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**A STUDY ON THE LITERARY SCHOOLS PRINCIPLES OF CLASSICISM IN  
FERDOWSI'S SHAHNAMEH<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Comparing different literary genres such as poem and prose among different nations can mostly contribute to find common features of poets' and authors' works. Comparative literacy, in essence, split the boundaries of different cultures and while maintain independent identity of each nation's specific culture, manifests cultural similarities and associates cultural areas of the world. However, different attitudes of states towards this area cannot decrease the extension and broadness of the scope. Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is the manifestation of Iranian identity and universally well-known masterpiece. Regarding this masterpiece, there has been always was one question in the mind of literature researchers, asking that "is it possible to make a better understanding about Shahnameh through literacy schools existing in the world?" Hence, study of Ferdowsi's poets align with some of the literacy schools is necessary to provide an answer to this question. The present study attempts to make a better understanding about this great literary under the light of the fundamental principles of a literary school, namely Classicism.

**Keywords: Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Classicism School, Wisdom, National Identity**

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## INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature is a branch of literary study seeking the mutual relations between two or more literatures or texts which are internationally and linguistically different. Literary effect can be divided into two types; the influence of the poets of a nation in the poets of the same country (e.g. the impact of Nezami, Ferdowsi, and Sa'adi on the other poets and another is the influence of the poet) and the influence of a nation's literature on the other nation's literature, (e.g. the impact of Ferdowsi on Matthew Arnold and the influence of Hafez on Goethe).

Master Abul Ghasem Ferdowsi, the famous poet of the fourth and fifth centuries AD and the father of the modern Persian language, was born in 935 AD in "Bazh" village, a city near Taberan-Tousin a farmer family and died in 1020 AD [1]. He lived in the garden which is now his majestic cemetery [2]. By achieving science and knowledge, he became interested in studying stories and history of the ancient Iran. Influenced by the history, he composed *Shahnameh*. He devoted about thirty years of the best days of his life to composing *Shahnameh*. Undoubtedly, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is the greatest epic of the world [3]. Among all Persian books, *Shahnameh* is the only literary work reflecting the image of a safe, positive, holistic, and prideful life.

*Shahnameh*, narrates the story of a man in the same own earthborn statement to the highest human stage and there is nothing of life such as youth and senility, womanhood and manhood, happiness and misery, love and hate, wisdom and stupidity which have not found their suitable place [4]. *Shahnameh* considers piety and wisdom as the base of human identity. This masterpiece narrates the history of ancient Iran, from the dawn of civilization to the fall of the Sassanids government by the Arabs which can be divided into three periods of mythological, heroic and historical.

### Classicism

Classicism refers to the art of ancient Greece and following crusade of "Omanism and Renaissance" [5]. As evident, the middle centuries includes the periods of the end of the middle ages (Greece and Roman civilization ages) and the new age refers to the fall of Roman Kaiser (west Rome) by the barbaric (its beginning) and the fall of Ghoshtantanieh and collapse of East Rome's Kaiser by the Turkish (its end) (Ibid). In the sixteenth century, classicism was appeared by the formation of a group called *Peluyad* consisting of French young poets believing that art regulations and methods derived from Greek and Latin literal works and teaching them. Classicism school can be considered as the

traditionalism school of the literature and art, especially imitation of the ancient authors and artists. Bivalve was the pioneer of Classicism school who proposed its principles and rules for the French. From the classical point of view, the main task of poet and author is to observe the principles and rules which ancestors have presented in their works. In seventeenth century, Classicism was the first literal school introduced after the Baroque age in French. Humanism movement, in the fourteenth century, was an introduction to French classicism in Italy. In fact, Classicism can be regarded as a kind of Greece and Roman art methods revival which was created in Italy but developed in France. The principles of Classicism involve imitating nature, following and imitating the ancients, rationality, clarity and brevity, realism, and being instructive and pleasant. The most famous poets and authors who followed classicism were "Molière", "Lafont", and "Racine. The present study attempts to investigate the mentioned principles in Ferdowai's Shahnameh.

### **Imitation of Nature**

Before observing any other law and rule, what classical author should consider is imitation of nature. Buvalou says in his Poetics, "nature should not be ignored even for a moment"; so, the question is that if the imitation of nature must be done carefully

