

Mythical Physiognomy of “Hero” in Ibn Hessam Khosfi’s Khavar Nameh

Shahrbanoo Haghshenas

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Farrashband branch, Islamic Azad University, Farrashband, Iran

Abstract: In the epic of Khavar Nameh, myths have prominent roles. Like Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, this work includes noble and valuable mythical physiognomies and each one of them is noteworthy. To express his ideas and goal, Ibn Hessam has skillfully used such myths as hero, creation, good and evil, dragon, demon, and etc. which are required for an epic work. In this Article, by examining the mythical physiognomy of “hero” in Khavaran Nameh, it is observed how Ibn Hessam has made Ali (PBUH), who is a religious and historical character, the hero of his own epic, so that he own all the features of a mythical hero, stands against all bad and evil forces, defeats all evils by his extraordinary actions and behavior, and brings goodness for human beings.

[Shahrbanoo Haghshenas. **Mythical Physiognomy of “Hero” in Ibn Hessam Khosfi’s Khavar Nameh.** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):4633-4636] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 698

Keywords: Myth, hero, Khavaran Nameh, Ibn Hessam, epic

1. Introduction

Myths are the origin of first stories, specially epic and heroic legends and it could be said that myths are like wide circles that encircle all literary and artistic themes and social, religious, psychological, etc. issues. It should be noted that epic is the best platform to retell narrative myths, tales and legends and it is certainly one of the reasons behind the success of Ferdowsi and Homer in expressing the past culture of their nations through the myths. Epic is highly associated with the myth. Kazazi believes that “myth is like a breeding mother who gives birth to epic and brings it up in her lap. True epic is just created by the myth. Therefore, epic is only generated in the culture and literature of those nations that own ancient history and legends.” He believes that myth and epic are the same and says: “epic is identical to myth in nature and structure; whatever myth deserves also does epic...” (Eliade, Mircea. 1963). Myths are the origin of most literary works, especially epics. It is interesting that in most epics, humane heroes are represented in mythical shapes. Myths are global heroes which are found in the history and culture of every nation. In this regard Yung says: “Heroic myths are the most popular and well-known myths which are found in Ancient Roman and Greek mythology, in Middle Ages and in the Far East, and even in the primitive tribes and our dreams.” (Foley, John Miles (1999)) He believes that although the myths are apparently different, they are all similar and identical. He adds: “Even though the myths are very different in details, the more thoroughly we analyze them, the better we understand that they have very similar structures and in spite of being created by individuals or groups who had no straight cultural relationship with each other, they all have global identical patterns.” (Foley, John Miles (1999)). In Persian literature and in public

culture, the mythical hero has a remarkable role. The heroes of humane epics are ideal models and examples of favorite humans who save all human beings from evil. By studying public ideas, beliefs and cultures in stories, tales, legends, and epics it is observed that in all ages while facing hardships and frustrations, people have been looking for a superman who could ideally overcome the problems. This superman is the hero who is introduced by Joseph Campbell in this way: “A hero ignores his life and begins a dangerous journey to supernatural wonders, then faces amazing forces there and will achieve absolute victory. While returning home from this mysterious journey, the hero is able to grant blessing and grace to his companions.” Wright, M.R (1995). In the epic of Khavar Nameh, myths have remarkable roles. Like Shahnameh, this work contains the physiognomies of precious and noble myths that are all noticeable. To express his ideas and to achieve his goals, Ibn Hessam has benefited from such myths as hero, creation, good and evil, dragon, demon and etc. very skillfully which is the requirements of an epic work. This paper tries to study the mythical physiognomy of “hero” in Khavar Nameh.

1.1. Mythical hero in Khavaran Nameh

Every civilization witnesses and narrates the story of a hero who fights for justice and freedom and sacrifices his own life to save his own society and country mates and endangers his life to death in order to defeat evil forces and as divine forces help him he deals with all dangers and will emerge victorious and proud. A good example of such a hero in Iranian national epic is Rostam. Rostam is a mythical hero and a symbol of physical strength, human virtues, and spiritual force and Great Ferdowsi has brought him up so masterfully in his unique epic that he has still remained in the culture and the people’s minds as

a hero and a savior. As it can be seen even until the eighth century when Hafez is suffering from the injustice and inequities of his time, he is still looking for a hero such as Rostam to assist them as he painfully says:

In the well of patience I burned for that flower-like candle The king of the Turk is unaware of us where is a Rostam (Hafez, 1995 :314). In addition to Rostam , Imam Ali (PBUH) is also very popular as a hero . There are many tales and legends among people about the wining and the relationship between these two national and religious heroes. In these stories even Ali's wining is preferred to Rostam's as Ibn Hessam says:

*The power of his arm reduced the reverence of
Rostam
His loin-killing hands ruined the glory of the King*

