

# ANALOGOUS COMPARISON OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR AND THE STORY OF FEREY DUN OF SHAHNAMEH OF FERDOWSI

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## Abstract

Researcher has conducted a comparative study between Shakespear's play *King Lear* and the story of Fereydūn in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. King Lear is the most painful tragedy of Shakespeare. This drama by Shakespeare is the most complete display of power conflict. These conflicts tend toward the destruction of the insane and even at the end affect the personality of Lear and Lead him to madness. One of the stories of Shahnameh is Fereydūn. Fereydūn is one of the mystical characters of Iran. He was a pishdadi King that based on Shanameh he was the son of Abtin's son and he won the Zahak using the help of Kaveh the blacksmith and put him in prison in Damavand Mountain, then he became the King of the world.

The common reason for the comparison of these two stories can be traced in the decisions made by two kings on their respected territory. The important point in both the stories is that the decisions made by these two characters lead to inevitable battles, which in turn determine the end of each of the character's life.

An attempt is made by the researcher in this article to compare the plots, characters, events, and the climax of both the stories. In this regard, the researcher has collected data based on qualitative descriptive method, content analysis, and library method. The results showed that even though these two stories were written in two different cultures, nations, and literary styles, they are similar to each other in terms of fictional core, events, protagonists, antagonists, and even the messages and ethical points.

**Keywords:** Comparative Literature, Fereydūn, King Lear , William Shakespeare, Ferdowsi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Plato calls the narration as art and imitation as performing. In his opinion, imitation may be a quality which is far from the art. If the basis of western performing is the theatre, showing, and imitation, the basis of eastern performing can be narration. The narration cannot be eliminated from the essence of the performing art whether in terms of Platonic art or Aristotelian art. The narrative element may be changed in western performing such as Chorus in Greek tragedy which is like the nature of the Oriental art of narration that is never eliminated from it. Objectivity and visualization of narrative western performing is ultimately rooted in historical and mythical stories of Iliad and Odyssey. According to this belief, it is not an exaggeration to say

that the western theatre roots in narrative arts whether in terms of content which owns to the historical and mystical stories or in terms of form and structure which owns the narrative arts such as narration and music especially street music. The basis of Greek Tragedies finally rooted in ritual ceremonies such as Dionysus (Eagleton, 2001: 175). Whatever narrative in Western views has changed, to the same extent in the East play face to stagnate or the loyalty has been remained as the first form. Finally, the audience of western theatre sees, while the eastern audience hears.

Despite the language differences between these two modes of expression, theatrical and dramatic structure of these two kinds is a single topic. Although the eastern world hasn't had a practice such as the Greek Theatre practices, it can be studied for evaluating the dramatic Literature, because not only the dramatic value of eastern dramatic works was not more than the western works, however also it was not less than them (Eagleton, 2001: 205).

Today the comparative criticism can show the amount of Excellency of cultures and exchange of ideas in literature in order to be familiar with the originality, depth, richness of cultural understandings and avoiding biases and scientific-literary unilateralism. Comparative study of texts of Fereydün story and King Lear shows the calculated choreography and overlapping of the capable poets' mind in two different cultures and two different languages in two distinct historical positions. However, being or not being aware of this intertextuality and overlapping cannot be provable and the previous authors and researches haven't mentioned anything on this issue, however what can be obvious is that there are obvious choreographies and overlapping in these two texts.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

What is the original at school of American Comparative literature is the principle of similarity and analogy. The principle of similarity and analogy led to this issue that in this school, literature along with other Humanitarian Sciences such as painting, architecture, dancing, music, and even studying the relationship between literature and empirical sciences were in the field of literary and criticism studies. The comparative literature in this school was tied to the modern criticism. In this school, all the features which change a work to a literary work are considered (Khatib, 2007: 50).

Henry Mark as one of the American researcher in the field of comparative literature defines it as: "comparative literature can mean the study of literature across the borders of one country and study the relationship between literature and other fields of human knowledge and also comparative literature means the comparison of the literature of one country with the literature of other countries and also the comparison of literature with other fields of human knowledge.

Regarding the presented definitions by the researchers of American comparative literature, it can be concluded that comparative literature were in a broader field from the limited borders of historicity and the effects and impacts of the literature of various nations that the most important feature of this school can be said as: American comparative literature can be a kind of cultural studies and in addition to that it becomes closer to the literary criticism than historical study of literary phenomena.

In this research, the researcher has compared and studied the King Lear play by William Shakespeare and Fereydün Story from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh using authors of comparative literature school.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher collects data based on qualitative descriptive method and analysis of content. In this research, the instruments of collecting data may be the calculation of databases and computer networks.

## 4. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford, England. He was famous as a poet, author, actor, and playwright and he is widely regarded as the greatest playwright in all eras, however some of his life's facts are vague.

