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 (wahīd) 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 Gothic 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 Siavush 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 Siavush 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; Siavush 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.  

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* Shahrnazar 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 Homay 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 Arnaz. 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 venturest inside the Lion’s lair
So hardly, 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 Homay and Beh Afarid, daughters of king Goshtasb and their abduction by Arjasb, 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 Homay 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 Sitta 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. Arjāsb 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 Arjāsb 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. Cattulus 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" (pâyandanîh) 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 Dênkard 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, Brahmadatta marries with all hundred daughters of Kusanabha. Kusanabha was a pious king. He wanted to give away his hundred daughters to Brahmadatta.

Calling the said Brahmadatta, 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 Brahmadatta, 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 Brahmadatta) 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 Brahmadatta 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. Brahmadatta the king who marries these girls all is also a mythical figure. Brahmadatta (gift of Brahma) is born from an unmarried woman as a boon given by a great ascetic. During the ceremony, when Brahmadatta 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 Brahmadatta 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 Rustam 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’ Abhijiran Shakuntalam, 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, Sitā drops her jewels while being carried away by Ravana. Meantime searching for Sitā, 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
marke the path of hier 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 Vánar 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 Zahhāk to kill his father. Devil assuming the form of a cook works for Zahhāk. He requests Zahhāk to kiss his shoulders but accidentally two snakes appear on his shoulders. Zahhāk orders for them to be cut but they grow again. Devil assuming the form of a doctor tells Zahhāk 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 urges king Kavus to conquer 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 Moriγō 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 Yazged 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 taken 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. Give 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 Zahhak, Kaveh leads a popular rising against him and restores Faridun. Capturing Zahhak, 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 Sītā 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 Vibhishana.
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 Tserek” 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 form 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 wipons 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 recue 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, the 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 Zahhak’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 Zahhak. Ferdowsi describes her as wise and beatific.

Sindokht the wise princess of Kabol 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, Ardashir 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, Rustam 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 Maitraye 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 pence. 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 Kikeyi 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 decieve 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’, 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 Zoroastrian 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 throughout 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 Rustam 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, Rustam 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 Ardesthir
If it raises you up to stars
Finally it bury 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’. Ferdowski 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. Ferdowski 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* Ferdowski 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 Ferdowski 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 crate
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 twit 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, toke 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 take 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 dose not care family relationship and being relative dose 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 painfull. 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 dose 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 reveng 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 o 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 falling 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 Kiumarth’s reign sends his son Khazuran with a huge army and kills Kiumarth’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 conquer 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 Kasra, 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, Luhrasd 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 Farshidvard’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 I 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 Kahruy 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 Baharam learns of Kahruy’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 deathsman 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 Esfandiayar which shows clearly how lying result worse. Gurgsar says Esfandiayar, “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 Nameh*’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 ship 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 Rustam, threw him upon the ground and sat on his chest, ready to cut his head. But Rustam 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 gust 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 massages 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 Kamban 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 Ayodhya 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 savesd 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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