great deed, chivalry and gallantry, but interestingly in modern Arabic language the word *hamaseh* is not common to refer to epic and instead they use the word *malhamah* means a great war. However in Persian we call, for example, the great work of Ferdowsi *hamaseh-ye Ferdowsi* and the work of Daghighi, *hamaseh-ye Daghighi*. Heroic works in Persian literature are mainly in *nameh*-style. *Nameh* means ‘book’

in general and includes both heroic and non-heroic works. Of non-heroic works, *Ghabus Nameh* for example is a collection of advices written by a father for his son, *Siyast Nameh* is an historical work about Mogul empire in Iran and *Marzban Nameh* is a collection of fables. Therefore non heroic *nameh* works have lots of verities in theme and style and it is difficult to define *nameh* as a genre in these kinds of works. But heroic *nameh* works in another hand are more specific and *nameh* in this respect has primary elements which form a generic framework and that can be traced as a gene. The ancient form of the word is *namak* in *Pahlavi* language and once can be seen in *Khotay namak*, which is a vast work on the history of Iran from mythical times to the death of Khosrow II in 628. This work is considered as one of the first attempts to collect verbal heroic tales of ancient Persia, was written under the order of Khosrow Anushirvan. When Pirouz, Khosrow's grandfather loses the war from the barbaric tribes of the north of Persia, and they occupied the country, the national pride of Iranians was hurt. In another hand a new prophet called Mazdak appeared and presented his religion to the people. This political and religious disorder led Khosrow Anushirvan of deciding to revival of national identity. He needed Iranians to be unified against invading of enemies, specially the emperor of Rom and the barbaric tribes of the north. Aiming of this, he summoned all intellectuals and *mubad* (Zoroastrian priests) to compile a work containing heroic tales of Persia. This collective effort resulted *Khotay namak* or in its later pronunciation *Khoday Nameh*. *Khotay* or *khoday* means king and therefore *khoday nameh* is a synonym for the word *shah nameh* both meaning the 'the book of kings'. The text includes a collection of mythical legends of Persian kings and heroes, written in Pahlavi language later formed the basis for the Persian poet Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh* (Book of the Kings). This work was enriched during the time and had different versions but none of them is available now.

The second attempt to write of heroic tales was in Samanid era when Iranians lost to Arabs and Iran was occupied by the latter. Thus again the national pride of Iranians which had been hurt by Arabs was the motivation of this effort. Historians know the state of Khorasan and specially the city of Tus as the center of this movement. Writing of the *nameh*-style heroic tales was a common work in this era. These stories were about national heroes and past kings of Persia, written in prose, called *Shah Nameh* (The Book of Kings). The unknown writers of these heroic works generally belonged to the cast of *Dihghans* who were landowners and desired to preserve Iranian traditions. Among all, *Shah Nameh Abu Mansuri* was the most comprehensive

work, written on order of Abu Mansur Mohammad- ibn Abdol Razzagh, the governor of Tus. This work was compiled by some writers in tenth century. According to the expert Dr. Jalal Khaleghi Mutlaq, the main reference of these writers was one version of *Khoday Nameh* of Pahlavi language and at least four of them knew *Pavlati* and translated into Persian. For this reason when they finished their work, they named it *Shah Nameh* which is synonym of *khoday Nameh*. The *Shah Nameh Abu Mansuri* was one of the main references for Daghighi's *Shah Nameh* and Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*. Daghighi was probably the first who started versification of *Shah Nameh* but composing only thousand verses, he was killed by his slave. Ferdowsi was the second after Daghighi who composed his *Shah Nameh*. After Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*, a number of other works similar in nature surfaced over the centuries within the cultural sphere of the Persian language. Many of them were heavily influenced by Ferdowsi and used his genre and stories to develop their own Persian epics, stories and poems (Nurian website). Bringing some examples, we can mention *Sam Nameh*, *Burzu Nameh*, *Luhraśb Nameh*, *Faramarz Nameh*, *Kush Nameh* and *Bahman Nameh*. This is interesting to note that the Indian epic, *Mahabharata* was translated into Persian as '*Razm Nameh*' meaning 'the book of war'.

The *nameh*-style heroic poems in Persian have a common meter called *motaqāreb*. This meter (in Persian: *bahr*) is based on regularly recurring patterns of short (◡) and long (—) syllables. Stress does not play an important or clearly understood role. This meter is a line of eight feet in two hemistiches. The hemistiches of each line have end-rhyme which differ from line to line and do not rhyme with each other. Between hemistiches there is a regular caesura but no regular one within each hemistich. Almost, there is no enjambment.

Definition of the meter of *motaqāreb*:

fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘al

◡ — — / ◡ — — / ◡ — — / ◡ —

Here is a sample from Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*:

be-nā-mē / kho-dā-van / de-jā-nō / khe-rad

kaz-’īn-bar / ta-ran-dī / she-bar-nag / za-rad

Almost all post-*Shah Nameh* epics are regarding to the Sistan cycle (Rustam, his ancestors and his posterities), and each of these epics is devoted to adventures of one central hero and the epic is named after him. The lineage of the Sistan heroes was: Garshasb, Nariman, Sam, Zal,

Rustam, Sohrab and Barzu. Also Faramarz son of Rustam as well as Banu Gushasb his daughter have their heroic *nameh* called *Faramarz Nameh* and *Banu Gushasb Nameh*. Among these *nameh* works, *Garshasb Nameh* (The Book (or Epic) of Garshasb) by Asadi Tusi (died: 1072) is considered as the second most important Iranian national epic, after Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*. Asadi Tusi who also happens to come from the same town of Tus, composed his work in 9000 couplets about half a century after the *Shah Nameh*. The poet took the story from a written work which was possibly *Garshasb Nameh* of Moayyed Balkhi and he noted that it is a complement to the stories of the *Shah Nameh*. The poem is thus based on written source although it was part of the folklore of the common people. Garshasb, the central hero of the tale was in the reign of Zahhak who ruled for 1000 years. Traveling to Zābolestān, he saw Garshāsb and encourages him to slay a dragon that had emerged from the sea. Showing great deeds of prowess, Garshāsb succeeds in killing the monster. Zahhāk then orders Garshāsb to go to India, where the king who was a vassal of Zahhāk's has been replaced by a rebel prince. Garshāsb defeats him and then meeting of a Brahman, stays in India for a while to observe its philosophical discourse. India has always been a place of marvel for Muslim authors. Later he returned to Iran and becomes king of Zābolestān. The poem ends with another battle and dragon-slaying, followed by Garshāsb's death.

Almost one century after Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*, another heroic tale called *Faramarz Nameh* was written by an unknown author. Faramarz is the son of Rustam and the tale deals with his voyage to India in order to help the Indian king Nowshaad. According to this story, the Iranian King Kay Kavus received a message from the Indian king Nowšād Shah who asked help against his five enemies; first, Konnās Dīv (a carrion-eating demon who had abducted three daughters of the Indian king); second, Gorg-e Gūyā (a talking wolf who speaks like human being and thus was known as Gūyā means talking); third, Aždahā (a dragon); forth, thirty thousand rhinoceros and the last was Kid Shah who gets a huge tax from him. Faramarz was volunteer to go to India and then Bijan, son of Giv and some other Iranian heroes accompanied him in his voyage to India. Faramarz slays the dragons and also has seven labors such as seven labors of Rustam in *Shah Nameh*. The author of *Faramarz Nameh* as other Persian writers of epic poetry who came after Ferdowsi, was heavily influenced by the style of the *Shah Nameh*.

The other *nameh* texts are *Bahman Namhe* and *Kush Nameh* ascribed to Iran Shah Ibn Abul Kheir, composed probably in twelfth century. *Bahman Nameh* includes a preface and four

chapters. The poet in the preface praises sultan Mohammad and asking for premium, sends the poem to him by Mir Movdud who was one of the commanders of army. In the first part of the book Bahman the son of Esfandiyar crowned as the king of Iran. He married Katayun, the daughter of the king of Kashmir. Katayun loved a slave called Lolo and took him to the court of Bahman. By advice of Katayun, Bahman entrusts the tasks to Lolo and goes for hunting. Lolo riots and Bahman goes to Mesr (Egypt). He married Homa, the daughter of the king of Egypt and by his help conquered Iran. At the end of this part when he hears of Rustam's death he howls. In the second part, taking revenge of his father who was killed by Rustam, he attacks Sistan. For three times he loses from Faramarz, Rustam's son but in the fourth battle he defeats and hangs him up. Rustam's daughters, Banu Goshasb and Zar Banu escape to India and goes before the king of Kashmir. In the third part, Bahman followed them and captured Rustam's daughters. In the fourth chapter Bahman crowned Homa. Ending of the story, on a day Bahman goes hunting and faces a dragon. He battles with dragon but finally is swallowed by him.

Another heroic tale *Kush Nameh* is also one of the most important *nameh* texts composed by Hakim Irānshāh Abu'l-Khayr between the years 1108-11. Probably he is the same poet of *Bahman Nameh*, but however the writer's name does not appear in the work. The story deals with the heroic tale of Kush the Tusked (or Persian: *Pil-gush*, "The Elephant-eared"), the son of Kush who is the brother of the king Zahhak. The tale starts with the king Zahhak who killed Jamshid and predicts that a person from Jamshid's family avenge his death. Therefore Zahhak sends his brother Kush to Chin (China). Kush marries a woman who gives birth to an elephant-eared and tusked son. He gets angry and kills his wife for giving birth to such a demonic creature. He then leaves his son in the forest. Later, Abtin finds Kush and takes him to his house and he is raised in Abtin's family. In a war between Abtin and Kush, when Kush and his son recognize each other, they join forces against Abtin. Abtin escapes to Māchin (inner China in Persian literature) and Kush puts his son as the king of China. After years Abtin's son, Faridun attacks and jails Zahhak and Kush the Tusked in Damavand mountain. After forty years Faridun put Kush free to help them in a war against Nubi army. Kush marches to Ondolos but then he breaks his pledge to Faridun, returns and battles against Iran's army. He helped Salm and Tur, the two sons of Faridun to kill their brother Iraj and also after years battles with Manuchehr who wanted to take revenge of Iraj. Kush almost appears in all the stories mentioned in *Shah Nameh* of Ferdowsi.

Another example of such *nameh* texts is Hamdallah Mustawfi's *Zafar Nāmeḥ* or the Book of Victory. This 14th century epic history, compiled in 75,000 couplets, relates Iranian history from the Arab conquest to the Mongols. Mustawfi spent fifteen years of his life to complete this long historical epic. The work has three chapters: the first chapter is regarding to the history of Arabs and includes the life of the prophet Mohammad, the life of four Muslim leaders after the prophet called *kholaḥfaye rashedin* and also the history of Bani Omayyeh and Bani Abbas clans. The second chapter is the history of Iran and the third and last chapter is devoted to the history of Mongols. *Zafar Nāmeḥ* is considered as the second historical epic after *Shah Nameh* of Ferdowsi using the same language and meter.

Indian Epic

In Indian literature as well critics speak of some generic terms bearing some distinct features of the court epic. Among them is *mahākāvya* (meaning great poetry), a genre of Indian epic poetry in classical Sanskrit literature. *Mahākāvya* is a short epic similar to the epyllion comprising 15-30 cantos, a total of about 1500-3000 verses. Compared with the *Ramayana* (500 cantos, 24000 verses) and the *Mahabharata* (about 100000 verses), *mahākāvyas* are much shorter. In its classical form, a *mahakavya* consists of a varying number of short poems or cantos that tells the story of a classical epic. It is characterized by ornate and elaborate figures of speech and skilled descriptions of scenery, love, hate, revenge, battles, festivals, weddings, embassies, councils, triumphs and so on. This particular form of the Sanskrit literary style is considered the most prestigious form in Sanskrit literature ("mahākāvya." website).

Belvalkar's translation of Dandin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* (1.15-19) notes the traditional characteristics of a *mahākāvya* are as following:

It springs from a historical incident or is otherwise based on some fact; it turns upon the fruition of the fourfold ends and its hero is clever and noble; by descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, seasons and risings of the moon or the sun; through sportings in garden or water, and festivities of drinking and love; through sentiments-of-love-in-separation and through marriages, by descriptions of the birth-and-rise of princes, and likewise through state-counsel, embassy, advance, battle, and the hero's triumph; Embellished; not too condensed, and pervaded all through with poetic sentiments and emotions; with cantos none too lengthy and having agreeable metres and well-formed joints, And in each case furnished with an

ending in a different metre—such a poem possessing good figures-of-speech wins the people's heart and endures longer than even a kalpa.

About the aforesaid traditional characteristics of a *mahākāvya*, Ingalls (33–35) states that these features are not random suggestions but specific requirements. He says “Every complete *mahākāvya* that has come down to us from the time of Kalidasa contains the whole list, which, if one considers it carefully, will be seen to contain the basic repertory of Sanskrit poetry. Contained in it are the essential elements of nature, love, society, and war which a poet should be able to describe”. Whether right or not, Ingalls compares *mahākāvya* with Persian *diwan* and observes that the great *kāvya* tested a poet by his power of rendering content, which is a better test at least than the Persian *diwan*, which tested a poet by his skill at rhyme.

Critics identify five works as model *mahākāvya*: The first work is *Raghuvamśa* by the celebrated Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. Comprising 19 *sargas* (cantos), the story deals with Raghu dynasty, the family of Dilipa and his descendants up to Agnivarna, who embrace Raghu, Dasharatha and Rama. While the earliest surviving commentary work written on the *Raghuvamśa* is that of the 10th-century Kashmirian scholar Vallabhadeva but however the most popular and extant commentary is of Mallinatha (ca.1350-1450) entitled *Sanjivani*. The meters used in the epic are 21 Sanskrit meters, namely *Mattamayūra*, *Mandākrāntā*, *Mālinī*, *Anustup*, *Indravajrā*, *Upajāti*, *Upendravajrā*, *Aupacchandasika*, *Totaka*, *Drutavilambita*, *Rathoddhatā*, *Vamśastha*, *Vasantatilakā*, *Puspitāgrā*, *Praharsinī*, *Mañjubhāsinī*, *Vaitālīya*, *Śārdūlavikrīḍita*, *Śālinī*, *Svāgatā*, *Harinī* (Acharya Kavyatirtha Appendix 2). In this story the hero Raghu goes on a military expedition to Transoxiana. He defeats the Hephthalites, or White Huns, whom the Indians called Hunas and *Mlecchas* (barbarians). Then Raghu and his army cross the Oxus River and encounter the Kambojas, an ancient Indo-Scythian people. Kambojas submitted to Raghu and presented him treasures. This group of people probably dwelt in the vicinity of the Pamirs.

The second work is *Kumārasambhava* (meaning "Birth of Kumara") written by Kālidāsa. While the extant version of the epic comprises seventeen cantos (*sargas*), the first eight are accepted as his authorship but the last nine seem to be later additions. *Kumarsambhava* is widely considered as one of Kalidasa's finest works, a great example of *Kāvya* poetry. The epic deals more with Shringara Rasa, the rasa of love, romance, and eroticism, than Vira rasa (the rasa of heroism). In the story, Tarakasura a rakshasha (or demon) was blessed that he could be killed only by Lord Shiva's son. Shiva had subsumed Kama-deva (the god of love). Parvati performed great

tapasya to attract the love of Shiva. Of their being together, a son called Kartikeya is born who kills Tarakasur to restore the glory of Indra, the king of gods.

The third paradigmatic example of Kāvya poetry is *Kirātārjunīya* by Bharavi written in the 6th century or earlier. This epic poem consists of eighteen cantos describing the battle between Arjuna and lord Shiva in the garb of a *kirāta* or mountain-dwelling hunter. Critics praise the work both for its gravity or depth of meaning, and for its impressive and sometimes playful expression. Cantos 4 to 9 are not related to the plot but instead they are just an excuse for beautiful descriptive poetry, which influenced on all later Sanskrit epics poetry. More than 42 commentaries written on *Kirātārjunīya* point the popularity of the work among critics. Also many anthologies and works on poetics entail verses from this work. Among the verses, the 37th from the eighth canto, which illustrates nymphs bathing in a river is the most popular verse and is noted for its beauty. Another verse from the fifth canto (*utphulla sthalanalini...*) describes the pollen of the lotus flowers being blown by the wind into a golden umbrella (*Chhatra*) in the sky is noted for its imagery, and has given Bharavi the sobriquet of "Chhatra Bharavi". The *Kirātārjunīya* is important of being the only known work of Bharavi. Singh (297) regards it to be "the most powerful poem in the Sanskrit language" and Warder (225) considers it the "most perfect epic available to us", with more concentration and polish in every detail. Despite using extremely difficult language, Warder notes that his alliteration, "crisp texture of sound", and choice of meter closely correspond to the narrative.

The fourth paradigmatic example of Kāvya-style poem is *Śiśupāla-vadha* (literary means "the slaying of Shishupala") composed by Māgha in the 7th or 8th century. Including 20 *sargas* (cantos) *Śiśupāla-vadha* is an epic poem of about 1800 highly ornate stanzas. Critics praise the work mainly for its exquisite descriptions and lyrical quality than for any dramatic development of plot. This is almost a common feature that can be seen in other Sanskrit *kavya* poems as well. Their plots are also drawn from one of the epics, in this case the *Mahabharata*. In the story, Shishupala, king of the Chedis in central India, has clashed with Krishna many times and insulted him several times in an assembly. Finally Krishna angered beyond measure and cut off his head. The 10th-century Sanskrit theorist Kuntaka observes that Magha arranges the story such that "the sole purpose of Vishnu's Avatarhood as Krishna appears to be the slaying of the evil Shishupala." Magha also creates a conflict in Krishna's mind between his duty to destroy Shishupala and to go Yudhisthira's ceremony to which he has been invited. This conflict is

resolved by attending the ceremony also attended by Shishupala who is killed (Singh and Barauh 763). It seems in composing the *Śiśupāla-vadha*, the poet Magha has been influenced by the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bharavi, and intended to emulate and even surpass it. Similar to the *Kirātārjunīya*, the poem presents rhetorical and metrical skill more than the growth of the plot and is significant for its intricate wordplay, textual complexity and verbal ingenuity. The vocabulary is rich and it is even claimed that it contains every word from the Sanskrit language. The narrative also moves a way from the main action which has little to do with the main story. As an example, the author describes the march of an army in cantos 9 to 11 leave the main theme to describe nature, sunrise and sunset, the seasons, courtesans preparing to receive men, the bathing of nymphs and so on. These descriptions make *Śiśupālavadha* to be an important source on the history of Indian ornaments and costumes, giving different terms for dress as *paridhāna*, *aṁśuka*, *vasana*, *vastra* and *ambara*; upper garments as *uttarīya*; female lower garments as *nīvī*, *vasana*, *aṁśuka*, *kaśeya*, *adhivāsa* and *nitambaravastra*; and *kabandha*, a waist-band (Datta 1204) and so on.

The fifth example of Kāvya poetry is *Naiśadha-carita* by Sri-Harsa. It is an epic poem in twenty two cantos describing the life of King Nala and Queen Damayanti. Nala is the king of Nishadha Kingdom known for his skill with horses and culinary expertise. His main weakness is gambling. He is possessed by god Shani. Nala was chosen by Damayanti as her husband in the *swayamvara*, a function in which the bride selects her husband from among the invitees, and preferred him to even the gods who came to marry her.

To this list, sometimes a sixth one is also added: *Bhattikavya* by Bhatti from the 7th century. It is a Sanskrit poem written in the formal genre of mahakavya deriving from on two Sanskrit traditions of the *Ramayana* and Panini's grammar. It also combines other traditions in a mixture of science and art and retelling the adventures of Rama which is the main purpose of Bhatti's poem. *Ravanavadha* (the death of Ravana) is an alternative title of *Bhattikavya*. It is impossible that this title was the original one as the death of Ravana is only a short part of the whole poem. *Bhattikavya* may have got this title to separate it from other works relating the death of Rama. *Bhattikavya* is the earliest example of "instructional poem" or *śāstra-kāvya*. The subject of *Bhattikavya* deals with the life of one hero which is the member of both warrior cast and a god. In this poem, each canto has a uniform meter. The end of each canto introduces the topic for the

next part. The form and subject of this poem is conducive to development of the four aims of life: righteousness, wealth and power, pleasure and spiritual liberation. *Bhattikavya* includes descriptions of cities, mountains, the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the ocean and the sports, love and sex. The poem gives a full exemplification of Sanskrit grammar. It also gives a good introduction to the poetics or rhetoric science (Narang).

In the relatively secluded world of modern Sanskrit literature, *mahakavyas* continued to be produced. In the introduction to *Sodaśī: An Anthology of Contemporary Sanskrit Poets*, Radhavallabh Tripathi writes:

The number of authors who appear to be very enthusiastic about writing in Sanskrit during these days is not negligible. [...] In a thesis dealing with Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* written in a single decade, 1961–1970, the researcher [Dr. Ramji Upadhyaya] has noted 52 Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* (epic poems) produced in that very decade.

Some modern *mahākāvyas* do not aim to follow all the traditional principles, and take historical matter as their subject. Such examples are Rewa Prasad Dwivedi's *Svatantrya Sambhavam* on the Indian independence movement, or *Keralodayah* by K.N. Ezhuthachan on the history of Kerala), or biographies of historical characters such as *Shrishivarajyodayam* by S.B. Varnekar's on Shivaji, M. S. Aney's *Sritilakayasornavah* on Bal Gangadhar Tilak, or P. C. Devassia's *Kristubhagavatam* on Jesus Christ. Some others like the *Śrībhārgavarāghaviyam* (2002) composed by Jagadguru Rāmabhadra cārya followed the subject of the traditional epics. The *mahakavya* has been used by modern poets to commemorate such noteworthy individuals as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (“mahakavya.” website).

In the *History of Indian Literature*, Weber (122-124) points to some other generic terms which are used to denote narrative legend like *akhyāna*, *vyākhyāna*, *anuvyākhyāna* and *upākhyāna*. These terms along with *itihāsa* seem to be prose while the other term *gātha* is more like a song. Anandavardhan, the author of *Dhvanyāloka* (8-14), distinguishes *itihāsa* from the court epic in the deployment of material. He says *itihāsa* relates what happened while the court epic is defined by formal sophistication and embellishment. Weber describes another generic term *gātha* as “strophes of historical purport” and references Ashwamedha sacrifice and a list of kings who perform it. Presenting some evidence, he shows that they are parts of longer hymns

and are not isolated verses. It seems that *gātha* is distinguishable from *itihāsa*, *purāna* and the narrative. *Gātha* refers to actual events in recent memory and has the hyperbolical character. Discussing the characteristics for *gātha*, Chanda says: “it is part of a larger song and necessarily in verse; its matter is borrowed from actual events but its style is not realistic- rather, it eulogises the hero of actual event with hyperbole” (15).

One of the first rigorous attempts at classification of narrative types in Indian literature did by Bhamaha who made a distinction between *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*. According to him, in *ākhyāyikā* the hero tells his own story and the material of this story comprises of *kanyāharana*, *yuddha*, *vipralambha*, *srngāra* and the *abhyudaya* of the hero. The meters that can be used to tell the story are particular and considered as a distinct feature. *Kathā* on the other hand is bereft of *chhanda* and the story is told by a third person and not the hero himself. Visvanatha expresses that the *ākhyāyikā* should contain a description of the poet’s family-tree, and mentions that the *ākhyāyikā* can also be in verse. He says that the *Kathā* is necessarily prose and must be created which is a creation of *saras vastu*. Amarsinha adds that the *ākhyāyikā* is *pralabdhartha*, or received material, its subject meter is known, while the *Kathā*, after Bhamaha, is imagined, *kālpanik*. Chanda (17) note that in the *Dhvani* school, at least one writer, Anandavardhana in discussing *aucitya*, refers to narrative types, also on the basis of source material. Anandavardhana’s contribution is that the *vidhi Kathā* deals with inherited or traditional material, as the *itivṛtta*, whose theme is adopted from traditional sources as well. Dandin, disagree of the theory of distinctive genres that Bhamaha sets up, says that the hero cannot always tell the whole of his own story and others should speak too, while Bhamaha stated that the *ākhyāyikā* should be a first person narrative, divided into *ucchvasas*.

Another generic term to be discussed here is *charit*, defined by Devipada Bhattacharya as biography, written on the plan of Thucydides or Plutarch, and its relation to history is direct. In *Tracing the Epic as a Genre*, Chanda identifies the elements that make up different texts bearing the name *charit* and considers its generic evolution. According to her, *charit* in its earliest form was a genre rooted in ‘history’ as recorded in the *purānetihāsa*, in the *Brahmanas* and in the extant *Purānas*. But it was also *kāvya*, using all literary devices to hold the readers’ attention. The *charit* texts in this period are written in Sanskrit, the language generally accepted as literary. *Harshacharit* written by Bana around the middle of the 7th century is a *charit* text that bears the name of one of India’s most famous kings. Bana was a Sanskrit writer and the ‘Asthana Kavi’

meaning 'Court Poet' of King Harsha. It is generally accepted that writing historical poetic works begin with *Harshacharit* in Sanskrit language and the text ranks as the first historical biography in the language (Keay 161-2). *Harshacharit* written in ornate poetic prose narrates the biography of the king Harsha who appears also in Hieun Tsang's account. Bana relates the greatness of the king when he is asked about him in Bana's home at Pritikuta. The work is in eight *ucchvāsas* (chapters) wherein the first two *ucchvāsas*, Bana gives an account of his ancestry and his early life. He begins his *charit* by listing his favorite works and debts to the *riti* of different regional schools. Then he relates the remembered deeds of king Harsha. The main concern of the *charit* is the story of Harsha's sister Rajyasri. He narrates her marriage, her capture by enemies and her brother's fights to rescue her, his final vow of vengeance and then conversing to Buddhism (Basham 433).

Concerning the elements that Bhamaha has counted for his theory of distinctive genres, *Harshacharit* can be called an *ākhyāyikā*. Other writers such as Rajasekhara have also used this text as an example to define the genre. But Keith calls the text a historical romance. Chanda comments that although Bana is too close emotionally and temporally to his subject, his choice of material - the beautiful bride, her sad fate, abduction by the villain, rescue and revenge - is typical of the sequence of the *mahākāvya* or the *ākhyāyikā* according to Bhamaha. She cites *Harshacharit* as an example for the genre of *charit* to show it as a "the twilight zone between fact and fancy, history and literature, the real and the imaginary" (29).

A mixture of romance-material and fact can also be seen in other texts. A similar text is Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacarit*, dating back to 1088 AD. *Vikramankadevacharita* is an application of the normal formula for an epic on a historical theme. The work is composed in eighteen cantos. It begins with the usual application to create a hero in order to maintain safety of the world. The hero Calukyas has a supranational origin of the family. God agreed to create from Brahma's *culuka* or water pot and Calukyas was born. The imaginary origin for the family of the hero is followed. Bilhana narrates the story of Tailapa, his victory over the Rashtrakutas, telling of the following kings and thereafter the poet concentrates on Ahavamalia, father of his hero. As the king is childless, he and his wife pray to Shiva for children, and as the reward of his penance, three sons Somesvara, Vikramaditya and Jayasimha are born. The narration of family history merges with all elements of epic story, war and revenge, love and marriage. It concentrates on a hero who may have existed in history but his deeds are more fictional than real and he appears a

superhuman, owning extraordinary qualities. As Chanda noted, “For the 11th or 12th century reader the requirement of such histories seems to be the portrayal of a real person on an epic or heroic scale” (31). Therefore it is again the notion of history and of literature. Using of literature by history where the heroes want to preserve their names and establish their fame is a sense that is expressed fine by Bilhana. He says about the power of literary word:

Where is the fame of kings who did not keep the lords of literature at their sides? There have been many kings on earth whose names, even, no one knows. The fame of the king of Lanka shrank, whilst Rama became famous, all because of the power of the First poet (31).

The charit, as a literary genre states this power and appears during the ages to be the vehicle of histories. The creators of such these works chose literature to narrate history, and their works are artistic presentation of historical events. The authors of charit texts take care and value to literary aspects of their works and recording history is not the only aim. However these writers are literary artists, rather than historians.

Medieval charit has some shifts. Medieval India is marked by the rise of many small and often rival kings and kingdoms. The heroic/epic charit of Brahmanical Sanskrit tradition provided a model for the medieval ones. The earlier charit was popular among Jains and the Buddhists and provided a model for the Medieval Bhakti charit. However within this shift, charit moved from the Sanskrit milieu into the vernacular. Some generic names like the *ras* and *kaha* that evolve from the vernacular tradition show this movement. The Jaina tradition has some texts names *ras* or *sandhi* which is similar to charit format. It means the charit travels and moves across India under its own name or taking other names. In both types of the medieval charit means the heroic charit and the Bhakti charit, the tradition of praise - poems or eulogy and hyperbolic genealogies have been the forerunners.

There are a number of heroic charit related to many clans in different parts of India. The history of Calukya, described by Bilhana in the charit of Vikrama, was continued by Jaysimha II in the charit titled *Kumarapalabhupalacharita*. This fourteenth century charit dealt with the king and his teacher Kshemcandra. The text used earlier sources, decorating them and praising the hero. Another charit related to the Cahamana dynasty is titled *Surajanacharita*. This was written by Candrasekhara in the sixteenth century, eulogizing the hero for his religious toleration. The charit concentrates on the hero's human qualities rather

on his chivalry. Some examples of charit texts from the southern part of India that preserve the heroic/epic tradition are *Mayuravarmancharita*, a *champu* text in eight chapters, narrating the story of the Kadamba, the ruler of Mayuravarman. There is also a charit that is not about chivalry but deals with intellectuality: the biography of Vyasatirtha or Vyasaraaya of Madhavan Dvaita Vedanta School. *Vyasayogicharita* written by Somanatha narrates the birth of the central hero which is connected to divine revelation, his marriage with Lakshmi and his consecration as the guardian deity of the empire by Krasnadevaraya. The writer claims with some evidence that he had met the aged Vyasa and wrote his biography. The *Mādala Panji* in the tradition of Orissa and the Rajacāritra as a chapter of the *Panji* in Oriya are two more examples. A Sanskrit kāvya work is also Vasudevaratha's *Gangavamsanucharita*, written in *champu*.

Of Tripathy, Chanda says that the *veergāthā* in the Indian literature can not be exactly the same as epic in the western literature because there are various types of *veerta* and chivalry is only one of them. Chanda states, "The *mahākāvya* too may not coincide with epic as understood in the west, for the definition of the former has little to do with bravery. It should be divided into *sarga*, its hero ought to be a god or a *kshatriya* born of a high lineage, the main rasa would be either *sringara* or *santa*, not *veera* and its story should be known" (41).

The Bhakti charit forms a part of the didactic tradition wherein not physical chivalry or political power but 'abstract qualities' are presented. In this kind of charit men are praised as gods and the attempt is to redraw and establish new religious values. Producing these models result in socio-religious movements. *Rasool charit* written by Syed Sultan in Bangla is an example of this kind of moral charit. The story deals with the hero who is Mohammad, the prophet of Islam. *Rasool* in the name of the charit means prophet in Arabic. The story begins with the birth and emergence of the prophet and telling of the greatness of Islam as a religion. The second part describes *shab-e-meraj* as the Night of Ascent, the blessed night when the Holy Prophet of Islam was spiritually transported to heaven and he reached a high stage of nearness to God Almighty which is beyond ordinary human comprehension. The story also deals with Prophet's deeds including the battle with the Hindu king Jaykum and focuses on the establishment of Islam.

The period 1050 to 1400 AD has been called the *Veergāthakāl* in Hindi literature where the *rāso*, the *vijay* or the *kahā* are prominent genres. The *rāso* moves between literature and history

dealing with materials that seem to be innate to the *charit*. The *rāso* is considered as *veergatha* because of its content that is bravery and chivalry of heroes. The *rāso* or *kahā* use other features of *charit* genre: The first person narrative by using a dialogue form and references to actual events specially wars that can be traced in history. The generic name *rāso* is may be from *Rajsuya*, the *Yajna* performed by kings, or from *rasāyan*. In the *raso* a historical event is presented in literary terms and the text goes for aesthetic merit.

The first extant *rāso* is *Khumman Rāso* by Dalpativijay written in the local vernacular language of Rajasthan. The date of the *rāso* is Vikram Samvat 869-893 and narrates the victories of Rana Khumman of Chittor and of the royal families from Bappa to Rajasinh. The text has grown and altered over the centuries. No earlier redaction than the 17th century one is available but the original is generally considered to be an older work than *Prithviraj Rāso* (Mukherjee 181). Considering the *Khumman Rāso* as the first, *Prithviraj Rāso* is of course the most famous of all. The *Prithviraj Raso* or *Prithvirajaraso* is a text traditionally ascribed to Prithviraj's court poet Chand Bardai on the life of Prithviraj III Chauhan, a Rajput king who ruled Ajmer and Delhi between 1165 and 1192. This text has been recorded as a historical work, used by several western historians such as Todd, Taso and Garcon (Chanda 51). Debates on the literality of the text besides its historicity make it an ideal heroic *charit*. Over time, the *Prithviraj Raso* was embellished with the interpolations and additions of many other authors. Only a small portion of the existing text is likely to have been part of the original version. Several versions of the *Prithviraj Raso* are available but scholars agree that a small 1300-stanza manuscript in Bikaner is closest to the original text (Gopal 8).

Some critics have made a distinction in the classification of these vernacular genres. According to Tiwary (33-5) poetry texts are called *geet* and the prose texts are called *khyāt*. A *rāso* in prose will be *khyāt* as is *Prithviraj Raso*. The *Sujancharita* of Sujan is in verse and the *Visaldev Raso* mixes both poetry and prose.

Tracing the *charit* through the centuries give us the idea of the process of genre-formation. In the last years of the nineteenth century there is a significant shift in Indian literature. For the first time the writing, reading and theorizing of literature in various Indian languages faced new epistemology and experienced different conceptual apparatus. As we have seen before, the occurrence of Muslim occupation was reflected in the *charit* texts. Religious or political struggles also influenced literature. The literature of the nineteenth century, as Ipsita Chanda (55) states is

an arena where different views of thoughts in world literature “meld with, confront and impact upon one another”. The charit in this century encounters the European novel. *Chinibashcharit* and *Bangalicharit* written by Jogendrachandra Basu and *Muchram Gurer Jibancharit* written by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in 1887 are the earliest charit texts in Bangla. These works are realist projects but as Bankim Chandra remarks about his character Muchiram in the preface to the book, “this does not profile any real person, it is a picture of society, Bengali society in particular.” *Damarucharit* written by Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay in 1923 is another example for the genre of charit in the 20th century, describing the picaresque adventures of a single hero Damarudhar who is far from heroic. The story is narrated in the first person where Damaru relates his adventures to an audience. First person narrative is what Bhamaha had advocated for historic authenticity. The charit as a literary genre moves between two lines of history and literature. Therefore it is not surprising that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the charit is used for literary representation of history. As Bankim Chandra says in his article “Banglar Itihas”:

There are reasons for the fact that Indians have no history. They believe that everything that happens, happens because of divine mercy ...they think of the divine as the doer in all cases. Hence, they are prone to singing the praises of the gods; in the *Puranetihāsa*, they narrate the great deeds of the gods... the human being is nothing, hence there is no need to sing praises to the guna of human characters. This timid mentality and *devabhakti* is the reason for the lack of history (60).

Kinds of Epic

Within the original sense of the term critics tend to distinguish between primary and secondary epics, while some scholars speak of tertiary epic as well.

1- Traditional Epics are also known as Primary or Folk Epics. Primary epics are direct expressions of the culture they depict, composed orally for performance before an audience. This kind of epics are written in ancient times and belong to oral traditions (Cuddon 266). Some of the most famous examples of this pattern are: *Gilgamesh* a Sumerian epic; *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Greek ; *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the two Indian epics; *Shah Nameh*, *Bahman Nameh*, *Borzu Nameh*, *Garshasb Nameh* and *Ayatkar-e-Zariran* in Persian.

2- Secondary or Literary Epics are inspired by traditional epics and are in skillfully style. The poet creates a subject or uses ancient subjects, structures and motifs, like *Aeneid* of Virgil which is based on *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; or *Paradise Lost* of Milton is a Biblical epic. Abrams believes that, “The literary epic is certainly the most ambitious of poetic enterprises, making immense demands on a poet's knowledge, invention, and skill to sustain the scope, grandeur, and authority of a poem that tends to encompass the world of its day and a large portion of its learning” (77).

3-Tertiary Epics are those composed recently deriving from secondary epics. In *Companion to Ancient Epic*, Foley writes, “if the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* represent primary epic and the *Aeneid* secondary epic, the next stage might be called tertiary epic”. He observes “once the possibilities of heroic verse seem to have been exhausted, the time comes, or so the ambitious and original poet may feel, for anti heroic epic or parody of epic” (571). Foley brings the example of Byron’s *Don Juan* which has been called a secondary epic in English after *Paradise Lost*. The poet himself calls it an “Epic Satire” after the style of Virgil and of Homer, so that my name of epic is no misnomer. Borris in *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature* speaks of a “post-tertiary” category where tertiary elaboration constitutes extensive textual reflection. He says, “tertiary epic reinterprets the secondary phase which subsumes the first, so this further phase respond to the third by redeveloping tertiary procedures and conventions so that they become critically self reflexive” (73).