In fact, Shakespeare is the poet and painter of humanity and human virtues of good and bad. His historical plays bring a new spirit to the lifeless and old events and visualize the characters of different periods of history with thoughts, habits, and characteristics of each period for the reader and audience. His power in combination and composition of distrihowevered real scenes as a single stream and related to all imply the dexterity in showmanship (Proner, 2006: 101)

His plays are rare in terms of subject, richness of vocabulary, the way of describing events, and unity of purpose and result. Although in each play there are various events like the colorful strings which are woven to each other, all of them are decorative that give a sense of manifestation and glory to this huge literary carpet in such a way that it doesn't eliminate the unity of the main setting in a simple and coherent manner and it doesn't decrease the grace and appropriateness.

King Lear is the most painful tragedy of Shakespeare. Shakespeare has written the King Lear play in 1606. Bradley, Shakespeareologist and famous scholar of England, said this on tragedy: "King Lear is known as the greatest work of Shakespeare. It is a work in which the most important playwriting abilities of Shakespeare were flourished. If we are to throw away all Shakespeare's plays and reserve one of them, all the individuals who deeply know Shakespeare and respect him will select King Lear as his best play".

This drama by Shakespeare is the most complete display of power conflict. These conflicts tend toward the destruction of the insane and even at the end affect the personality of Lear and Lead him to madness (Proner, 2006: 131).

## 5. KING LEAR'S STORY

King Lear is the king of Britain and at the end of his life he decides to give up his power and divide his realm amongst his three daughters. Goneril is the eldest daughter of king who is the wife of a Duke from Albany. Regan is his middle daughter who is the wife of Duke of Cornwall. Cordelia is his youngest daughter who is the main character of the story. She will be the wife of France King. Cordelia, the young daughter of the King, will be initially unpopular to his father due to the cunning of her older sisters. These two sisters make plans in such a way that the least portion will be given to the youngest sister. After a while the selfish behavior of two sisters becomes clear to the king and Lear becomes aware of his unkind behavior to his youngest daughter and turns remorseful. However, in fact, it is too late. After the war which takes place between France and Great Britain, the France army fails and Lear who goes to his youngest daughter is arrested. The evil and bastard Edmund send an executioner to Lear and his youngest girl in order to kill both of them in jail. After revealing the conspiracy and with the help of faithful generals, two older girls are killed in a specific manner. When the faithful general arrives to Lear and Cordelia, it is too late. He faces to Lear who carries the corpse of Cordelia on his hands. Lear dies due to the intensity of sadness.

## 6. FERDOWSI

Hakīm Abu'l-Qāsim Firdawsī Tūsī, was a highly revered Persian poet. He is the author of the Shahnameh, the national epic of Iran and the Persian-speaking world.

Shahnameh of Ferdowsi is the biographies, triumphs, failures, frustrations, and heroism of Iranian from the ancient era. Iranian foreign conflicts with the Indians in the East, Turanian in the East and Northeast, Romans in east and northeast, and Arabs in the Southwest have been seen in Shahnameh. In addition to the linear progression of historical events, there are scattered independently stories in Shahnameh that are not directly related to history (Jowdat, 1976:53).

One of the stories of Shahnameh is Fereydūn. Fereydūn is one of the mystical characters of Iran. He was a pishdadi King that based on Shāhnameh he was the son of Abtin's son and he won the Zahak using the help of Kaveh the blacksmith and put him in prison in Damavand Mountain, then he became the King of the world.

## 7. THE STORY OF FEREYDŪN

Fereydūn (Iranian mythical king) had three sons whose names were Salm, Tur, and Īraj and their wives were the daughters of Sur, Yemen King. He divided his realm amongst his three sons. He gave Anatolia and the East to Salm, Turkistan and China to Tur, and Iran to Īraj (Shahidi, 1998: 525). Many years passed and Fereydūn became old. Salm became jealous of Īraj why his share is Iran. Greed prevailed on him. So, he sent a herald to Tur and said that I'm the older son of Fereydūn and I'm more deserving for the succession to the throne of my father than Īraj.

He angrily sent a horseman to the court of Tur with a heart full of hatred in order to give him this message that I'm not interested in being king anymore, however do you not deserve this throne and kingdom? Both of us should be angry and upset due to this oppression that we have. Tur wrote in response to Salm that the tree which is planted by our father will have a bitter fruit for us. After that, they have sent so many messages to each other, and Salm from West and Tur from China met each other and there was a unanimous agreement between them (Jowdat, 1976, Vol. 1: 24).

After killing Īraj by his brother, MahAfarid gave birth to a girl who was the daughter of Īraj. Fereydūn gave this child to his own Nephew named Pashang and Manuchehr was born from this marriage. Years later, Īraj's grandson Manuchehr avenges his grandfather's death (Īraj) by killing both Salm and Tur and sent their heads to Fereydūn. Fereydūn put the royal crown on the head of Manuchehr and stayed in seclusion until his death (Shahidi, 1998L 525).