And it is said since the time Rostam was inspired by Ali, he was never knocked down. In the past literary works to present , Ali's bravery and heroism has been expressed several times and poets such as Roudaki , Kasae , Ferdowsi , Sanae , Sa'di , Khajooye Kermani , Ouhedi Maragheie , Hafez , Babafaghani , Ahil Shirazi , Mohtashem Kashani , Hazin Lahiji , Ashegh Esfahani , Hatef , Vesal Shirazi , Forsat Shirazi , Malekoshora Bahar , and etc. each one has in turn admired Ali very sincerely on behalf of his own nation. It is due to such admirations that ultimately in 9th century Ibn Hessam choses Ali as the hero of his own epic and in fact "the poet holds a real popular character out of his own time and location and takes him into other time and locations". In KhavarNameh , Ali (PBUH) - apart from history- is a myth and a perfect example of an epic human who with his justice fights dragons , demons , wizards , and cruel kings in amazing wars and finally defeats the evils brings justice and goodness for human society and he is in fact the myth which is mentioned by the mythology experts.

Carl Gustav Yung says: "A global mythical hero always refers to a very powerful man or a or semi-divine who defeats the evils such as dragons, snakes, demons, and Satan and saves his people from death and destruction." (SHARIAT ZAHRA, ZAINALI LEILA. 2009). The hero of Khavaran Nameh also owns all those criteria which are specific to an epic or mythical hero. The hero of the epic has some divine and supernatural power so that a hero like Rostam who is the son of Zal is brought up by a Simurgh which has divine power and it protects him in all battles and troubles. In Khavar nameh, Imam Ali is brought up with the holy prophet (PBUH) who has a divine power as well. The holy prophet talks to God and Gabriel (Simurgh in Shahnameh) comes to

the prophet in difficulties and saves him from concerns. When Ali was fighting in a difficult war, the holy prophet got worried

*Gabriel appeared to him and saved him from concern
God send Gabriel to him
He told him Oh! Guiding Sayid (prophet)
Behold in order not to be worried
Go to the Ivan of the mosque oh messenger
Come to see Ali in the East
In the battle with the enemies*

In addition to communication with Gabriel, the holy prophet owns a divine power and in all stories he has the role of Simurgh in Shahname and in the difficulties he assists Ali and the other heroes of his army. An example is mentioned here:

Magnet Castle was a castle in which there were 400 gold idols. The demon of monster was dominating that castle , Imam Ali couldn't capture it after several attacks and throwing stones , and several times he prostrated disappointedly and cried and moaned : " My Lord , I don't know what this condition is. " Then the holy prophet got aware of Imam Ali difficulties through occult inspiration and sent a letter to him and told him to fasten the letter to the spear and throw it toward the castle to break its spell and Imam Ali did so and captured the castle.

During the whole story, this divine force helps the hero. When Imam Ali is worried about his slave Ghanbar , a savior from the hidden world saves him ; Imam Ali worriedly :

*He came down the horse and prostrated God and
said Oh! The world creator
For the sake of the holy Mohammed who is the light
inform me about my slave
A mysterious voice from a hidden place told him
what he had to do (Khavaran Nameh , V. 2 : 95)*

The hero's height and shoulders and his body are quite different from others:

If Rostam "While sitting is taller than anyone who is standing in front of him" (Shahnameh , V. 2: 65) the hero of Khavaran Nameh is also taller than the tall man (Salsal) who has an athletic body and courageous men are afraid before him. Salsal goes toward the battle field:

*The soldiers saw his body and his mane
The length and the width of his spear
From that big body and strong mane
The brave soldiers were amazed
Everyone was afraid of his height
There wasn't any man like him in the world*

With such a glory, Salsal was amazed by seeing the height and the body of Imam Ali and called him a wizard:

*The tall Salsal approached him
He was short before the tall handsome man (Ali)
When Salsal saw that tall man who was taller than
him as a head and neck
He told him "Oh man! Who are a wizard stop
doing magic now
It seems as if you were shorter than me but now
you are taller than me*

The hero of the epic is a supernatural being and his actions are extraordinary. In the battle field Ali (AS) calls on 10000 warriors instead of one and finally he is the winner of the field:

*He roared the king that I am fighting you
The fight of the East land and the enemies
Shame on me if I avoid a warrior
Who is fighting me?
Send ten thousands soldiers from famous warriors to
fight me in the battle*