Besides the above categories, epic can be classified according to its subject:

1- Mythological Epic is the most ancient and purest kind of epic based on mythologies of a nation, like the Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh* and the first part of *Shah Nameh* (until Faridun’s story), parts of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, parts of the *Bible*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

2- Heroic Epic describes the life of heroes. It can be mythological like that recreating the life of Rostam in *Shah Nameh* or can be historical like as *Zafar Nameh* by Hamdollah Mostovfi (which is about the war between Iranians and Arabs) and *Shahanshah Nameh* written by Saba (which is about the war between Iranians and Russians) in which the heroes are historical protagonists. Usually in these epics, the hero is a commoner for whom death is better than shame and opprobrium.

3- Religious Epic presents the hero as a religious man and the plot is based on the tenets of one religion. *Divine Comedy* of Dante, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, *Khavaran Nameh* by Ebn Hesam and *Khodavand Nameh* by Malek-ol-Shoara Saba-ye-Kashani are such examples.

4- Mystical Epic is common in Persian literature in which, the hero mortifies his passions and achieves eternal glory by unifying with God. His enemy is passion and rut that he calls bogey of passion or goblin of rut as well as other similes and metaphors like dog, pig, cove of passion (the last a reminder of Mehr the god-sun who victimized the first cove).

The hero of such an epic undertakes a dangerous trip and passes seven stages of love or austerity and abstinence. This trip representing the features of Man to God has many difficulties, resistance, privation and so on. The wayfarer or the hero of a mystical epic purges himself with the help of a spiritual guide who is the defender god and enemy of evil, the demon of passion

The Persian epic of Hallaj in *Tazkera-tol-Ovliya* by Attar is a mystical epic. *Mantegh-ot-Teir* another work of Attar is also a mystical epic but has composed in a figurative style. *Bhagavad Gita*, an Indian religious text is sometimes called a mystical epic.

However it is possible to find other kinds of epics in world literature. In European literature is the form called Mock Epic that imitates the elaborate form and the ceremonious style of the epic genre, but applies it to narrate a commonplace or trivial subject matter. A masterpiece of this type is *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) by Alexander Pope. The grandiose epic perspective presents a quarrel among socialites of his day over the theft of a lady's curl. The term mock epic is often applied to poetic forms which are purposely mismatched to a lowly subject as for example Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat" (Abrams 27).

Elements of Epic Style

It is generally accepted that the epic has a grand style and sublimity in the use of words and meanings. In this style the imagery enhance the grandeur and magnitude of the theme. Epic heroes are compared to strong and mythic animals like dragon, whale, lion and tiger and so on. One of the specifications of the epic style is the use of hyperbole; but here hyperbole constitutes not the imagery but the essence and nature of the epic. The epic hero is supernatural and so his behavior and appearance are extraordinary.

In Homeric epic there is a kind of simile known as epic simile or Homeric simile which is of such length and ramification that it appears almost independent and separate rather than having a narrative function and “in some cases running to fifteen or twenty lines in which the comparisons made are elaborated in considerable details”(Cuddon 276). In other words, the secondary subject introduced by epic simile far exceeds the parallelism it seeks to establish with the primary subject.” As Abrams says, this figure was imitated from Homer by Virgil, Milton, and other writers of literary epics, who employed it to enhance the ceremonial quality and wide-ranging reference of the narrative style” (Abrams 79). Here is an example from *Paradise Lost* by Milton in which the fallen angels busy building the Pandemonium are compared with swarming bees:

In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
 Pour forth their populous youth about the Hive.
 In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
 Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
 The suburb of their straw-built Citadel,
 New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
 Their state affairs, so thick the aery crowd
 Swarm'd and were strait'd...

Epics also pose the Epic Question. Narrator asks the Muse to inspire him to compose the story and aid his great work. In Greek mythology, the nine Muses presided over the arts and other fields of learning.

In Persian literature instead of Muse, possibly a *Mubad* (Zoroastrian priest) or *Dehghān* (a cast of people who desired to preserve ancient traditions of Iran and be proud of their nationality) narrates the story or even a nightingale can tell that. Ferdowsi in the beginning of the story of Rostam and Sohrab pictures a spring with its wind, rain, nightingale and flower. Then he narrates the love story of a cloud and nightingale for a flower and in this prelude, asks if the readers can hear the shriek of the cloud and the croon of the nightingale.

Homeric Epithet is also one of the features of epic style. These are adjectival terms-usually a compound of two words- as used by Homer as recurrent formula as: "fleet-footed Achilles," "bolt-hurling Zeus," "the wine-dark sea", Rosy Fingered dawn, God like Paris (Abrams 89).

Features of the Epic

The epic is recognized by some features such as the following:

1) Epic works include war, bravery and adventure and so on. In an Epic, a hero is often involved in a war or adventure or journey and encountered with various obstacles. It can be said that the basis of an epic (in its different types) is war and adventure. For instance in Persian epic *Shah Nameh*, heroes like Rustam or Esfandiyār face wars and adventures as do Achilles, Hector, Paris and Odysseus in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the *Ramayana*, Rama and Laxmana are involved in many battles and wars.

2) Animals are important in an epic and often have main roles as supernatural creatures. Achilles' horse Xanthos has the ability to speak and predict and even predicts the death of Achilles. Raxsh the loyal horse of Rustam, is not an ordinary horse. It wars with lions and in some other wars Raxsh decides what it must do. Simorgh (fabulous bird variously identified in *Shah Nameh*) brings up Zāl (father of Rustam) and also helps in the birthing of Rustam as midwife. It teaches Rustam how he can win in the war with Esfandiyār.

In *Bahrām Yasht* (ancient Iranian book) there is Vareghneh the king of birds. Ahuramazda advised Zoroaster that the touch of the feather of this bird would protect him. If he has its feather or its bone, no one can injure him. Simorgh gave a feather to Zal to burn when he is in trouble. In *Mantegh-ot-Teir* (Persian Gnostic epic), Simorgh is a symbol of God.

In the epic of Adam and Eve, a snake cheats Eve and a peacock causes Adam's ouster from paradise. In the epic of Mehr, Mehr wrestles with a cow. In *Ramayana*, animals have important roles. In the main war between Rāma and Laxmana with Rāvana of Lankā, a group of monkeys and bears help them. King Sugriva and his aide-de-camp Hanuman (two exiled monkeys) promise to recover Sita if Rāma helped Sugriva regain his kingdom. In epics there are fantastical animals like winged horse, seven headed dragon, bliss bird (Homā) and so on.

3) The epic hero kills monsters, gnomes and dragons. For instance, Rustam and Esfandiyār kill the monster and white demon in their seven stages (*Haft khān*). Gilgamesh kills Hombaba the monstrous guard of cedar jungle. The most common killing in ancient epics is the killing of monsters, as Faridun kills monster Zakhāk and Ardashir kills the worm of Haftvād. Beowulf too

kills monsters. In the gnostic epic, the hero wars with his passion's dragon, as Rumi has composed:

Passion is dragon and not death
No care to it has made it torpid

4) Epics have with magical effect. In *Gilgamesh*, a plant gives eternal life to one who eats it. Pomegranate is a holy fruit that Esfandiyār eats which makes him brazen-bodied. From Siyavush's blood, the plant of *khon-e- Siyavushan* grew that is used as medicine. In the epic of Adam and Eve there is a forbidden tree and who those eat its fruit, can distinguish between good and bad. Also in the story of Rustam and Esfandiyar "people worship tamarisk" shows tamarisk as a holy tree. In *Ramayana*, Hanuman brings a mountain where curative herbs grow to save Laxmana and Rama's life.

5) The hero of an epic is a supernatural creature with god-like powers and divine features as in the epic of Mehr or sun as a god. Two thirds of *Gilgamesh* is divine and only one part human. In *Aeneid* of Virgil, Aeneas is the son of Aphrodite. Achilles's mother Thetis is also goddess. In the Christian epic, Jesus is the son of God. In *Ramayana*, Rāma is god. In Iranian epics, the hero is not clearly mentioned as a child of god but a sign of "man-god" is the long life of epic hero. Rustam is five hundred years old when he battles with Esfandiar. His birth is supernatural and his father brought up by Simorgh in the god's mountain (Alborz). Esfandiar who is a supernatural creature abuses Rustam by saying that his father is son of devil. Eskandar doesn't have eternal life but searches for āb-e hayāt for having eternal life. In Gnostic epics, a hero attains eternal life after passing through seven dangerous stages.

6) Supernatural powers play a role in epics. Heroes have relationship with gods and speak with them. In *Shah Nameh* before wrestling with Sohrab, Rustam asks god to return his power. In the story of Rustam and Esfandiar, Zāl speaks with Simurgh (a symbol of god). Controversy of Ayyob, the prophet with God is the most beautiful part of the *Bible* as the dialogue of Musa with God in the *Bible* and *Koran*. In *Ramayana* Rāma speaks with gods and asks help and advice from them.

7) Some times, gods support one hero against the others. In fact, the war of two heroes is the war of gods with each other. Dues of in Neo-Classical metaphysics, supernatural powers depicted in epics were called “machinery”. Mock-epics used such “machinery” in their imitation of the epic form.

8) A woman falls in love with the hero of an epic but hero doesn't care for her. For instance, Ishtar falls in love with Gilgamesh who ignores her and so she gets angry and sends a cow to destroy the earth. Tahmineh (Samangan's daughter) falls in love with Rustam who ignores her. Another example from *Shah Nameh* is that of Sudābeh's love for Siyavush. The prototype of love of Sudābeh and Tahmineh is the love of a goddess or an epic hero. Some mythologists analyze the hero of epic as one killed in the period of matriarchy by the woman leader of a tribe. The hero of an epic is usually a man but some epics have woman heroes like Gord Afraid (*Shah Nameh*) and Kannagi of the Tamil epic *Silappati Karam*.

9) Hero of an epic is a national or race hero. For instance Adam in *Paradise Lost* of Milton is represents humankind and Achilles in *Iliad* and Rustam in *Shah Nameh* are national and cultural heroes. Nezāmi the Iranian poet in his two epic compositions *Eghbal Nameh* and *Sharaf Nameh* tried to introduce Eskandar (who was not Iranian) as a religious hero but he didn't succeed.

10) The epic hero is powerful in all horizons.

11) The acts of heroes are supernatural and defy logic. For example Rustam as hero eats a wild zebra for a meal and he is so heavy that his feet sank in the ground. Aristotle says, “tragedy should make men marvel, but the epic, in which the audience dose not witness the action, has greater scope for the inexplicable, at which men marvel most...to marvel is pleasant, as can be seen from the fact that everybody adds something in telling a story, thinking to please” (53). Since the epic hero is supernatural, his acts are also unusual.

12) The hero of epic faces an antagonist in each part of his life. Rustam faces Afrasiab, Ahoramazda (god) Ahriman(evil) and Christ, Dajjal. But when two heroes face each other, one of them wins leading to tragic subtraction. Like the war between Rustam and Sohrab and Rustam and Esfandiar in *Shah Nameh*; the war between Achilles and Hector in *Iliad*; Rama and Ravana in *Ramayana*.

13) The hero of an epic undertakes journeys and travels which are dangerous. Rustam and Esfandiar in their seven stages obstacles (*Haft khān*) face a lot of problems and troubles. Also Odysseus had a lot of problems. In mystical epics, hero should also pass difficult stages and obstacles.

14) The acts of a hero have national and spiritual importance. For instance the war between Rustam and Afrasiyab has national importance and the war between Esfandiar and Arjasb has religious value. Mystical epic in which Man wages wars against passion contains matters of spirituality. In *Gilgamesh*, the oldest philosophical thoughts about secret of life and death are discussed.

15) An exciting epic scene would be the duel between the hero and the antagonist as Rustam and Ashkbos Koshani, which is one of the best parts of *Shah Nameh*. Piran Vise was killed in the war by Gudarz and Key Khosro killed Afrasiyab in the same situation. In the battle field, when two heroes face each other, there is epic boast which contains mockery of the rival and adversary. When heroes come to the battle field as their first start to a career, they praise themselves, boast and then enquire who their rival is. In religious and philosophical epics, every one tries to condemn some one else with complicated questions. One can say that the basis of the debate is of epic value.

16) In epic wars, especially in a duel, heroes use different kinds of weapons.

17) One of the instruments of war is cheating. Rustam cheats Sohrab to save himself from death. Faridun is a magician; Yahweh the god of Bible is artful; in Koran god called himself artful; also in *Iliad*, the Greeks opened the gate of Troy with cheat and trick. And also Esfandiar conquered Rooin Dej (brazen castle) with trick.

18) The hero of an epic is man-god so his death remains enigmatic.

19) In an epic there is prediction and augury. Sām dreamed that Zal (his son) is alive in Alborz mountain; Jāmāsb predicted that Esfandiar is killed by Rustam; killing of Achilles in Trojan war was also predicted and for this reason his mother made him brazen.

20) Epics contain devils, ghouls, gnomes and hexes.

21) Epics have power, greatness as well as simplicity.

Some literary terms which are closely related with the epic should be noted here.

Myth and Epic

Myth as a word derived from Greek word *mūthos* and it is the word that Homer used to mean narrative and conversation, but not fiction. Odysseus tells false stories about himself and uses the term *mūthologenevein* to mean “telling a story”. At a later period, Greek *mūthos* also meant fiction. Plato refers to *mūthos* to signify something not completely untruth but for the most part fictitious. Nowadays myth tends to donate a fiction which conveys a psychological (or even historical) truth. However in its modern significance, myth refers to stories belonging to a specific culture recounting supernatural or paradoxical events designed to reflect that culture’s view of the world. The word “myth” can be taken to refer generally, in relation to epic, to the background of traditional oral storytelling, available to the poet in written versions in some cases, from which the epic derives. Scholars of myth often separate traditional oral stories into categories based on narrative content – myth, legend, and folktale (Edmund 31).

Myths are about the exploits and demeanor of gods, legends about heroes, and folktales about ordinary people. Myth would be of a fabulous or superhuman nature, and which may have instituted a change in the workings of the universe or in the conditions of social life. Most myths have social rituals as series of actions carried out in sacred ceremonies. But even now a main question for anthropologists is whether rituals generated myths or myths created rituals.

Myth has occupied a central role in the psychologies of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and among philosophers such as Ernst Cassirer and Suzanne Langer, who argue that mythic thinking is a fundamental aspect of human consciousness. The relation of myth to literature has been one of the chief concerns of literary study in the 20th century. Frazer’s book *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) believes that ‘primitive’ societies have faith in the efficacy of magic, or adopt totems because they regard themselves as blood relations of the totemic animal, or are ignorant of the connection between sexual relations and birth (Frazer 29-32). The most celebrated myth critic is Northrop Frye whose *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) is an impressive attempt to encompass literature within mythic frame. Northrop Frye sees literature as rooted in the myths of the seasons: comedy, spring; romance, summer; tragedy, autumn; irony, winter. As a result, these four genres are indelibly marked by their mythic origins. He mentions some cyclical symbols

and writes: “these cyclical symbols are usually divided into four main phases, the four seasons of the year being the type for four periods of day (morning, noon, evening, night), four aspects of the water-cycle (rain, fountains, rivers, sea or snow), four period of life (youth, maturity, age, death), and the like” (Frye 160).

Archetype

Archetype is a term that is used to describe “Collective Unconscious” or those innate and congenital thoughts, tendency to behavior and suppositions based on certain patterns. In other words, “Collective Unconscious” contains repeated patterns of common human experience as images, ideas, beliefs and customs inherited unconsciously from primeval ancestors and reflected in myths, religions, visions and literary works. Archetypes are atavistic and universal. The fundamental and primordial facts of mankind are archetypal as matters like birth, growing up, death and the structure of family based on tribal life. Plato was the first philosopher to elaborate the concept of archetypal or ideal forms (Beauty Truth, Goodness) and divine archetypes. Cuddon in his entry on archetype writes:

Certain character or personality types have become established as more or less archetypal. For instance: the rebel, the Don Juan (womanizer), the all-conquering hero, the braggadocio (q.v.), the country bumpkin, the local lad who makes good, the self-made man, the hunted man, the siren, the witch and femme fatale, the villain, the traitor, the snob and the social climber, the guilt-ridden figure in search of expiation, the damsel in distress, and the person more sinned against than sinning. Creatures, also, have become archetypal emblems. For example the lion, the eagle, the snake, the hare and the tortoise. Further archetypes are the rose for the state of 'Pre-Fall' innocence and themes to include the arduous quest or search, the pursuit of vengeance, the overcoming of difficult tasks, the descent into the underworld, symbolic fertility rites and redemptive rituals (53).

literary criticism which is centered on archetypal elements and mythical narrative patterns, known as Archetypal Criticism owes much to the school of comparative anthropology at Cambridge, J. G. Frazer's monumental study *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) about elemental patterns of myth and ritual, and to the psychology of C. G. Jung (1875-1961) who applied the term "archetype" to what he called "primordial images". The "psychic residue" of repeated

patterns of common human experience in the lives of ancient ancestors which, survive in the "collective unconscious" of the human race are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in works of literature. This term has often been used since Maud Bodkin's remarkable book *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934) and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1937) and constitutes a valuable source of scholarship.

Romance

Romance is a literary form which has many similarities with the epic as those stories in 11th and 12th centuries which were written about knights, cavaliers and their treatments of chivalry in wars. Usually romance suggests love stories but in fact romance is about wars and brave treatments. Love is in the second stage. There are many similarities between romance and epic. Like the epic, romance has dragons, ogres and bogies who fight with heroes. There are magic weapons and spell.

It is possible to say that romance is epic in another form and age when man continued his epic thought and mythological insights. M.H Abrams writes,

Chivalric Romance or Medieval Romance is a type of narrative that developed in twelfth-century France, spread to the literature of other countries, and displaced the earlier epic and heroic forms. Romances were at first written in verse, but later in prose as well. The romance is distinguished from the epic in that it does not represent a heroic age of tribal wars, but a courtly and chivalric age, often one of highly developed manners and civility. Its standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady's favor; frequently its central interest is courtly love (181).

However the difference between the two forms is that in epic, heroic treatments have mythological resources but in romance treatments seems unreal. Epic usually is the description of national history but romance is the author's creativity and doesn't have historical reference. Sometimes, the epic hero loses a war or is killed but a romance hero wins his wars. So romance has a joyful tone and amusing theme. A romance hero is not real and does not have the equal outside the story. He is smart, loyal, polite and has all positive qualities. Romance authors are not always known and these stories are based on human ideals. It is said that romances have some main purports: sometimes a lord or prince fights to achieve his reign and dominion which has

usurped by others, sometimes he is going to free a girl who is captive in hands of dragons, or a cavalier is searching for Grail. Other romances are of Charlemagne and his commanders and King Arthur of England.

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CHAPTER- II

Tracing the Epic through the Ages

In chapter I, different aspects and features of epic as a genre were studied and focused on the general structures and patterns. This chapter traces the epic through the ages, from the ancient to medieval epoch and its transformation in modern time. We know that epics are often of national significance in the sense that they embody the history and ideals of a nation and almost every nation has an epic and so there are many kinds of epics to be found in the world. Since it is difficult to discuss all epics in detail, this chapter will review some of them based on the dates of their composition. The study includes three historical periods: Ancient which contains earliest epics up to 500 AD; Medieval that covers 500 till 1500 AD; and the third, Modern means epics after 1500 till now. The focus would be on some notable epics as *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the Greek epics, *Gilgamesh* the Sumerian epic, and Virgil's *Aeneid* as ancient epics; medieval epics such as the old English epic *Beowulf*, French epic *The Song of Roland*, the German epic *Nibelungenlied* and the great Italian epic *Divine Comedy*; modern epics cover the 18th-century works of Richard Blackmore who has several heroic poetries such as *Prince Arthur*, *Eliza*, *Redemption*, *Alfred* and; the epic poems of the 19th-century author Walter Scott as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake* to be seen as the astonishing creation of its age.; and the late 20th-century *Omeros* by Nobel Prize-winning author Derek Walcott.

Ancient Epics

The most notable and principal epics of the world are in this category as *Gilgamesh* (3000 BC) which is the earliest work in the oral tradition. Next are the Homeric epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1000 BC). The other work of this time is *Theogony*, a Greek mythology ascribed to Hesiod composed in 700 BC. *Theogony* describes the origins and genealogies of the gods of the ancient Greeks. This work is considered as the first Greek mythical cosmogony. In the *Theogony* the initial state of the universe is Chaos, a *gaping void* viewed as a divine primordial condition from which everything else appeared. Hesiod introduces Zeus as a supreme god controlling the cosmos. Zeus marries seven wives who bear gods and Muses. The written form of the work was accomplished in the sixth century (Sandwell 28).

Later two great Indian epics appeared: the older *Mahābhārata*, ascribed to Vyasa (5th to 1st century BC) and *Ramayana*, by Valmiki (5th century BC to 4th century AD). In the 3rd century BC the notable work is the Greek epic poem *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodes. *Argonautica* is considered as the only surviving Hellenistic epic and relates the voyage of the heroes Jason and the Argonauts to get the Golden Fleece from the mythical land of Colchis. There is another but much less-known version of *Argonautica* using the same body of myth composed by Valerius Flaccus during the time of Vespasian. While it is believed that Apollonius used Homer as his principal model, but differs from the Homeric epic in many respects. *Argonautica* also differs from traditional epics because of its weaker, more human rather than supernatural protagonist Jason. J.F. Carspecken notes that his characters are more characteristic of the genre of realism than epic, in that he was:

chosen leader because his superior declines the honour, subordinate to his comrades, except once, in every trial of strength, skill or courage, a great warrior only with the help of magical charms, jealous of honour but incapable of asserting it, passive in the face of crisis, timid and confused before trouble, tearful at insult, easily despondent, gracefully treacherous in his dealings with the love-sick Medea... (101).

Before discussing 1st century's most notable *Aeneid* by *Virgil*, one must note the works of Naevius and Ennius. Virgil is generally regarded as the first national poet but before him these two authors wrote of Roman history and legend. Gnaeus Naevius (270-199 BC) was a Roman epic poet and dramatist of the Old Latin period who wrote a long epic in Saturnian verse about the First Punic War. The First Punic War (264 to 241 BC) was the first of three major wars fought between Rome and Carthage. Naevius was highly patriotic and a soldier in the Punic Wars. However only fragments of Naevius' several poems survive. The other poet Ennius (239-169 BC) is often considered the father of Roman poetry and his influence on Latin literature was significant. Ennius wrote several works but his most famous work is a historic epic called the *Annales*, in fifteen books, later expanded to eighteen. *Annales* deals with Roman history from the fall of Troy in 1184 BC to the censorship of Cato the Elder in 184 BC. *Annales* was the first Latin poem in dactylic hexameter metre used in didactic poetry and Greek epics. This made it the standard meter for the epic genre in Latin poetry. The *Annales* also became a school text for Roman children, but was replaced by Virgil's *Aeneid*. Only about 600 lines of *Annales* survive (Young Sellar 64).

The *Aeneid* (30-19 BC) is a great Latin epic poem that records and celebrates the foundation of Rome by Aeneas following the Trojan War.

In the 1st century AD are works like *Metamorphoses* by *Ovid* (Latin mythology), *Pharsalia* by *Lucan* (Roman history), *Punica* by *Silius Italicus* (Roman history), *Argonautica* by *Gaius Valerius Flaccus* (Greek mythology) along with *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* by *Statius* (Greek mythology). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in fifteen books, describes the history of the world from its creation to the deification of Julius Caesar. *Metamorphoses* is considered a masterpiece of Golden Age Latin literature and was the most-read of all classical works during the Middle Ages. *Metamorphoses* in tone and style is epic in the manner of Virgil but is a diffused, episodic and sprawling creation which has no central hero. Ovid's influence in the late Middle Ages and during the Renaissance period was immense, as mean as Virgil's (Cameron 53).

The main theme of Lucan's *pharsalia* is the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. The poem's title refers to the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC in northern Greece. It seems that *pharsalia* is very uneven, though fitfully splendid because of its fine descriptive passages and epigrams. *Pharsalia* is an historical epic but the author is not interested in the details of history itself; he seems more concerned "with the significance of events rather than the events themselves (Martindale 47)." Probably *pharsalia* is incomplete, but the poem is widely recognized as the best epic poem of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

In the 2nd century India epic poetries were written: *Buddhacarita* by Aśvaghoṣa and *Saundaranandakavya* by Aśvaghoṣa. *Buddhacarita* is in the Sanskrit *mahakavya* style on the life of Gautama Buddha. The poem has 28 cantos of which the first 14 are extant in Sanskrit but cantos 15 to 28 are in incomplete form. In the year 420, Dharmarakṣa translated the poem into Chinese, and in the 7th or 8th century, a very accurate Tibetan version was made. The second of these two, *Saundaranandakavya* is the work of Aśvaghoṣa, an Indian philosopher-poet born in Saketa in northern India in a Brahmin family. He was the most famous of Buddhist court writers whose epics rivaled the contemporary *Ramayana* (Collins 220). He wrote the life of the Buddha as *Buddhacarita*. His other work is *Saundaranandakavya* on the theme of conversion of Nanda, Buddha's half-brother. The first part of the epic describes Nanda's life, and the second part describes Buddhist doctrines and ascetic practices. Aśvaghoṣa uses the *kāvya* style as a means for Buddhist teachings. Noting this, Honda Yoshichika (17) in his study Indian Buddhism and the *kāvya* literature: Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundaranandakavya* cited from the work:

This poem, dealing thus with the subject of Salvation has been written in the Kavya style, not to give pleasure, but to further the attainment of tranquillity and with the intention of capturing hearers devoted to other things. For, that I have handled other subjects in it besides Salvation is in accordance with the laws of Kavya poetry to make it palatable, as sweet is put into a bitter medicine to make it drinkable.

In Indian literature between 2nd to 5th centuries there are five great epics of Tamil literature:

- *Silappadikaram* by Ilango Adigal
- *Manimekalai* by Seethalai Saathanar
- *Civaka Cintamani* by Tirutakatevar
- *Kundalakesi* by a Buddhist poet
- *Valayapati* by a Jaina poet

Between 3rd and 4th centuries, the notable work is *Posthomeric* by Quintus of Smyrna. *Posthomeric* tells the story of the Trojan War, between the death of Hector and the fall of Ilium. This work is arranged in twelve books. The first four books describe the great deeds of prowess of Penthesilea the Amazon, Memnon son of the Morning, and of Achilles; it also describes the funeral games in honor of Achilles. Book five describes the contest between Ajax and Odysseus for the arms of Achilles. The story continues with the death of Aias of suicide after his loss, the exploits of Neoptolemus, Eurypylus and Deiphobus, and the deaths of Paris and Oenone. It also covers the building of the wooden horse. The remaining books narrate the capture of Troy by using of the wooden horse and the sacrifice of Polyxena at the grave of Achilles. It also relates the departure of the Greeks to their country, and their falling in trouble by the storm. While many critics consider the style of this epic as subpar to Homer, but the work is valuable as the earliest surviving account of this period in the Trojan War (Paschal 63).

in the 4th century the notable works are *Evangeliorum libri* by Juvenius, *Kumārasambhava* by Kālidāsa (Indian epic poetry), *Raghuvamsa* by Kālidāsa (Indian epic poetry) and *De Raptu Proserpinae* by Claudian. In 5th century, *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus is mentionable and in 5th to 6th century *Argonautica Orphica* by Orpheus.

The first work, *Evangeliorum libri* is a history of Christ according to the Gospels, particularly that of St. Matthew. The author, Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvenius, known as Juvenius was a Roman Spanish Christian and composer of Latin poetry who composed his work in dactylic hexameters. His task is to render the Gospel text into easy language matches to the tradition of the Latin poets, and borrowed especially from Virgil (Green 84).

The second work *Kumārasambhava* is a Sanskrit epic poem by Kālidāsa, as mentioned before. This epic is considered as one of Kalidasa's finest works and a model example of Kāvya poetry. The present version of the work contains seventeen cantos entails Shringara Rasa but except the first eight cantos (*sargas*) are accepted as his work, the last nine may be later additions. The other work of this time is *Raghuvamsha*, a Sanskrit mahakavya by the most celebrated Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. The work has 19 *sargas* (cantos) and is composed in 21 Sanskrit meters. The epic narrates the story of the Raghu dynasty (Basham 117).

The last one, *De raptu Proserpinae* is an unfinished epic written by the Roman poet Claudian. He was a Greek-speaking citizen of Alexandria, arrived in Rome before 395. He marked his task with a eulogy of his two young patrons, Probinus and Olybrius, and became a court poet. He wrote a number of praise poems for the deeds of General Stilicho and Emperor Honorius. Though of Greek origin, he wrote in Latin and his works are among the best in this language. From the historical view Claudian's works are valuable and as a primary source give a fragment of his period.

Among four primitive primary epics considered the greatest examples of this genre are:

Sumerian Epic *Gilgamesh*

The greatest surviving work of early Mesopotamian literature which also known as the oldest epic and 'Humankind's first literary achievement' is the epic of *Gilgamesh*. This epic is best known from a version called "He who saw the deep" in which Babylonians believed this poem collected by a man called Sin-liqe-unninni, from Uruk who lived some time between 1300-1000 BC. However now clear "He who saw the deep" is a version of an earlier version and the oldest surviving fragments of the epic was written more than 3700 years ago by an anonymous Babylonian poet. Andrew Gorge (47) in his introduction to new translation of *Gilgamesh* states,

“The story of Gilgamesh's 'growing up' is, in fact, the story of a hero who grows wise, wise in the sense of learning his place in the divinely ordained scheme of things. In fact, it is the tale of one whose extraordinary experiences make him extraordinarily wise. The poet makes it clear right at the beginning that we should expect this:

He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation,
[who] knew ... , was wise in all matters ...
and [learnt] of everything the sum of wisdom.”

The central character of the epic, *Gilgamesh*, known as Bilgameš in the earliest text, was the fifth king of Uruk (Early Dynastic II, first dynasty of Uruk), ruling circa 2700 BC, according to the Sumerian king list. In the epic his father was Lugalbanda and his mother was Ninsun (whom some call Rimat Ninsun), a goddess. In Mesopotamian mythology, Gilgamesh is credited with having been a demigod of superhuman strength who built a great city wall to defend his people from external threats and traveled to meet Utnapishtim, the sage who had survived the Great Deluge.

It is generally accepted that Gilgamesh was a historical figure, since inscriptions have been found which confirm the historical existence of other figures associated with him: such as the kings Enmebaragesi and Aga of Kish. If Gilgamesh was a historical king, he probably reigned in about the 26th century BC. Initial difficulties in reading cuneiform resulted in Gilgamesh making his re-entrance into world culture in 1891 as "Izdubar" (Thompson 18).

The epic of *Gilgamesh* contains many strange adventures and incidents which restates the primitive human thoughts about life and death. The epic narrate the struggle of hero who is afraid of death and looking for eternal life through glorious deeds, but he at last understands the only immortality he may expect is the enduring name, not the body which can not be immortal.

Although the fear of death is one of the main themes in this work, the epic deals with so much more. The duties of kingship referring to the royal courts of Babylonia and Assyria and what a king should or should not do, man's responsibilities to his family, the immortality of fame and the heroic enterprise and conflicts are also examined. There are many interesting and absorbing moments in this epic. The ancient city-state of Uruk in the land of Sumer, is the central setting of the epic.

Many powers and characters play role in this epic. Enkidu, a strange wild man whom the gazelles brought up as their own; The sacred Forest of Cedar which was guarded by terrible

ugsome giant, Humbaba; in other place, at the edge of the world, a monstrous sentries who were half man and half scorpion, lived were the twin mountains of Mashu where the sun rose and set. Also the mysterious goddess Shiduri, who dispensed wisdom from behind her veils lived in a tavern nearby the great Garden of Jewels. Almost these are the most important principal characters of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. According to Andrew Gorge (33) “The Gilgamesh epic is one of the very few works of Babylonian literature which can be read and enjoyed without special knowledge of the civilization from which it sprang”. Although the names of the characters may be unfamiliar and the places strange, but as George says, “some of the poet's themes are so universal in human experience that the reader has no difficulty in understanding what drives the epic's hero and can easily identify with his aspirations, his grief and his despair”.

Greek Epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

European literature begins with the Homeric epics and Homer as the first poet of Greece directly or indirectly is the paragon of most epic poetry. Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have fascinating contents, grand style, beautiful images and language, great form which are appreciated by anyone who reads them. The *Iliad* deals with the episode of the Trojan War. This epic narrates the tenth and last year of the struggle for Troy. Paris the son of king Priam of Troy, abducted the beautiful wife, Helen in absence of king Menelaus of Sparta to Troy where they wed. Menelaus called his powerful brother king Agamemnon of Mycenae to raise an army against Troy. The war started but as predicted the attackers gained little advantage in the first nine years of the war. In the tenth year Greeks suffered a bad set-back. The cause was the Wrath of Achilles (Rouse 11) that establishes the *Iliad*'s principal theme. Finally, Greeks made a large wooden horse inside of which a number of the Achaeans concealed themselves and the rest of army pretended to give up and went to their ship. By this trick they could enter Troy, slay the Trojans and destroy the city. Some of the Achaeans reached their cities quickly and safely but others like Odysseus arrived after many years. The adventures of Odysseus on his way home to Ithaca after the Trojan War is the main theme of the epic *Odyssey*. Flood took Odysseus' ship to far islands where he faced with strange constraints which took time twenty years. The 24 books are divided by Greek scholar Richmond Lattimore in four categories: Books I-IV narrate the adventures of Telemachos, Odysseus' son; books V-VIII and part of book XIII concern Odysseus's

homecoming; book IX- XII tell of Odysseus's wanderings; book XIII-XXIV describe Odysseus's adventures on his return to Ithaca.

Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are long narrative poems composed in a single meter and contain 24 books each. *Iliad* from the Greek word *Ilias* means 'poetry about Ilios' and *Odyssey* from the Greek word *Odysseia* means 'poetry about Odysseus'. Together they contain 27,000 verses, *Iliad* being a bit longer. The language of poetry is Greek but with strange Ionic dialect as well as some old words. The meter is hexameter and rhythm comes from patterns of long and short syllables (Fox 19).

The legend of Troy was not a fixed and unchanging entity through the ages. We don't have complete account from antiquity but seems it was a story in oral tradition until perhaps the eighth century B.C. when the alphabet was introduced into Greece or until the seventh century B.C. when the alphabet thought used for the literary purpose first time. However for many centuries the great story of Troy was preserved both in oral and literary tradition (Lord 190). Among these two poems *Iliad* is a tragic poem whereas the *Odyssey* is a folktale epic. Some scholars believe that *Odyssey* is Homer's old age work. Richard Bently believes that Homer wrote the *Iliad* for man and the *Odyssey* for women. Samuel Butler (136) in *The Authoress of the Odyssey* argued that the *Odyssey* was actually written by a Sicilian lady and that Princess Nausicaa was the authoress self-portrayed. Analyses of *Iliad* brought two ideas: According to the compilation model, a number of smaller songs compiled by a later editor to a single long poem whereas others accord a nucleus model, an original song on the wrath of Achilles had grown to its recent size. This kind of research about *Odyssey* showed three main songs in which joined together at different times: the Telemachy, which is those primarily parts of poem deal with Telemachus; Odysseus' travels, the middle part of the poem and the third part is about revenge of Odysseus. These kind of attention brought modern scholars to say, for the most part, the epic is Homer's work, but it appears to be a later composition than the *Iliad*.

The Latin Epic *Aeneid*

Aeneid is a Latin epic poem written by Virgil in the late 1st century BC (29–19 BC). The work is composed of roughly 10,000 lines in dactylic hexameter and is arranged in twelve books. The epic deals with the legendary story of the hero Aeneas, a Trojan who traveled to Italy, where he builds the city of Rome and becomes the ancestor of the Romans. The first six books of *Aeneid*

tell the story of Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Italy and remind one of *Odyssey*. The second half of the poem relates the Trojans' victorious war upon the Latins under the order of Aeneas and seems like *Iliad*. These two halves are commonly regarded as Virgil's ambition to rival Homer by using both the *Odyssey's* wandering theme and the *Iliad's* warfare themes (Harrison 181). Foley (135) states from the first lines of the *Aeneid*, Virgil brings his Greek models, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together by defining the parameters of heroic epic as *arma virumque cano*, "I sing of arms and the man." Aeneid has central heroic figure and other elements of Homeric epic which in style and method (invocation, digressions, similes) recall Homer but in fact Virgil is a more civilized poet, a more conscious and 'contriving' artist who has an intense feeling for the past. Aeneid has been assumed as the Roman's answer and challenge to the Greek epic. *Aeneid* tied Rome to the legends of Troy, glorified traditional Roman virtues and tell us of the founders, heroes and gods of Rome and Troy. Almost the entirety of the Aeneid is devoted to the theme of conflict. The *Aeneid* has been considered a fundamental text of the Western canon and its influence is visible in many works.

Medieval Epics

Medieval epics include the heroic works written in the period between 500 and 1500. The medieval era covers some of the best epic works of world literature. The notable heroic works are as follows:

Bhāttikāvya is a Sanskrit courtly epic dating to the 7th century CE. This work is based on the *Rāmāyana* and *Astādhyāyī* of Pāṇini in the formal genre of "great poem" (*mahākāvya*). *Bhāttikāvya* stands in comparison with the best of Sanskrit poetry (Keith 142); the other work of this time is the Old English epic, *Beowulf* which is categorized as an oral epic; next is *Waldere*, Old English version of the story told in *Waltharius*, known only as a brief fragment. This work was discovered in 1860 by E. C. Werlauff, Librarian, in the Danish Royal Library at Copenhagen, where it is still preserved. The work is the Armenian epic titled *David of Sasun*. This is a national epic poem recounting David's exploits and as an oral history, it dates from the 8th century. The *Bhagavata Purana* (also known as Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, or Bhāgavata) is one of the "Maha" Puranic texts of Hindu literature composed in the 9th century. This Sanskrit text comprises twelve *skandas* (cantos or books) and 13,216 verses (Lalye 55).