and exactly like photography? No, the essence of any good or bad things must be extracted among the complex design of nature, indicating that the essence should be thoroughly stated in such a way that it can be consistent with truth and reality. Any redundancy and additional theme should be avoided in order that it can be showed by itself. To show the state, artist should use short words instead of imitating the details and in fact, arrange the nature to be reflected better than any other time. Instead of painting nature, the classic artist creates a more holistic model of nature and combines it with the ideals and aspirations of humanity. Does the classic artist state all of the things existing in nature? According to Buvalou, "there are some animals in nature (e.g. snakes) which are unpleasant to imitate". The classics do not want to imitate all the nature. They are just trying to mimic human nature. As Cent Urmun wrote, "speech, in which there are only trees, mountains, rivers, meadows, and gardens makes us tired, or at least, does not create a new pleasure. But the aspects of humanity, such as desires, loves and affections will naturally and deeply influence us. Nature-made sense is the unit which is easily transmitted from the soul of the artist to the audience" [5]. Classic artist does not express cheerless and non-fictional features of human existing in their nature. Classic

religion inhibits artist from such behavior since in Classicism, it is believed that such features exist in animals and human possess the superior features distinguishing them from animals and these eternal features such as love, jealousy, parsimony, etc. have to be analyzed and described. The animals are under the control of their instinct and the human are their own governors. The classics show the nature with its good and ideal aspects in their works. In other words, they represent the nature not only as it is but also as they wish it to be, always with the desires and ideals. By considering the wisdom and logic and without interference of their own feelings, the classics portray the nature. In the study of the origin of nature imitation, a question is raised asking that "does the classic artist intend to express all of the existing in nature"? No, he does not. In fact, classic artist intends only to imitate human nature. In the following, based on the discussed principle, some examples of Shahname are reviewed:

Ferdowsi's Beautiful description of the crescent change at different times is one of the manifestations of the nature. So, it can be said that Ferdowsi has used a manifestation of nature and described it for his addressees. Since such description of nature is often seen at the beginning of the tales and adventures of Shahnameh, this reputable poet can be introduced to the

literature world and the international schools by the exact instrument called school of Classicism.

### **Rationality**

"I only imitate the ancient authors who agree the wisdom"; it was a new principle for the classics. However, it is attributed to Aristotle but it is against Aristotle's method believing that "wisdom is the necessity of obeying tradition and not getting out of the very narrow and limited path called just milieu or the middle way and everyone who go out of this path will be punished by nature extremely"; and in art world, wisdom can be practically defined as what is against imagination and pure inspiration. Here, the classics follow Dekartian nationalistic philosophy indicating that "wisdom and will have to predominate feelings and emotions since wisdom is the greatest advantage distinguishing human from animal". In 1660, the classical artists had to make a choice between Aristotle's method and wisdom principle and they preferred wisdom principle. However, it should be noted that by wisdom, it does not mean periodic wisdom releasing personal inspiration but it is referred to total and universal wisdom which is the same and unchangeable and recognizes steadily the beauty in different periods and places. The works considering wisdom put human imagination in the correct path and limits it

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in the way in which health, wisdom and judgment are dominant over art. The principle of wisdom predominates in the classical literature and other principles [5].

### **Imitating the Ancients**

Since none of the models showing nature's beauty specifications to human are not complete and perfect, nature cannot be followed directly and without intermediaries. Therefore, the ancients could choose the best and suitable manifestations of nature to mention properly in their works. The ancient artists believed that they had to seek the eternal beauty in the works of the ancients. Further, new works may be good or bad and these works are often forgotten but only some specific masterworks such as The Aeneid, the works of Virgil, can be praised yet after two thousand years. So, the so called work has been written in a suitable style and it should be imitated by anyone who appealing to make his/her work valuable and alive. Nevertheless, such imitation should not be considered a kind of slavery but it is the observation of the rule and specific method. In other words, it can be claimed that each artist has separate value and can possess the newest arts. Hence, an author needs "thinking deeply" to imitate the ancients to create a valuable work. Each classical author such as Labruid repeats that "everything is said" while Allen asserts that "interesting point of human life

is that everything is said but everything not be understood completely". Therefore, the facts have to be repeated in all the periods of time [5].

According to Tous, it is clear that none of the stories of Shahnameh have been prewritten and all the sources are old ones. The main source of Shahnameh is the old prose book (apparently) compiled sparsely by Abu Mansour Mohammad EbnAbdolrazagh, generalissimo victim of Khorasan, in the fourth century A.H. Afterwards, Daghighi and then Ferdowsi wrote the history of ancient Iran using the so called book and other sources; and professor Tous mentioned it in all parts of Shahnameh under the titles such as letter of the kings, king letter, regal letter, regal book, prince letter, ancient letter, and also mentioned it in its introduction.

### **Being Instructive and Pleasant**

As classics believed, only imagination of beauty is not sufficient for complete an artistic work but it is needed also to be instructive conveying a moral message. However, it should be noted that classicism is not only an abstract sermon but it is a moral school and course median with pure education and its method implemented for these educations should be pleasant for people. According to Lukres, "the bitter drug is immediately given to the kids and they eat the drug." All the classic artists

believe that the art work under its own beautiful appearance should be accompanied with a moral aspect which is considered the main essence of that work` creation [5].