Ali (AS) fights Amoud who was 700 Man (a unit of measurement equal to 3 kg). The story is like this; Salsal asks Ali to lift 700-Man Salsal in order to try his masculine skill And Ali lifts him very easily and show him to all. Also the hero of the epic encounters an anti-hero in each aspect of his life. It should be noted that familiar myths are the reflection of dualism in nature and in human being and also the reflection of contradictory forces in the world". (Zomorodi, quoted by Bahar, 2003: 377). Antiheroes are the real symbols of evil that the hero (the goodness) fights and saves the humans from them. In Shahnameh, Rostam is facing some anti-heroes such as Afrasyab, demon, monster, and others. But his battle is not only with anti-heroes but also sometimes he is fighting some ideal heroes such as Esfandiar or a hero from his own race and blood such as Sohrab and when he defeats them, the epic turns into tragedy. In Khavaran Nameh, as the battle is just between two opposite heroes (good and evil), there never happens such tragic scene. But the hero of Khavaran Nameh, Imam Ali (PBUH) always encounters anti-heroes such as cruel kings, demons, monsters, and wizards. The kings of Khavaran Nameh are all cruel idolaters, cannibals, and demon-like and are in summary the true example of evils and the hero of the epic together with the other heroes fight them to save human beings. Some examples are mentioned below:

1.1.1. Navader:

Navader is a cruel king whose soldiers close the path to the caravans by his command and after murdering them, invade their properties:

*A cruel king who is a burglar
Has invaded that mountain as a king
The name of that king was Navader banditry was
always his fun (Farhad Naqash .2002)
Finally, after a severe battle with Islamic troops:
The body of the king was rolling in blood
His life came to and ends very hard
At the same time he lost his sweet life
you said as if Navader was never born by mother
(Farhad Naqash .2002)*

2.1.1. Ghattar:

This king is the twin brother of the bandit Navader, who has a devil nature and like Zahak in Sahname he is eating human body.

*Near him was a debased man
Who were both a bandit and a cannibal?
In profanity, this black man was disgraced and
He never did something good
He made wine out of the blood of the braves He made
kebab out of the thigh of the prisoners
The name of this cruel person was Ghattar He was
malicious and wicked and evil
(Farhad Naqash .2002).*

As quoted by Shafiee Kadkani: "perceptions and attitudes of poets towards the myths, historically depends on the political and social atmosphere of their environment as well as their sense of imagination and creativity. Referring to Iranian and non-Iranian mythology has taken various colors in the images of different poets. (Farhad Naqash .2002).

In order to show the evil nature of Ghattar, Ibn Hessem has introduced him with attributes such as malicious, wicked, and cannibal so that it immediately develops the picture of Zahak in the mind of the audience with a different color and image especially when he says in the story:

His body grew up by (eating) human beings he has sucked the blood of brave people (Khavaran Nameh, v. 1 69). But according to the epic perspective that finally goodness defeats evil, (As Freidoon defeats Zahak or Houshang defeats demon) this evil king is also defeated and Ali (AS) says that he will be saved if he believes in Islam.

*Ali told him to stop being a pagan don't disobey
The religion of the prophet
You will be saved if you believe in God come to the
path of God
I will release you from the prison
I will turn your head up in the high wheel
(Farhad Naqash .2002).*

2. Discussions

One of the benefits of the myths is that by studying each nation's mythology, we can know the history of civilization, culture, ideas and development process of that nation better. Ancient beliefs and traditions can be found in the myths. Studying the myths might make us familiar with ancient customs and patterns which are still alive within us. (Esmaelpour , Myths , symbolic expressions : 16). By studying the mythical hero in Khavar Nameh it is observed how people make Ali the hero of their epics through the strong belief they have to him, a hero who is able to defeat all evil forces even the monsters and demons and be the conqueror of all the battle fields.

Acknowledgements:

An author is grateful to the Department of Persian Language and Literature, farrashband branch, Islamic Azad University for financial support to carry out this work.

12/2/2012

Corresponding Author:

Shahrbanoo Haghshenas
Department of Persian Language and Literature,
farrashband branch, Islamic Azad University,
farrashband,Iran

References

1. Eliade, Mircea. 1963. *Myth and Reality*. Trans. Willard Trask. New York: Harper & Row.
2. Farhad Naqash .2002. *Khavaran Nameh Ebn Hesam KHosefi Beyrjandi*. sazman-e chap Va entesharate vezarate farhang va ershade eslami – Tehran.177pages.
3. Firdausi. 1886 *The Shah Nameh of the Persian Poet Firdausi*. Translated by .James Atkinson. London, New York: F. Warne.
4. Foley, John Miles (1999). "Homeric and South Slavic Epic". *Homer's Traditional Art*.
5. SHARIAT ZAHRA,ZAINALI LEILA. 2009. DEPICTING EPICAL, NATIONAL, AND RELIGIOUS -PERSIAN FEATURES IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF KHAVARAN NAMEH. ISLAMIC ART SPRING-SUMMER 2009; 5(10):43-58.
6. Wright, M.R1995. "Models, Myths, and Metaphors." *Cosmology in Antiquity*.