In the 10th century, the principal Persian epic *Shah Nameh* was born. This national epic composed by Ferdowsi is a legend and history from prehistoric times of Persia to the fall of the Sassanid Empire. The other works of this century are *Waltharius* by Ekkehard of St. Gall which is a Latin version of the story of *Walter of Aquitaine*; and *The Battle of Maldon*, brief Old English epic describing the real Battle of Maldon of 991. Only 325 lines of the poem are remained, both the beginning and the ending are lost.

In the 11th century, six epics are noted: *Taghribat Bani Hilal* (Arabic epic literature); *Ruodlieb* a Latin epic written by an unknown southern German poet who flourished about 1030.; *Digenis Akritas* a Byzantine epic poem detailing the life of its eponymous hero, Basil, a man, as the epithet ("Two Blood Border Lord") signifies, of mixed Roman (Byzantine) and Syrian blood; *The Song of Roland* (French: *La Chanson de Roland*) is the oldest surviving major work of French literature. It exists in various different manuscript versions. The oldest of these versions is the one in the Oxford manuscript, which contains a text of some 4,004 lines and is usually dated to the middle of the twelfth century (between 1140 and 1170). In the medieval romances, Roland is the most famous of Charlemagne's paladins. Roland has been linked to the historical leader of Charlemagne's rearguard. The other work, *Epic of King Gesar* is the central epic poem of Tibet and much of Central Asia, compiled from earlier sources. The story concerns the fearless king Gesar, who ruled the legendary Kingdom of *gLing*. And finally the *Epic of Manas* which is a traditional epic poem of the Kyrgyz people dating possibly later. The story was first found written in a Persian manuscript dated to 1792-3.

In the 12th century the more notable works are: *The Knight in the Panther Skin* written by the Georgian epic-poet Shota Rustaveli, who was a Prince and Treasurer at the royal court of Queen Tamar of Georgia; *Alexandreis* a Latin epic by Walter Châtillon, French writer and theologian; *De bello Troiano* and the lost work *Antiocheis* by Joseph Exeter; *Carmen de Prodicione Guenonis*, Latin version of the story of the *Song of Roland* composed in elegiac couplets by an unskilled versifier; *Architrenius* a medieval allegorical and satirical poem in hexameters by Johannes de Hauvilla; *Liber ad honorem Augusti*, an illustrated narrative epic in Latin elegiac couplets, written in Palermo by Peter of Eboli; and the last one *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, an anonymous epic poem written in the Old East Slavic language.

The heroic works of the 13th century are: *Antar* in Arabic epic literature. Antarah Ibn Shaddād al-'Absī was a pre-Islamic Arabian hero and poet known both for his poetry and his adventures. For the first time in 1898 the French painter Etienne Dinet translated a 13th century epic Arab poem *Antar* which brought Antar to European notice. His work has been followed by some other scholars among them Diana Richmond's *Antar and Abba* (Richmond 32). The next work *Nibelungenlied* translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German detailing the story of dragon-slayer Siegfried. The other work *Brut* also known as *The Chronicle of Britain*, is a Middle English heroic poem compiled by the English priest Layamon; *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise* (Song of the Albigensian Crusade) is an Old Occitan epic poem narrating events of the Albigensian Crusade from March 1208 to June 1219; *Sirat al-Zahir Baibars* another work of Arabic literature is a long folkloric epic poem narrating the life and heroic achievements of the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baibars al-Bunduqdari; the *Epic of Sundiata*, *El Cantar de Mio Cid* Spanish epic of the Reconquista, the Latin literary epic *De triumphis ecclesiae* by Johannes de Garlandia, *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach and *The Secret History of the Mongols* are the rest of these works.

14th century cover these heroic works: *Confessio Amantis* by John Gower (c. 1350); *Cursor Mundi* by an anonymous cleric (c. 1300); *Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*) by Dante Alighieri (between 1308 and his death in 1321); the Latin literary epic *Africa* by Petrarch; the Japanese epic *The Tale of the Heike*; and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Anonymous (c. 1390).

The 15th century has: *Morte d'Arthure* which is a 4346-line Middle English heroic poem, retelling the latter part of the legend of King Arthur; *Orlando innamorato* an epic poem written by the Italian Renaissance author Matteo Maria Boiardo (1495); *Shmuel-Bukh* (Old Yiddish chivalry romance based on the Biblical book of Samuel, and *Mlokhim-Bukh* an Old Yiddish epic poem based on the Biblical Books of Kings. Its stanzaic form resembles that of the *Nibelungenlied*, and its hero is the biblical David.

Anglo-Saxon Epic *Beowulf*

Beowulf as an early (eighth century) Anglo-Saxon work contains 3,182 lines and is the earliest work in Teutonic literature of unknown authorship. *Beowulf* was written in England, but

is set in Scandinavia. The epic narrates mid-sixth-century Danish historical events and Nordic legend. The poem was an oral tradition reaching from Iceland to Austria which may have been carried to Anglo-Saxon England by Dane, Geat, or Anglo-Saxon seafarer in a time after events happened (Tolkien 127). When St. Augustine's arrived in England in 597, the tale was recast by a bard. According to the plot, the poem starts with the mythic ancestor of Danish kin, Scyld Scefing, and the founding of Scylding dynasty. King Scyld was an abandoned baby who is rescued by the Danes and later becomes their king. When Scyld dies, his son Beo becomes king. His kingship is succeeded by his son, "the great Healfdane". His grandson, Hrothgar who eventually becomes king of the Danes, builds a great mead hall called Herot but the demon Grendel slips into the hall. The main protagonist, Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, comes to the aid of Hrothgar, and kills both Grendel and Grendel's mother, the latter with a magical sword. He also travels great distances to prove his strength at impossible odds against supernatural demons and beasts. When Beowulf was king of the Geats, attacks the dragon whose treasure had been stolen from his hoard and finally slays the dragon, but is mortally wounded. According to Jane Chance in her 1980 article "*The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel's Mother*" there are two standard interpretations of the poem: one view which suggests a two-part structure (Beowulf's battles with Grendel and with the dragon) and the other, a three-part structure (which argues that Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother is structurally separate from his battle with Grendel).

French Epic *The Song of Roland*

The Song of Roland (French: *La Chanson de Roland*) is the oldest surviving major work of French literature. It exists in various different versions. The oldest of these versions is the Oxford manuscript which contains a text of some 4,004 lines (Sison vi) and is usually dated to the middle of the twelfth century (between 1140 and 1170). The *Song of Roland* marks a nascent French identity and sense of collective history traced back to the legendary Charlemagne. Some believe that Tuoldus, who is named in the final line, is the author; however, nothing is known about him other than his name. Regarding its form, the poem is written in stanzas of irregular length known as *laissez*. The lines are decasyllabic (containing ten syllables), and each is divided by a strong caesura which generally falls after the fourth syllable. The last stressed syllable of each line in a *laisse* has the same vowel sound as every other end-syllable in that *laisse*. The

laisse is therefore an assonal, not a rhyming stanza. Based on the plot, in the medieval romances, Roland is the most famous of Charlemagne's paladins. Roland has been linked to the historical leader of Charlemagne's rear guard at Roncesvalles in the Battle of Roncevaux (778) against the Basques. As the chanson begins, Charlemagne has been in Spain for seven years but only Saragossa remains unconquered. King Marsilla sent word to Charlemagne asking for a meeting to discuss terms by which Charlemagne will leave Spain. Roland warns king Charls against a plot. Ganelon, Roland's stepfather, who had a hatred of Roland, convinced the king to dispatch a message to Marsilla. Roland told the king to make the messenger Ganelon himself. Ganelon angrily goes to Saragossa and there decides to accept Marsilla's bribe and betray Roland. When he returns convinces Charls to assign Roland to command the rear guard of 20,000 men through the narrow pass of Roncesvalles. It is there that Roland's men are ambushed by 400,000 Saracens. By the time, Charlemagne arrives with his army but it is so late. The men are all dead.

German Epic *Nibelungenlied*

The *Nibelungenlied*, translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German. The story tells of Siegfried at the court of the Burgundians, how he was murdered, and of his wife Kriemhild's revenge. In an early –fourteen century- manuscript the epic is called the Book of Kriemhild, an appropriate title since the story begins with her and ends with her death. In the first part of the poem, Nibelung is apparently the name of Siegfried's lands, people and treasure but in the second part it is used as an alternate name for the Burgundians. The poem is composed of four-line stanzas and probably the written *Nibelungenlied* is the work of an anonymous poet from the area of the Danube between Passau and Vienna, dating from about 1180 to 1210, possibly at the court of Wolfger von Erla, the bishop of Passau (in office 1191–1204) (Müller xv). Siegfried the crown prince of Xanten arrives at Worms with the hopes of wooing Kriemhild, the sister of King Gunther in the court of Burgundy. The story narrates how Siegfried became invulnerable after killing the dragon. Unfortunately for Siegfried, a leaf had fallen on his back from a linden tree and that small patch of skin the leaf covered had not come into contact with the dragon's blood, leaving Siegfried vulnerable in that single spot. Siegfried finally meets Kriemhild. Gunther requests Siegfried to sail with him to the fictional city of Isenstein in Iceland to win the hand of the Iceland's Queen Brünhild. Siegfried agrees, provided Gunther allows him to marry his sister Kriemhild. Gunther defeated Brunhild, married her and

allowed Siegfried to marry with her sister, Kriemhild. Years later Brünhild goads Gunther into inviting Siegfried and Kriemhild to their kingdom. Brünhild thinks it is obvious that she should go first per custom of her perceived social rank. Kriemhild, unaware of the deception involved in Brünhild's wooing, insists that they are of equal rank and the dispute escalates. The argument between the queens is both a risk for the marriage of Gunther and Brünhild and a potential cause for a lethal rivalry between Gunther and Siegfried. Taking advantage of this situation, Hagen von Tronje, one of King Gunther's vassals, killed Siegfried with a spear. Kriemhild swears to take revenge for the murder of her husband and the theft of her treasure. Many years later, she invited all to a feast and by a trick burned the hall. All of the Burgundians were killed except for Hagen and Gunther. Kriemhild orders her brother Gunther to be killed. Even after seeing Gunther's head, Hagen refuses to tell the queen what he has done with the Nibelungen treasure. Furious, Kriemhild herself cuts off Hagen's head. At the end, Old Hildebrand, the mentor of Dietrich of Bern, is infuriated by the shameful deaths of the Burgundian guests. He hews Kriemhild into pieces with his sword.

Italian Epic *Divine Comedy*

Divine Comedy is considered the preeminent work of Italian literature (Norwich 27), and one of the greatest in world literature (Ergang 103). The central theme of *Divine Comedy* is an imaginary journey into the world of death. Dante's influence is so great that his work affects the Christian view of the afterlife to this day. Dante composed his epic of three canticas (or "cantiche"), *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise), contained respectively of 34, 33, and 33 cantos. An initial canto serves as an introduction to the poem and is generally considered to be part of the first cantica, bringing the total number of cantos to 100.

In 1919, Professor Miguel Asín Palacios, a Spanish scholar and a Catholic priest, published *La Escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* ("Islamic Eschatology in the Divine Comedy"), an account of parallels between early Islamic philosophy and the *Divine Comedy*. Palacios argued that Dante derived many features of and episodes about the hereafter indirectly from Islamic sources. But it is worthy of note that the Arabic sources also in their turn derived some features from Pahlavi works and Zoroastrian texts. One of the most important elements of Zoroastrianism which was reflected in Islamic literature is the case of the Bridge of Judgment. The idea of the Bridge of Judgment, is known to the Zoroastrian as the Chinwad Pul, and to the

Muhammadan as Al-Sirat. In Zoroastrianism the Chinvad Pul, or straight Bridge of Judgment, was always a prominent eschatological feature, mentioned repeatedly in the Avesta and still more in the later Pahlavi literature. Another example is the Muhammadan legend of the Night Ride. Discussing the originality of this story, Herbert Henry Gowen writes:

There was every reason, therefore, to expect borrowings from Zoroastrianism, even before the propaganda of Islam came into contact with the literature and religion of Persia. The latter condition, of course, prevailed for several years prior to the Prophet's death, but there much intermingling of religious beliefs and literary traditions in Sassanid times and Islam became subsequently the channel through which were carried to the West many fruitful themes, possibly even the story of Jamshid's cup to be the basis for the Holy Grail, and the story of the circle of the court of Khosru Nushirwan to suggest the Round Table of Arthur's knights (438).

However, with such plain evidence of borrowing as is provided in the case of the Bridge of Judgment, it is natural to expect further indebtedness on the part of Islam to the Zoroastrian eschatology. This indebtedness is so manifest in the Pahlavi document known as the *Book of Arda Viraf* that may fittingly be entitled 'the Pahlavi Dante'.

Modern Epics

Although in the Renaissance epic poetry (also known as 'heroic poetry') was regarded as the highest form of literature and the deepest ambition of every Renaissance poet was the creation of a heroic poem (Baldick 11) from the nineteenth century onward, the 'Epic' was replaced by the 'Novel' and this modern form took a superior position among literary genres (Shamisa 53). Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the major literary theorists of the twentieth century in his 1941 essay "Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" compares the novel to the epic. In this essay Bakhtin elaborates his theory of the novel and its unique properties by comparing it to other literary forms, in particular the epic. Bakhtin refers to the novel as capable of achieving much of what other forms cannot; this includes an ability to engage with contemporary reality, and offers the possibility of redefining his own image. He also emphasizes the flexibility of novel and says it is a genre with the unique ability to constantly adapt and change, because there is no generic canon of the novel as there is for epic or lyric poetry.

The epic, on the other hand, is a 'high-distance genre'. The form and structure of epic situate it in a distant past time that assumes a finished quality, and thus cannot be re-evaluated, re-thought or changed by us. Bakhtin compares the novel to clay, a material which can be remodeled, and the epic to marble, which cannot. The epic past is one that is irretrievable and idealized, and it is valorized in a way that makes it appear hierarchically superior to the present; the epic form is a 'walled' one, i.e. it builds boundaries which block it off from the present. The individual in the epic is a fully-finished and completed lofty hero, who is entirely 'externalized': i.e. his appearance, actions and internal world are external characteristics which are literally expressed in the written word. Bakhtin concludes: The novel therefore is 'the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it' (Bakhtin 7).

Epic continued to exist and Epic Fantasy in the modern era owns its roots in the epic fantasy of the past but transformed and represented into movies. In written works also the settings of the stories changed but most of the features endured as the hero who struggles with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In the epic of the past the world was an unknown and mysterious place. One could be expected to live one's whole life in a village or town. Journey was difficult and dangerous. They could only be told about places in stories. Thus Epic authors were limited to oral stories and their imagination. Today the situation has changed and people have access to much of the wonder that the world has to offer. Although it still remains a strange and mysterious place with mysteries relegated to other galaxies and stars. In modern epic instead of gods there are alien creatures who come from other stars. The hero uses modern guns and weapons and not a sword or darts to battle. He drives a car or rides a bike and not a horse. So the epic story has transformed to reach new worlds of fantastic and epic proportions.

Discussing the transformation of heroism and the hero, Dean A. Miller (2) states that we form our intelligible thought world, in that part of the historical continuum following on what Michel Foucault identified as *l'age classique*, that is, the Age of Reason. The Age of Reason has its own new rules. Living in this time, in the fragment of rationally ordered universe, some features of the old time and magical powers and events are not permitted. This new view Miller says disallows much of the older outmoded heroism:

...setting aside the superhuman and especially the supernatural tints and taints; the crude interventions of gods and the friendship or, even more grotesque, the imagined kinship of the hero with humanlike animals; the encounters with monsters, the magical flights and

otherworld adventures-the heroic defiance, in a word, of physical laws, in the impossible combinations of the human with the animal and the divine.

In modern terms, epic is often extended to other art forms such as novels, plays and films (Merchant 17) where the story is centered on heroic characters and the action takes place on a grand scale, just as in epic poetry. Epics in this sense are majestic depictions that capture impressive struggles, such as stories of war, adventures, and other efforts of great scope and size over long periods of time. The real life stories of heroic figures have also been referred to as being epic. Examples of such notable epics include Ernest Shackleton's exploration adventures in *Antarctica* and historical novels such as *War and Peace*.

In modern era, one can see the flourishing of epic films that emphasizes human drama on a grand scale. Epics are more ambitious in scope than other film genres that help to differentiate them from similar genres such as the period piece or adventure film. They typically entail high production values, a sweeping musical score (often by an acclaimed film composer) and an ensemble cast of bankable stars, placing them among the most expensive of films to produce. Typically, such films have a historical setting, although fantasy or science fiction settings have become common in recent decades. The central conflict of the film is usually seen as having far-reaching effects, often changing the course of history. The main characters' actions are often central to the resolution of this conflict. Many writers may refer to any film that is "long" (over two hours) as an epic, making the definition of this genre a matter of dispute. As Roger Ebert put it, in his *Great Movies*, article on *Lawrence of Arabia*:

The word epic in recent years has become synonymous with big budget B picture. What you realize watching *Lawrence of Arabia* is that the word epic refers not to the cost or the elaborate production, but to the size of the ideas and vision. Werner Herzog's *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* didn't cost as much as the catering in *Pearl Harbor*, but it is an epic, and *Pearl Harbor* is not (138).

Epic films could be historical that take place in the historical past, often focusing on people who change the course of history. A number of historical epics, especially those made in the 1950s and 1960s, are set in ancient times, particularly in Rome, Greece, Persia or Egypt. *300* (2007) for instance is an American film about the Battle of Thermopylae fought between the Spartans and the Persians. The movie centers around King Leonidas of Sparta who leads 300 soldiers to fight against the Persian god-king Xerxes. Historical epics typically are more

grand-scale than other types of epics. Notable examples of historical epics include *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Titanic*, *Spartacus*, *Barry Lyndon*, *Robin Hood*, *Ben-Hur*, *Gladiator*, *Gandhi*, *Ivan the Terrible*, *Gone With the Wind* and *Mughal-e-Azam*.

But as Robert Burgoyne points out in his introduction to his book, *The Epic Film in World Culture*, epic has transformed through the ages. Whereas historically the epic genre promoted a nationalist message, now it has become transnational in its orientation and includes a larger appeal to “cross-cultural structures of belonging and identification.” The epic genre, as described by Burgoyne, has “traversed national boundaries” by “moving among different cultures, acquiring new identities” (5).

Science fiction is another type of epic films. The Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968 and George Lucas' *Star Wars* in 1977 are two notable examples. The *Harry Potter* film series of J. K. Rowling's creation may also be considered in this category, especially David Yates' two-part adaptation of the series finale *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

There are also animated epics such as the Disney movies including *Hercules* (1997), *Tarzan* (1999), *Aladdin* (1992), and the most famous *The Lion King* (1994).

From 1500 till recent years, a long list of works can be recognized as epics. 16th century epics are: *Orlando furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto (1516), *Os Lusíadas* by Luís de Camões (c.1555), *La Araucana* by Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga (1569-1589), *La Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso (1575), *Ramacharitamansa* (based on the *Ramayana*) by Goswami Tulsidas (1577), *Lepanto* by King James VI of Scotland (1591), *Matilda* by Michael Drayton (1594), *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser (1596).

The notable epics of 17th century are: *The Barons' Wars* by Michael Drayton (1603; early version 1596 entitled *Mortimeriados*), *The Purple Island* by Phineas Fletcher (1633), *Szigeti veszedelem*, also known under the Latin title *Obsidionis Szigetianae*, a Hungarian epic by Miklós Zrínyi (1651), *Davideis* by Abraham Cowley (c. 1668), *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (1667), *Paradise Regained* by John Milton (1671), *Wojna chocimska* by Wacław Potocki (1672), *Prince Arthur* by Richard Blackmore (1695), *King Arthur* by Richard Blackmore (1697).

18th century works are: *Eliza* by Richard Blackmore (1705), *Columbus* by Ubertino Carrara (1714), *Redemption* by Richard Blackmore (1722), *Henriade* by Voltaire (1723), *La Pucelle*

d'Orléans by Voltaire (1756), *Alfred* by Richard Blackmore (1723), *Utendi wa Tambuka* by Bwana Mwengo (1728), *Leonidas* by Richard Glover (1737), *Epigoniad* by William Wilkie (1757), *The Highlander*; by James Macpherson (1758), *The Works of Ossian* by James Macpherson (1765), *O Uruguai* by Basílio da Gama (1769), *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (1773), *Der Messias* by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1773), *Rossiada* by Mikhail Matveyevich Kheraskov (1771-1779), *Vladimir* by Mikhail Matveyevich Kheraskov (1785), *Athenaid* by Richard Glover (1787), *Joan of Arc* by Robert Southey (1796).

The 19th century has: *The Tale of Kiêu* by Nguyễn Du (1800), *Thalaba the Destroyer* by Robert Southey (1801), *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* by Walter Scott (1805), *Madoc* by Robert Southey (1805), *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (part 1 1806, part 2 c. 1833), *Columbiad* by Joel Barlow (1807), *Milton: a Poem* by William Blake (1804-1810), *Marmion* by Walter Scott (1808), *The Lady of the Lake (poem)* by Walter Scott (1810), *The Vision of Don Roderick* by Walter Scott (1811), *The Curse of Kehama* by Robert Southey (1810), *Rokeby* and *The Bridal of Triermain* by Walter Scott (1813), *Queen Mab* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1813), *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* by Robert Southey (1814), *The Lord of the Isles* by Walter Scott (1813), *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1815), *The Revolt of Islam (Laon and Cyntha)* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1817), *Harold the Dauntless* by Walter Scott (1817), *Endymion* by John Keats (1818), *The Battle of Marathon* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1820), *Hyperion*, (1818), and *The Fall of Hyperion* by John Keats (1819), *L'Orléanide, Poème national en vingt-huit chants*, by Philippe-Alexandre Le Brun de Charmettes (1821), *Don Juan* by Lord Byron (1824), *Prometheus Bound* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1833), *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz (1834), *Krst pri Savici* by France Prešeren (1835), *The Seraphim* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1838), *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* by Ivan Mažuranić (1846), *Evangeline* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1847), *Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot (1849 Finnish mythology), *Kalevipoeg* by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1853 Estonian mythology), *The Prelude* by William Wordsworth, *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1855), *La Fin de Satan* by Victor Hugo (written between 1855 and 1860, published in 1886), *La Légende des Siècles (The Legend of the Centuries)* by Victor Hugo (1859-1877), *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández (1872), *Clarel* by Herman Melville (1876), *The City of Dreadful Night* by James Thomson (B.V.) (finished in 1874, published in 1880), *Idylls of the King* by Alfred Lord

Tennyson (c. 1874), *Eros and Psyche* by Robert Bridges (1885), *Canigó* by Jacint Verdaguer (1886), *Lāčplēsis* ('The Bear-Slayer') by Andrejs Pumpurs (1888; Latvian Mythology), *The Wanderings of Oisín* by William Butler Yeats (1889).

20th century epic works are as following: *Lahuta e Malcís* by Gjergj Fishta (composed 1902-1937), *The Ballad of the White Horse* by G. K. Chesterton (1911), *Mensagem* by Fernando Pessoa, *The Hashish-Eater; Or, The Apocalypse of Evil* by Clark Ashton Smith (1920), *Kurukshetra* (1946), *Rashmirathi* (1952), *Urvashi* (1961), *Hunkar* (epic poem) by Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', *Savitri* by Aurobindo Ghose (1950), *Astronautilía-Hvězdoplavba* by Jan Křesadlo, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* by Nikos Kazantzakis (Greek verse, composed 1924-1938), *The Cantos* by Ezra Pound (composed 1915-1969), *Dymer* by C. S. Lewis (1926), *A Cycle of the West* by John Neihardt (composed 1921-1949), "A" by Louis Zukofsky (composed 1928-1968), *Paterson* by William Carlos Williams (composed c.1940-1961), *Victory for the Slain* by Hugh John Lofting (1942), *The Maximus Poems* by Charles Olson (composed 1950-1970), *Aniara* by Harry Martinson (composed 1956), *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* by Melvin B. Tolson (1953), *Mountains and Rivers Without End* by Gary Snyder (composed 1965-1996), *Helen in Egypt* by H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) (1974), *The Changing Light at Sandover* by James Merrill (composed 1976-1982), *Genesis: An Epic Poem* by Frederick Turner (1988), *Omeros* by Derek Walcott (1990), *The Levant* by Mircea Cărtărescu (1990), *The Descent of Alette* by Alice Notley (1996), *Overlord: The Triumph of Light 1944-45* by Nicholas Hagger (1995-7), *Cheikh Anta Diop: Poem for the Living* by Mwatabu S. Okantah (1997), *The Dream of Norumbega: Epic on the U.S.* by James Wm. Chichetto (c. 1990; p. 2000-), *Cerulean Odyssey: the long distace voyager* by Gerrit Verstraete (c.2004; p.2009-).

Among these long list of works we concentrate on the 18th-century works of Richard Blackmore, the epic poems of the 19th-century author Walter Scott and the late 20th-century *Omeros* by Nobel Prize-winning author Derek Walcott.

Richard Blackmore

Richard Blackmore is an English poet, born at Corsham in Wiltshire (1654). Blackmore had a passion for writing epics and heroic poetries. His efforts resulted in a series of modern epics with different themes and styles. He was admired by many critics but also had his serious

opponents. In 1695, Blackmore wrote his first heroic work *Prince Arthur* which was a celebration of William III based on the form of Virgil's *Aeneid*. *Prince Arthur* deals with the content of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. This poem reveals the adventure of King Arthur who attacks Saxons and takes London. Although John Dennis criticized the poem as servile in its treatment of Geoffrey Monmouth but king William gave Blackmore a gold medal and knighted him in 1697. William also appointed Blackmore to write an official account of the plot of Sir George Barclay who sought to kill William. This work was not produced until 1723 as *A true and impartial history of the conspiracy against the person and government of King William III, of glorious memory, in the year 1695*.

In 1697 Blackmore composed *King Arthur: an Heroic Poem in Twelve Books*. This poem like his previous work was a description of current events within an ancient cover but this time the public and the court were less interested. Unlike *Prince Arthur*, Blackmore drew upon on John Milton rather than Virgil. He states in his preface that his previous book had adhered too much on the Classical unities.

Blackmore used his epics to fight political battles and his stance was attacked by William Garth. This led Blackmore to write *A Satyr against Wit* (1700). He was not explicitly partisan in his epics but believed that it was necessary to counter the degeneracy of poetry written by wits. However, John Dryden criticizes him of plagiarizing the idea of an epic and called him "Pedant, Canting Preacher, and a Quack".

In 1705 after William died and his Queen Anne was on the throne, Blackmore wrote another poem, *Eliza: an Epic Poem in Ten Books*. This work was on the plot by Rodrigo Lopez, the Portuguese physician, written specially against Queen Elizabeth. Once more, the "epic" referred to current events of his society and denounced John Radcliffe, a Jacobite physician who was not a favorite with Anne. It appears Anne didn't notice this work but Sarah Churchill valued *Eliza*. After *Eliza*, two pieces followed: *An advice to the poets*: a poem occasioned by the wonderful success of her majesty's arms under the conduct of the duke of Marlborough in Flanders (1706) and *Instructions to Vander Beck* (1709).

In the year 1711, Blackmore composed another work titled *The Nature of Man*, a physiological/theological poem according to climate and character. *The Nature of Man* Was a step ahead for producing of one of the most important of his poem *Creation*. His recent work, *Creation* was a philosophical poem composed in 1712. This work was praised by John Dennis,

Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson because of its Miltonic tone. The content of this book was to reject the atheism of Vanini, Hobbes and Spinoza.

He stopped writing after publishing *Creation* for a time but resumed in 1722 with another heroic poem entitled *Redemption* a religious epic in the concept of divinity of Jesus Christ. In the following year he wrote a long political epic about King Alfred the Great that was presented to Prince Frederick, the eldest son of King George. But this epic has disappeared. (“Blackmore” website).

Walter Scott

Walter Scott (1771 –1832) was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet, who was popular throughout the world, the first English-language writer who had an international career. Scott wrote novels, short stories, poems, essays but his first success was poetry. Scott was interested in the oral tradition of the Scottish bords. The novel brought him lower social value compared to the epic that had given him public acclaim. Scott’s heroic poetries include many titles. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) is a long narrative poem on the story of Lady Margaret Scott of Buccleuch who is loved by Baron Henry of Cranstown, an ally of the Ker Clan. But there is a deep enmity between the two clans Lady Margaret's father is killed by the Kers Maragaret's widowed mother hates the Ker clan and refuses any suggestion of marriage between them. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* comprises introduction and six cantos. For creating the scenes of poem, Scott adopts the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance which gives him greater liberty. This model also permits an occasional alteration of measure which allows change of rhythm in the text. But the adoption of machinery from popular belief in a poem that did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance is not appropriate and would have seemed puerile. The poem is narrated by an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who receives hospitality at Newark Castle from Ann, Duchess of Buccleuch and he is supposed to survive the Revolution. In return, he recites a tale concerning the Duchess's family. The poem begins thus:

The way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His wither'd cheek, and tresses gray,
Seem'd to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,

Was carried by an orphan boy.
 The last of all the Bards was he,
 Who sung of Border chivalry;

The Lay of the Last Minstrel brought Scott instant fame. Within three years there were six editions of the poem, with sales rising to 27,000 copies in a decade, unparalleled figures for poetry. Even the Prime Minister William Pitt was a fan and recited passages from the poem at his dinner table. Many critics reacted favorably. Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* thought that many passages were 'in the very first rank of poetical excellence'. The *Critical Review* praised the skill with which Scott had refined the 'rich but unpolished ore' of ballad poetry. The *Annual Review* thought it 'elegant, spirited, and striking' and welcomed the move away from the stiffness of classical poetics. Other journals, though, such as the *Literary Journal* and *Monthly Review*, thought Scott guilty of prosaic and irregular versification, and found the plot both obscure and far-fetched. Nonetheless, the *Lay* was successful with the public and could attract critics attention ("Walter Scott" website).

Scott started writing of his second major work *Marmion* in November 1806 and it was published in 1808. This epic poem attracted Scott's readers and the first edition of two thousand copies sold out in a month. The work was followed by twelve octavo editions between 1808 and 1825. The poem deals with the story of Lord Marmion, a favorite of Henry VIII of England, desired for Clara de Clare, a rich woman. There is a conflict between Marmion and Clare's finance, De Wilton where Marmion tried to remove him. De Wilton claims the right to defend his honor in combat but he loses the duel and goes in exile. Later De Wilton's plans for revenge and in a battle Marmion dies on the battlefield, while De Wilton displays heroism, regains his honor, and marries Clara. Scott's *Marmion* caught the public imagination particularly the story of "young Lochinvar", excerpted from Canto V was widely published in anthologies, and learned by readers as a recitation piece. Moreover one of the most famous quotations in English poetry is derived from *Marmion's* Canto:

Oh, what a tangled web we weave
 When first we practise to deceive!

At the same time the story was criticized for its obscurity and also the character of Marmion was felt to be unsuitable for a poetic hero. Francis Jeffrey pointed that there was too much in the

poem that was 'flat and tedious' and accused Scott to be vaunting his historical knowledge ("Marmion" website).

The third heroic poem of Scott is *The Lady of the Lake*, first published in 1810. This poem is composed of six cantos, each concerns the action of a single day. *The Lady of the Lake* set in the Trossachs in Scotland and has three main plots: the challenge among three men, Roderick Dhu, James Fitz-James, and Malcolm Graeme, fighting for the love of Ellen Douglas; the enmity and reconciliation of King James V of Scotland and James Douglas; and a war between the lowland Scots and the highland clans. The poem was really influential in the nineteenth century, and welcomed by critics and readers. It inspired the Highland Revival and indirectly influenced on Schubert's *Ellens Dritter Gesang*, Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* (1819), the Ku Klux Klan custom of cross burning, and the song "Hail to the Chief". In this work Scott didn't want to depend on local color and spectacular action but rather he wished to attain greater psychological depth in his characterization. he was confident in bringing King James V and the clan chieftain Roderick Dhu to life, but his fear was that the romantic hero, Malcolm Graeme would remain 'a perfect automaton' (letter to Lady Abercorn, March 14, 1810). *The Lady of the Lake* brought Scott a great popularity as a poet and the work was successful in market. It sold 25,000 copies in eight months, and broke all records for the sale of poetry. This work also spread Scott's fame beyond Great Britain to the United States.

The Lady of the Lake followed by some other epic poems, including *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), *Rokeby* and *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813), *The Lord of the Isles* (1813) and *Harold the Dauntless* (1817). Writing of heroic poems became a huge success and made him the most popular author of the day.

Caribbean Epic *Omeros*

Omeros is an outstanding modern epic poem by Derek Walcott, written in 1990. Many critics consider it his finest work which brought Walcott the 1992 Nobel Prize for literature. He has also been praised for his rich and inventive use of language in *Omeros*. The author was born on the small Caribbean island of St. Lucia, where the story set on. *Omeros* partly is an adaption or retelling of the story of the *Odyssey* with a modern view. The title of the book goes back to Greek origins, deriving from the pronunciation of Homer's name. Walcott takes on Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton and also revisits the canonical works of Walt Whitman, James Joyce, and Hart Crane because they typify the ideals of Western civilization. Though Walcott admires these

predecessors, he also notes that the first four reflect a world of hegemonic domination or colonialism, and they divide humanity into conqueror and conquered, or marginalized "other." Walcott's view to the world is that of an artist who grew up in a neglected colony; He therefore states that the colonized citizens of the world deserve their own rights (Hammer 202).

Omeros is a multilayered narrative. Walcott does not concentrate on a single character, unlike Homer who focuses on Achilles in the *Iliad* and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. Rather, many critics have taken the "hero" of *Omeros* to be the island of St. Lucia itself. *Omeros* is arranged in seven sections (called "Books"), further divided into chapters of poetic narrative structured in a kind of *Terza Rima*. The story relates the lives of Caribbean fishermen in the island of St. Lucia. The main characters are the Homerically named Achille, Philoctete, Hector, and Seven Seas (*Omeros*); Helen, a native woman and the beloved of Achille and Hector whom in many ways is a center of the story; British farmer/ landowner called Dennis Plunkett and his Irish wife Maud; Ma Kilman, the local bar owner and healer; and then the narrator who is a poet and native of St. Lucia. Within the story, Philoctete suffers from a bad wound to his leg, in the end healed by Ma Kilman. Achille and Hector challenge for the love of Helen who is a servant at the farm of the Plunketts.

The story can be divided into three main threads, all of which are introduced in Book One of the poem. The first is the narrative of Achille and Hector who compete for the love of Helen, with considerable attention paid to Philoctete, based on Homer's and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. The second revolves around the Sergeant Major Plunkett and his Irish wife Maud, who live on the island and must reconcile themselves to the history of British colonization on St. Lucia. The third part is that of the poet-narrator, who narrates and remarks the action of the poem and participate in many journeys.

The story shifts between the Caribbean, Africa and narrates the 18th-century conflicts between the British, the Dutch, and the French over colonial lands and slave-trade. The poet/narrator who is a central figure in the poem, disappointed of his lost love, travels the world, looking for hope, love, meaning, and self-understanding in the postcolonial world where he sees injustice and challenges with hopelessness. He finally led to renewed faith by the blind guide *Omeros* and his visions in St. Lucia.

Through a poetic fiction some postcolonial issues, nature, history, language, and ancestry are discussed. White western colonialism, imperialism and the lives of masters and servants are presented. The story moves in the colonial past and the postcolonial present. Anger, division, competition, lust, battle, domination, oppression, suffering, and eventually love are some other thematics of the work.

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CHAPTER - III

SHAH NAMEH

Shah Nameh, the celebrated work of the Persian poet Ferdowsi is called “The Crown Jewel of the Persian Literature” in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form. The name “*Shah Nameh*” is a compound of two words: *Shah* meaning king and *nameh* meaning book, translating to “The Book of Kings”. But *nameh* as noted before also refers to the genre of epic or almost all epics after *Shah Nameh* carried the word ‘*nameh*’, for instance *Farāmarz Nameh*, *khavaran Nameh*, *Lohrāsb Nameh*, *Jahangir Nameh* and so on. It is interesting to note that when the Indian epic *Mahabharata* was translated into Persian during the reign of Mongol empire Akbar (1556-1605), it was called ‘*Razm Nameh*’ meaning ‘the book of war’. It should be noted also the official history of the reign of Emperor Akbar including a statistical gazetteer of sixteenth century North India, compiled by his minister Abu’l-Faḡl under the title of *Akbar Nameh*.

Ferdowsi

Ferdowsi composed *Shah Nameh* in the 10th century in a rich and moving language shaped in a great style. Ferdowsi (b. A.D. 932; d. 1020) whose real name was AbolQāsem Mansure, was born in a village called Baḡ which itself belongs to Tābarān of Tus. Tus was a city in the eastern Iranian province of Khorāsān. Ferdowsi was a member of the landed gentry known as *Dehghān*. The *Dehghāns* were a class of educated Iranians who were interested in preserving Iranian traditions, customs, cultural values and protect them against Muslims conquest. In Ferdowsi's time, when Iranians were experiencing Arab dominance, the writing of *Shah Nameh* was a strong tradition especially among *Dehghans*. In fact it was the ambition of all poets to write the history of Persia to portray its honors and victories. Regarding motivation of the poet to write his epic, Banani asserts that:

Ferdowsi was undoubtedly inspired by the nascent Iranism of the Samanid epoch and may have even conceived of his masterwork as an offering to that illustrious house, only to witness its demise in the hands of the Turkic Ghaznavids. The bitterness of the mythical Iranian-Turanian epic struggle that permeates the *Shah Nameh* and gives it its dramatic tension is the pressing phenomenon of the poet's own time.