Ferdowsi recommended very valuable issues regarding behavior type and moral maxims to the readers of his book. He also prevents the readers from the false characteristics. Now, Ferdowsi's religious recommendations and his advices regarding science and knowledge accomplishments are investigated. He made use of moral accomplishments and virtues and also unique behavioral features of The Prophet of Islam Mohammad and Imam Ali.

### **Clarity and Brevity**

Artwork should be pure, simple and clear. At the present age, the words of a poem are limited. It can be seen in the Persian literature and nowadays, it is one of the ways of recognizing different poets` styles like Molana in classic poetry and Sapehri in new poetry using colloquial language. Brevity and the maximum senses in the minimum words, using clear words and sentences, and avoiding abandoned and ambiguous sentences are the principal elements in classic literary works. The classic artist is not allowed to use idioms and non colloquial words. Many subjects can be stated with the minimum words. Dramawith two thousand odes and the

sermon with three lines are considered long ones. As Walter declared, "the useless things should be avoided". Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, however, is an epic story including different symbols of Iranian people. It, therefore, does not narrate battle and victory but beside of battle, it includes feast. It is both fiction and history, contains advice, wisdom, religion, faith, morality, civilization, culture, happiness, sadness, pain, and even ironic stories can be found in it [6]. Despite the diversity of the subjects, all the stories have a common link and different themes and also, the epic soul has affected all the content of Shahnameh and colored them specially. One of the powerful aspects of Ferdowsi's language presenting the great poem- containing six thousand odes- is his strong and fluent [7]. In the short issue of art, Ferdowsi`s poetry is not considered but it has been focused on the language of Shahnameh and the power of its creation. It is true that there is difference and relation between the normal and poetry language but it is now discussed that how Ferdowsi could made use of his inner powers in the frame of Persian language character and created clear and pompous language. Fedowski's language is so fluent, clear and explicit that after thousand years, it is comprehensible for not only special people but also ordinal people; accordingly, Shahnameh is yet studied in the villages and

coffeehouses and is narrated by storytellers. Also, in urban houses, the book read by the families loudly and all of the family members listened is Shahnameh. All of these take place due to clear, simple and understandable language of Shahnameh.

### **Realism**

Realism is one of the principals originated from Aristotle's art poetry. According to Aristotle, what is said is not pure truth but it is the thing which can be occurred. From this viewpoint, it equals with fact or semi fact, i.e., the events and the characters which are true not only about one particular individual but also about different individuals and in other words, they are not particular but involve public aspects. The advocates of Classicism school believe that there should be coordination among the components of the works and even among art work. For example, literary language is appropriate for epic and tragedy and simple language should be used for comedy dealing with individual's life. As Houras emphasized, using appropriate form to express a subject and the used by story`s characters should be coordinated with the status.

### **CONCLUSION**

Since Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is the an evident of Iranian identity, it is necessary to explore the thoughts of this poet in accordance with some literary schools and

all of the researchers studying Shahnameh should approve that Ferdowsi's thoughts can be known through the principles of literary schools of the world. After evaluating Ferdowsi's thoughts and his poets based on classicism school, it can be concluded that this masterpiece includes intellectual principles and Ferdowsi's thoughts reflected in this work can be comprehended by all nations and races using Classicism school. For example, at the beginning of Shahnameh, Ferdowsi began by the name of God of wisdom; accordingly, it can be claimed that Ferdowsi's focus on wisdom and started his work with the name of God of wisdom. There are also other poems in which Ferdowsi showed his holy and religious attitudes. Or considering Ferdowsi`spro found attitude regarding nature signs and comprehensive point of view, regarding beautiful signs of creation in the text of Shahnameh, the fundamental principles of classicism school are spontaneously dictated to the mind of the expert and smart reader. In Shahnameh, it is emphasized on the ancient narratives and the pleasure achieved by studying the poems of Shahnameh and also using courtesy in the words and literature of Shahnameh fosters such belief in the reader. So, it can be said that comprehensive Shahnamehis able to make the thoughts of different nations closer and the researchers can make a better and

scientific understanding about Ferdowsi's thoughts in Shahnameh and recognize his thought structure based on thoughtful and philosophy literary schools. The content and poems related to the introduction of Shahnameh and the adventures of Kikavus attacks to Mazandaran, Ristan and Sohrab and Rostam and Esfandiyar of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh are consistent with the principles of Classicism school. Shahnameh is a work compiled before formation of the world literary schools. Hence, it cannot be claimed that Ferdowsi's poems are based on the principles of Classicism. However, since Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is a trans-boundary work belonging to the whole of the world and with respect to the fact that it has been written in Persian, it is observed that even non Iranian people who interested in Ferdowsi and Shahnameh can understand its profound content by studying the principles of literary schools and specially Classicism.

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