Regarding his knowledge and education, the available information is scanty and limited to his works which shows he knew well the Arab literature and philosophy of his time. It is said that though Ferdowsi was well-born, he spent his money to complete his work and became poor. Ferdowsi in his later years decided to present *Shah Nameh* to Sultan Mahmud who did receive neither him nor his work respectfully. Nizami Aruzi writes in *Chohar Maghaleh* that Mahmud told Ferdowsi:

Shah Nameh is nothing except the story of Rustam, and in my army there are thousands like Rustam. Ferdowsi answered: as I know God has not created like Rustam and went out. Mahmud told his minister: he ironically named us liar, we should kill him; but as they searched, they could not find him because Ferdowsi had been escaped from Ghaznein (65).

But there was quiet another politics at play to explain why Mahmud refused Ferdowsi, while Ferdowsi was Shia, Mahmud was Sunni. They belonged to two different faiths of Islam. Moreover when Mahmud was a Turk, the *Shah Nameh* presents a negative image of Arabs and Turks. Ferdowsi was grieved by the fall of the Persian Empire and its subsequent rule by Arabs and Turks. In this regard Diankonoff remarks:

‘Book of Kings’(*Shah Nameh*) though, formally, impeccably Muslim, had nevertheless a certain anti-Arab and anti-Turk bias. History became an eternal feud between Iran and Turan.³⁵ No wonder the book did not have success with Mahmud Ghaznawi, to whom it had been dedicated. The ‘Book of Kings’ by Firdousi is witness to the fact that Persian self-consciousness had been born. For Firdousi, the great past was represented by the dominion of the mythical Zoroastrian Kayanid dynasty and the historical Zoroastrian Sasanid dynasty. It is interesting to note that the Achaemenid Empire had completely disappeared from historical memory (100).

Some years later Mahmud, regretful of his treatment, wanted to make amends. Mahmud sent Ferdowsi costly and royal gifts. But as Nezami Aruzi narrates, when Sultan's gifts arrived in Tābaran, Ferdowsi's corpse was being carried out of the city. Ferdowsi had a daughter. When the royal messengers wanted to give her the gifts she refused saying she did not need such things.

The Sources of the Epic

For his sources, Ferdowsi mainly used an earlier prose version titled *Shah Nameh Abo-Mansoori*, which itself was a compilation of old Persian stories and historical facts and fables based on of much older source *Khvatay- Namak*, that reached back to the Sassanid dynasty. *Shah Nameh Abo-Mansoori* was compiled by order of Abu Mansoor Tusi (governor of Khurasan), under the supervision of his minister Abu Mansoor Abdol Razzagh Tusi and by the efforts of some Zoroastrians of Sistān and Khurasan. This work was based on *Khvatay- Namak* and some other books such as *Ayatkar Zariran*, *Karnameh Ardeshir Babakan* and the story of *Bahram choobin*. *Khvatay- Namak* was compiled in Khusrow Anooshirvan's age which was the history of Sasanians, written in Pahlavi language.

Ferdowsi incorporated 1,000 verses of the earlier poet Daqiqi-e Balkhi, a court poet of the Sasanids. Daghighi started the versification to chronicle the pre-Islamic and legendary Persia also based on *Shah Nameh Abu Mansoori*. But he met a violent end after completion only 1000 verses when he was killed by his slave. Ferdowsi used these verses which were about the rise of the prophet Zoroaster in his work with an acknowledgment. A strong influence of oral literature is clearly seen in Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh*. Davidson in his comprehensive essay on Persian epic writes:

Ferdowsi describes his pre-Islamic poetic sources in terms that suit both oral and written traditions. The oral traditions are represented as stylized performances by learned men called mobads and dehqans, while the written traditions are attributed to an archetypal Book of Kings written in Pahlavi, the language of the Sasanian empire... On the surface, Ferdowsi's own references to a prototypical *Shahnama* as an archetypal book seem to contradict the argument that Ferdowsi's poetry is the product of an oral tradition. In terms of the cultural background of the *Shahnama*, however, oral poetry is basically not incompatible with literacy, as represented by the archetypal book (288).

Language and Style

Persian prosody and rhyme follows Arabic model. The meters in Persian classic poem are quantitative; they are based on regularly recurring patterns of short, long and extensive syllables. Stress not plays an important or clearly understood role. The form that Ferdowsi used for *Shah Nameh* is a line of eight feet in two hemistiches. The hemistiches of each line have an end-rhyme

which differs from line to line. Between hemistiches there is a regular caesura but no regular one within each hemistich. There is usually no enjambment either. *Shah Nameh* is written in the meter *motaghareb*:

Definition of the meter of Motaqāreb: fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘ū-lon / fa-‘al

◡ – – / ◡ – – / ◡ – – / ◡ –

Here is an example of two couple lines:

1. Be nameh / khodavan /d-e jan-o / kherad kazin bar /tar andi /she bar nag /zarad
2. khodavan /d-e nam-o /khodavan /d-e jay khodavan /d-e roozi /deh-e rah /nomay

The language of *Shah Nameh* is simple and strong and Ferdowsi used fewer Arabic words. *Shah Nameh* itself was a reaction to Arab conquest and Ferdowsi as a nationalist poet tried to free his work from Arabic influence. This is noteworthy as it is a known fact that it is difficult to write in Persian without using Arabic loanwords. Other poetry of Ferdowsi's time has considerably higher percentage of Arabic words. The Encyclopedia of World Biography entry on “Firdausi” gives useful information about *Shah Nameh*'s language and style:

He combined harmoniously what he drew from historical sources with his personal inspiration. As for his style, whether in the fantastic elements demanded by the epic or in the gracefulness of his descriptions of everyday life, he excels at describing and explaining facts or sentiments in a clear, concise manner. His style is firm but eloquent, never giving into baseless extremes. His poetry very seldom contained Arabic words, except in his descriptions of Alexander the Great, which came largely from Arabic sources. Just as Dante did with Italian, Chaucer with English, or the Gutenberg Bible with the Latin Vulgate, he was in his day a popularizer of the vernacular. Arabic was the holy Islamic language of Allah in the Koran just as Latin was the lingua franca for the Catholic Church. It was the *Shah Nameh* of Firdausi that recongealed the Persian language into a coherent force that soon was to be the court language for most of the Islamic world (website).

Ferdowsi's language is strong and supple because the poet used the rhetorical devices available in Persian poetry. This stylistic point reinforces the genre of the poem as an epic. In an epic, the

greatness of the language must match the heroic action. Yet using too many rhetorical devices and figurative language reduces this magnificence. A correct balance is the hallmark of a great epic poet. Hence in *Shah Nameh* there is brevity instead of verbiage. The poet's use of metaphor is notable. The heroes are given the qualities of powerful creations like lion, tiger, dragon and whale. In other words, the hero of an epic is a superhuman so his acts and treatments are not natural. In *Shah Nameh*, Rustam eats a zebra in each meal and lives for some hundred years. There are examples of epic Similes also and extensive use of hyperbole.

General Themes

From the pre- Islamic times until today, Persian literature has had a strong didactic side and *Shah Nameh* is within tradition. Didactic side strongly point towards moral, preach, justice, honesty, freedom and patriotism throughout the text. In legendary parts of *Shah Nameh*, the sense of fatalism and vanity of human desires are so strong where Rustam says to himself after his horse had been stolen “sometimes you are in the saddle and sometimes the saddle is on you.” Whereas in the historical part, the greater stress is on ethical values. Didacticism of Ferdowsi is represented by the characters, speeches and actions and by the poet himself who enters into comment action. In the historical parts of the text a newly selected king usually start giving speech on throne, stressing the need for justice and honest in the world.

The events of *Shah Nameh* are centered in Iran which spreads towards in all direction. War and hunting carry the heroes of Iran to face Arabs, Central Asians, Chinese and other peoples. Long journeys and prolonged absence from home is the rule of heroes. *Shah Nameh* is valued especially in varied sources of the national epic and covering the vast area of Iranian culture. The Iranians entered the plateau which is the political state of Iran in the second millennium B.C and have brought legend and tales. This is the time that kings and heroes like Hushang, Key Khosrow and other important figures in *Shah Nameh* have their origin. After a long time, many of this Iranian shifted their life from nomadic to more settled way of life. So conflicts occur between the Pastoralists and the agriculturalists. After this transition one of the main themes of Persian epic “the theme of Iran against Turan” emerged (Hanaway 76).

Protagonists

Keyumars: is the first man, the ruler of the world. The reign passes to his grandson, Hushang. His son, Tahmuras was his successor and it passes to his son, Jamshid.

Zahhāk: is an evil figure in Iranian mythology. In *Shah Nameh* he is an oppressor king who has two snakes in his shoulders but in earlier source, in Zoroastrian literature he is described as a three-headed dragon monster.

Kāveh the Blacksmith: is a mythical figure in Persian mythology who leads a popular uprising against Zahhāk.

Nariman: is an Iranian hero, son of Garshasb, and father of Sām who himself is grandfather of Rustam the hero.

Sām: is a mythical hero of ancient Persia, and an important character in the *Shah Nameh*. He was the son of Nariman and father to Zāl. He was Iran's champion during the rule of Faridun, Manuchehr and Nowzar.

Zāl: is a legendary Persian warrior who was born with white hair and so he was left when only an infant; upon the mountain Damavand. The mythical bird Simurgh found the baby and grew him up. He is father of Rustam.

Rūdabeh: is a Persian mythological female figure in *Shah Nameh*. She is the daughter of Mehrab Kaboli, and later she married to Zal. She bears Rustam to Zal.

Mehrab Kaboli: is king of Kabul and is most famous for being father of Rudabeh and grandfather of her son, the famous Persian hero, Rustam.

Rustam: is the greatest national hero of Iran, the champion of champions who is involved in numerous stories.

Tahmineh: is a female character in the *Shahnameh*. She is the wife of Rustam and the daughter of Samangan shah. Of her marriage with Rustam, Sohrab was born.

Sohrāb: is the son of Rustam, who was slain at a young age by his father. Rustam only found out he was his son after wounding him in a duel.

Shaghad: is the half-brother of Rustam who was always been jealous of Rustam's high status. He killed Rustam by dropping him into a pit full of swords or other sharp objects.

Siyavsh: is the legendary Persian prince and the son of Kay Kāvus, the king of Iran. Due to the treason of his stepmother, Sudabeh with whom he refused to have sex and betray his father, exiled himself to Turan where he was killed innocently by order of The Turanian king Afrasiab.

Simurgh: is the mythical flying creature. Zal was taught much wisdom from the loving Simurgh. The name *simurgh* derives from Avestan *mərəγō Saēnō* "the bird Saēna" as can be deduced from the etymological cognate Sanskrit *śyenaḥ* "raptor, eagle, bird of prey" that also appears as a divine figure.

Rakhsh: is the stallion of main protagonist Rustam in *Shah Nameh* of Ferdowsi. Rakhsh is highly intelligent and his loyalty is legendary. No one except Rustam ever rides Rakhsh, and Rakhsh knows no one but Rustam as his master.

Bizhan and Manizheh: Bijan is the son of Giv, a great hero of Iran during the reign of Kai Khosrow. Bijan falls in love with Manijeh, the daughter of Afrasiab, the king of Turan and greatest enemy of Iran. Both of them greatly suffered as a result where Bizhan was jailed in a deep hole by Afrasiab.

Afrasiab: is the king and hero of Turan and an archenemy of Iran. Finally he is killed by Rustam.

Rustam Farrokhzād: is the Commander of the Army of Iran in Sāsānian Empire and is remembered as an historical figure.

Gurdāfarīd: is one of the heroines in the *Shah Nameh*. She was a champion who fought against Sohrab and delayed the Turanian troops who were marching on Persia.

Synopsis of the Epic

It took Ferdowsi 30 years to compile *Shah Nameh*, starting his composition in the Samanid era in 977 A.D and completing it around 1010 A.D. during the Ghaznavid epoch.

“The Crown Jewel of the Persian literature” is honored by all Iranians (including non-Persian

ethnic groups) as well as Persian speaking societies of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Central Asia. *Shah Nameh* is the national literary epic of Persia, containing elements of folk epic that includes legend and history and covering almost 6,000 years from prehistoric times to the fall of the Sassanid empire (651 A.D). In scope it outranks all western epics and has some 60,000 rhyming couplets, making it more than three times the length of Homer's *Iliad*, and more than twelve times the length of the German *Nibelungenlied*. *Shah Nameh* is divided into three consecutive parts: the mythic, heroic, and historical ages:

1. The Mythical Age

The narrative of *Shah Nameh* begins with the praise of God and Wisdom in the manner of all epic invocations. Ferdowsi then describes the creation of the world and man, as believed by the Sasanians. This is followed by praise of the Prophet Mohammad; explanation regards the compiling of the book and its verification, the story of poet Daghghi. The introduction ends with the praises of Sultan Mahmud. After the introduction, Ferdowsi introduces Keyumars, the first man, the ruler of the world and founder of Pishdadian dynasty. Keyumars's son Siyamak is killed by Kharoozan Div. getting revenge of The Dive is end of Kumars. The reign passes to his grandson, Hushang, son of Siyamak, who discovered fire and established the *Sadeh* Feast in honor of that; he also did smithy and animal husbandry. His son, Tahmuras, was his successor and the next king. Tahmuras domesticated some animals and birds. He also learned writing from Dives. The kingship passes from father to his son, Jamshid. He brought the world, some other elements of civilization including smelting of metals, clothing, architecture, medicine and the organization of society into four classes: clergymen, warriors, planters and craftsmen. Proud of his deeds, Jamshid claimed that he was supreme refusing his obligation to God. Jamshid was killed by non Iranian violator, Zakhāk who also ruled thousand years. Zakhāk had two snakes on his shoulders, resulting of devil's kiss. All doctors tried to find a solution but they could not. Again devil in the mask of doctor went to Zakhāk and advised him to kill two youth every day and eat their brains. Two people who worked as cooks decided to kill a sheep instead of one youth and let him free to escape to mountains. One night Zakhāk saw a nightmare. He asked his hypnologists to tell him what his dream means. The hypnologists told him the key of his death is in the hand of Faridun who has not born yet. Years later Faridun was born but later his father was killed by Zakhāk's men and his brain gives to snakes. The following of the story which starts by

rising of Kaveh against Zahhāk may study in Heroic Part of *Shah Nameh*. The mythical part of *Shah Nameh* is some deal short, amounting to some 2100 verses.

2. The Heroic Age

Almost two-thirds of the *Shah Nameh* is allocated to the age of heroes, extending from the story of Kaveh and finishing with Rustam's death. The main part of this section deals with the Sīstāni heroes who appear as the backbone of the Persian Empire. Garshasb is briefly introduced with his son Nariman, who is father of Sam. His successors were his son Zāl. When Zāl was born, his hair was completely white. Unhappy with this son, he took him to the mountain and left him alone there. Searching of food, Simorgh (a huge mythical bird) found Zal and nurtured him. This bird plays an important role in the epic. Some years later, led by a dream Sam goes to mountain and finds his son Zāl. There follows the romance of Zāl and Rudabeh, leading to the birth of Rustam, the bravest of the brave of *Shah Nameh*. This heroic part includes long wars between Iran and Turan, the Seven Stages (or Labors) of Rustam, the tragedy of Rustam and Sohrāb, Sīyāvash and Sudābeh, Rustam and Akvān Dīv, the romance of Bižhan and Manižheh, The *Haft Khan* (Seven Stages) of Esfandiyār, Daqiqi's account of the story of Goshtāsp and Arjāsp, and Rustam and Esfandyār. The episode of the fight between Rustam and his son Sohrab is justly famous. The hero Rustam unknowingly meets and kills his own son in a battle. This brilliant story-tragedy was translated and popularized by Matthew Arnold in his 1853 poem "Sohrab and Rustam". There are similar motifs to be found in the German legend of Hildebrand and Hadubrand, the Irish legend of Cuchulainn, the Russian heroic legend of Ilya Murometch. It is possible that the motif spread from Persia to the Irish people via the Russian and the German (Vries 114).

3. The Historical Age

The Historical Age, sometimes mixed with legends, extended from the conquest of Alexander the Great (Sekandar) to the fall of the Sassanid dynasty subsequent and the Arab conquest of Persia. This portion of the epic is narrated woefully, romantically, and in moving poetic language. After the history of Bahrām Gur, Ferdowsi relates the history of other fifteen Iranian kings. Yazdgerd is the last king of Sassanid Empire after whom Iran experienced the mastery of the Arabs. By order of Omar, caliph of Muslims, Sad-e Vaghghās attacked Iran. Rustam-e Farrokhzād, an Iranian commander, battled against them for some months in

Ghādesiyeh but none of two sides could be defeated. In the next war which continued for three days, lots of soldiers were killed. Finally Rustam and Sad battled each other. First Rustam killed Sad's horse but couldn't let behead Sad. Sad took advantage and killed Rustam. When Iranians saw their commander killed, they escaped to Baghdad. After this, Rustam's brother Farrokhzād attacked Karkh and killed many Arabs but again a dust storm did not let Iranians to see and they finally lost. Yazdgerd went to Khorāsān and asked Māhuy for help. Māhuy gave his army to Yazdgerd but secretly encouraged Bižan-e Pahlāvān, the governor of Bokhara, to battle against Yazdgerd. Bižan sent his commander, Barsām to war of Yazdgerd. In the war of Yazdgerd and Barsām, Iran's army by collusion did not fight and left the king alone. Yazdgerd hid in a mill. When the miller saw the king, he informed Māhuy and by his order killed the king. Then Māhuy wanted to fight against Bižan and conquer Bokhara, but he lost the war and was captured by Barsām. Barsām gave Māhuy to Bižan who killed him and three of his sons and burned them.

***Shah Nameh* and the Revival of the Persian Language**

Perhaps the principal and highest importance of *Shah Nameh* is its impact on Persian language. All Persian scholars unanimously agree that *Shah Nameh* has played a major role in reviving of a language after the Islamic conquest of Persia and the subsequent influence of Arabic language. It is well known that the *Shah Nameh* has few Arabic loanwords. Most experts like E. G. Browne claim that Ferdowsi consciously “avoided their use ... because he felt them to be unsuitable to the subject of his poem. But even in his time many Arabic words had become so firmly established in the language that it was impossible to avoid their use” (II 145-46). Browne studied 21 verses from the episode of Sohrāb and Rustam and estimates the Arabic vocabulary at four or five percent. The one study offering a complete count and a comprehensive commentary on the Arabic vocabulary of the *Šāh-nāma* (sic) is the Swiss dissertation by Mohammad Djafar Moïnfar written under the guidance of Emile Benveniste (1902-76; q.v.) and Gilbert Lazard (b. 1920). Moïnfar criticizes earlier attempts for their incomplete samples and loose criteria such as lax etymology, inclusion of proper nouns, and the counting of derivatives, compounds, and components of collocations as separate words. Moïnfar calculates that the *Shah Nameh* contains 706 words of Arabic origin, occurring a total of 8,938 times. The 100 words occurring most frequently account for 60 percent of all occurrences (Perry).

Ferdowsi belongs to the clan called *Dehghān* who were educated Iranians and had a sense of

responsibility to preserve Persian language and culture as well as their traditional customs against the dominance of Arabs who had been brought new values. This sense encouraged Ferdowsi in the creation of his poetic opus and shows his love for his language. Ferdowsi says:

Suffering for thirty years,
 I revived Iranians by this Persian composition
 Habitable constructions being destroyed
 By radiation of the sun and rains,
 I constructed of verses, a magnificent palace
 It is protected of wind and rain.

Ferdowsi started the composition of the *Shah Nameh* when Persia's political independence had been compromised. *Shah Nameh* reflects Persia's history, cultural values, ancient religion (Zoroastrianism) and the profound sense of ethno-national history of Persia. The profound cultural and linguistic influence of Ferdowsi's *Shah Nameh* lead some scholars to say that the main reason for Modern Persian language today to be more or less the same language as that of Ferdowsi's time over 1000 years ago is due to works like *Shah Nameh*. The work has become one of the main pillars of Modern Persian language and read by Persian speakers throughout the world in its original form. This fact makes the *Shah Nameh* different from other epics which are written in languages that are now dead. For instance, the old English epic *Beowulf* (ca. eighth century) can not be understood by the Modern English speaker.

Shah Nameh has had an enormous influence in shaping the modern identity of its Iranian readers as well as Persian speaking societies of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Central Asia. According to Bertold Spuler, "In the last analysis, it was the *Shahnameh* (sic), Ferdowsi's poetical work of universal literary rank that became the milestone for the self affirmation of Iranian identity. For the Iranian people indeed live in and by means of their poets; and the importance of the poems of Ferdowsi for the preservation of the Iranian character can in no way be overestimated" (281).

Ferdowsi, aware of the significance of his work, wrote at the end of *Shah Nameh*:

I've reached the end of this great history
 And all the land will talk of me:
 I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save

My name and reputation from the grave,
 And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim
 When I have gone, my praises and my fame. (VI. 26)

***Shah Nameh* and Iranian Traditions**

Shah Nameh is a compendium of Iranian traditions and customs, providing the readers knowledge and image of Persia's ancient ethics, rites, ceremonies, sports, events, values, myths and histories, arts, jobs, geographical places and cities... (Sarrami 15). It also traces the history of Zoroastrian religion from its beginnings to the defeat of the last Zoroastrian king by Arab conquerors. The sweep and psychological depth of the *Shah Nameh* is nothing less than magnificent. In its pages are unforgettable moments of national triumph and failure, human courage and cruelty, blissful love and bitter grief. It explores loyalty, familial conflict, duty; it chronicles the burdens of empire and the resentments and rebellions of the misused; it recounts the striving for justice and civilized order in times of turmoil and danger.

Amin Banani remarks that while Ferdowsi's main objective is to preserve the history of his fatherland, the sum of the *Shahnameh*'s (sic) artistic worth outweighs the inherent shortcomings of the poet's conscious scheme. He says, broadly conceived, *Shah Nameh* belongs to the epic genre, but it is not a formal epic as is the *Aeneid* or the *Lusiad*. "Rather, while its spontaneity recalls the *Iliad* its episodic character reveals its kinship with the *Chansons de geste*. More than any of its kindred poems, however, the *Shahnameh* (sic) is beset by paradoxes that shape its art and are the source of its tragic nobility. If there is a unifying theme in the *Shahnameh* (sic) it is no simple wrath of Achilles, but the malevolence of the universe itself" (website).

Yet Ferdowsi is no passive fatalist. He has an abiding faith in a just Creator, believes in the will of man and the need for his efforts and the worth of his good deeds. At the same time, it reflects Islamic principles and values, ethical beliefs and admiration of virtue, referring Ferdowsi is a Muslim who has a strong belief on Prophet Mohammad and his family (Ahl-e Beit) and admires them:

The one who has odium to Ali in his heart
 Tell me who is worse than of him in the world
 I believe them for ever

Even if the king cuts my body
 I can't leave their love
 Even if the sword of king passes my head. (I. 4)

These verses were one of the reasons why Sultan Mahmud did not welcome *Shah Nameh* and Ferdowsi. According to the expert Jalal Khaleghi Mutlaq the *Shah Nameh* teaches: Worship of one God, Fear of breaking the commandments of God, Respecting God, Religious Uprightness, Patriotism, Love of wife, family and children, Helping the poor, Pursuit of Wisdom, Pursuit of Justice, Long term thinking, Seeking and Acting in Equilibrium-moderation, Acting and Knowing correct manner-courtesy, Seeking the happiness of Guests-hospitality, Chivalry, Forgiveness, Thankfulness, Being content and Happy with existence, Hard Work, Being Peaceful and Kind, Being faithful, Truth and opposing anything that is against the Truth, Keeping covenants, Shame at committing immoral acts and also control over one's self, Not acting loud-modesty, Pursuing Knowledge-education, Knowledge of Wise Words and many other moral qualities.

The opening of *Shah Nameh* in praise of God and Wisdom established Ferdowsi as an intellectual poet who is known as a *hakim* in Persian. In this introduction, he gives an account of the versification of the book, advising his readers to think carefully to historical events and to see even the legends as symbols referring to reality. Shahbazi remarks:

The singular message that the *Shahnameh* (sic) of Ferdowsi strives to convey is the idea that the history of Iranshahr was a complete and immutable whole: it started with Kayumarth, the first man, and ended with his fiftieth scion and successor, Yazdegerd III, six thousand years of history. The task of Ferdowsi was to prevent this history from losing its connection with future Iranian generations (126).

His effort is to preserve the memory of Persia's golden age and turnover it to new generation, to learn from the past and make the future better. He remarks, man should see the world and use its history and experience, because:

The one who uses the world,
 Is needless of any teachers

He stressed on wisdom more than any other poets in Persian literature, believing wisdom as the

best gift of God to man. The wise one avoids injustice, tyranny, lying, greed, avidity and other evils. Beside these moral qualities, *Shah Nameh* gives good accounts of the ancient regions, cities, rivers and mountains of Persia along with other geographical places. *Shah Nameh* provides legends and stories about kings, heroes and heroines, warriors and their warfare. Though *Shah Nameh* is more than 1000 years old, even now Iranian names draw upon *Shah Nameh*'s protagonists, establishing the enduring popularity of the book among Iranians in modern time and how it leads them to secure a national identity. This continuing influence on Iranian nation is marked by some scholars. Victoria Arakelova points to the great impact of *Shah Nameh* on the whole literary process of peoples living in a vast area embracing the territories between Asia Minor, Caucasus, the Central Asia, India and even the Far East she writes as follows:

The onomastic system of Shahnameh (sic) can be traced in the name-giving traditions of the peoples and ethnic formations of this huge part of the world: Rustam, Sohrab, Bizhan, Manizhe, Rudabe, Tahmine, etc. are the most current names of the representative of Iranian and non-Iranian peoples of this area, followers of different confessions (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc.) (1).

Jamshid Sh. Giunshvili remarks on the connection of Georgian culture with that of *Shah Nameh*:

The names of many *Shah Nameh* heroes, such as Rustam, Tahmine, Sam-i, or Zaal-i, are found in 11th- and 12th-century Georgian literature. They are indirect evidence for an Old Georgian translation of the *Shah Nameh* that is no longer existent. The *Shah Nameh* was not only translated to satisfy the literary and aesthetic needs of readers and listeners, but also to inspire the young with the spirit of heroism and Georgian patriotism. Georgian ideology, customs, and worldview often informed these translations because they were oriented toward Georgian poetic culture. Conversely, Georgians consider these translations works of their native literature. Georgian versions of the *Shah Nameh* are quite popular, and the stories of Rustam and Sohrab, or Bijan and Manizha became part of Georgian folklore (website).

***Shah Nameh* and Its Impact on Persian Literature**

Shah Nameh's method and style was followed by subsequent Persian poets. The study of this masterpiece was a requirement for achieving knowledge of the Persian language. Ferdowsi and his *Shah Nameh* were provided by many who admired him in their own verses. For instance, the famous mystic and poet Sanāyi writes,

How he said, the great master,
Who established the foundation of poetry.

Nezāmi Ganjavi (1141-1209) a great story teller of Persian literature uses the *Shah Nameh* as a major source in *Eskandar Nameh* and his two other books. He says:

The wise eloquent of Tus
Who decorated the words like a bride.

It should be noted here that *Eskandar Nameh* of Nezami consists of two formally independent works, both in rhymed couplets and in the motaqāreb meter of the *Shah Nameh*. The first part is generally known as *Sharaf Nameh*, the second as *Eqbāl Nameh*.

Khaghani Shervani, a major Persian poet and prose writer (ca. 1127- 1199) says:

Is a candle of wises' ceremony in darkness of despondency, The
pointer of Ferdowsi;
His pure sense is an angelic birth
The creatures are angelic when the poet is Ferdowsi.

Sa'adi (c. 1213- 1291), the famous poet remarks:

How sweetly has conveyed the pure natured Ferdowsi, May
blessing be upon his pure resting place:
Do not harass the ant that's dragging a seed, because
it has life and sweet life is dear.

Anvari (c. 1126 - 1189) writes,

Well done to Ferdowsi 's spirit

Owning the fine inclination and beatific
 He was not just a Teacher and we his students.
 He was like a God and we are his slaves

Many more poets can be mentioned here. For example, Rumi and other mystical poets have used many imageries from *Shah Nameh* but in mystical symbolic manner. In a famous verse, Rumi writes "*shir-e Khwoda o Rustam Dastanam Arezoost*" (The lion of God (Ali as first Imam of Shia) and Rustam of Dastan is who I seek), Rustam is symbol of ideal man who reached God.

The *Shah Nameh* in India

Copies of the *Shah Nameh* illustrated in Persian style are attributed to India in 'Sultanate' period of 1420s which was marked by political fragmentation of Muslim power after the sack of Delhi by Timur in 1398. This was followed by the rush of Afghan chiefs and their followers into India. When Timurids lost their control over Central Asia, they turned towards northern India where one of Timur's descendants, Babur (1526–1530) defeated the Lodi sultans and founded the Mughal dynasty (1526–1858). Significantly, Mughal governors were bibliophiles and Persian language and culture was dominant at their court. Calligraphed and richly painted copies of the *Shah Nameh* were preserved in their libraries. In the following years, an astonishing set of illustrated manuscripts was prepared for Emperor Akbar (1556–1605). The Akbari style combined major artistic traditions the Safavid from Tabriz, Hindu from Vijayanagar and European styles brought by Jesuit missions and diplomats to the Mughal courts. Illustrated copies of *Shah Nameh* are among the most magnificent examples of Persian miniature painting. Several copies remain intact, although two of the most famous, the *Houghton Shah Nameh* and the *Great Mongol Shah Nameh*, were broken up as sheets to be sold separately. A single sheet (now in Aga Khan Museum) was sold for £904,000 in 2006. The Fitzwilliam Museum reports:

The *Shah Nameh* endured as a princely manual on wise and just kingship. It offered splendid opportunities for Mughal rulers and courtiers engaged in hunting, fighting, diplomatic ceremonies, feasts and amorous affairs. It also continued to provide a topical commentary on contemporary events and individuals, extending its relevance to the recent past and the present. Above all, its lasting appeal points to a core of meaning —

the eternal strife between good and evil — that transcends specific time and place (“The Shahnameh in India.” website).

Post- *Shah Nameh* Epics

Shah Nameh of Ferdowsi inspired other Iranian poets to write epic poems using the same meter and language. The influence of *Shah Nameh* on other epics can be seen in the imagery and the adventures undertaken by the heroes. There were more than sixteen other epic poems written following the completion of *Shah Nameh*. All the post-*Shah Nameh* epics are in the *Sisatn* cycle, and each is devoted to the adventures of a single eponymous hero. The following is a list of these epics with a short introduction to them:

1. ***Garshāsb Nameh*:** The second greatest epic is *Garshasb Nameh* of Asadi Tusi appeared about half century after *Shah Nameh*. This epic has got seven to eleven thousands lines and is the story of Garshasb, the ancestor of Rustam. The poet took the story from a written work which was possibly *Garshasb Nameh* of Moayyed Balkhi and he noted that it is a complement to the stories of the *Shah Nameh*.
2. ***Bahman Nameh*:** Ascribed to Iranshah Ibn Abul Kheir in 11th c, *Bahman Nameh* contains six thousands lines, deals with the story of Bahman son of Esfandiyār, narrating his revenge on Rustam's clan. *Bahman Nameh* includes a preface and four chapters. The poet in his preface praises sultan Mohammad and asks for premium.
3. ***Kush Nameh*:** this work also ascribed to Iran Shah Ibn Abul Kheir, composed probably in twelfth century. *Kush Nameh* deals with the heroic tale of Kush the Tusked (or Persian: *Pil-gush*, “The Elephant-eared”), the son of Kush who is the brother of the king Zakhak who mutinied in Feridon's time.
4. ***Farāmarz Nameh*:** written by unknown poet in 11th c, is the story of Faramarz, Rustam’s son who attacked India in order to help the Indian king Nowshaad. Nowshaad was taxpayer of Iran. This epic has been presented to Sultan Mahmud.
5. ***Bānu Goshasp Nameh*:** Banu Goshasp, Rustam's daughter, was a heroine. She had lots of great suitors but Rustam married her to Giv, son of Gudarz.

6. ***Borzu Nameh***: this epic, possibly by Atayi recounting the exploits and adventures of the legendary hero Burzu, son of Sohrab and grandson of Rustam, who almost has a similar story with his father. Before war against Iran, Sohrab fell in love of Shahru in Shangan and Borzu is outcome of this love. Burzo was captured by Rustam and when the secret out, he joined Iranians.
7. ***Bīžan Nameh***: this epic is written by Amīd Abu'l-Alā Aṭā b. Yaqūb Kāteb Rāzī, thought to be the author of *Borzu Nameh* relating the adventures of the legendary hero Bīžan, son of Giv, son of Gudarz which contains 1400 to 1900 lines. The story originally is derived of the story of Bīžan and Gorzan of *Shah Nameh*. Matini believes that *Bīžan Nameh* is “nothing more than a plagiarism of Ferdowsī’s story with some verses added by the author and some of Ferdowsī’s omitted”.
8. ***Susan Nameh***: Susan Nameh is a part of *Borzu Nameh*. Susan was a Turani jigger and mermaid whom Afrāsyāb sent her with Pilasam to fight of Rustam.
9. ***Shahriyār Nameh***: this epic written in 11th c, by Serajeddin Osman-ebn-e Mohammad Mokhtari Ghaznavi is important because related the adventures of Rustam's clan up to third generation. Shahriyār, son of Burzu, son of Sohrāb, son of Rustam and is the last man of Garshāsb's family. He unknowing of his decent, battled with his relatives but the war ended to peace.
10. ***Āzarbarzīn Nameh***: Azarbarzin was the son of Farāmarz from daughter of Sur, the king of Keshmir who lived in India when his father was fighting against Bahman. He hastened to help his father but was captured by Bahamn and joined him. The story starts from birth of Azarbarzin and ends by his death.
11. ***The Story of Kak-E Kuhzād***: Kak-e Kuhzad was an Afghan warrior. This story possibly written in Mongol's time, narrates how he obsessed Sistani people. Rustam in his hildhood with Milād hastened to fight him and his notability started from this point.
12. ***Lohrāsb Nameh***: Lohrāsb Nameh is another epic poem, mainly about the hero Lohrāsb.
13. ***The Story of Shabrang***: this epic poem is the story of Rustam's fight with Shabrang, son

of Div-e Sepid and all gnomes of Mazandaran.

14. ***The Story of Jamshid:*** this story relates the revote of Zahhāk against Jamshid and has been attached to *Shah Nameh*. This poem is full of Arabic words and has been written after rush of Mongol to Iran.
15. ***Jahāngir Nameh:*** Jahangir Nameh is a long epic poem which relates the story of Jahangir, son of Rostam and his fight with Rostam. The poet is an unknown composer named Ghasem who has been written it in Harat.
16. ***Sām Nameh:*** *Sam Nameh*, possibly composed by Khajū-ye Kermani seems to have been written in the late thirteen or early fourteen century. The story covers the life time of Sam, son of Narimān.
17. ***Zafar Nāmeḥ:*** Hamdallah Mustawfi's *Zafar-Nāmeḥ* or the 'Book of Victory' is a 14th century epic history. This epic, compiled in 75,000 couplets, relates Iranian history from the Arab conquest to the Mongols. Mustawfi spent fifteen years of his life to complete this long historical epic.

However, *Shah Nameh* has been a source of inspiration for countless writers, poets and artists for almost 10 centuries and its influence on culture and literature can not be overestimated. Davidson concludes that although there were other Persian epics besides the *Shah Nameh* of Ferdowsi, it is this poem that is recognized in Persian culture as Iranian epic par excellence (267) and he is Ferdowsi who has been called the Homer of Persia.

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CHAPTER - IV

RAMAYANA

Ramayana is one of the few great epics of ancient India and the story of Rama is ranked as one of the most popular stories in India and South Asia. The name *Ramayana* is a compound of two words: Rama and *yana* meaning “vehicle” translating to the “vehicle of Rama” or “Rama's Journey”. *Ramayana* narrates the journey and adventures of the hero Rama, the prince of Ayodhya who is possibly an incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu to annihilate vice. In the Indian tradition, Rama lived in *Treta Yug*, the second of the four eons (yuga) of Hindu chronology (Buck and Nooten xxi). Traditionally, *Ramayana* is attributed to the Sanskrit poet Srimad Valmiki. The Sanskrit version of *Ramayana*, dating to approximately the 5th to 4th century B.C is known to be “the most extensive early literary treatment of the life of Rama”. Asserting this, Paula Richman writes in her introduction to *Many Ramayanas*:

Many later *Ramayana* authors explicitly refer to it either as an authoritative source or as a telling with which they disagree. For centuries it has been regarded as the most prestigious *Ramayana* text in many Indian circles. It has also drawn the most attention from western scholars (5).

Robert P. Goldman the general editor of a new English translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, says:

Few works of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated, and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit epic poem, the Valmiki *Ramayana* (x).

This version of *Ramayana* is composed of verses called *Sloka* in Sanskrit language. Valmiki used the meter called *Anustup* for versification. These verses are grouped into chapters called *Sargas* which narrates an episode or intent. *Sargas* themselves are grouped into books called *Kaandas*. *Kaanda*, meaning the inter-node stem of sugar cane, refers to a particular phase or an event of the story in the course of story telling.

The Valmiki *Ramayana* is a 24,000 couplet-long epic poem over the years, additional verses and stories have been inspired especially during the medieval Bhakti period when several *bhasha* versions were composed. Efforts of textual scholars showed that some portions of Book I Bala Kanda, and the entire Uttara Kaanda which narrates Sita's expulsion to forest, appear to be later

additions (Sundararajan 106) possibly during the 2nd century BC or later (Chaurasia 38). Moreover, according to Goldman, “the main body of the narrative lacks statements of Rama's divinity and identifications of Rama with Vishnu are rare and subdued even in the later parts of the text” (45). Along with Valmiki's *Ramayana*, there are hundreds of other tellings and renderings of the story of Rama to be found in India, Southeast Asia, and beyond (Richman 7). Three famous renderings of the epic include *Shri Rama Panchali* or *Krittivasi Ramayan* by Krittibas Ojha in Bengali (15th century), *Ramayana* of Kampan or *Iramavataram* in Tamil (11th-12th century), and *Ramacharitamanas* by Tulasidas in Awadhi, an eastern form of Hindi (16th century) (Sundararajan 106).

Protagonists:

Rama is the central and the hero of the epic. He is believed to be the seventh incarnation of god Vishnu. In the story Rama is the eldest son and heir of the King of Ayodhya but was sent into exile for fourteen years.

Laxmana is the younger brother of Rama and the second of the bore princess of Ayodhya and believed to be incarnation of the Sheshanāga associated with Vishnu. Laxmana was loyal to his brother and accompanied him in his long exile.

Sita is the adored wife of Rama and the incarnation of goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. She followed Rama into exile but was abducted by Ravana. From this point the epic narrates Rama's war with Ravana for the release of Sita.

Dasharatha is Rama's father and the king of Ayodhya. He had three queens: Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, and four sons: Rama, Bharata and twins Laxmana and Shatrughna.

Kaikeyi is Dasharatha's queen and Bharata's mother. When everything was prepared for Rama's coronation as heir apparent, Kaikeyi forced Dasharatha to declare Bharata as a king and send Rama into exile.

Bharata is the third son of Dasharatha and Rama's brother. When he heard what his mother had done he refused to crown. He went into the woods to request Rama's return. When Rama refused

to come back as that would have dishonored his father, Bharata carried Rama's sandals the throne and ruled as Rama's regent.

Sugreeva is the King of the monkeys who was banished by his brother Vali. He promised to help Rama locate Sita if Rama helps him to defeat Vali.

Hanuman is a huge and powerful ape considered the son of the god of the Winds Vayu. He found Sita in Lanka and played an important role in fighting Ravana.

Ravana is the powerful king of Lanka. He is a rakshasa described as having ten heads and twenty arms. He received a boon from Parameshwara that he couldn't be killed by gods, demons, or spirits. This boon did not include the human being. Ravana abducted Sita with the help of the rakshasa Maricha and carried her to Lanka. In the ensuing battle, Ravana was killed by Rama.

Synopsis of the Epic

The Valmiki's *Ramayana* has been arranged into six books or kanda, which are:

Bala Kanda (Book of Youth) [77 chapters]

Ayodhya Kanda (Book of Ayodhya) [119 chapters]

Aranya Kanda (Book of Forest) [75 chapters]

Kishkindha Kanda (The Empire of Holy Monkeys) [67 chapters]

Sundara Kanda (Book of Beauty) [68 chapters]

Yuddha Kanda (Book of War) [128 chapters]

Bala Kanda

Bala Kanda starts with the story of king Dasharatha who had three queens but no children. He was advised to perform a *Putra-Kameshti Yagya*. As a consequence, Rama and his three brothers are born. Nowadays in India Rama's birthday is celebrated as Ramanavami. In another trajectory(not in Valmiki's text), Janaka the king of Mithila and Sita's father organized a 'Swayamvara' for Sita and declared that whoever could string the bow bestowed upon him by Shiva would marry Sita. Rama was the only one who could wield the bow and this led their marriage.

Valmiki's *Ramayana* describes Rama lifting and stringing the mighty bow while visiting Janaka with Visvamitra.

Ayodhya Kanda

Soon Dasharatha felt it was time to give the reins of the kingdom to Rama. But Kaikeyi whose jealousy has been aroused by her servant claimed two boons that Dasharatha had long ago promised her. She asked that Rama should be exiled for fourteen years, and her son Bharata to become king.

Aranya Kanda

Rama, Sita and Laxmana settle in the forest. Maricha assumed the form of a golden deer to lure Rama and Laxmana providing opportunity for Ravana to steal Sita away. Searching for Sita, Rama and Laxmana met ascetic Shabari who led them to Sugriva and Hanuman.

Kishkindha Kanda

The story continues in Kishkindha Kanda when Rama and Laxmana meet Hanuman. Hanuman directs them to Sugreeva, the King of the monkeys, who was banished by his brother Vali. Rama helps him to defeat Vali. When Sugreeva regained the kingdom, he sent four groups to the four sides of the earth, searching for Sita. Finally Hanuman located Sita in Ravana's garden in Lanka.

Sundara Kanda

This book as Goldman (3) says forms the heart of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The Sundara Kanda narrates the adventures of Hanuman who finds Sita after a long search. He shows her the signet ring of Rama and received her own ring for Rama. He allowed himself to be captured and before leaving Lanka, sets fire to the city.

Yuddha Kanda

The last book of *Ramayana* describes the great war between Rama and his ape army with Ravana's forces. After a long war, Rama kills Ravana and recovers Sita. Finally, Rama accompanied by Sita, Laxmana and Hanuman return to Ayodhya where they are welcomed by

the people. Rama becomes the king and rules the earth for ten thousand years very morally and ethically.

Variations of *Ramayana*

One of the common features of the ‘oral epic’ is the variation of the story. Significantly no epic in the world has as many versions as *Ramayana*. Frank E. Reynolds asserts that “in the history and literature of religions few stories have been told in as many different ways as the story of Rama” (50). Within India there exist multiple versions of the *Ramayana*. In the neighboring countries of Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam, China and Maldives, many Rama-stories exist with different names. Srinivasa Iyengar in his introduction to *Asian Variations in Ramayana* writes:

What is perhaps even more astonishing than the universal vogue and the great role of the *Ramayana* in India is the general diffusion of the story all over the world. Even as, in India, the Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina and other *Ramayana* versions vary from one another, just as the numberless folk renderings and evocations in the plastic and the performing arts reveal a tantalising versatility in the handling of the Rama-Sita-Ravana theme, the legend has likewise undergone countless variations in the process of diffusion or transplantation abroad to the several far-Hung countries of Asia (2).

Camille Bulcke counted three hundred tellings of the epic in various genres. Actually, more than 300 versions of the *Ramayana* are identified as extant (Ramanujan 32). Among all, the Sanskrit *Ramayana* attributed to the sage Valmiki is known to be the oldest text. This version has served as the base adapting or translating into many regional languages (bhasha). But as A.K. Ramanuja explains, “it is not always Valmiki’s narrative that is carried from one language to another” (25).

Some of these regional versions of the *Ramayana* written by various authors differ from each other in important manners. These authors have either adapted the Valmiki *Ramayana* and transformed it to suit their own culture, lifestyle and tradition, or translated into the various regional languages in India. Most of these *Ramayana* versions are not considered as merely literal translations; instead they have their own linguistic richness and poetic style. In “Top 15 Popular Version of Ramayana” the entries are arranged according to their period.

To mention some of the significant examples of the *Ramayana* story, the 7th century *Bhattikavya* by Bhatti is a Sanskrit rendering of the epic. As noted before, *Bhattikavya* is one of the sixth paradigmatic example of Kāvya poetry and the earliest example of an "instructional poem" or *śāstra-kāvya*. As literature, it stands comparison with the best of Sanskrit poetry. *Ravanavadha* (the death of Ravana) is an alternative title of *Bhattikavya*. It is not possible that this was the original title as the death of Ravana is only a part of the whole poem. *Bhattikavya* may get this title to separate it from other works which relate the death of Ravana. *Bhattikavya* of Bhatti is a version including descriptions of cities, mountains, the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the ocean and the sports, love and sex. The poem exemplifies Sanskrit grammar and poetics and rhetoric (Narang website).

The 12th century *Iramavataram*, also known as a *Kampan Ramayanam*, written by Kampan is the Tamil version of the tale. Although *Ramavatharam* is based on Valmiki's *Ramayana*, it differs from the Sanskrit text in many aspects - both in spiritual concepts and in the specifics of the story line. This work is considered as one of the greatest literary works in Tamil literature. Schuman describes Kampan's *Iramavataram* thus: "perhaps the supreme achievement of Tamil letters, and certainly one of the great works of the world's religious literature, is Kampan's version of the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*. No creation of Tamil poets has ever been so passionately loved as Kampan's *Iramavataram*" (135). This epic is divided into six chapters called *Kandam* in Tamil.

Bala Kandam (Chapter: Childhood)

Ayodhya Kandam (Chapter: Ayodhya)

Aranya Kandam (Chapter: Forest)

Kishkinta Kandam (Chapter: Kishkintha)

Sundara Kandam (Chapter: Beautiful)

Yutha Kandam (Chapter: War)

The *Kandams* are further divided into 123 sections called *Padalam* containing around 12,000 verses. The chapter *Sundara Kandam* on the difficulties faced by the main characters, their practice of restraint, and their hopes for a better future is the most popular one. Regarding its religious significance, the epic is read by Hindus during prayers and in some households the entire epic is read during the Tamil Month of Aadi.

Kumudendu Ramayana (a Jain version) by Kumudendu and the *Ramachandra Charita Purana* by Nagachandra during the 13th century, and Kumara-Valmiki Torave's *Ramayana* written in the 16th century are three Kannada versions of the *Ramayana*.

During the 15th century, the *Ramayanu* written by Krishnadasa Shama in Kardalipura, the Assamese *Katha Ramayana* or *Kotha Ramayana* by Madhava Kandali, and the Bengali *Krittivasi Ramayan* by Krittivasa are notable works. Also in this century a Telugu version called *The Sri Ranganatha Ramayana mu* was adapted by Ranganatha.

In the 16th century, the Marathi *Bhavartha Ramayana* was written by Eknath. This narrative epic of forty thousands couplets in 'ovi' meter has enjoyed huge popularity among the rural folk. Of forty thousands couplets, twenty- five thousand were written by Eknath; the rest was completed by his disciple Gawba. While composing this work, Eknath was conscious of the poetic values and the relationship of poetry with society. As Singh remarks, "Awareness of the prevailing conditions and also suggestions to meet the distracting political and social onslaught are also distinctive feathers of this work" (433). In Orissa, *Dandi Ramayana* or *Jagamohan Ramayana* was adapted by Balaram Dasa in Dandibritta variety of prose rhythm. In this form if the first line consists of twelve letters, the second line can exceed from fourteen to twenty five. *Dandi Ramayana* is not a literary translation but is an Oriya imitation of Valmiki *Ramayana*. It was put to music and sung by popular singers and presents Oriya customs and traditions, rites and rituals, feasts and festivalities and the folk tales (Datta 57). During this century the Malayalam *Adhyatma Ramayana Kilipattu* written by Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan is noted. Ezhuthachan is considered the Father of the Malayalam language. The importance of his version of *Ramayana* is that it is full of devotion. It is so popular in Kerala that it is used for chanting in all Hindu homes in Kerala. Ramayana Masam (Ramayana Month) is celebrated every year in Kerala between mid-July to mid-August. This work comprises six chapters as follows:

1. Bala Kanda
2. Ayodhya Kanda
3. Aranya Kanda
4. Kishkindha Kanda
5. Sundara Kanda
6. Yuddha Kanda

The other significant work of this time is *Ramacharitamanasa* composed by the 16th-century Indian poet Goswami Tulsidas (1532–1623). *Ramcharitmanas* literally means the "lake of the deeds of Rama". The epic is also called *Tulsikrit Ramayan* literally means "*The Ramayan composed by Tulsi*" or in other words, "*The Ramayan of Tulsidas*". As Vyas notes, It has been the custom to name the Ramayan after its author (10). The *Ramcharitmanas* consists of seven Kāndas or 'books' where the poet compares it to seven steps leading into the holy waters of Mansarovar a Himalayan lake "which purifies the body and the soul at once" (Ghose 118). In his entry on 'Ramcharitmanas' Class writes, "The word manas alludes to a sacred lake in the Himalayas, and so the title may be rendered 'the divine lake of Ram's deeds'. It also means the "lake of the mind". *Rāmcharitmānas*, composed in the Avadhi dialect of Hindi, is an epic of some 13,000 lines. This work is considered one of the greatest works of Hindu literature, and is often referred to as the "Bible of northern India" by Western scholars of Indian literature (Lochtefeld 559). Of the seven books, the first two titled Bāl kānd (Childhood Episode) and Ayodhya kānd (Ayodhya Episode), make up more than half the work. The later books are Aranya Kānd (Forest Episode), Kishkindha Kānd (Kishkindha Episode), Sunder Kānd (Pleasant Episode), Lanka Kānd (Lanka Episode) and Uttar Kānd (Later Episode).

During the 17th century, the Punjabi *Ramavatara* was written by Guru Gobind Singh, the Gujarati *Tulsi-Krita Ramayana* was an adaptation of the Tulsidas *Ramayana* by Premanand Swami, and an Urdu version titled the *Pothi Ramayana* are noted. During the 19th century, *Ramavatara Charita* of Prakash Ram is a Kashmiri version. Since its first edition in Persio-Arabic script, the *Ramayana* of Prakash Ram has run into six editions as proof of the popularity of the poem in Kashmir and has served as a model for the epic poets of the Kashmiri language (Datta 43).

Besides these Indian versions, *Ramayana* in many versions exists in other Asian cultures. In Nepal, two versions of *Ramayana* are present. The first one is a Nepal Bhasa version titled *Siddhi Ramayan* written by Mahakavi Siddhidas Mahaju Amatya during Nepal Bhasa renaissance era. Mahakavi Siddhidas is considered the greatest poet in the language and among the four stalwarts involved in Nepal Bhasa renaissance. The other one is *Bhanubhaktako Ramayan* by Bhanubhakta Acharya in Nepali language, recognized as the first epic written in this language. It is so lyrical that it is more a song than a poem (Bishnu website).

Other renderings of *Ramayana* include a Malaysian version entitled *Hikayat Seri Rama*. Although the main plot remains the same, some aspects are modified to suit the local context such as the spelling and pronunciation of names. Also Laxmana plays a larger role, sometimes becoming more important than his elder brother Rama. Another work is *Kakawin Ramayana* of Java composed in *kakawin* meter. The Javanese *Ramayana* differs markedly from the original Hindu prototype. The first half of this work is similar to the original Sanskrit version, but the second half diverges completely to the unrecognizable by Indian scholars of the Sanskrit *Ramayana*. One of the main changes is the entry of the all-powerful Javanese indigenous deity *dhayana*, the guardian god of Java Semar and his misshapen sons, *Gareng*, *Petruk*, and *Bagong*. This latter part of the work is the more popular and is performed in all *wayang* performances. The other adaption of *Ramayana* in Indonesia is *Ramakavaca* of Bali. *Phra Lak Phra Lam* of Laos, *Maharadya Lawana* and *Darangen of Mindanao* (Philippines), *Yama Zatdaw* of Burma (Myanmar), *Reamker* of Cambodia and *Ramakien* of Thailand are other renderings of *Ramayana* outside India. The Chinese Ming period (1368-1644), the novel *Hsi-yu Chi* or *Journey to the West* has also adopted some aspects of *Ramayana*. The story deals with the journey of monk Hsuan-tsang during a pilgrimage to India to obtain Buddhist scriptures. In this journey four animal disciples accompany him, especially his superhuman monkey disciple Sun Wu-k'ung. In this novel, the character of Sun Wukong could have been based on Hanuman. Subbaraman in his essay "Beyond the Question of the Monkey Imposter: Indian Influence on the Chinese Novel, The Journey to the West" studies the parallels between *The Journey to the West* and the *Ramayana* and states,

...comparisons between the two texts should not simply be limited to the two monkey characters, but should be expanded to other characters, settings, extended plot lines, and even thematic organization. The use of these examples will hopefully illuminate the many ways Indian literature may have influenced the Chinese novel *The Journey to the West* without portraying the novel as a foreign (website).

Besides such classic versions of the epic, some Contemporary prose renderings of *Ramayana* have been published. *Sri Ramayana Darshanam* by K. V. Puttappa in Kannada, *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* by Viswanatha Satyanarayana in Telugu, and *Geet Ramayan* in Marathi by

G.D. Madgulkar are three noteworthy examples. In addition, R. K. Narayan wrote a shortened prose work. Ashok Banker also has written a series of six novels both based on the *Ramayana*.

Translation of *Ramayana* into Persian

Traditionally, there is a close cultural relationship between India and Persia which goes back to ancient times. In Sanskrit literature, especially in *Vishnu Puran*, Persians are mentioned in many cases as Parasika. Also the inscriptions of Persepolis and Naqsh-e-Rustam of Emperor Darius (d. 486 B.C.) located in the south of Iran point to Indus as ‘Hindush’ from which the term ‘Hindu’ was derived and later used by Arab geographers and historians. There seems to be a striking similarity between Vedic gods and the ancient Iranian and Hittite deities. The cult of sun-worship was brought to India by the Magas who migrated from Sakadvip or Persia around the first century B.C. Initially they were not admitted into Hindu rituals and ceremonies but in the course of time they were absorbed into Vedic society and came to be known as Sakadvip or Maga Brahmins (Momin website).

Close interaction and exchange between Persia and India is reflected in arts and crafts, architecture, etiquette and manners, music, as well as literary compositions and translations. To mention an outstanding example, the Indian fable masterpiece, *Panchatantra* was first translated into a foreign language during the Sassanid reign of Khosru Anushiravan around 570 CE when his famous physician Borzuye translated it from Sanskrit into Pahlavi, the Middle Persian language, entitled *Kalile va Demne* (Zarrinkoub 374-79).

During the medieval period, Persian language enjoyed a pre-eminent position of cultural and political spheres in India which consequently influenced to a greater or lesser degree a large number of Indian languages. The deep impact of Persian on Indian regional languages led some scholars to claim that “no other language, apart from Sanskrit which is the mother of all modern Indo-European languages in the country, has left such a deep and enduring influence on Indian languages as Persian” (Momin website).

Persian literary traditions also influenced Indian literature and led to the flourishing of Persian literature in India. Many Sanskrit works were translated into Persian under the patronage of Muslim emperors and kings. If we leave out the re-telling of the stories of the *Ramayana* and

the *Mahabharata* in Indian regional languages, the first significant translations took place at the time of Emperor Akbar (Asaduddin website).

Akbar in his efforts to cultivate understanding among religions and to reduce sectarian tensions between Hindus and Muslims, commissioned translations of Sanskrit, Arabic and Turkish works into Persian and set up a '*Maktab Khaneh*' or translation bureau. The Sanskrit texts which were rendered into Persian included *Atharbed* by Badaoni; *Bhagwad Gita* by Faizi; *Gangadhar* by Abul Fazl; *Haribans* by Maulana Sheri; *Jog-Bashishta* by Maulana Faraniuli; *Katha Sarit Sagara* by Badaoni; *Kishen Joshi* by Abul Fazl; *Lilavati* and *Nal Daman* by Faizi; *Mahesh Mohanand* by Abul Fazl; *Singhasana Battisi* by Badaoni, as "*Nama-i-Khird Afza*"; *Tajak* on astronomy by Muhammad Khan; a treatise on elephants by Mulla Sheri; *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* by Badayuni and others.

Mullah Abdul Qadir Badayuni, of Akbar's court reluctantly translated *Ramayana* into Persian. This rendering began in 1585 and was completed around the 1589. Badayuni translated it under royal pressure and wrote:

In the month of the year nine hundred and ninety seven (997), I finished the translation of the *Ramayana*, which has taken me four years. I wrote it all in complete and brought it to the Emperor. When I wrote at the end of it the couplet

"We have written a story, who will bring it to the emperor?

We have burnt our soul, who will bring it to the beloved?"

It was much admired. He commanded me to write a preface to it after the manner of the authors. But, it was no such great recovery from my falling out of favour, and a *kutbah* would have to be written without praising the God and the Prophet, I dissimulated. And from that black book, which is nothing like the book of my life, I flee to God for refuge. The transcription of *Kufr* (infidelity) is not *kufr* and I repeat the declaration of faith in opposition to heresy, why should I fear (which God forbid!) that a book which was all written against the grain, and in accordance with a strict command, shall bring with it a curse" (Gandhi website).

Shortly after the translation of *Ramayana*, the other important Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata* was also rendered into Persian as '*Razm Nameh*' or the "Book of War". However, following

Badayuni's rendering of *Ramayana*, other writers began to translate or compose it into Persian. The number of complete or partial translations of the *Ramayana* in Persian is not known but over a period of three centuries (16th to 19th) *Ramayana* found many versions in Persian. The former curator of Persian and Arabic manuscripts at the Natural Museum in Delhi estimated that the number of *Ramayana* composed in Persian was thirty eight but some scholars set around ninety (Momin website).

One of these Persian translations was done by Sheikh Sadullah Masih Panipati, being the reign of Emperor Jahangir. This text *Ramayan-e-Masihi* was published in 1899 by Munshi Naval Kishor Press, Lucknow. It remained neglected during Jahangir's reign because Muslim readers had lost their interest in Hindu scriptures. Fanatic Muslims blamed him for composing the *Ramayana*. Therefore to justify himself, Masih condemned fanatics in the beginning of his work under the heading *Dar Mazammat-e-Hossad* (condemning the jealous). He reminded the two *naats* in praise of the Prophet Mohammad written at the start of the epic, and in 'Peighambar Nameh' his other epic poem relating the life and exploits of the Prophet. But there were ignored by cynic and fanatics. Masih wrote in Persian 'masnavi' style and gave separate headings to all incidents or episodes. Masnavi is a series of couplets in rhymed pairs (*aa, bb, cc*, and so on) as a type of Persian verse used chiefly for heroic, historical, and romantic epic poetry and didactic poetry. Thus he employed an Indic theme within the literary conventions of the Persian Masnavi.

Although Masih composed his work based on Valmiki's *Ramayana*, he transformed the story as a Persian romance between two lovers. Ram and Sita. His work also reflects a mystical-allegorical dimension while referring to Rama as 'body' and Sita as the 'soul'. The attempt of Rama in searching of his beloved Sita frequently work as allegory of mystical love of a soul seeking unity with the divine. Saini in his essay "Ramayana retold in Persian" points to this fact and says:

He [Masih] deals with it as a love poem and not as scripture. Sita is painted like a beautiful maiden. It was her beauty that attracted Rama to marry her. Ravana also carried her away when his sister Sarupnakha described her matchless beauty before that demon. He took Sita to Lanka to marry her and not to avenge the insult heaped on his sister, whose nose was chopped by Laxmana in presence of Rama. The Hindu poets do not describe Sita's beauty from top to toe. It seems that Masih could not read the Sanskrit

epic of Valmiki and composed his magnum opus after reading Badayuni or hearing its bare outlines from his Hindu friends. Still this book is a piece of superb poetry (website).

Another translation of *Ramayana* into Persian was done by S. Mohar Singh entitled *Balmiki Ramayan*. It was published in 1890 by Ganesh Prakash Press, Lahore. Mohar Singh belonged to Ram Nagar village in Gujranwala district (now in Pakistan). He was employed in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army. Unfortunately Mohar Singh died before who could complete his work. The remaining portion of his work was completed by his friend Hiranand Lal using the same meter and style. Mohar Singh's rendering drew on Valmiki's *Ramayana* and he often mentions the name of the sage gratefully. He did not divide his work to traditional cantos but looking to *masnavi*'s form described all events by various headings. The style of the work is simple but sometimes Sanskrit words occurred. Saini believes that "these two poets have not only enriched the epic tradition related to Rama but have also paved the way for communal amity. One has painted Rama as a human being with divine qualities and other has depicted him as a divine being with human characteristics" (website).

The figure of Rama was portrayed in Persian literature also through the translations of the Vedantic text, the *Yoga Vasistha*. This work is one of the Rama stories which was rendered into Persian during the Moghul Dynasty. *Yoga Vasistha* also known as *Vasishtha Ramayana* is a Hindu spiritual text and is considered one of the most important scriptures of the Vedantic philosophy. This book was originally written in Sanskrit and traditionally attributed to Valmiki while modern scholars estimate its composition as being between the 11th and 14th centuries AD.

In this work, prince Rama returning from his journey around the country becomes disillusioned with the world after experiencing *vairagya* (dispassion). King Dasaratha expresses his concern to Sage Vasistha who consoles the king that Rama's dispassion (*vairagya*) was a sign that the prince was now ready for spiritual enlightenment. He says that Rama has begun to understand profound spiritual truths, which was the cause of his confusion and he just needed confirmation. Sage Vasistha asks king Dasaratha to summon Rama. Then, in the court of king Dasaratha, the sage begins the discourse for Rama which lasts for several days. The answers to Rama's questions form the entire scripture that is *Yoga Vasistha* in which Rushi Vasistha presents his philosophical concepts on salvation.

One of the significant translations of *Yoga Vasistha* was carried out by Nizam al-Din Panipati in the late 16th century A.D. The translation also known as the *Jug-Basisht*, became popular among Persian intellectuals with Indo-Persian interests (Leslie104). Later, Jahangir's grandson prince Dara Shikoh commissioned a translation of the *Yoga Vasistha*. In this work, Rama is presented as a disciple rather than a semi-divine king. The story begins with Dara dreaming of Rama and Vasishtha and Vasishtha asking Rama to feed Dara. Rama embraces Dara and feeds him sweets which seem to portray a Sufi understanding. Different from Rama of Akbar's translations, the attempt made to combine ruler-ship with spiritual realization and powers.

Although poorly catalogued, the libraries' manuscripts of Persian Rama stories give evidence of the Rama theme in Persian literature. In Jehangir's time Girdhardas, who was a contemporary of Tulsidas, translated much of Valmiki's epic into Persian verse. In Shahjahan's time another rendering of the epic was written entitled *Ramayan Faizi*. In Aurangzeb's time Chandrabhan Bedil translated Valmiki into Persian verse and prose in 1696 entitled *Nargestan*. This translation was published in 1875 in Lucknow.

Later in 1860, a translation was done by Amanat Ray Lalpuri in forty thousand couplets and arranged into six chapters with. He added a ghazal to each chapter. In the next decade, Meser Ram Das Ghabel translated four chapters of the *Ramayana* into Persian. He titled first chapter as *Mobarak*(blest), the second as *Feragh* (seclusion), the third as *Jang* (battle) and the forth chapter as *Jolus* (crown). This translation is in verse. Another translation was by Sumer Chand which was illustrated during the reign of Farrukh Siyar (1715-16 A.D.) as 258 miniatures throwing light on the art, architecture, costumes and ornaments of the period besides highlighting the composite culture of India in the late medieval period (Kuma 11).

Munshi Chagann (1866-1899) also known by his pen name Hasan wrote a prose narrative as *Neirang-e Hasan* (Trap's of Hasan) or *Bahar-e Ayodhya* (Spring of Ayodhya) in 1877. He also wrote a shortened version of the epic included in his book (Abaee 15).

***Ramayana* and its Impact on Art and Culture**

Kathleen M. Erndl, a western Indologist maintains that “The *Ramayana* story, more than any other sacred story in India, has been interpreted as a blueprint for right human action”. She asserts that “although the *Ramayana* is a myth that can be approached on many levels, it is the human level that has had the most profound effect on the Indian people” (67). Thus the importance of *Ramayana* is not limited to its literary features. It functions as a fundamental text of Hinduism as one of the sacred books illustrating Hindu ethics. Hindus learn the epic as a holy book from their childhood believing that reading or hearing of it blesses both the reader and listener. In this regard U. Thein Han states, “It (the *Ramayana*) is not only a literary treasure but also a source of ennobling influence on the relationships of men as parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, teachers and pupils, and rulers and the ruled” (Iyengar xiii). Pointing to its significance in the daily life of the Indians, there are two all-Indian holidays to celebrate the events of *Ramayana*: ones Dussehra, a nine-day festival in October commemorating Rama's victory over Ravana; and the second is Diwali, the festival of Lights in October-November, commemorating Rama and Sita's return to their kingdom Ayodhya. On the *Ramayana*'s wholly salutary impact on the people of India, Fr. C. Bulcke writes:

The popularity of the Valmiki *Ramayana* and the voluminous Rama-Literature of many centuries is a monument to the idealism of India, its high esteem of moral values and its belief in the ultimate of good over evil. In the same way, the enthusiastic response of the millions of northern India to the message of *Ramacharitamanasa* testifies to the deep-seated religious belief and spontaneous piety of the soul of India (Iyengar 2).

The *Ramayana* as an impressive monument of poetry has been reflected in other arts. The story is reflected in songs, theatre, painting, temple architecture and dance as well as in cinema and television. The 1975 Hindi television serial based on the *Ramayana* story captivated its audiences. Philip Lutgendorf wrote about this serial:

The *Ramayana* serial had become the most popular programme ever shown on Indian television- and something more: an event, a phenomenon of such proportions that intellectuals and policy makers struggled to come to terms with its significance and long

range import. Never before had such a large percentage of south Asia's population been united in a single activity; never before had a single message instantaneously reached so enormous a regional audience" (128).

The profound impact of *Ramayana* can be seen in the *Mappila* Songs of the Muslims of Kerala and Lakshadweep as well as in the American song and later film *Sita Sings the Blues* and. *Ramayana* is represented in the Indian performative traditions of *Yakshagana*. The epic is painted on the walls of Thailand's Wat Phra Kaew palace temple. Despite Islam forbidden theater and dance, performing arts based on *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have survived in Malaysia and Indonesia. In Indonesia, the world's largest Islamic nation, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are compulsory subjects in most the universities. Indonesians take pride in saying "Islam is our Religion but *Ramayana* is our Culture" (Kumar 4). In Indonesia, the tales from the epic are performed in ballet performances, masked danced drama, and Wayang shadow puppetry.

At the 1975 *Ramayana* seminar that was held in New Delhi, Amin Sweeney gave a masterly account of 'The Malaysian Ramayana in Performance'. He states:

The characters of the Lord Rama, his lady Sita, and their loyal followers still come to life nightly on the shadow screens of the north-west Malaysia where the performance of at good dalang can still draw a larger audience than a local open- air cinema showing the latest in Hollywood coco-cola culture (Iyengar xiii).

The television series 'Ramayan' by producer Ramanand Sagar and 'Jai Hanuman' by Sanjay Khan are two adoption of *Ramayana* on the screen. A Japanese animated film 'Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama' (1990) and an Indian animated film 'Ramayana: The Epic' (2010) are two more examples. The Southeast Asian Games in 1997 used Sri Hanuman as its mascot. He is a popular figure or deity in all these countries. Kumar writes of the character of Hanuman:

Hanuman or Hanumat or Aanjaneya or Anjata or Maruti is known by different names in these countries: Hanoman in Balinese, Anoman and Senggana in Javanese, Haliman in Karbi, Anjat or Anujit in Khmer, Hanmone(e), Hulahman, Hunahman, Huonahman, Huorahman in Lao, Haduman, Hanuman Kera Putih, Kera Kechil Imam Tergangga, Pahlawan Udara, Shah Numan in Malay, Laxamana (yes, and Laxmanis

known as Mangawarna) in Maranao, Hanumant in Sinhalese, Anuman in Tamil, Anchat or Wanon in Thai and Hanumandha or Hanumanta in Tibetan (4).

These distinctive features have given *Ramayana* a unique status and has caused its numerous permutations as Narayana Rao maintains, “the *Ramayana* in India is not just a story with variety of retellings; it is a language with which a host of statements may be made” (114).

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CHAPTER – V

Comparison of the Two Epics

This chapter addresses the similarities and differences of the two Eastern epics *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* by studying some examples. Indian and Persian epics have long been recognized as intimately connected in fascinating and important ways, but through this chapter we try a closer and deeper study to explore the implications of the parallels and contrasts. This study uses a tiered structure to present its information, moving from the general to the particular. It discusses the general epic pattern and then presents some examples from the two texts. Some of the examples could be traced to the overall Indo-Aryan family of languages and traditions. Not only genetically related words but phrases and narrative patterns shared across wide expanses of space and time suggest a possible Indo-Aryan prototype for various stories. Such partial stories in turn raise the question of the relationship between myth and epic. In *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) Frazer holds that ‘primitive’ societies have literal faith in the efficacy of magic, or adopt totems because they regard themselves as blood relations of the totemic animal, or are ignorant of the connection between sexual relations and birth (29-32). This subject was discussed in the first chapter and this chapter provides some examples of the common myths of the epics. There are parallels between the poetry of two societies which are separated in time and space but seem so similar in culture.

The Prologue: *Shah Nameh*

In keeping with the classical tradition, Ferdowsi begins *Shah Nameh* in praise of God and Wisdom continuing with an account of the creation of the world and man, the creation of the sun and the moon as believed by the Sasanians. This introduction is followed by praise of the Prophet Mohammad and Imam Ali. Then Ferdowsi describes how he compiled the epic, relating the story of the poet Daqiqi who inspired his verses and ends his prologue in praising Sultan Mahmud. The last part was added later when *Shah Nameh* was presented to the sultan Mahmud of Ghazneh. Opening the book in praise of God was an old tradition among Muslim poets and writers in Persian literature but the point that distinguishes *Shah Nameh* from other literary

works is the stress Ferdowsi puts on 'wisdom' which is unique and magnificent in Persian literature.

IN the name of the Lord of both wisdom and mind,
 To nothing sublimer can thought be applied,
 The Lord of whatever is named or assigned
 A place, the Sustainer of all and the Guide,
 The Lord of Saturn and the turning sky,
 Who causeth Venus, Sun, and Moon to shine,
 Who is above conception, name, or sign,
 The Artist of the heaven's jewelry!
 Him thou canst see not though thy sight thou strain,
 For thought itself will struggle to attain
 To One above all name and place in vain,
 Since mind and wisdom fail to penetrate
 Beyond our elements, but operate
 On matters that the senses render plain. (I. 1)

Regarding the popularity of these verses among Persians in preset times, there is evidence of writers and speakers invoking Ferdowsi's prologue in their discussions. Epistemologically, the God as prayed and described by Ferdowsi as a leitmotif is based on Islamic theology. God as *Allāh* is the all-powerful and all-knowing creator. He is unique (*wahid*) and inherently One (*ahad*), all-merciful and omnipotent. According to the Islamic teachings, God exists without a place. According to the Qur'an, "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. Ferdowsi says:

Him thou canst see not though thy sight thou strain,
 For thought itself will struggle to attain. (I. 16)

According to Islam there are 99 names of God, each of which evokes a distinct attribute. All these names refer to Allah, the supreme and all-comprehensive divine name. God is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things" (Qur'an 6:103). Ferdowsi says:

To One above all name and place in vain,
 Since mind and wisdom fail to penetrate
 None then can praise God as He is. Observe
 Thy duty: 'tis to gird thyself to serve.
 He weigheth mind and wisdom; should He be
 Encompassed by a thought that He hath weighed?
 Can He be praised by such machinery
 As this, with mind or soul or reason's aid? (I. 1)

Then Ferdowsi moves on to Prophet Mohammad and Imam Ali whom they are praised by their knowledge, spiritual and physical strength. These two also are the subject of some religious epics such as *Khavaran Nameh* (The Book of the East) of ibn Husam al-Din and *Hamleye Heydari* of Mirzarafi Basel Mashadi illustrating bravery, courage and deep faith of the prophet and Imam Ali. However the way that Ferdowsi commended Imam Ali in his prologue was not pleasant to sultan Mahmud and historians know this praise poem one of the reasons that Mahmud neither received Ferdowsi nor his *Shah Nameh* warmly:

The Faith and knowledge trusty guides are they,
 And 'tis for thee to seek Salvation's way;
 If thou wouldst have thy heart not sad, not see
 Thy spirit wretched through eternity,
 To take the Prophet's teaching be thy part,
 There wash away the darkness of thy heart.
 What was it that He said, the inspired Lord,
 Of bidding and forbidding - Heaven's own word?
 "I am the City of the Doctrine, he
 That is the gateway to it is 'Ali." (I. 3)

The Prologue: *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana* begins with Valmiki asking Narada who is a discerning thinker and articulator about the greatest man who ever lived. Valmiki asks: who can possibly be full of virtues in this world? Who is possessed of prowess and knows what is right? Who is a man of knowledge? Who has conquered anger? Who is the most principled, courageous, able, good looking man? Narada narrates to him the story of Rama, king of Ayodhya and extols the virtues of the hero. Narada in his description of Rama portrays the image of Ideal man as believed by Hindus.

Then Nárad, clear before whose eye
 The present, past, and future lie,
 Made ready answer: "Hermit, where
 Are graces found so high and rare?
 Yet listen, and my tongue shall tell
 In whom alone these virtues dwell.
 From old Ikshváku's line he came,
 Known to the world by Ráma's name:
 With soul subdued, a chief of might,
 In Scripture versed, in glory bright,
 His steps in virtue's paths are bent,
 Obedient, pure, and eloquent. (I. 15)

There are indications Rama is God inhabiting a human form, but this is not clearly repeated in Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The poet describes Rama by his looking as high cheek bones, long arms, broad-shoulders as well as his character as just, righteous, learned and his abilities as the destroyer of enemies, intelligent, possessor of long bow. Praising Rama by his physical as well as his spiritual power, Valmiki then elaborates the story of Rama in verse, creating the *Ramayana*. This opening is preceded by the incident of the sage witnessing the killing of one of a pair of *Krauncha* birds by a hunter. *Krauncha* birds pair for life. At the death of the mate, the surviving bird wails. Valmiki is deeply moved by the lamenting wail of the bird. He utters verses in compassion and is surprised at the language he has unconsciously used. Later, Narada explains the language was 'deva bhasha' as the speech of the gods and that Valmiki must use this

language called Sanskrit for his composition. Following this is the synopsis of the whole story in swift sequence of events and references to the protagonists and their actions. Sita is described as ever loyal and pleasant; in the synopsis. Laxmana surprisingly does not get much account, Shatrughna is not mentioned whereas Sabhari and Tara are. There is more detail in ‘Sundara Kanda’ than of ‘Yuddha Kanda’. It presents the minor and major characters and events. Rama is often described as “Ajanu Bahu, Maha Bahu” almost repetitively focusing on his powerful arms that this refers to Karma i.e. work or action (done with one’s hand), making one see the symbolism (Sanjay, website).

Indo Aryan Mythology: The Myth of Fire

Of sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics, Momin writes that “language and culture are closely intertwined, that language reflects the world-view, epistemology and cultural patterns of society, that language significantly conditions our perception and thought processes” (website). He remarks, “Comparative linguistics tells us that when two or more cultures are in close contact over a period of time, there takes place a process of cultural exchange and hybridization, which influences customs, habits and languages” (Ibid). Historical linguists appraise that a continuum of Indo-Iranian languages probably began to diverge by 2000 BC preceding both the Vedic and Iranian cultures. The earliest recorded forms of these languages, Vedic Sanskrit and Gathic Avestan, have close similarities, having descended from the common Proto–Indo-Iranian language (Mallory 35). However, the main part of *Shah Nameh* reflects ancient sources of Indo-Iranian (Aryan) origin, preserved in the *Avesta*, the scriptures of Zoroastrianism and some of the characters of the Epic are of Indo-Iranian heritage.

One of the common beliefs among Indo-Aryans is the myth of fire. Fire, the provider of heat and light and the source of life and growth, was the center of all religious rituals of the ancient Indo-Iranians and till this day fire plays an important role in the religious ceremonies of the Hindus and Zoroastrians. The cult of fire can be traced back to the Indo-European period. The Avestan word *Athra* has its equivalent *Agni* in Sanskrit and *Ignis* in Latin. In Zoroastrian fire is a divine concept but it would be wrong to call them fire worshippers; because their veneration of fire is an intimate communion with Ahura Mazda. The *Avesta* (Vendidad, Chapter 8) describes sixteen types of fires : *Adar Shaidan*, *Adar Khoreh*, *Adar Mino Karko*, *Adar Farnbag*, *Adar*

Farah (glorious), Adar Gushpasp, Adar Khorda, Adar Burzen Meher, Atash Dara, Atash Berezo-Savangh, Atash Vohu Fryana, Atash Urvazishta, Atash Vazishta, Atash Spenishta, Atash Nairoghanga. The common origin maybe due to premise that Aryans who hailed from central Asia brought certain practices with them into India. *Rig Veda* for instance records many such practices and beliefs.

Fire came to be recognized as the symbol of Truth and Order ('ASA' in Avestan and 'RTA' in Sanskrit). In ancient India Agnipariksha or Agni (= Fire) + Pariksha(= Test) was much heard of. This in turn led to the use of fire as the tester of truth, the agent of purification and fire ordeals were used to establish a person's innocence. According to Pahlavi texts, molten metal was poured on the chest of the accused or the person was made to drink hot fiery 'soogand' (burning sulphur). If the person survived the ordeal it was taken as a sign of innocence. Such extreme measures probably served as detriments to bad deeds and false testimony. Fire has played a central role in many religions. It has been deified as for example the Indo-Iranian Agni and recognized as a symbol of home and family (the hearth fire) in many cultures. It has also been a symbol of purification and renewal. The pattern of "passing through a fire to prove one's purity" is reflected both in *Shah Nameh* and *Ramayana*. In the Indian epic when the great war of Rama and Ravana ended and Sita was released, Rama wondered whether Sita had remained faithful to him while held captive by Ravana. Rama says to Sita:

What man of spirit and born in a noble family for his part would take back with an eager mind a woman who has dwelt in another's house, because she has been kindly disposed towards him? While boasting of my lineage, how can I accept again you, who were squeezed into the arms of Ravana and regarded with an evil eye? (VI. 643)

This statement opens a window for the readers of *Ramayana* in modern times to have an idea about traditional Indian society. Seeing the story in the context of society gives us valuable information regarding the status of women in this text as a direct reflection of the context. Rama is a man-god. He has spiritual sight and reasonably expected he knows his wife is innocent. He is sure about the loyalty of his beloved wife and he knows Sita was helpless in that event but still he blames her for an undone sin. Sita was kidnapped by Ravana and regarded by the evil eye! It is enough for Rama as a "man of spirit and born in a noble

family” to reject her. This kind of judgment shows the inferiority of a woman in such a society. It is the matter that Sita contests against:

Why do you, like a common man, address to me, O hero, such unkind and unbecoming words, which are jarring to the ear, as a common man would do to an ordinary woman? I am not as you take me to be, O mighty-armed one! Restored to confidence about me. I swear to you by my own character. Judging by the conduct of vulgar women you distrust the womankind. Shake off this doubt if I have been actually tested by you. I was helpless when I came in to contact with the person of Rāvana; I did not act of my own free will on that occasion. My fate is to blame on that score, my lord. (VI. 643)

Here the concept of fatalism can be heard from the mouth of Sita. She relegates all disasters that happened to her, to her fate. It may be rooted in the theory of *karma*, one of the three central tenets of Hinduism on the transcendent level (two other being are *Dharma* and *Moksha*). According to the *karma* theory, “a man or woman's present status in life is a consequence of good or evil deeds in past lives. Likewise, present conduct holds the key to future existence. Fatalism and free will are two faces of the same synergy” (Swatos 226). Thus we are never innocent: our *karma* creates our fortunes and our misfortunes, everything we experience every moment. So we have no one to blame, or thank, but us. We may not remember our past actions, we may not be able to trace the source, but there is no escaping our responsibility (Pattanaik, website). It would be said it is a common feature of ancient epics in which ‘they are ruled by fate’. Fate is in the epics but in different forms. It may appear in the form of Zeus in the *Iliad*, as *karma* in the *Ramayana* or behind the mask of sublime heaven or God’s will in the *Shah Nameh*. However Sitā, who did not expect to hear these words from her beloved husband, asked Laxmana to raise for her a pyre and said:

I no longer desire to survive, smitten as I am with false reproaches. I will enter fire, which is the best course for me, renounced as I am in a public gathering by my husband, who is no longer pleased with my virtues. (VI. 644)

Obeying Sita, Laxmana kindled a big fire. Sitā approached the blazing fire, bowed and prayed the god of fire to protect her. Saying so, Sitā entered the flaming fire with a fearless mind. She

rushed into the fire in the presence of all. Then the god of fire emerged in person from the burning pyre with Sitā and restored her to Rama after having testified her purity.

Here another feature of epics is seen: the role of gods in shaping the events of epic. Contrary to other ancient epics, the *Ramayana* gods do not remain just in myth but are believed by Hindus in present day. They are worshiped and have remarkable presence in an Indian's life. The question which emerges here is while Rama knows Sita is innocent why does he agree that Sita takes the fire and what was the use of testifying the god of fire for Sita.

Rama answers this question himself and says to god of fire that although he was sure about Sita's purity, she needed to undergo the ordeal for the people:

The world would murmur against me saying that Rama, son of Dasharatha, was foolish and that his mind was dominated by lust if I accepted the daughter of Janaka without proving her chastity. (VI. 645)

This pattern is also seen in *Shah Nameh* in the story of Siyavush. When Sudabeh, Kāvus' wife and the queen of Iran fell in love with Siyavush, her stepson, she asked Siyavush for an immoral relationship but he refused her several times:

She bade one go by stealth to him and say:
 To would cause no wonder if thou shouldest visit
 The royal bower anon.
 The envoy went,
 But noble Siyawush was wroth and said:-
 Entice me not. I am no chamberer,
 Or given to romances and intrigues. (II. 6)

Sudabeh pleased to take a revenge for this rejection and so,

She rent her robes and tore her cheeks. A cry
 Rose from her bower, her clamour reached the street.

But Kavus who learned that Siyavush was innocent, reproached Sudabeh and didn't take care of her any more. This time Sudabeh bribed a pregnant woman to abort then secretly put two dead

children into a basin and screamed to inform all. Hearing the clamor, Kavus asked for the reason. He beheld two dead children in the basin and Sudabeh, her eyes blinded by tears. Sudabeh said, “See what Siyavush did to me; you trusted him in vain.” Informed of the event, he became disconsolate and went to Sudabeh. He summoned his seers and asked them about those infants. They told the king that those children were not hers. The king ordered his spies to find the woman pregnant. When the woman was brought before the king, she didn’t reveal the truth. The king summoned a seer who said that the infants belonged to this woman. Sudabeh said “woman is afraid of Siyavush because even a lion is scared of Siyavosh”. The Mubids advised the king, “If you want to find the truth, one of these two ought to enter the fire.” Kavus called Sudabeh and Siyavosh and said, “Now just fire can judge you.” Sudabeh said, “I told the truth and I showed two dead children; Siyavush must enter the fire.” Siyavosh said “Even hell is better than her words; if it is a mountain of fire I enter it.” King bade cameleers to bring wood from the forest. They fetched two huge piles of woods. Hundred men kindled the fire and the flames and smoke overspread the heavens. Siyavush entered the fire and when he came forth there was not a singed hair on his head, neither had the smoke blackened his garments. It is interesting that a similar story exists in the *Iliad* about Phaedra, Hippolytus and Theseus, though without the fire Ordeal and also the story of Yusef and Zoleikha in the *Koran* which based on the story of Joseph and Potiphav’s wife in the *Bible*.

Unlike *Ramayana* in which gods play an important role in forming the stories, in *Shah Nameh* there is only one God who has not a direct role in the stories. Valmiki is a Hindu and his work reflects the principals of Hinduism while Ferdowsi is a Muslim and *Shah Nameh* portrays both Islamic and Zoroastrian religious values. In Hinduism there are many gods while Muslims and Zoroastrian believes only to one God (*Allah* in Islam and *Ahurāmazdā* in Zoroastrian).

The Role of Queens in Banishing Rama and Siyavush: Kaikeyi and Sudabeh

Kaikeyi and Sudabeh are two negative female characters in *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh*. Kaikeyi is the wife of king Dasharatha and Sudabeh is the wife of king Kavus. Kaikeyi is the stepmother of Rama whereas Sudabeh is the stepmother of Siyavush. Their actions result in banishing of the young princes but their motivations are different. While it is jealousy and ambition for her son that leads Kaikeyi to ask for Rama’s banishment, Sudabe’s immoral love leads Siyavush to opt for exile.

In *Ramayana*, when Dasharatha expresses his desire to crown Rama, to which the Kosala assembly and his subjects express their support, Kaikeyi whose jealousy is aroused by Manthara, a wicked maidservant claims two boons that Dasharatha had long ago granted her. Kaikeyi demands that Rama be exiled for fourteen years while the succession passes to her son Bharata:

With him, his best and eldest son,
 By all his princely virtues won
 King Dasaratha willed to share
 His kingdom as the Regent Heir.
 But when Kaikeyí, youngest queen,
 With eyes of envious hate had seen
 The solemn pomp and regal state
 Prepared the prince to consecrate,
 She bade the hapless king bestow
 Two gifts he promised long ago,
 That Ráma to the woods should flee,
 And that her child the heir should be. (I. 16)

In the Iranian epic, Sudabeh's immoral love for Siyavush caused lots of problem for him. Years later, when Afrāsyāb attacked Iran, Kāvus sends Siyavush as a commander of the army. Siyavush defeated Afrāsyāb who asked for peace. First Kāvus accepted and asked for some hostages but later ordered Siyavush to kill the hostages and attack Turān. Siyavush did not agree to kill the hostages and to be free of his father and his stepmother, went away to Turan. He was killed in the enemy land years later.

Unlike *Shah Nameh* in which the poet displays that the prince left his father's kingdom optionally, just fearing of incest and her stepmother's tricks, it is obligation in *Ramayana* that sends the prince to exile. The Indian story indicates that the king Dasharatha was the man of his word and did not change his promise though he loves his son but in the Persian epic Kavus is impulsive and capricious man. The similarity between the queens in *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* is both are immoral and they take advantage of the shortcoming of their husbands. The Indian queen has lust for the throne and power for her son and she is sure that her husband can't break his promise while the queen of *Shah Nameh* lust for sexual relation with her stepson and when

she didn't succeed, puts him in trouble.

The mothers ruled in India and Iran before the patriarchy was established. So in the male epics the females are shown as villains. Since the sons of the first wife inherit, the stepmother is invented as wicked. This is an invention of the male mind. In life we see that actually men are competitive but women co-operate and do not kill.

Abduction of the Princess

Being a common motif in an epic, abduction of a queen or a princess is the motivation of a long war and is the main theme of the epic. The famous example of this pattern is found in the Greek epic *Iliad* where the abduction of Menelaus' queen Helen by Paris brought about the Trojan War. This pattern is found in *Ramayana* where the abduction of Sita caused the war between Rama and Ravana and the ultimate destruction of Ravana's kingdom. Similarly, in *Shah Nameh* Shahrnaz and Arnavaz the sisters of king Jamshid were captured by the king Zahhak. Also, similar story can be compared from *Shah Nameh* that is the story of the princesses Homa and Beh Afarid, daughters of king Gushtasb.

In the Indian epic, Ravana abducts Sita with the aid of the rakshasa Maricha. Maricha, assuming the form of a golden deer, captivates Sita's attention. Entranced by the beauty of the deer, Sita pleads with Rama to capture it. Rama is aware of this ploy of the demons but is unable to dissuade Sita from her desire and chases the deer into the forest, leaving Sita under Laxmana's guard. After some time Sita hears Rama calling out to her; afraid for his life she insists that Laxmana rush to his aid. Laxmana tries to assure her that Rama is invincible, and that it is best if he continues to follow Rama's orders to protect her. Sita gets angry with him and insists that it is not she but Rama who needs Laxmana's help. He obeys her wish but stipulates that she must not leave the cottage boundary or entertain any strangers. Finally with the coast clear, Ravana appears in the guise of an ascetic requesting Sita's hospitality. He coaxes her out of the boundary marked by Laxmana. Unaware of the devious plan of her guest, Sita lured out and then forcibly carried away by Ravana.

In Euripides' *Helen of Troy*, Helen says: "I was never at Troy| it was a shadow that they fought over". In the end of epic time action (war) becomes internal, psychological. Ravana is overconfident and his mind betrays him that invincible. But Rama kills him. All stories are based

on adultery and this continues in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anne Karenina*.

Following this pattern are two similar stories in *Shah Nameh*. In the first story, the non-Iranian violator Zahhāk defeated Jamshid the king and took captive his two sisters Sharnaz and Arnavaz. Zahhak ruled for thousand years but eventually Kaveh raised a revolt against the evil tyrant Zahhak and restored Faridun to Iran. Faridun defeated Zahhak and entered his palace but couldn't find him but finds the two sustained among other women. Ferdowsi describes this scene thus:

Then from the women's bower he brought two Idols
 Sun-faced, dark-eyed; he had them bathed, he purged
 The darkness of their minds by teaching them
 The way of God and made them wholly clean;
 For idol-worshippers had brought them up
 And they were dazed in mind like drunken folk.
 Then while the tears from their bright eyes bedewed
 Their rosy cheeks those sisters of Jamshid
 Said thus to Faridun: "Mayst thou be young
 Till earth is old! What star was this of thine,
 O favoured one! What tree bore thee as fruit,
 Who ventur'ed inside the Lion's lair
 So hardily, thou mighty man of valour?
 What anguish and what bale have we endured
 All through this dragon-shouldered Ahriman! (I. 162)

The second story of *Shah Nameh* following the same pattern is the story of the queens Hodaya and Beh Afarid, daughters of king Goshtasb and their abduction by Arjasp, the king of Turan thereby causing the war between two countries. Shamed Goshtasb promised his son Esfandiyar the kingdom if he could set his sisters release. Goshtasb says:

To him Gushtasp said: Thou, O mighty man !
 Rejoicest while thy sisters are in bondage.
 Oh ! happy they that died upon the field,
 Not Irantic with dishonour from the Turkmans !

When men behold me sitting on the throne
 What will my subjects say? So long as life
 Endureth I shall weep for this disgrace,
 And burn within my brain. By most high God,
 The Omnipotent, I pledge myself - if thou
 Shalt go without disaster to Turan,
 Courageously confront the Dragon's breath,
 And free thy sisters from the Turkmans, I
 Will yield to thee the crown of empire, treasure
 Which thou hast earned not, and the throne of greatness. (V. 33)

In *Ramayana* the princess Sita, Rama's wife is abducted by supernatural Ravana. In the first story of *Shah Nameh* Shahrnaz and Arnavaz are the sisters of king Jamshid who are captured by king Zhhak and in the second story Hoday and Beh Afarid are the daughters of king Gushtasb who are captured by king Arjasb. In *Ramayana* Sita is abducted through a trick while in *Shah Nameh* princesses are captured through war. When the Indian princess is kidnapped consequently, the Great War causes between Rama and his ape army with Ravana's forces. This constitutes the main story of *Ramayana*. Ravana finally is killed by Rama and Sita is released. In the first story of *Shah Nameh* Kaveh a liberal man raised a revolt against Zahhak and restored Faridun who was from royal family to Iran. Faridun defeated Zahhak in a long war and released the two princesses. Here the motivation of war was not just because of the princesses but to get rid of cruel Zahhak. In the second story, to reach Arjasb's castle Esfandiar had to pass seven stages called *Haft Khan* which is one of the perfect stories in *Shah Nameh*. In the first stage Esfandiyār bought two wolves; in the second stage Esfandiyār killed two lions; in the third stage he killed a dragon. In the fourth stage Esfandiyār met witches who started singing. When Esfandiyār captured her, she changed in an ugly grimalkin whom he killed. In the fifth stage he killed Simorgh and its chicks. Finally Esfandiyār could enter the castle and made a big fire. Pashutan his brother understood the signal and attacked the castle. Arjās b who was drunk sent Tarkhan with ten thousand soldiers to battle outside of the castle but he was killed by Nushāzar, son of Esfandiyār. At night Esfandiyār with twenty warriors killed Arjās b and released his sisters.

Marriage

Generally the theme of love and marriage presents in all epics. Although marriage is the final act of the romance pattern, it is not the final term of the plot in epic (Woods 53). The romance followed by many struggles and conflicts. Marriage in an epic includes many models and provides many epic patterns. The marriage of heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses and even the marriage of supernatural animals are seen in epic. Catullus chose for his theme the marriage between Thetis, a sea- Nymph and granddaughter of the god ocean and the mortal Peleus (Boyle 61). In the Indian epic *Ramayana* Tara, a monkey marries with Sugriva after her husband is killed. In *Shah Nameh* the heroine Gordafarid refuses to marry with the hero Sohrab.

However *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* present some similar stories regarding marriage. In these two epics marriage is conditioned to doing great exploits. Both epics indicate to the marriage of many sisters to a king. Also both epics imply the marriage of Protagonists' brothers and sisters.

Marriage with the Condition That the Suitor Should Do Great Deeds of Prowess

It is a typically epic theme that king sets conditions for the marriage of his daughter to the hero who performs a great deed of prowess. The *Odyssey* provides an example comparable with this pattern. Neleus, king in Pylos, would give his daughter Pero in marriage only to the one who could drive the cattle of Iphiclus out of Phylace in Thessaly. A prophet, Melampus, volunteered, but was imprisoned for a year. He was released after he had given prophecies to Iphiclus (Heubeck and Hoekstra 246–7). In non-Valmiki *Ramayana* versions this pattern is seen in Sitā's marriage. In this story when Sitā was of marriageable age, king Janaka decided to hold a *swayamvara* which included a contest. The king possessed of an immensely heavy bow presented to him by the God Shiva. The king announced that whoever could wield the bow could marry Sitā. The sage Vishwāmitra attends the *swayamvara* with Rama and Laxmana. Only Rama could wield the bow and he breaks it. Janaka announces that Rama had won Sita as his wife.

There are seven types of marriage in Hinduism: Gandhavua marriage is love-marriage. It is by abduction (a primitive way). But in the patriarchy the valor is tested. Hence Rama has to break the bow, Arjun has to pierce the rotating set on a pole with his arrow to show his skill too.

Shah Nameh has examples of the same pattern. Two stories deal with Czar of Rom. In the first story, Mirin a Roman was a suitor for Czar's daughter. Czar made her marriage conditional - for killing of a huge wolf. Mirin went to Goshtāsb an Iranian hero and asked him secretly to kill the wolf. Goshtāsb obliged, Mirin went to Czar and claimed that he had killed the wolf and could now marry Czar's daughter.

The marriage of Ahren to another daughter of Czar, follows a similar pattern. The Czar's condition was to kill a dragon. Again Goshtāsb killed the dragon but Ahren claimed it as his deed and married the Czar's daughter.

Another example is of the announcement of Goshtāsb, the king of Iran, that his daughter Homāy would marry the hero who killed Biddarafsh, a Turanian hero. Esfandiyār kills him and in consequently married to his sister, Homāy. This story shows a special kind of marriage among Zoroastrians in Sasanid era. In Zoroastrianism there were essentially two types of marriage, each with several subtypes and irregular forms. The ancient custom of receiving a sum of two thousand *drahms* "security" (*pāyandanîh*) for the bride, may have been the primary reason for preferring marriage with kin, in order to prevent property from leaving the family. In fact, the most meritorious type of marriage was what modern Parsis call "next of kin" union, described in the *Dēnkard* as "union of father and daughter, son and mother, brother and sister". Consanguineous marriage, originally practiced by the nobility among many peoples, was later commonly contracted in all sections of the Iranian community, high and low. Many Persian monarchs married their sisters or daughters and the Magians were reported by Xanthus of Lydia to have cohabited with their mothers and daughters (Jackson 152-57).

The Marriage of Protagonists' Brothers and Sisters

In *Ramayana*, Rama's marriage to Sitā is also the time when marriages were arranged between the other sons of Dasharatha and the daughters and nieces of Janaka.

The four ashramas (stages) of life in Hinduism make it compulsory for a man to retire from household duties at 50 and go to the forest for 23 years so if Rama's brothers marry with him, Dasharatha's responsibility is over.

In *Shah Nameh*, Faridun, the king of the world who had three sons Iraj, Salm and Tur sent his minister Jandal to Yemen to send three daughters for his sons.

The Marriage of Many Sisters to a King

Both in *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* there are stories which show the marriage is arranged between a king and some sisters at the same time. In *Ramayana* for instance, Brahmadata marries with all hundred daughters of Kusanabha. Kusanabha was a pious king. He wanted to give away his hundred daughters to Brahmadata.

Calling the said Brahmadata, the exceptionally glorious king (Kusanabha), the ruler of the earth, gave away with a most cheerful mind (all) the hundred girls (to him). At the time of marriage, O scion of Raghu, king Brahmadata, who shone like Indra (the ruler of gods), married them (one after another by taking their hands in his) in order of seniority. The moment their hands were touched (by Brahmadata) in the course of the wedding the girls were cured of their deformity and rid of their agony. (I. 93)

Culturally, the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal can marry a lower cast wife and make all her sisters Brahmin by also marrying them. So this is a way of upward mobilization in India. Hence, the polygamy.

Shah Nameh includes two stories in which the king marries with some sisters at the same time. These two stories are regarding to the reign of Bahrām Gur. In the first story Bahrām returning after a month's hunting reached a village. There was a celebration in the village and girls were singing and dancing. Among the girls, four of the prettiest ones came before the king. Bahrām, whose heart burned towards them in love, asked them about their father, hearing: "our father is an old miller who goes hunting to the mountain and returns nightly." When the miller came from the mountain, King Bahram asked for the four girls in marriage from their father and to take them to his palace.

In the second story while Bahram is hunting, his favorite hawk escapes. While searching for it, the king and his men entered a garden and see an old man with three beautiful girls. When the hawk was caught, Bahram requested their father marry the three girls.

Shah Nameh tells a historical story about marriage by narrating the story of king Bahram who married seven sisters while *Ramayana* tells a mythical story in which Brahmadata marries hundred sisters. Bahram was the fourteenth Sassanid King of Persia (421–438). He is known in Persian literature to be a capricious king, lusting after women. Numerous legends have been associated with Bahram. One account says that he aided an Indian king in his war against China. Other accounts suggest that he also married an Indian princess (Payaslian 40). Unlike *Shah Nameh*, the figures of *Ramayana* story are mythical. Kusanabha for example is described to be the son of Kusa who was the son of Brahma, the creator. He had also a hundred daughters born through a celestial nymph Ghrtaci. When they grow up the wind-god desires to marry all of them but they refused. Offended by this rebuttal the wind-god entered into them all and caused deformity of their limbs. Brahmadata the king who marries these girls all is also a mythical figure. Brahmadata (gift of Brahma) is born from an unmarried woman as a boon given by a great ascetic. During the ceremony, when Brahmadata touched the hand of each girl her deformity left her and she regained her beauty and charm. Unlike king Bahram in Persian epic, king Kusanabha and king Brahmadata both are described as pious and moral monarchs.

Recognition via a Token

In this typical epic pattern, two protagonists know each other through a sign which could be a ring or a jewel. This happens in the tragedy of Rostam and Sohrab where the father knows his son via a gem. A messenger also may show such a token to prove his identity as Hanuman does when he meets Sita. In the famous story of Shakuntala in Kalidasa's *Abhijñāna Śhākuntalā*, a token becomes a very important item. Dushyanta's ring I swallowed by a fish and when presented by a fisherman proves Shakuntala's identity to her husband Dushyanta. In all epics there is recognition scene for reconciliation after temporary separation. The most famous are the scars on Oedipus ankles to show Jocasta that she has slept with her son, a tragic recognition. More famous is Odysseus being recognized by wife Penelope after return from exile, he describes the design on the marriage-bed.

According to *Ramayana*, Sītā drops her jewels while being carried away by Ravana. Meantime searching for Sītā, Rama meet Hanuman who led him to Sugriva. Sugriva told Rama that he had seen a lady by being carried off by Ravana. She had dropped her shining jewels to

marked the path of her abduction. Sugriva ensured Rama all help him in finding Sita. When Hanuman was sent by Sugriva to the south to search for Sitā, Rama gave him his signet ring as a token to inspire confidence in Sitā. Rama tells Hanuman:

Through this token, O jewel among the monkeys, Sitā will unperturbedly recognize you to have arrived from my presence. Nay, your resolution as well as your prowess coupled with courage as also the words of Sugriva (addressed to you) predict success as it were to my mind. (IV. 897)

After locating Sita, Hanuman shows her Rama's signet ring to prove himself as Rama's messenger. Sita gives him a gem as a token when Hanuman prepares to return to his Lord. He requests Sita:

Give me a gem that I may show,
Some token which thy lord may know.

She ceased; and from her glorious hair
She took a gem that sparkled there
A token which her husband's eyes
With eager love would recognize.
His head the Vānar envoy bent
In low obeisance reverent.
And on his finger bound the gem
She loosened from her diadem. (V. 939)

The same pattern of "recognition via a jewel or ring as a token" in *Shah Nameh* includes some stories as follows:

When Rustam visits Samangan at the border of Turān he marries Tahmineh the daughter of king of Samangan. Before leaving, Rustam took from his arm a gem that was known by the entire world. He asked her to fasten it to hair of child if the child was a daughter and to his arm if the child was a son. Tahmineh gave birth to a son in the likeness of his father and named him Sohrab. Later, Sohrab decides to go Iran to meet his father. Gathering an army he marched

towards Iran where he encountered with Iran army. In the war Sohrab was wounded by Rustam who didn't know his antagonist was his son. About to breathe his last, Sohrab said,

...if thou shouldest become a fish that swimmeth in the depths of the ocean, if thou shouldest change into a star that is concealed in the farthest heaven, my father would draw thee forth from thy hiding-place, and avenge my death upon thee when he shall learn that the earth is become my bed. For my father is Rustem the Pehliva, and it shall be told unto him how that Sohrab his son perished in the quest after his face. (III. 195)

Hearing of this, Rustam was stupefied and asked: do you have any token of Rustam? Sohrab replied: yes when I wanted to come towards Iran, my mother fastened my arm a jewel as a token whereby my father should know me. Now open my mail to see the jewel. Rustam did as said and saw the jewel. His grief knew bounds as he cradled during Sohrab died in his bosom.

Similarly, the characters of both *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* use a gem or a jewel for recognition. One reason would be that jewel is carried by a protagonist wherever who goes and is known by his/her acquaintances. So it is easy to recognize. In *Ramayana* for example Laxmana says, 'I am sure these are Sita's anklets, because severally I seen them while laying my head on her feet in worship.' Sita and Rama also can recognize their partner's rings easily. In *Shah Nameh* Rustam gives Tahmineh a gem which is known for all because it is unique. In one of the following stories also we see Rustam uses his ring as a token in which bearing his seal.

Secondly, in the patriarchal epic the value of a woman is her chastity. The gem then is symbolic of a woman's chastity, her true value. In *Othello* Desdemona is given a handkerchief which belonged to Othello's mother who was an enchanter and wove a web-design with magic threads. This is the old dis-empowered matriarchy asserting itself. Desdemona is a nobleman's daughter. Hence she is careless about the handkerchief. She misplaces it and this leads to her death at Othello's hands. Likewise, Sita's jewels are symbolic of Sita's chastity, the true jewel of the *Ramayana*.

In *Ramayana* two protagonists Rama and Sita are wife and husband. The tokens are given to identify the messenger and as reassurance of receipt of message. In *Shah Nameh* the two protagonists have not met each other before. They are father and son, facing each other in battle but the recognition is delayed and the son is killed by his father unknowingly.

In another story of *Shah Name*, the recognition happens between a mother and her son. Homa the king of Iran who doesn't want to abandon the reign to her son, fastens a gem to his arm and ordered him to be put a box and put it into the river. A laundryman saw the box, caught it and beheld the child. He and his wife brought up the child and named him Darab who grew up to become a sturdy youth. Later he understood they are not his real parents, he joined to Iran's army at the time Rom's army had attacked Iran's border. Iran's army set forth towards Rom. Midway, due to some events, Rashnovad the commander asks about his identity. Darab explained what he knows. Rashnovad sent for the laundryman and his wife. After the war Rashnovad met the laundryman and his wife heard their story and saw the gem which has been fastened on Darab's arm. Rashnovad sent a letter to the king along with that piece of jewel. Reading the letter and seeing the jewel, she learned that he was her son.

This story is similar to the story of Rustam and Sohrab. Rustam and Homa have not seen their sons since their childhood. In both stories they know their sons via a gem which were fastened to their arms. In the following story, similar to *Ramayana* the recognition is indirect through a messenger and the token is a ring.

Manižeh a Turani princess fell in love with Bižan Iranian hero. She took him secretly to palace and hid him, but later Afrāsyāb was informed by guardian, bade Bižan be chained and thrown into a deep hole. The king of Iran asked Rustam to go to Turān and rescue Bižan. Rustam said, "I go there but not with an army because I am afraid that if Afrāsyāb learns our plan, he may kill Bižan. I purpose to go forth in the garb of a merchant." Rustam and a group of Warriors disguised themselves as a caravan of traders and departed towards Turān. When Manižeh learned that a group of Iranian traders came to Turān, she went to them asking that Giv or Rustam be informed that young Bižan is prisoner in the pit. Rustam, who was afraid for his secret, bade her food to take for Bižan. Within the body of a fowl, Rustam had hidden his ring bearing his seal. Manižeh took the food to Bižan. While eating, Bižan found Rustam's ring and understood the situation. He sent Manižeh to Rustam asking: "tell us if you are the master of Raxsh". Rustam was ensured these were Bizan's words and eventually Bižan was rescued.

Assuming the form of other creatures

It is an epic pattern that the protagonists assume the form of other creatures to reach their goal. This pattern is seen in two ways: first, assuming the form of other creatures by using magic; and second, disguising but not by using magic.

Ramayana follows the first type. When the news of Rama and his beautiful wife reaches Ravana, he resolves to destroy Rama by capturing Sita with the aid of the rakshasa Maricha. Maricha assumes the form of a golden deer and by the beauty of the deer, Sita pleads with Rama to capture it. Leaving Sita, Ravana appears in the guise of an ascetic and carries her away. There are many occasions when the characters assume disguise to achieve certain aims.

In *Shah Nameh*, both types are used. These examples are notable for using magic to change form:

Devil assuming the form of a youth encourages Zakhāk to kill his father. Devil assuming the form of a cook works for Zakhāk. He requests Zakhāk to kiss his shoulders but accidentally two snakes appear on his shoulders. Zakhāk orders for them to be cut but they grow again. Devil assuming the form of a doctor tells Zakhāk to kill two youths every day and feed their brains to the snakes.

A demon as an expert musician urges king Kei Kavus, to fight Mazandaran's demons.

Devil's messengers in the form of a propitious youth to urges king Kavus to conquest the sky.

Rustam meets a sorceress who appears in a form of beautiful lady during his seven labors.

In the story of Ekvan-e Div, one day a shepherd told the king Kei Khosrov that he saw a zebra bigger than a horse. The king knew that it is not a real zebra and asked Rustam to investigate. Rustam went to the plain, saw it and when he tried to hunt it, it disappeared. Rustam understood it as Ekvan-e Div or gnome. After three days as tired Rustam slept near a spring, Ekvan-e Div became a wind and carried Rustam to the sky.

A demon assuming the form of a beautiful lady provoked Bahrām Chubin to occupy Iran's sultanate.

In *Ramayana*, Shurpanakhe changes form to entice Rama; Marich and Ravana change form to kidnap Sita and so on.

Beside these, there are some examples in which the protagonist changes his appearance without using magic:

Rustam disguised himself as a merchant, entered the stronghold of Sepand and conquered it.

When Rustam and his army arrived at Sepid which was occupied by Sohrab, Rustam took the disguise of a Turk people and entered Sepid at night.

While Searching for Kei Khosrov, Giv wore Turkish clothes and spoke in Turkish.

When Giv wanted to bring Kei Kosrov and Frangis to Iran, Piran from Turan's army followed them. Giv captured Piran and wore his cloth. Using this trick he could kill lots of Turani soldiers.

Using magic in epic is not limited to only assuming the form of other creatures but it functions in broader era. Magic in fact is considered as one of the main characteristics of epic. In both *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* we see magic weapons, magical battles, magic lands and islands and many other magic means.

Supernatural Animals

Supernatural animals whether with positive or negative characters play an important role in the epics. These animals can speak, predict, cure, fight, fly and do many things heroes are not able to do. In the Persian myth there is a bird called Vareghneh that is the king of all birds. Ahoramazda advised Zoroaster to touch the feather of this bird to protect himself from danger; even owning its feather or bone, was protective. In the epic of Adam and Eve, a snake cheats Eve and a peacock causes Adam's ouster from paradise. Achilles' horse Xanthos speaks and predicts and even predicts his death. Serbian Prince Marko's horse Sara'c is "not as other horses," it can speak and also drink wine. The horse of the Tibetan hero Gezar can not only speak but also fly and change shape. Miller, pointing to the significant role of these animals, writes:

Heroic helpers may also come from the animal world, like the magical horse or other beast endowed with prescience or some other quality or special knowledge separate from simple animality. This aiding animal will be the necessary reverse of that animal monster

who impedes the quest, but animal “guardianship” can be either benign or malign, in the same way as human figures may be either helpful or opposed to the questing hero (168).

In both *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* supernatural animals play direct and active roles. These animals are relevant to epic’s geographical environment. While they are monkeys who have a significance presence in the Indian epic, they are horses for example to be very important in the Persian epic. Horse as ‘*asb*’ in Persian is seen in the name of many kings and heroes like Gushtasb, Lohrasb, Garshasb and Jamasb reflecting the importance of this animal among Iranians. Shamisa (48) holds that it is probable that horse was a totem in ancient Persia.

Supernatural Animals in *Shah Nameh*

Simurgh

Simurgh is a fabulous, mythical bird. The name derives from Avestan *mərəyō saēnō* ‘the bird Saēna’, originally a raptor, either eagle or falcon, as can be deduced from the etymologically identical Sanskrit *śyenā*. Simurgh is almost the most important animal in *Shah Nameh*. She appears in the story of Zal’s birth and at Rustam’s birth. When Rudabeh was pregnant with Rustam, she was full of pain because the child was so big. Simurgh appears and advises them to cut her womb and take out the child and then apply a special herb on her injury. For the third time Simurgh is seen in *Haft Khan* (Seven Stages) when Esfandiyar kills Simurgh’s partner and chicks. Finally Simurgh appears in the scene of war between Rustam and Esfandiyar. Simurgh appeared and cured Raxsh and its master. Then she taught Rustam how to kill Esfandiyar.

Raxsh

Raxsh meaning lightning is Rustam’s horse. Choosing the horse by Rustam is narrates in *Shah Nameh* in details. All the horses bent under his grasp, and bowed their haunches in weakness. Then Rustam chooses Raxsh with the chest and shoulders of a lion, in strength it seemed like an elephant, and in color it was as rose leaves that have been scattered upon a saffron ground. Raxsh and Rustam were born at the same time and also die with each other. It is also an epic pattern addressed by Miller:

Clearly the horse is the animal most closely identified with the hero in many of his biographical episodes. The two come together in the accident of divine or monstrous

origin, the possession of extraordinary powers, the attributes of great speed and strength—and a fatal, mutual impulse toward death and destruction. “Le cheval est isomorphe des ténèbres et de l’enfer” is one acute observation, for this animal rightly shows itself both at the beginning and often at the fated end of the heroic biography (182).

Raxsh is an unordinary horse that had special powers; in *Haft Khan* (Seven stages or labors) Raxsh kills a lion when Rustam is slept. In third stage, a dragon appeared. Raxsh awaked Rustam but dragon disappeared. Raxsh also aids his owner in killing a dragon. Even In the scene Rustam falls down in the shaft which was dig by his brother Shoghad to kill him, Raxsh refuses to go tries to warn Rustam, and But Rustam gets furious and forces Raxsh to move where both of them are killed together.

The Camel

In the story of battle of Rustam and Esfandiyār, there is a camel that tries to stop Esfandiyar of going to Sistan. Goshtāsb had promised Esfandiyār to enthrone him after killing of Arjāsb but he refused. Hearing from his seer that Esfandiyar is killed by Rustam, Goshtāsb asked his son to go to Sistān and tie Rustam's hands and bring him to the king. Esfandiyār with his host marched towards Sistān. In the mid of the way, a camel that walked in front of the caravan laid down and stopped all. The Cameleer took his effort to force camel to move but it did not rise from the earth. Esfendiyar who thought “The omen is evil, commanded the driver that he cut off the head.

The Green Bird

In the story of Eskandar (Alexander) a green bird informed him his imminent death.

The Worm

In the story of Ardeshir there is a worm that grows up very fast and unordinary. When the worm was five years old, it was like an elephant. Finally Ardeshir disguised himself as a merchant, entered the fort of Haftvad, made worm’s worshiper drunk and killed the worm by giving him melting tin.

The White Horse

In the story of Yazdged Bezeh Gar there is a white horse that comes out from the spring of Su. The horse seemed tame but when the king wanted to close its tail, kicked and killed him.

The Ewe

Passing of the *Haft Khan*(Seven stages or labors), in the second stage, Rustam suffering of hot weather and thirst languished. He prayed God to help him. In this moment a ewe appeared guiding him to a spring.

Supernatural Animals in *Ramayana*

Jatayu

Jatayu is a vulture that tries to rescue Sita when she is being take away by Ravana but is mortally wounded. According to *Ramayana*, when “glorious Jatayu (the formost of birds), who looked like a mountain-peak and had a sharp bill” (673), perceived Rāvana and saw Sitā tried to dissuade him. Jatayu fights Ravana but is fatally wounded. Searching for Sitā, when Rama and Laxmana came up on Jatayu, bloody and mutilated, lying on the ground, who explained everything to him before breathing its last

The Monkey Army

Among the supernatural animals in *Ramayana*, the monkey army plays an important role and forms several stories. Sugriva, Hanuman, Vali, Tara and Angada are some of the monkey figures.

Sampati

Sampati is the vulture King and Jatayu’s brother. Sampati and Jatayu were the children of Aruna, the god of Dawn and brother of Garuda, Hari's vehicle. He informed Hanuman and his group that Sitā is imprisoned in Lanka. Sampati described in detail the Ravana's kingdom.

Jambavana

Jambavana is the lord of bears. In the great combat of Rama and the army of ogres, when Rama and Laxmana as well as the army of monkeys got grievously hurt and prostrated, Jambavana advised Hanuman to go to Himalaya Mountain and bring some celestial herbs as cure-all. Hanuman fetched a hillock clothed with celestial herbs. Inhaling the unique fragrance of the powerful herbs, two princes were healed of their wounds.

Crossing of the Sea

Crossing of the sea in an epic is considered to be an obstacle that a hero should pass to reach his new goal. Crossing of the sea also means a change of mode of living. For example, Moses passing red sea to go from slavery in Egypt to the promised land (of freedom) in Israel. Epic sea journey forms an important part of the ancient epics. Almost the whole story of *Odyssey* and the first half of 12 books of *Aeneid* is epic sea journey.

This pattern in the Indian epic *Ramayana* is seen when Hanuman wants to cross the sea to find Sita. In this story, hearing from Sampati that Sitā was kept a prisoner in Lanka, Hanuman was chosen to cross the ocean. His mother Anjana was a maiden among the goddesses above, but cursing of a rishi, she was born as a Vanari. Vayu the Wind-God embraced Anjana and Hanuman was born to her. Hanuman flew across the ocean and approached the coast of Lanka.

The second crossing of the ocean was done by Rama, Laxmana along with the monkey army. To cross the sea Rama prepared to shoot arrows into the bosom of the sea. But the sea-god told Rama:

Earth, air, ether, water and fire, O gentle scion of Raghu, remain fixed in their nature, abiding (as they do) by the eternal law (of nature, governing it). My nature too, therefore, is such that I am fathomless and incapable of being swum across. Fordability would constitute a deviation (from my natural state). (Nonetheless) I tell you the following device (of crossing me). Neither from covetousness nor from avidity nor again from fear, O prince, may I allow in any case my waters infested (as they are) with alligators and crocodiles to solidify. (VI. 245)

Then the sea-god told Rama to ask monkeys to bring boulders and trees to build a causeway. Thousands of monkeys worked hard for several days and soon finished building the causeway.

In *Shah Nameh* also there are some examples in which a king or a hero crosses the sea.

Kei Khosrov son of Siyavush lives in Turan with his mother Frangis. The Iranian hero Gudarz sends his son Giv to find them. Looking for Kei Khosrov Giv goes to Turān secretly. Eventually Giv finds them but when he wants to take them to Iran, Afrasyab Turan's king understands and follows them with his army. Giv and his two companions reach the sea and ask the shipmaster to carry them very fast but the villain man asked Giv to give him one of the four:

his horse, armor, the youth or the lady. Giv got furious. Then he turned unto Kai Khosrau, and said-

If thou be Kai Khosrau indeed, thou wilt not fear to enter this river and cross it, even as it was crossed by Feridoun thy sire.” Now the river was swollen with the rains, but the young King regarded it not. He entered upon its surge with Behzah his steed, and the horse of his father bare him across the boiling waters. And Ferangis followed after him and Gew the bold. And when Kai Khosrau was come unto the other side, he dismounted and knelt and kissed the ground of Iran, and gave thanks unto God the mighty. (III. 311)

Kei Khosrov the king of Iran returning of a war has to pass the water. The king orders to prepare food for one year travel. For six months the sea was too windy in which nobody could stay alive. In the seventh month, wind directed the ship to a way named *Fammol Asad* (mouth of lion). However the reached to seaside after seven months which was such a miracle.

In the story of Zakhak, Kaveh leads a popular rising against him and restores Faridun. Capturing Zakhak, they have to cross the sea. Feridun bade the guardians of the flood convey them across. But these refused, saying, the King bade that none should pass save only those who bore the royal seal. “When Feridoun heard these words he was wroth, and he regarded neither the rushing river nor the dangers hidden within its floods. He girded his loins and plunged with his steed into the waters, and all the army followed after him. Now they struggled sore with the rushing stream, and it seemed as though the waves would bear them down. But their brave horses overcame all dangers, and they stepped in safety upon the shore” (III. 19).

To Seek Refuge

In both *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh*, there are stories in which a protagonist seeks refuge. In *Ramayana* this deed is seen in the story of Vibhishana who sought refuge with Rama but in *Shah Nameh* there are more examples.

Vibhishana the younger brother of Ravana tries his best to persuade Ravana to release Sitā and save Lanka but all his words went in vain. Ravana annoyed to hear this advice of his youngest half- brother, castigated him with harsh words. Vibhisana who found his brother in the wrong and realizing that there was no place for him in Lanka thereafter, sought the protection of Rama, proceeded to him. Four good Rakshasa friends went along with Vibhisana.

This pattern in *Shah Nameh* includes the following stories:

Angry of his father Siyavush goes to Turan and dwells there. First he marries Pirān's daughter, Jarir and from their union Frud is born. Also later he marries Afrāsyāb's daughter, Farangis.

Gushtasb was waxy because his father, king Luhrasb would not abandon to him the sovereignty. Therefore he along with three hundred of his men departed toward king of India. But in the mid way Jamasb reaches them and convinces Gushtasb that his father will abandon to him the kingdom. With this promise Gushtasb returned Iran. Again when he beheld that his pleading was vain and his father is not going to abandon to him the sovereignty, secretly goes to Rom. There he did great deeds of prowess in the land and married to daughter of the king.

Invulnerability

Invulnerability is the quality the hero possesses that he can not be harmed or defeated. In mythology, the hero is made invulnerable by the help of supernatural creatures, by means of some sort of magical bath. Wearing a strange armor providing another kind of invulnerability, which is partial and a quite different subject. For example Egill, one of the most notorious Icelandic “head-breakers,” wears stone armor in his strange forest adventure toward the end of his saga; this appears to be a magical interpolation; King Haroldr Sigurdarsson, called Hardrafla, had a mail shirt with the feminine name “Emma” that could not be penetrated by any weapon; The Irish heroes wear “impenetrable” and bespelled body armor; in the Ossetian Nart tales the Nart Soslan possesses the magical cuirass “of Tserék” that puts itself on the hero when the word “battle” is spoken, and renders Soslan (almost) invulnerable (Miller 466). However when a hero is completely invulnerable, generally one part of his body is vulnerable. Achilles in *Iliad* for example is vulnerable in his heel and Siegfried in German epic *Nibelungenlied* is vulnerable in his back. In *Ramayana*, Ravana a rakshasa with ten heads and twenty arms is invulnerable. Receiving a boon from Parameshwara, he would not be killed by gods, demons, or spirits, but this boon did not include human beings or monkeys.

In *Shah Nameh* Esfandiar son of king Gushtasb is invulnerable. There are two stories regarding how he became invulnerable:

1. Zoroaster Iranain Prophet gave him a pomegranate and made him invulnerable (Zoroaster also gave to Esfandiar's brother Pashootan, a glass of milk and through this he found eternal life)
2. Under the order of Zoroaster, Esfandiar went into the mythological river, *Dahi Ti* took a bath there and became Invulnerable; but his eyes are not vulnerable, because in the water he has been closed his eyes.

Esfandiyar is killed eventually by Rustam. Simurgh teaches Rustam how to kill Esfandiyar. Simurgh bade Rustem break from the tree a branch that was long and slender, and fashion it into an arrow, and she said- "Only through his eyes can Esfendiyar be wounded. If, therefore, thou wouldst slay him, direct this arrow unto his forehead, and verily it shall not miss its aim."

Panacea

Using the panacea or cure-all is one of the common patterns in the epic. Eating, drinking or sometimes inhaling Panacea (as we see in *Ramayana*) heals the wounded or even gives life to a killed hero. Therefore heroic healing or life giving is also a part of the legendary career of warriors. In the Indian epic of *Ramayana* we face with four kinds of panacea:

Mrtasamjivani: capable of restoring the dead to life;

Visalyakarani: capable of extracting weapons and healing all wounds inflicted by weapons;

Suvarnakarani: restoring the body to its original complexion;

Sandhani: capable of joining severed limbs or fractured bones.

All these come from Ayurved, the plant-medicines of ancient India. According to a story in Yuddha Kanda, Indrajit son of Ravana invoked the missile presided over by Brahmā (the creator) charges the bow and shoots it with all his power. Thereupon Rama and Laxmana as well as the army of monkeys got grievously hurt and prostrated. Jambavana spoke to Hanuman addressing the panacea in the Himalaya Mountain:

You will discover four flaming herbs illuminating the ten directions. Viz., Mrtasamjivani (capable of restoring the dead to life) and also Visalyakarani (capable of extracting weapons and healing all wounds inflicted by weapons) as well as Suvarnakarani (restoring the body to its original complexion) and the great herb sandhani (capable of joining severed limbs or fractured bones). Taking all the aforesaid herbs, O Hanuman, you ought

to come back with all speed. Reassure the monkeys after uniting them back with life, O offspring of the wind-god. (VII. 655)

On inhaling the unique fragrance of the powerful herbs, the two princes were healed of their wounds. Other prominent heroes among the monkeys who were lying senseless on the battle field sprang on their feet. Even those eminent heroes among the monkeys who had been killed were healed of their wounds and rid of their pain in an instant by the fragrance of these most excellent herbs.

The concept of panacea in *Shah Nameh* includes some stories. In the story of the combat of Rustam and Sohrab, Rustam who doesn't know his antagonist is his son wounds him mortally but then he learns the truth and tries to rescue him. Rustam asked Gudarz to go before the king and get the panacea but Kei Kavus who was afraid if Sohrab be joined to his father, he may turn upon him, refuses to give the panacea and Sohrab dies.

Regarding panacea, Simurgh the mythical bird in *Shah Nameh* is healer and has the power to cure all kinds of disease and wounds. In fact her feathers act as panacea. For instance, in the story of Rustam's birth, Simurgh says, "Rudabe can't give birth to her son in an ordinary way. Therefore you ought to make her drunk and then a noble man cut her womb, pull out the child and sew it again. Then there is an herb that you should mix it with milk and *moshk*, make them dry and put it on the wound. After that set my feather on them to cure it completely. Simurgh also heals Rustam's wounds as well as Raxsh's in the story of his combat with Esfandiyar.

The Status of Women

Nabaneeta Dev Sen holds that "The ideals of the epic world obviously do not have much to share with women, nor do the women enjoy the heroic values. There is little they can do there other than get abducted or rescued, or pawned, or molested, or humiliated in some way or other".

Again, all epics are patriarchal. They are written by sons after the overthrow of matriarchies. Woman is the property and under the protection of man. Hence she is shown as weak in the epics. Foley's essay "Women in Ancient Epics" refers to *Aeneid* that defines the parameters of heroic epic as *arma virumque cano*, "I sing of arms and the man." Foley writes thus:

Yet ancient epics in fact contain a much broader range of important female figures, even if they must often act and speak from the margins of the male community. Women are

both the passive and, in the case of Roman epic, increasingly the active cause of wars as well as its carefully delineated, sometimes explicitly sacrificial victims. Women play a critical role as objects of exchange between men for the purpose of procreation, pleasure, and alliance; at the same time, a woman imported from another household or country can prove unfaithful or untrustworthy (105).

Women in *Shah Nameh*

The female figures in *Shah Nameh* possess both positive and negative characters. Ferdowsi speaks of the kindness of Faranak, the skill of Sindokht, the braveness of Gordafarid, the loyalty of Farangis, Manizheh, Shirin and Sepinud and the wisdom of Gordiyeh. Women in the stories of Bahram Gur are respectable. But women are blamed by heroes in many cases. Generally women in *Shah Nameh* don't enjoy equal status with men. This view of women is rooted in the economic, social and political situation of that time. In fact from ancient to the modern period, women were underprivileged and didn't have any rights. But Ferdowsi's view of women is more positive than other intellectuals of his age and he values women more than others of his time.

For example, Faranak, when her husband is killed by Zakhak's soldiers, does not lose her confidence and takes her son Faridun to the cow of Parmayeh. She gives her son to the guard of that meadow. Faridun grows up and eventually aids Kaveh and the Iranian people defeat Zakhak. Ferdowsi describes her as wise and beatific.

Sindokht the wise princess of Kabul reports to her husband that their daughter Rudabeh has fallen in love with Zal the Sistani hero. She speaks with her husband otherwise Rudabeh would have been killed by her father. She shows her wisdom and high competence in this story.

The Iranian heroin, Gordafarid fights with Sohrab bravely in such a way Sohrab wonders and admires her:

In wrath day dark with dust. He pressed upon her
 With loud cries, jostled her, and snatched her helm.
 Her hair escaped, her face shone like the sun.
 He said: "It is a girl! Her head of hair
 Is worthy of a crown If such a girl" (III. 22)

When Afrasyab decides to kill Siyavush, Farangis takes all her effort to prevent him. She speaks eloquently with his father. Her words are sensational and impressive. In the last part of her speech she says:

Killing of Siyavush is planting a tree which
 Its leaf is blood and its blossom is revenge
 Taking revenge of Siyavush, sea wears black
 Doing this, you oppress yourself
 In future you remember my words
 You are not hunting a zebra
 You are stealing a prince from his palace
 You ought to think more in this matter
 Don't destroy Turan for nothing
 If not your bad day will come. (IV. 22)

When the Turani hero Kahrom attacks Iran, ravages the city of Balkh and kills the king Luhrasb, Gushtasb's wife wears the clothes of Turani people and goes from the long way of capital city to Sistan quickly and informed her husband. Ferdowsi introduces this woman as wise, intelligent and eloquent.

The statement of Homay and Behafarid, Gushtasb's daughters to Him when their brother, Esfandiyar was killed by Rustam is strongly and frankly:

You sent him to Zabol
 Giving him many advices
 To die looking for crown
 The world all are crying for him
 Neither Simurgh killed him nor Rustam and Zal
 You killed him and now don't cry
 You should be shamed of your white beard
 That you killed your son because of your wish
 They lived many kings before you
 Who all were worthy of kingship
 Non of them led their son to death
 Not even from their families or relatives! (III. 17)

The rule of three women in *Shah Nameh* is significant. Homay Chehrzad, Purandokht and Azarm Dokht are three female kings of Iran.

This shows that even during patriarchy, women re-asserted itself. It shows the high status of women in ancient Persia where Iranians accepted and obeyed a woman as a king. A Shia statement says, "Heaven lies under the feet of mothers."

Ghidafeh the king of Ondolos (now Spain) presents a significant image of herself in *Shah Nameh*. Ferdowsi commends her wisdom and munificence and narrates a story about her statecraft which is unique in *Shah Nameh*.

The wisdom of the daughter of Mehrak and her nice speaking is notable and causes the Sassanid Prince, Ardeshir falls in love with her.

The daughters of Barzin are artist. One of them is singer, another one is player and the third one is dancer. They present their art before Bahram and the king falls in love with them.

The loyalty and deference of Sepinud Bahram's wife is notable. Ferdowsi commends her wisdom, modesty and nice looking.

In the story of Kasra and Nushzad, Ferdowsi commends Kasra's wife who is in fact an ideal woman in his thought:

Whether a king or a slave
Or a pious believer man
They should marry a woman
As they need eating, wearing and a place for sleeping
If a woman is pious and wise
She is a valuable treasure
Specially if she is tall,
And her hair is long to her food
Clever, conscious and modest
Eloquent and nice speaking
Kasra had a wife like this
Tall like cedar and beautiful like a moon. (V. 22)

In the story of Talkhand and Gav, Ferdowsi commends Jomhur's wife, the king of India. He introduced her as wise, artist and conversant. We don't see any negative point in her life.

Gordiyeh, the sister of Bahram Chubin is one of the most important women in *Shah Nameh*. If she didn't kill her husband, we could consider her the best woman in this epic. She is a real heroin and so brave who is chosen as a commander of the army. She takes all her effort to prevent her brother of battle against Hormazd and Parviz. Her advices to her brother, Bahram Chubineh are truly and wisely. Beside her prowess, she is excellent in banquet. When she

marries Parviz, by his request she presents her art fighting with Khaghan's army. Then she shows her art in drinking. She plays her role from the kingship of Hormazd up to end of the story of Khosrow Parviz.

The loyalty of Shirin to her husband Parviz continues even after his death. To keep her honor and her husband's name, Shirin kills herself beside her husband corps. Almost one century later, the Iranian poet, Nezami Ganjavi composed the story of "*Khosrow and Shirin*". But as noted, some verses in *Shah Nameh* present a negative image of women. In the following we discuss these verses:

In the story of Zal and Rudabeh, when Mehrab learns of the love of the Iranian hero and his daughter, he grows angry and wants to kill her daughter. He reminds his progenitor's word and says:

He told me, "when a daughter was born
You should cut her head at that moment"
I didn't kill and I ignore his advice
And now this excellent matter happens to me! (II. 17)

In the story of Bizhan and Manizheh, when Afrasyab learns that her daughter has brought the Iranian hero to the palace, he shakes of anger and says:

Anyone who has a daughter
Even she has crown, she is unlucky
For the one who has daughter instead of son
He doesn't achieve except an unlucky son in law! (III. 31)

The Czar of Rom has the same opinion of Mehrab, the king of Kabul and Afrasyab, the king of Turan. When his daughter Katayun wants to marry Gushtasb, a stranger and unknown man, Czar says:

Is the best if you don't have a daughter
Because she deteriorates the race
If I give my daughter to him
I become lowly of this shame
My daughter and the one who chose
We should kill both of them! (II. 23)

Sudabeh plays a black role in the story of Siyavush. In this story we read:

Don't do anything on order of a woman
You can never see a wise woman!

When Esfandiyar informs his mother of his decision that he wants his father's reign, his mother objects. Then we read:

Esfandiyar says to his mother
 How nice story a wise says
 Don't say a secret to a woman
 If you say you will find it revealed near all
 Don't do anything on order of a woman
 You can never see a wise woman! (I. 22)

Hearing the news of Siyavush's death, Rostam who knows Sudabeh guilty, says to Kei Kavus:

The one who is chief of a group
 Death is better for him rather woman's order
 Siyavush died of a woman's saying
 The best woman is who does not come to birth (III. 17)

Women in *Ramayana*

The role of women in Hinduism is often a controversial issue, ranging from equal status with men to restrictive behavior in tandem with the ups and downs in Hindu society. Hinduism but is not limited to one or two sources but is based on numerous texts, from 2000 BCE or earlier to contemporary time. These works include vast era of authority, authenticity, content and theme. The status of women in Hinduism is broadly dependent on the specific text and the context. While some works such as the *Manu Smriti* stand for a restriction of women's rights (Doniger 61), but positive references are made to the ideal woman in texts such as the popular ancient epics *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Jayapalan in his account on the "The status of women in Hindu Society" cites from Atharva Veda that "the success of woman in her married life depends upon her proper training during Brahmacharya", adding that many Vedic women composed hymns. Jayapalan remarks, "During the Upanishadic period there were great Brahmavadinis who were enriched with deep knowledge of Philosophy. Gargi and Maitrayee asked difficult questions in a challenge with their husband Yajnavalkya, the great thinker. During the Buddhist period, great women lived who were in no way inferior to men. The status of women was highly appreciable during the time of Jainism" (147). Hinduism also considers god to have both male and female aspects, as the original source of both.

Taking a look at some of the main female characters of *Ramayana* clearly shows that the positive image of women outweigh the negative one, and even it presents the character of ideal woman. The main female characters of *Ramayana* whether positive or negative are as follows:

Kaushalya is the first of three Dasharath's wives and a queen of Ayodhyā. Kaushalya had a perfect and liberal character. In her previous birth she was born as Manushataroopa and had pleased Lord Vishnu with her penance. She is the blessed woman as she was chosen to be the mother of Rama, God incarnate.

Kaikeyi is the second of King Dasharath's three wives and as well a queen of Ayodhyā. She is the mother of Bharata. *Kaikeyī* as a term in Sanskrit means "belonging to the Kaikeyas" referring the ruling family of the Kekaya clan, to whom Kaikeyī belonged. Kaikeyi's personality is worth examining and her character is portrayed as jealous and malevolent. While all is set for the great event, the coronation ceremony of Rama, Kaikeyi whose jealousy was aroused by her maid, claimed two boons that Dasharatha had long ago promised her: Rama should be exiled into forest for fourteen years, while her son, Bharata is to become the king of Ayodhyā.

Manthara is the personal maid of queen Kaikeyi who poisoned her mistress's mind. Manthara who did not want to see Rama as a king, aroused Kaikeyi's jealousy that Bharata deserves and should to be the king and not Rama. Manthara finally convinced Kaikeyi that she should persuade Dasharatha to exile Rama in to the wood and make Bharata the king instead. Her manner brought sorrow to everyone in the royal household for fourteen years.

Sumitra is the third wife of King Dasharath who gives birth to twins named Laxmana and Shatrughna. Her character is not highlighted in *Ramayana* but we know at least she doesn't have a negative personality. It seems even she encouraged her son Laxmana to go with Rama. Laxmana is so loyal to Rama and accompanies him in his journey to the forest for fourteen years.

Of all the women in the *Ramayana*, Urmila "made one of the greatest silent sacrifices" (Garg website). She initially wanted to go to the forest with her husband Laxmana, but he tells, with her present, he would not be able to completely fulfill his responsibilities towards Rama and Sita.

Soorpankha is Ravana's sister. She tries to deceive first Rama and then Laxmana in a sexual relationship but then when Laxmana recognizes that she was a demon, he cut off her nose and two ears with his sword. Soorpankha who was disfigured in the process, crying in pain, went to her brother Ravana in Lanka. She then sought revenge by provoking Ravana to abduct Sita.

There is another positive female character in *Ramayana* but not a human being, she is a monkey. Tara is the Queen of Kishkindha and wife of the monkey King Vali. After being widowed, she becomes Sugriva's, Vali's brother's wife. Tara is wise and intelligent. When Sugriva delays and fails to act on his promise to assist Rama in recovering Sita, Tara speaks with him and convinces him to send some groups to search for Sita.

Mandodari is the virtuous wife of Ravan who stands up to her husband when he abducts Sita. Though she is born into a *rakshas* family, she is wise and can distinguish right from wrong. She has the foresight to know that Ravan's actions would bring destruction to Lanka.

Beyond doubt the principal and most positive female character of *Ramayana* is Sita. She is the exemplar of womanly and wifely virtue. She is regarded also as a daughter of Bhumi Devi, the goddess of the Earth. Sita is portrayed as beautiful, chaste, polite, fully aware of her duties, and loyal to her husband. She accompanies Rama on his exile to the forest for fourteen years and remains loyal to him when she is abducted by Ravana. During her captivity for a year in Lanka, Ravana desires her and even orders some *rakshasis* to convince her but Sita refuses his request and struggles to maintain her loyalty. Returning to her husband, Sita is questioned by Rama of her virtue and devotion to him. Sita then proves her purity and faithfulness by passing the fire-test. She is the symbol of the sufferings and strengths of women, the symbol of ideal woman and one of the most revered figures in the Hindu pantheon. Bhargava remarks that

I see that Sita, more than any other character, is an integral part of the Indian woman's psyche. At every stage of an Indian woman's life, her name is invoked. I find it amazing that one great epic written by a poet thousands of years ago has shaped and continues to shape and reshape the thinking of an entire culture. And, how certain aspects of a character have been emphasized more than others to suit the political and societal norms of the day (website).

Several years ago, Sally Sutherland showed that for 90 per cent of the Indians she interviewed, Sita was their favourite (mythical) woman. Dev Sen holds that, "Just as the Ram myth has been exploited by the patriarchal Brahminical system to construct an ideal Hindu male, Sita too has been built up as an ideal Hindu female, to help serve the system" (website).

Ethics and Beliefs

Ethics and Beliefs in *Shah Nameh*

Ferdowsi is known as *Hakim* in Persian which Means philosopher, and his work contains several philosophical themes. Though Ferdowsi is a Muslim poet, the basic subjects of *Shah Nameh* are rooted in the Avesta and are reflections of Mazdean and Zoroasterian creation myths. Thus the Islamic and Zoroastrian ethics and beliefs can be traced in *Shah Nameh*. The world outlook of Ferdowsi, his beliefs and his thoughts about life and about the world are expressed by the poet through out his heroic work. The fragments of thoughts in *Shah Nameh* can be discussed under the following subjects.

The Disloyalty of the World

Banani writes: “If there is a unifying theme in the *Shah Nameh* it is no simple wrath of Achilles’, but the malevolence of the universe itself” (website). Ferdowsi likens the world to a snake which is soft when touched but is very dangerous when it bites. The world does not follow any certain rules and every day has different stories. It is mysterious and can’t be revealed. Once it raises you to the sky and another time it reproaches you to dirt. This is the image of the world which Ferdowsi presents whether through his mouth or of the protagonists. For example in a story Rostam looks at the mountain of the trophy that he achieved from the war of Afrasyab and says:

This possession turns from one to another
 Sometimes with curse, sometimes with bravo
 The heaven dose not remain calm, it turns
 T was its dealing from the beginning
 One gathers wealth and keeps it
 Another one comes and eats it.
 Defeating of Fuladvand, Rostam advised his soldiers,
 Why do you trust to heaven,
 When the wise dose not know even one of its secrets from five
 Sometime it comes fighting like a devil
 Another time like a beautiful bride,
 Choose drinking and not bothering people
 Who tells cures is better than bravo
 Have what do you have and don’t be sad
 Because the heaven is temporary and we are passing

Don't distaste others because of money
 Don't oppress people as you can. (IV. 22)

In the story of finding the treasure of Jamshid again Ferdowsi emphasizes on the disloyalty of the world as well as its impermanency and says that gathering treasure is vain. This story shows how a king like Jamshid just gathered and did not use. After centuries Bahram Gur finds this treasure and divides it between poor people. Ending of the story Bahram says, "As previous kings died, we will die as well. Therefore the best is to pass it joyfully."

Another story that Ferdowsi portrays the image of disloyalty and impermanency of the world is in the reign of Khosrow Parviz. Ferdowsi first counts the great deeds of the king, his wealth and his powers, his singers and his dancers, his camels, horses and elephants and finally says,

A man such him were killed by a slave therefore
 Don't be greedy; don't be jealous. (VI. 22)

Death

Death is a highlighted theme in *Shah Nameh*. "The prevailing paradox of human existence is refracted and made particular in episodes about its lives of mortals who, prism-like, reflect the light and shadow of character, the changes of mood and motive, and the many psychic levels of personality" (Banani website). Ferdowsi more than any Persian poet speaks about death in several stories. Significantly, more than two percent verses of *Shah Nameh* is regarding death (Sarami 607) and almost all the stories in *Shah Nameh* end with the death of the heroes. Ferdowsi believes that death is the only certain rule in the world. When a king asked his minister about the knowledge of the world, he answers,

Among the knowledge of the world,
 lots of them are uncertain and hollow,
 except the word that said, dirt is the place
 I do not have knowledge about the other world! (III. 41)

In Ferdowsi's thought, death includes everyone and nobody can escape from death. In the story of Bahram for instance, when he is going to fight with the behemoth, his men warn him that he may be killed by the behemoth but he answers, "Man is from the race of dirt therefore there is no fear if he returns to dirt." In the story of Ardeshir Babakan we read,

It is the dealing of the heaven,

Whether with Ardavan or with Ardeshir
 If it raises you up to stars
 Finally it burry you in the ground (V. 17)

Also the following verses state that death includes all:

Whether religious or impious,
 They put their hands on their heads, surrendering to death

Every creature is born for death
 This world is a temporary house and we are passing
 Whether we are a king or a warrior,
 We can't get free of the talon of death

If the ground reveals its secrets,
 And tell us its beginning and its final,
 It is red of warriors' blood
 And it contains lots of kings
 Its lap is full of wises
 And its pockets full of pretties
 Whether you put crown on your head or a helmet
 The arrow of death passes it! (VI. 13)

Ferdowsi says that man dies when it is written in his/her Fate and it can't be changed or delayed. In the aforesaid story Bahram says, "If God has written in my Fate that my death is in Hindustan, therefore I will not die in another place". Again when Shengel asked Bahram to fight with a dragon, his men try to stop him but he says, "If my death is in the hand of this dragon, I can't change it with my power."

Fate

All the stories in *Shah Nameh* present the mastery of fate in man's life. Man can't conquer his fate and achieve freedom. The heroes who fight against fate step by step understand that they were toys not players. Therefore the most important thought of the epic is shortened in the following verse:

We try but in vain;
 Everything was from the beginning whatever it should be

The *Shah Nameh* expert, Sarrami holds that fate in *Shah Nameh* has two faces. Sometime it arranges Man's destination behind the mask of sublime heaven, wheel, sphere, seven globes, and

sky that we can call it 'Cosmic Fate'. The second returns directly to God's will which can be define as 'Divine Fate'. Ferdowsi is angry at the first one and describe it as cruel, unkind and mad but to the second one he defers to whatever God decides. Ferdowsi wanders between these two fates. Sometime he looks at fate as trick of the stars and jugglery of the sky but another time he refers it directly to God. Trough out the *Shah Nameh* Ferdowsi is looking for a solution to get free from this paradox that bothers his soul. At the end of the story of Eskandar (Alexander) he clearly shows his effort to solve this paradox. He first complains of the heaven that made him old. He calls heaven, disloyal and mad and even wishes that his mother did not give birth to him! Then Ferdowsi warns heaven of complaining against him to God in the hereafter. Hearing his words, the heaven answers, "I don't have any power; you are superior to me in every aspect; all of our works is because of God's order and His will:

O sublime heaven!

Why you made me poor when I am old

You support me when I was young,

Why did you leave me lowly in my old?

The cedar bowed in the garden

The dear light darkened

The black mountain was covered with snow

The army knows the king guilty

You were like a mother yet

But now I should tear blood of your toil

You are disloyal and mad

I toil of your madness

I wished you did not give me birth

And when I was born, I hoped you did not toil me

When I pass from this dark world

I tell my referee your misbehaviors

I complain to God about you

while I am heartsick and I pour dirt on my head

the sublime heaven responded

O inoffensive man!

Why do you refers all good and bad to me

Such a this complain from a learned man is not seemly

You are superior to me in every aspect

You train your soul with wisdom

The things you relate to me are not in my hand

The son and the moon they don't know about these things

Your eating and sleeping and thinking and sitting
 Knowing about good and bad, and the proper way
 Ask your way from the creator of the way
 Who creates day and night, sun and moon
 The one who knows every thing and there is no secret for him
 He doesn't have beginning and no end
 When he bids: Be, that thing is created
 If somebody believes something different of this, is wrong

Of your justice, I am your believer
 I worship the creator
 I do everything on His order
 And I do not break my promise
 Believe God and quarter to Him
 Ask Him whatever you want but don't lavish
 Except Him, don't call anybody God
 The creator of Moon, Sun and Venus (V. 22)

Reading this conversion, one may think Ferdowsi has found his right way and from this moment he will not twist the heaven and he knows the stars, under the conquest of God, but it is not truth. This paradox has not been solved for him and he continues to castigate heaven even with harsh words. Besides these, all the heroes in *Shah Nameh* return their work to Fate specially those works which end their life or other's life. In addition, fate in *Shah Nameh* gives a mood or temper to everyone which forces him to do as it wants. For example if a person is kind he is slave of his kindness not his master as well as a person who is greedy and he can't master his greed. Therefore each person has been created with a special essence or nature which controls him inwardly. Man from outside is under the control of heaven and stars and obedient to his essence from inside.

The great role that fate plays in shaping the stories of *Shah Nameh* are clearly seen in the following stories as some examples:

When Faridun occupies Zahhak's palace, asks Arnavaz about him. Arnavaz says, "He is in India, killing the people. He goes from one city to another city to escape from his Fate."

The role of fate in the tragedy of Rustam and Sohrab is highlighted. Sohrab captures Iranian hero Hojir to show him Rustam but in fact fate prevents and all His efforts were in vain.

When Sohrab defeated Rustam and was ready to kill him, Rustam deceived him and on order of the fate, Sohrab let him go. Ferdowsi counted three reasons for Sohrab's action:

The young hero accepted the word of the old hero
 First, on order of his heart, the second because of the Fate
 The third returns to his magnanimity. (II. 42)

But however it is the fate that agreed his heart and provoked his magnanimity to let Rustam goes. As we know in the final battle Sohrab was killed by his father, Rustam. Sohrab in the last moment of his life acquits his father and says: it was my fate that instead of playing with my friends, took me to battlefield and stood me against my father.

Revenge

While the main theme in lyrics is love, it is revenge in the epic. Taking revenge is the start point for any war. An important part of *Shah Nameh* is related to the life and death of Siyavush and taking revenge of him. Ancient Iranians consider 'revenge' of such high importance that they made lots of songs about these stories. Even taking revenge in *Shah Nameh* is divine and the first one was done under the order of God. The one who takes revenge of a slain helps in fact the fate. Iranians believed if a family members or friends of a slain couldn't take revenge of him from the killer, eventually God himself takes revenge of him. To know the significance of this belief among Iranians, we read a conversation between Mahuy and his wise adviser. When Mahuy was going to kill Yazdgerd the Sassanid king, consulted with his nobles to know their ideas:

Mahuy arranged a meeting with the nobles
 Asking their views in this story:
 If Yazdgerd stay alive,
 Gathering an army, men will come and join to him
 Now my secret was revealed in the world
 And you all heard my words
 He will kill me,
 And he will kill the people
 Not even a man remains, not this country
 The wise adviser responded:
 You shouldn't misbehave to the king
 If he becomes your enemy
 He doesn't remain you alive

And if you kill him, it is worth
 His avenger is God in the world
 Left and right is toil and sorrow
 Think whatever you should do (VI. 13)

Another story that shows how revenge was divine for ancient Iranians is regarding the reign of Kei Khosrow. Rustam and his father Zal go to meet Kei Khosrow. In this meeting Kavus, the former king of Iran stresses on the necessity of taking revenge of his son Siyavosh. Kavus asks his grandson Kei Khosrow to take revenge of his father from Afrasyab and the matter that his mother is daughter of Afrasyab shouldn't prevent him from this great deed. Kei Khosrow takes an oath and writes a letter that he knows his duty to take revenge of his father from his maternal grandfather Afrasyab. He asks God to help him taking revenge of his father. He knows his act, divine and says, "Whoever is killed in this way is martyr and goes to Paradise and whoever kill Turanians, God will give him back in hereafter."

As we see, taking revenge does not care family relationship and being relative does not prevent one to take his revenge. Kei Khosrow takes his revenge from his grandfather and in another story, Manuchehr takes revenge of his grandfather, Iraj from his brothers Salm and Tur. But however taking revenge for the revenger is bitter and painful. Faridun who asked Manuchehr to take revenge of his father from his uncles, up to end of his life is sad of his son's death. Kei Khosrow who cut his grandfather's head Afrasyab, after sometime regrets and asks God his death. He eventually disappeared strangely.

Simurgh that her pair and chickens were killed by Esfandiyar, to take revenge of him, taught Rustam how he can kill Esfandiyar.

In addition of being divine, Iranians consider it as a respected custom which nobody can ignore it. The words that Bahman tells Iranian nobles of taking revenge of his father from Rustam's family shows the importance of this custom in their thought:

Whoever is lord,
 He doesn't throw a gem on dirt (he does not kill a hero like Esfandiyar)
 He will be like King Farydun
 If he is like this, he is imperial
 Who killed Zahhak to take revenge of Jamshid
 Or Manuchehr who gathered a big army from Amol
 To take revenge of his grandfather from Salm and Tur
 On order of his grandfather, He went to China

He killed them and made a mountain of their bodies
 Or like Kei Khosrow who took his father's revenge from Afrasyab
 He made a sea of the blood
 My father also came and took revenge of Lohrasb
 As far he killed the ground was like a mountain
 Faramarz, taking revenge of his father (Rustam)
 He went to kabol and destroyed everything
 The ground was covered by blood, nobody can recognize the area
 They rid horses on murders (V. 42)

In some cases in *Shah Nameh*, the heroes try to take revenge with justice. One example is the moral dealing of Kei Khosroe with wives and children of Afrasyab. His accompanies blame him that here is not a right place for justice but the king answers:

Taking revenge with justice is the right way
 Therefore we reach our goal and remain a good name

Stories with theme of revenge include mythical and heroic parts of *Shah Nameh*, beginning from Kiyumarth's reign and end in Bahman's reign. At the end of *Shah Nameh* also we face with the image of revenge. Taking revenge of Yazdgerd, Bizhan battels with Mahuy and eventually kills him and his sons savagely.

The theme of revenge in *Shah Nameh* can be traced in the fallowing stories:

To take revenge of Siyamak, Tahmureth battled with evil. He defeated gnomes and captured many of them.

Taking revenge of his father, Faridun rose up against Zahhak and finally captured him but on order of Surush, doesn't kill him and jailed Zahhak in Damavand mountain.

Taking revenge of his grandfather, Manuchehr fought against Salm and Tur and killed both of them.

Giv captures the Turani hero, Tejav and taking revenge of Bahram killed him.

Kei Khosrow taking revenge of his father killes Afrasyab and the long story of revenge of Siyavush ends.

In the last moment of his life, Rustam takes his revenge of Shughad and with an arrow attaches him to a tree.

To take revenge of his father, Faramarz attacks Kabol and hangs on the king of Kabol and forty nobles of his family.

Narrating the stories in *Shah Nameh*, Ferdowsi speaks of moral principles. Ferdowsi blames jealousy and greed, arrogance, oppression, parsimony, anger and hot temper, drunkenness and lying but he praises magnanimity. In the following we list these ethics and discuss the stories that refer to one of these principles.

The Infelicity of Jealousy and Greed

The first war of *Shah Nameh* begins because of infelicity and greed of Devil (Ahriman). Ahriman who wants to take Kiumarsh's reign sends his son Khazuran with a huge army and kills Kiumarsh's son Siyamak; The infelicity and greed of Salm and Tur also provoke them to kill their brother Iraj; Of this greed, Kei Kavus goes fighting with gnomes of Mazandaran where eventually he is captured by them; Again the greed prompts Kei Kavus to conquest the heavens but finally he falls down in the forest of Amol; Gurgin is jealous of Bizhan's gifts who received from Kei Khosrow. He uses a trick and encourages Bizhan to go and see Afrasyab's daughter, Manizheh in a festival. Bizhan goes there and finally is captured by Afrasyab who jailed him in a hole; the jealousy and greed provokes Mahuy to kill Yazdgerd but finally he is captured and killed by Bizhan; Prophet Mazdak says to king Ghobad:

Five things pervert you from the truth
The wise didn't add anything to them
Jealousy, spite, anger and want
The fifth is greed when overcomes man
If you overcome these five
The way of God is appeared to you (VI. 26)

The Infelicity of Arrogance

When Jamshid finds himself the only king of the world, becomes haughty and assumes himself as God. Ferdowsi says, his arrogance caused his charisma separates from him, led him to be killed by evil Zahhak:

Jamshid says to old nobles
I can't find any peer for myself
I created the art in the world
The throne hasn't seen a king like me
I arranged the world with excellence
Now the world is as I wanted
Your eating, sleeping and resting is because of me
And your efforts and wishes is of me

I own the dignity and the diadem
 Who says there is a king except me
 All Mubads (Zoroastrian priest) were silent
 Nobody dared to say something
 When Jamshid said this, the charisma was separated of him
 And the world was full of jangle
 When he praised oneself and said “it is I”
 Everything was roiled (I. 22)

In another story, Yazdgerd to cure his illness goes to divine Su spring and takes a bath there. But when he is cured, he praises oneself and says, “It was my competence”. Saying “it is I” a horse comes out from the spring. It seems the horse is tame but when the king wants to ride it, the horse hoofed and killed Yazdgerd.

The Infelicity of Oppression

Shah Nameh blames oppression and commends justice and it is a leitmotif in this epic. The just kings succeed and cruel kings end in ignominy. Bahram Gur and Kasa, two favorite kings of Ferdowsi are just and their justice brings their reigns glory and grandeur, but in another hand Zahhak, Hormazd and Shiruy are cruel and their tyranny causes of their ignominy and opprobrium. Even a dictator king like Afrasyab commends justice. In the story of Siyavush, Afrasyab says the Turani nobles:

Of injustice of the king
 All graces disappear
 A zebra doesn't litter on time in a plain
 The chicken of eagle becomes blind
 The beasts don't give milks
 The water of spring becomes black
 All springs become dry
 The *mushk* of deer doesn't have good smell
 The truth escape of the lie
 And shortcoming comes from every side
 Now we should learn knowledge and justice
 Instead of offending we should do justice. (IV.17)

When Gushtasb asks his father, Luhrasb to abandon him the reign, Luhrasb cites from Kei Khosrow who told:

He told me, the cruel king
 Is such a weed in the garden
 When it finds water, it grows
 And it destroys the garden (III. 15)

In the story of Bahram and the woman whose job is sucking ships, the woman says:

When a king becomes cruel
 Even the moon doesn't shine
 The milk becomes dry in the breast
 The mush of deer doesn't smell well
 Rape and gavel appear
 The kind heart becomes like a stone
 The wolf eat people in the plain
 The wise escapes from unwise
 Even an egg doesn't become a chicken
 When the king is cruel (VII. 21)

The Infelicity of Parsimony

In the story of Lonbak and Braham, we read Brhaham is a sordid man. To examine him, Bahram Gur in a garb of a soldier asks him to give him hospitality for one night, but Braham doesn't let him to enter his house and asks him to go and sleep in the stable. When the king returns to his palace, he orders to confiscate Braham's wealth; Farshidvard, a sordid man has the same destination of Braham. The king Bahram and his army pass the Farshidfard's village. The king Bahram goes to his house and asked him hospitality but Farshidvard claimed he is a poor man and he doesn't have anything to offer him. Bahram goes from his house and in the way he sees a farmer. He informs Bahram that Farshidvard is a rich landowner who has lots of ships, camels and cows. Knowing this, Bahram orders to confiscate all his wealth and spreads it between poor people.

The Infelicity of Anger and Hot Temper

Some stories in *Shah Nameh* present the evil being of anger and some heroes in this epic are hot tempered. Among them Tus and Kei Kavus are more hot tempered than others. In the story of Rustam and Sohrab, when Giv accompany with Rustam come before Kei Kavus, the king who is angry at Rustam's delay orders to hang him. But when Giv loiters, he orders Tus to hang both

Rustam and Giv. Tus comes and takes Rustam's hand to take him out but he doesn't let and blames king's treatment:

Rustam grows angry and said the king
 Don't put fire near yourself
 Each of your work is worth than other
 You are not worthy to be a king
 You go and hang Sohrab if you can
 And reproach rebel and sinister (II. 41)

The hot temper of Tus results the tragedy of Frud. On order of Tus, Bahram goes up the mountain to learn who they are. Bahram speaks with these two and knows them. He returns to Tus and tells him, "They are Frud, the brother of the king Kei Khosrow and his guide, Takhar. As you know the king bade us not bother or fight with them." Tus grows angry and says Bahram, "I told you to bring them here not to speak with them. He is not prince but he is afraid of me and claims he is prince." Then Tus asks one of his heroes goes and bring the head of Frud. With this order, eventually Frud is killed and all his families and also his mother suicide.

The Infelicity of Drunkenness

Although there are a lot of stories about wine-drinking in the epic and Ferdowsi knows it a happy custom, and even invites his readers to drink and to be happy but he blames extravagance in this work. The view of *Shah Nameh* to wine-drinking is discussed well in the story of declaring wine unlawful and then declaring wine lawful. The gardener Kahrui in the party of king Bahram drinks a lot and when he returns to his village, he sleeps in the midway. Some crows attack him and eat his eyes. When Bahram learns of Kahrui's sad destination, declares that wine is unlawful. After one year a son of shoemaker drinks a lot and in his drunkenness catches a lion and rides it. Hearing of this news, Bahram again declares wine lawful and says:

Wine- drinking is lawful
 But to that amount a person drinks and catch a lion
 Not such a person whose eyes became blind by crows (VI. 12)

Here we bring some examples that shows how extravagance in drinking put drinker in treble. In the story of Bizhan and Manizheh, when Bizhan is drunk, Manizheh adds some hypnotic drug in his wine and take him to the Afrasyab's palace. This causes Bizan to be jailed in a deep hole; Esfandiyar invites Arjasb and his men to wine-drinking and when they are drunk in aid of his

warriors kill all of them; When Ardeshir Babakan, using a trick entered the castle of the worm, he makes worshipers of the worm drunk. Then he gives the worm hot copper and kills it and also kills all the worshipers of the worm while they are drunk; Malekeh bid her cupbearer to tipple Tayer and his men. Then she opens the gate of the fort. Shapur and his warriors enter and kill lots of drunk men. He also captures Tayer and eventually bids deathsmen to cut his head; Khosrow Parviz when he is drunk bids to put his uncle in chain and then orders to cut his hands and his feet while his uncle was loyal to the king.

The Infelicity of Lying

In many cases *Shah Nameh* blames lying but especially it is in the story of Seven Stages of Esfandiyar which shows clearly how lying result worse.

Gurgsar says Esfandiyar, “after passing the stage of snow we reach to the hot and dry desert which there is no water in it. Therefore Esfandiyar bids to carry lots of water and leave heavy tools. Passing the stage of snow when Esfandiyar expects to reach a desert faces himself to a sea. He blames Gurgsar because of his lie but he knows without Gurgsar they can’t pass the sea therefore Esfandiyar speaks kindly and promises his liar guide to put him as commander of the fort. However they pass the sea by aid of Gurgsar but eventually he is killed by Esfandiyar as a penalty of his lie.

Magnanimity

Some of the *Shah Names*’s stories give currency to magnanimity and self- sacrifice. Here we point to some of them. Zahhak has two snakes on his shoulders. Devil in the garb of a doctor tells him that he should kill two youths every day and give their brains to the snakes. Armayel and Garmayel, cooks of Zahhak instead of one of these two youth, kill one sheep and therefore save the life one person every day; The guardian of the meadow that the Parmayeh cow grasses there, accept to keep the child of Faranak while her husband has been killed by Zahhak; Faridun asks his son, Iraj to battle with his two brothers, Salm and Tur but instead, Iraj goes to them kindly and truly. However, eventually he is killed by them; Novzar, the king of Iran and one thousand two hundred of his soldiers are captured by Afrasyab. The king of Turan cuts Novzar’s head and bids to kill all Iranian captives but his brother, Aghrirath intervenes and asks him not to kill them; Sohrab lifted Rostam, threw him upon the ground and sat on his chest, ready to cut his head. But Rostam said: “It is written in the laws of honour that you can kill your antagonist if

you overcome him in the second time and not first". Sohrab kindly accepted and didn't kill him; Although Siyavush knows himself innocent but accepts to pass through fire. Moreover when he pass it successfully and proves his innocence, forgives Sudabeh and asks his father not to punish her; When Afrasyab bids killing of her daughter, Frangis, his wise minister Piran Viseh intercedes and saves her life. Piran also later saves the life of Kei Khosrow; Esfandiyar injures Rustam in the battlefield and whereas he can kill Rustam, he gives him time to come with him before Gushtasb; Lonbak who is water seller sells even his clothes and his water-skin to receive his guest Bahram.

Ethics and Beliefs in *Ramayana*

"Such absolute and all-commanding sway and influence of literature," Vyas holds, "is perhaps unknown in the West with the single exception of the Bible. Even Occidental scholars agree that no work of world literature secular in its origin has ever exerted so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Valmiki- *Ramayana*." (318). The enduring moral influence of *Ramayana* in classical Sanskrit, as well as popular Hindi and Bengali literature, and its regular public recitations from the second century C.E., the epic stands unparalleled in Indian culture (Hindery 289). Benjamin Khan in his clear treatise *The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana* describes the epic as "the national manual of ethics" (98) and Hein puts his stress on *Ramayana* as a leading revealer of the pulse of Indian convictions which "has carried traditional Hindu ideals to the youngest and simplest of many generations" (94).

The ethical messages and the moral intimation of *Ramayana* should not be extracted only through its explicitly didactic passages but also through the characters of the epic, their manners and their treatments. The two main protagonists Rama and Sita are both divinized, and their divinity is portrayed and believed ever increasingly after the composition of the epic. Although Goldman asserts that in the original Valmiki- *Ramayana*, "the main body of the narrative lacks statements of Rama's divinity, and identifications of Rama with Vishnu are rare and subdued even in the later parts of the text" (45). However, in later additions and in the ninth and sixteenth century versions of Kampan and Tulasidas, Rama, particularly, is divine and deserves worship.

The Ideal Man

Through the story Rama is portrayed as an ideal man. At the beginning of *Ramayana* Valmiki asks Narada the greatest of hermits as to who is the ideal man: Absolute-like, Absolute-similar or comparable human, full of virtues, truthful of speech and firm of resolve with some of many traits of that Absolute. Sage Narada responded by relating the story of Rama and introduces him as the ideal man:

One emerged from Ikshvaku dynasty and known to people thus as Rama by his name, and he is conscientious, highly valorous, resplendent, steadfast and a controller of vice and the vile... He is an adept one, moralist, learned, propitious, and a destroyer of enemies. His arms are dextrous, and his neck is like a conch-shell, and cheekbones high... He is lion-chested, thick-shouldered, knee-length are his arms, and his is longbow, an enemy-subjugator, [and his emperor's countenance is] with a crowning-head with an ample forehead, and his pacing is lion-like... He is the knower of rectitude, bidden by the truth, also his concern is in the welfare of subjects, proficient in prudence, clean in his conduct, self-controlled and a diligent one, thus he is glorious... He equals the Omniscient, he is an exalted one for he is the sustainer of all worlds, and he eliminates enemies completely, thus he is a guardian of all living beings and he guards probity, in its entirety... He is the champion of his own self-righteousness and also champions for adherent's welfare [in the same righteousness,] and he is a scholar in the essence of Vedas and their ancillaries, too. He is an expert in Dhanur Veda, the Art of Archery... (I. 61)

The Importance of Dharma

The concept of dharma is one of the most important themes within Hinduism. Dharma is often translated as religion, duty, or righteousness, but in fact, there is no single direct translation for it. As a Sanskrit term dharma covers a wide range of meanings. Defining dharma, Jois writes:

the word 'Dharma' is used to mean Justice (Nyaya), what is right in a given circumstance, moral values of life, pious obligations of individuals, righteous conduct in every sphere of activity, being helpful to other living beings, giving charity to individuals in need of it

or to a public cause or alms to the needy, natural qualities or characteristics or properties of living beings and things, duty and law as also constitutional law (Website).

Jois also remarks, dharma was formulated as a solution for problems arising out of the six inherent enemies in Man, namely Kama (desire), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (passion), Mada (infatuation) and Matsarya (enmity).

However, dharma is a leitmotif which finds significant repetition throughout the *Ramayana*. While details of the story have been changed, particularly through the processes of localization and translation, the main tenets of the story remain intact and continue to be used as examples of correct behavior. Shukavak N. Dasa in his book regarding the essentials of modern Hinduism holds that “*Ramayana* was built on the system of dharma” (2). He writes that, the hero Rama exhibits the ideal execution of dharma as a son and king. The princess Sita illustrates the dharma of the ideal woman and wife. Laxmana, Bharata, Shatrugha performe their dharma as devoted brothers. Hanuman, the divine ape, exhibits the dharma of a devoted servant in the way he serves Rama. But the evil Ravana is the personification of *adharma* or the opposite of dharma. “Valmiki’s *Ramayana* is a book of great influence”, Pollet states, “and it makes great impact on Indian consciousness and influence the nation’s emotional, aesthetics and moral life. The human element and moral values dominate the epic. Indian people have accepted the values presented in *Ramayana* to such extent that it has been often said that ‘one should behave as Rama did not as Ravana: Ramadivat pravartitavyam na Ravanadivat, (201).” *Ramayana* offers models of dharma, as exemplified below.

In the beginning of the tale, when Rama strings the great bow of Siva, king Janaka Sita’s father gives his consent to the marriage. Presenting his daughter to Rama, Janaka introduces her as aware of her dharma. Janaka says:

This Sita my daughter is going to be your helpmate in discharging your sacred obligations. Take her hand in your own and accept her. May good betide you! She is highly fortunate and will remain exclusively devoted to you and will ever follow you as a shadow (184).

Later in the story when everything was arranged for Rama’s coronation, as heir apparent, his stepmother wants her son Bharata to become the king. She claimed the two boons that Dasharatha had long ago promised her that Rama should be exiled into the forest for fourteen

years, while her son Bharata becomes king. In this situation Rama stressed that his father keep his word to his wife and accepted the decree unquestioningly. He speaks to Kaikeyi as follows:

Honouring the promise made by the king and wearing matted locks and the bark of trees, I will undoubtedly proceed from Ayodhya to the forest to take up my abode... Nor should displeasure be shown by you, O queen, because I am putting this question to you...Be fully pleased with me. Enjoined by the emperor, who is my friend, preceptor and father and appreciates a service done, what kindly act shall I not do unhesitatingly for him? (I. 264)

When Sita heard that Rama was to be banished, she asked to accompany him to his forest retreat "As shadow to substance, so wife to husband". Sita continues:

"If you depart this very day for the forest which is difficult to penetrate, I shall walk ahead of you crushing under my soles the blades of Kusa grass and thorns... protection under the feet of one's husband under all circumstances is preferable for a woman than to residence in a palace, or living in aerial cars or coursing through the heavens. I have been taught in many ways by my mother and father how I should conduct myself" (I. 294)

When Bharata returns to Ayodhyā and learns that his mother had snatched away the kingdom because of the two boons she had received from her husband, he refused the crown. He says it is not dharma. He went to forest looking for Rama to request his return to the kingdom. He reminded Rama that the eldest should rule. Rama, pleads that the command of their father is supreme and must be implicitly obeyed by both of them, the first part of it enjoining the exile of the elder brother being binding on him and the second part bequeathing the kingdom to Bharata being binding on the latter. Bharata then took his brother's sandals and said, "I shall place these sandals on the throne as symbols of your authority" (II. 504)

Later in the story, rakshasa Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, comes to Rama. Mesmerized by the beauty and charming personality of the prince Rama, she asked him to take her as his mistress. Rama but is a faithful husband and replied with a smile and sweet words: "O lady, I am already married. Here is my beloved wife" (VI. 596).

Another story which gives an image of dharma is Sita's devotion when she is imprisoned in Lanka. Ravana asks her to marry him but Sita refused saying she is faithful to her husband. She rejects Ravana bravely:

How do you not feel ashamed even after perpetrating such a reproachful act as bearing away a woman, much more the wife of another, and that too in a lonely place where there is none to protect her? People will denounce throughout the worlds this act of yours-even though you pride yourself on your valour and energy, of which you spoke at that time. And accursed in the world is such conduct of yours which brings reproach on your race! (V. 76)

Searching for Sita, Rama and Laxmana meet Hanuman who directs them to Sugreeva, the King of the monkeys. Sugriva told Rama that a lady was seen by him while being carried off by Ravana and a wrapper was actually dropped by her as also shining jewels. Rama wept and asked his brother Laxmana to examine the jewels. Laxmana did so. "I am sure these are Sita's anklets," Laxmana said. "There is no doubt they are hers, because severally I seen them while laying my head on her feet in worship." Laxmana continued: "Neither do I recognize the armlets nor do I know the earrings, I only recognize the anklets due to my bowing at her feet every day" (IV. 763). As a dutiful brother he had never lifted his eyes to even look at Sita's face.

Hanuman is a faithful servant and messenger for Rama. Receiving the signet ring of Rama, Hanuman resolved to go Lanka. To reach there, he had to cross the ocean. Hanuman who was the son of the wind god, jumped across the ocean and landed in Lanka. He searched for Sita and found her in Ashoka garden. He conveyed Rama's message and received her ring to give it to his lord. Hanuman also did great deeds of prowess and saved the life of Rama and Laxmana by bringing life-saving herbs from the Himalayas.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that the two epics of India and Iran spring from the same cultural complex facilitated by the Indo-Aryan languages of Persian and Sanskrit. Therefore the value system in both epics is similar. The spiritual values, code of conduct, many socio-cultural practices seem to emerge from the same matrix. Both cultures changed from matriarchal to

patriarchal. Both had agricultural economics. The poor people longed for heroes to deliver them and the epics furnished models of social behaviors. The two epics provide numerous examples of shared values and moralities. This chapter necessarily offers a selective, rather than exhaustive, comparison to support its basic research arguments.

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Conclusion

Andrew Lang in his account on the comparative study of early epics holds that, “The similarity of human nature under similar conditions makes it certain that comparison will discover useful parallels between the poetry of societies separated in time and space but practically identical in culture” (266). In the study of *Shah Nameh* and the *Ramayana*, we observe the parallels and similarities of two epics which appear closer and more intimate than one would expect. As cultural texts, both return to their Indo-Aryan origin.

Language and culture are closely intertwined. Language reflects the world-view, epistemology and cultural patterns of a society. Language significantly conditions our perception and thought processes. Momin remarks, “Comparative linguistics tells us that when two or more cultures are in close contact over a period of time, there takes place a process of cultural exchange and hybridization, which influences customs, habits and languages”. The main part of *Shah Nameh* reflects ancient sources of Indo-Iranian (Aryan) origin, preserved in the *Avesta*, in the other scriptures of Zoroastrianism; some of the characters of the epic are of Indo-Iranian heritage. Historical linguists appraise that a continuum of Indo-Iranian languages probably began to diverge by 2000 BC, preceding both the Vedic and Iranian cultures. The earliest recorded forms of these languages, Vedic Sanskrit and Gathic Avestan, have close similarities, having descended from the common Proto-Indo-Iranian language (Mallory 35).

Findings

1. *Shah Nameh* is a national heroic epic. *Shah Nameh* recounts myths and history of Persia, beginning with the creation of the world and the introduction of the arts of civilization (fire, cooking, metallurgy, law) to the Aryans and ends with the Arab conquest of Persia. Though *Shah Nameh* is more than 1000 years old, it is a live text, present in all Iranian homes and has significant presence in people's life. The popularity of the text can be traced to the name-giving traditions of the peoples and ethnic formations. Rustam, Suhrab, Bizhan, Manizhe, Rudabe, Tahmine and so on are popular names of Iranian and non-Iranian peoples. Notably, in some parts of Iran *Shah Nameh* is gifted to the bride as dowry.

The principal and highest importance of *Shah Nameh* is the impact of the epic on Persian language. All Persian scholars are unanimous in its agreement that *Shah Nameh* has played a

major role in reviving of this language after the Islamic conquest of Persia and subsequent influence of Arabic language. *Shah Nameh* itself was a reaction to the Arab conquest of Persia and Ferdowsi as a nationalist poet tried to free his work from Arabic influence.

Shah Nameh is valued especially in varied sources of the national epic which covers the vast areas of Iranian culture. The Iranians entered the plateau which is the political state of Iran in the second millennium B.C and brought legend and tales with them. *Shah Nameh* is an encyclopedia of all the Iranian traditions, customs, myths, tales and legends. It offers its readers fruitful knowledge and perspicuous image of Persia's ancient cultures, beliefs and practices. As Sarrami says, ethics, rites, ceremonies, sports, events, values, myths and histories, arts, jobs, geographical places and cities, ... can be inferred of the book (Sarrami 15). Also it reflects ancient religions by tracing the history of Zoroastrian religion from its beginnings up to the defeat of the last Zoroastrian king by Arab conquerors. At the same time, it reflects Islamic principles and values, ethical beliefs and admiration of virtue.

2. *Ramayana* is a spiritual text. Its religious aspect outweighs its heroic theme. The *Ramayana* tells about life in India around 1000 BCE and offers models of dharma. *Ramayana* narrates the journey and adventures of the hero Rama -- who is an incarnation (avatar) of the God Virtue - to annihilate vice. *Ramayana* portrays the image of ideals; in this work the hero Rama exhibits the ideal execution of the dharma as a son and king. The princess Sita illustrates the dharma of the ideal woman and wife. Hanuman, the divine ape, exhibits the dharma of a devoted servant and messenger for Rama. Rama's brothers Bharata, Laxmana and Shatrughna exhibit the dharma of younger siblings for the eldest brother.

In Hinduism and other Indian religions, *yatra* which means pilgrimage to holy places, refers to places associated with Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and other sacred pilgrimage sites, as for example the forests of Chitrakuta where Rama, Sita and Laxmana spent eleven and half years of their fourteen-year exile. Visiting a sacred places is believed by the pilgrim to purify the self and bring one closer to the divine.

The *Ramayana* story, more than any other sacred story in India, has been interpreted as a blueprint for the right kind of human action. Although *Ramayana* is a myth that can be approached on many levels, it is the human level that has had the most profound effect on the Indian people. The importance of *Ramayana* is not limited just to its literary features but it functions as a fundamental part of Hinduism. *Ramayana* is a sacred books in the subcontinent

which illustrates Hindu ethics and conduct. This important aspect leads Hindus to learn the epic as a holy book from their childhood. Holding such respect, Hindus believe that reading or hearing of the epic blesses the reader or the listener. In this regard U. Thein Han states, “It (the *Ramayana*) is not only a literary treasure but also a source of ennobling influence on the relationships of men as parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, teachers and pupils, and rulers and the ruled” (cited in Iyengar xiii). Pointing to its significance in common life of Indians, two all-Indian holidays celebrate events of *Ramayana*, the first is Dussehra, a fourteen-day festival in October which commemorates Rama's victory over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. The second is Diwali, the festival of Lights in October-November which commemorates Rama and Sita's return to their kingdom of Ayodhya.

The *Ramayana* as an impressive monument of poetry has been reflected on other boughs of art vastly. The story of *Ramayana* appears reflected in songs, drama and theatrical performances, on screen, painting, temple architecture and dance. The 1975, Hindi television serial based on the *Ramayana* story attracted millions of Indians.

3. From the point view of mythology there are similarities between the two epics. The myth of fire for example is a common myth in the two epics as discussed in the earlier chapters. Other similarities can be seen in the use of common motifs as the abduction of the princess, marriage with the condition that the suitor should do great deeds of prowess, recognition via a token, assuming the form of other creatures, supernatural animals, crossing of the sea, invulnerability and panacea or cure-all as discussed before. These examples also can be seen in the Western epics.

4. There are seven translation of *Shah Nameh* in English both in verse and prose.

- Dick Davis (translator), *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. Viking, 2006; Penguin, 2007. (abridged prose translation). Fullest widely available edition in English, but skips much Sasanian material, due to Davis' belief that much of it is repetitive and unnecessary, serving only as a deterrent for modern readers.
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- Zimmern, Helen (translator), *The Epic of Kings: stories retold from Firdusi* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1882) (prose selections)

Epics of the West and the East

1) While *Shah Nameh* and *Ramayana* as Eastern epics are similar to Western epics in many aspects like having sublime language and great style, beautiful imagery, theme of warfare and heroic adventures, in my view it is the subject of morals that distinguish Eastern epics from the Western epics. As noted, the *Ramayana* is a sacred book and forms an important part of the Hindu life and canon. *Ramayana* explores human values and the concept of dharma. “Moral values of life, pious obligations of individuals, righteous conduct in every sphere of activity, being helpful to other living beings, giving charity to individuals in need of it or to a public cause or alms to the needy, natural qualities or characteristics or properties of living beings and things, duty and law as also constitutional law” as broad meanings of dharma all are reflected in *Ramayana*. This ancient epic of India portrays also the concept of ideal characters like the ideal father, the ideal brother, the ideal wife and husband and the ideal king. Dharma is a leitmotif which finds significant repetition throughout the *Ramayana*. In fact the whole story of *Ramayana*

offers models in dharma. It is the matter that Benjamin Khan in his clear treatise *The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana* describes in the epic as "the national manual of ethics" (98) and Hein puts his stress on *Ramayana* as a leading revealer of the pulse of Indian convictions which "has carried traditional Hindu ideals to the youngest and simplest of many generations" (94).

Shah Nameh too presents morals and human values through out the work. In fact from the pre- Islamic times until today, Persian literature has had a strong didactic nature and *Shah Nameh* is within this tradition. *Shah Nameh* speaks of the infelicity of jealousy and greed, the infelicity of arrogance, the infelicity of oppression, parsimony, anger and hot temper, as well as the infelicity of drunkenness and lying. Ferdowsi blames cruel kings and their injustice but he praises magnanimity and righteousness. Unlike Homeric and Western epics that the hero must win at any cost, the Iranian hero must bear the consequences of not only his actions but his intentions as well and at the highest level he must be ready to make a redemptive sacrifice of himself. Banani who compared *Shah Nameh* and *Iliad* in his essay explains that Ferdowsi's genuine compassion for the poor and the wronged, his remarkable and persistent sense of social justice, his courageous and vocal condemnation of the irresponsibility of rulers, his altruism and idealism-in short, his profound humanity-account for some of the most moving and ennobling passages in the *Shah Nameh* and endow it with a consistent integrity (website).

The didactic side and moral dimension of both *Shah Nameh* and *Ramayana* is so highlighted and it is the matter that differ them from the western epics. Rama- as ideal man "Purushottama"- is a role model for the society by the character he presents in the epic. Supriya Gandhi in her short account on Persian versions of *Ramayana* states that the figure of Rama in theses renderings is portrayed almost in three shapes;

- i. Representation of Rama as a heroic king combining both human and divine attributes, mostly famously depicted in the illustrated Persian *Ramayana* commissioned by Akbar during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.
- ii. Portrayal of Rama as a seeking prince, who eventually achieves spiritual realization without abandoning the world as depicted in the various Persian translations of the Laghu Yoga Vasishta including those commissioned for Prince Salim, son of Akbar, later Emperor Jahangir, as well as for Prince Dara Sikoh, son of Shah Jahan.

- iii. Depiction of Rama as an ideal lover, in poetic renderings of the story of Rama and Sita.

This category given by Gandhi would be also a start point for further studies.

Rustam as the greatest hero of *Shah Nameh* as well as other heroes of the epic like Tus, Gudarz, Giv, Bahram and Bizan are vulnerable. They do their deeds by their choice and unlike Western epics gods are not involved in the stories. Thus we see Rustam for example kills his son Sohrab unknowingly and leads him to create a tragedy.

2) Eastern epic modifies the genre of the epic as understood in Western classification and enrich it in some significant ways. *Ramayana* has some features of the *charit* as an Indian genre where Rama is portrayed more as a king rather than a god. *Shah Nameh* also is a heroic *nameh*-style work composed in *motaghareb* meter carrying a national theme.

Difficulties faced in this research: Matters of Language

This study relied mainly on the English translations of *Ramayana* which while is useful – since the translations are commendable – it cannot be denied that deeper investigation in language and style of *Ramayana* would need the knowledge of Sanskrit. Similarly, the main part of *Shah Nameh* is rooted in its Avestan source and so studying the original stories of *Shah Nameh* would need the knowledge of Pahlavi language. To research the etymological and mythological similarities between these two texts, one requires knowledge of Sanskrit and Pahlavi languages which I sadly do not have. I admit this a handicap faced in my research.

Further Directions

This concluding chapter is open-ended. It tries to weave the threads of the arguments together and indicates avenues for further work on the subject, opening a new window, a much deeper and wider comparative study on myth of early Avestan and Sanskrit literatures would be meaningful. There seems to be striking similarities between Vedic gods and ancient Iranian and Hittite deities. Etymology and comparative linguistics could aid us to identify and discover the similarities and in some cases the transformation of concepts. An example of such transformation is ‘Feridon’ as a mythological figure in *Shah Nameh* who is originally Thraêtañoa in *Avesta*. Thraêtañoa whose first part of the name in modern English is three, in Indo-Iranian mythology is a three-headed dragon. But when the national Iranian epic was composed the story tells of a king who has three sons (Shamisa 42). Monford (website) holds that there is a close similarity

between the Hindu Krishna and the Avestan Sam. Mitra, an ancient Persian Sun god is also represented in Indian literature and culture. The cult of sun-worship was brought to India by the Magas who migrated from Sakadvip or Persia around the first century B.C. Initially they were not admitted into Hindu rituals and ceremonies but in the course of time they were absorbed into Vedic society and came to be known as Sakadvip or Maga Brahmans. In fact, in India exists an "early Aryan initiation", in which a character named Visvakarma "crucifies the Sun", called "Vikkartana", who is "shorn of his beams", on a cross or "cruciform lathe" (Momin website).

A wide and vast study on Persian versions of *Ramayana* is an important requirement and should not be neglected. Persian itself has evolved a great deal from the time of the Persian rulers who ventured into India. During the medieval period, Persian language enjoyed a pre-eminent position of cultural and political in India which caused consequently to influence, to a greater or lesser degree, a large number of Indian languages. The deep impact of Persian on Indian regional languages led some scholars to claim that "no other language, apart from Sanskrit which is the mother of all modern Indo-European languages in the country, has left such a deep and enduring influence on Indian languages as Persian"(ibid). Persian literary traditions also dominated a large part of Indian literature and saw flourishing of Persian literature in India. In this period of time, lots of Sanskrit works were translated into Persian under the patronage of Muslim emperors and kings. If we leave out the re-telling of the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in Indian regional languages, the first significant translations, took place at the time of Emperor Akbar (Asaduddin website). In Akbar's reign except *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* some other Sanskrit texts were translated into Persian. How many Ramayanas were composed in Persian? The number of complete or partial translations of the *Ramayana* in Persian is unknown because the evidence we have consists of poorly catalogued, or un-catalogued manuscripts scattered in museums, libraries and private collections throughout the India and Iran, but we know at least over a period of three centuries, from the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century *Ramayana* was composed in Persian.

The former curator of Persian and Arabic manuscripts at the Natural Museum in Delhi once estimated that the number of *Ramayana* composed in Persian was thirty eight but some scholars has counted it even up to ninety. Therefore the further attempt should be collecting the manuscripts of Persian versions of *Ramayana* from the libraries and museums of India and Iran

and then to conduct a research based on them. Of the available data we know at least some names and titles if we don't have access to whole books, where each of which can be the subject of a study. One of these translations of *Ramayana* into Persian was done by Sheikh Sadullah Masih Panipati, the contemporary of Emperor Jahangir. This text entitled *Ramayan-e-Masihi* was published in 1899 by Munshi Naval Kishor Press, Lucknow. Masih transformed *Ramayana* to a love story and wrote his work in Persian '*masnavi*' style. Thus he employed an Indic theme within the literary conventions of the Persian *masnavi* which can be an interesting subject for a critical study. Another translation of *Ramayana* into Persian was done by S. Mohar Singh entitled *Balmiki Ramayan*. It was published in 1890 by Ganesh Prakash Press, Lahore. Moreover, the figure of Rama was portrayed in Persian literature also through translations of the Vedantic text, the *Yoga Vasistha*. This work is one of the Rama stories which was rendered into Persian during the Moghul Dynasty. One of the significant translations of *Yoga Vasistha* carried out by Nizam al-Din Panipati in the late sixteenth century A.D. The translation, known as the *Jug-Basisht*, became popular in Persia among intellectuals with Indo-Persian interests since then (Leslie, 2003: 104). Later, Jahangir's grandson, the prince Dara Shikoh also commissioned a translation of the *Yoga Vasistha*. Later in 1860 the next translation was done by Amanat Ray Lalpuri. Almost in next decade (1709), Meser Ram Das Ghabel translated four chapter of *Ramayana* into Persian. A unique illustrated *Ramayana* of Valmiki translated into Persian by Sumer Chand and illustrated during the reign of Farrukh Siyar in 1715-16 A.D. Munshi Chagann (1866-1899) also known by his pen name: Hasan wrote his book named *Neirang-e Hasan* (trap's of Hasan) or known as *Bahar-e Ayodhya* (spring of Ayodhya) in 1877.

Finally, this research is a cross-cultural study which examines similar and dissimilar characteristics of two epics from two different societies. While we know that epics are often of national significance in the sense that they embody the history and ideals of a nation, this thesis attempted to highlight the enduring relevance of the two immortal epics *Ramayana* and *Shah Nameh* by emphasizing the ethical and moral models they represent that bring peace to the mind and soul of humankind in a world fraught by troubles and stress. I must admit that this research has been a rewarding experience for me.

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