### Commonalities of the two stories

- The kings who are facing their children;
- Children who are good and bad;
- The mockery of deep trust as a sense of royal authority.
- Kings' advice.
- Examining the children in being right or being wrong;
- Faithlessness of world to its inhabitants;
- Number of children is "three" in both stories;
- The first of two children are bad and the youngest one is good;
- Considering sensualities leads to ruin human;
- Jealousy is the root of many sorts of cruel behaviour;
- Considering the appearance and not considering the depth and meaning leads to depravity.

## 8. COMPARING THE CHARACTERS OF THESE TWO STORIES

### Fereydūn and Lear

What is clear about the story of Fereydūn is the dominancy of wisdom and thought. He always takes the right decisions at the most critical moments. Patience and fortitude are among his characteristics and perhaps his only weakness can be "the feeling of revenge". The most important decision of his life can be related to the period of Īraj's death: although he was very sad about this event, wisdom was dominant on him and he personally never confronted his children with the aim of vengeance, since he didn't consider this act the fatherly way.

Although the feeling of revenge is considered as the "weakness" of Fereydūn, at the end when he loses Salm and Tur, he becomes upset and turns depressed of the destiny of his children. Therefore, he passes the throne and crown to Manuchehr and he becomes a recluse due to the death of his children and at the end he passes away (Jowdat, 1976: 73).

Happiness and success of human all the time depend on the correct discernment of King Lear on the things which are superficial and hollow or have depth and inwardness. King Lear cannot recognize the untrue love of his two children, Goneril and Regan, towards himself. He sees the deceitful appearance, however he is unable to recognize her heart full of righteous (Cordelia) and the consequence of the unwise judgement and recognition is nothing but death and annihilation for his children and himself.

If we assume Fereydūn as a wise king that wisdom is dominant upon him, Lear is a king that feeling is dominant upon him than wisdom. His emotional aspects sometimes affect the story. He is full of shame and regret and wants his daughter Cordelia to treat him unkindly, since he confirms that she has so many reasons for blaming her father. At the end, he loses his endurance and patience due to the death of Cordelia and passes away.

### Īraj and Cordelia

In fact, Īraj is a unique character in the story of Fereydūn. By recognizing these kinds of characters, it can be obvious that they are so rare to find in the real world. A human who has a Holy face by sublime attributes; virtue, patience, love, compassion, enlightenment, generosity and optimism are in the nature of one single human; that is why he is called as an "individual". Within the story, in every single speck of his intercourse with his father and brothers, we don't hear him say any words except the words of wisdom, the wise and mysticism. With this spiritual and wisdom vision he knows the world nothing but as the location of the

temporary passing and he believes that human shall not neglect to revere brotherhood for the sake of thrown and crown and he decides to negotiate and make peace with his brothers by optimism, however the demon of greed swallows all these goodness entirely and İraj is sentenced to be sacrificed guilty of "innocence" (Homaie, 1981: 85).

Cordelia like Fereydün is unique and individual. We can explicitly see her patience, piety, and adoration in story and in a word she is the "man of action". She considers the showy and flattering adoration as a hollow and worthless issue: Even if all the Britain territory is given to her, she never speak in a flattery manner to her father in order to show her real love and she doesn't show her feelings for obtaining the "world" or "power". Therefore, we should add hardness to her characteristics. Despite all the bad actions that her father committed towards her, the fire of "love toward father" flames in her heart until the last moments of life. Cordelia cannot achieve anything however "death" and "Ominous fate" in return for honesty, patience, devotion, love and purity. As a child, she never does anything but gratitude and loyalty, however she is always worried that her father is indignant because of her. In the beginning of story, when Lear deprives her child of having the crown, she goes to her own way very patiently and piously (she went to France) and she never complains. However her father thinks that it doesn't suffice, so for a long time he curses her and this act was the most terrifying thing in the world for her. When the father discovers the kind Cordelia again, she was still worried of the curses. For the pious and virtuous soul of the girl, who never even committed any error toward her father, there wasn't anything more horrific than the curse of him. To make sure that the curse of the past has been vanished, she asks the father to pray for her:

Cordelia: My lord, please look at me and put your hands on my head for blessing. (Shakespeare, 2008: 259)

These two characters, both in terms of human spirituality and the sublime qualities are excellent. That's why they should be called as an individual. Their behaviour, temperament and ideas aren't a common pattern; one who bears a strong resemblance to them in the real world is rare to find.

## Goneril and Regan, Salm and Tur

These characters are opposite to İraj and Cordelia. If they are unique in humanity, they are unique in cruelty and wickedness. Their images in story are supremacy in brutality and malevolence and cruelty. In a way, they introduce some types of human in society and by knowing them; it seems that we know a lot of people who are in this type, because all the times the evils are: Ethnic hatred, avarice, greed, envy, jealousy and "cruelty" which are the common characteristics of these four characters. They do anything to fulfil their wishes and interests. Finally, their endings are pitiful and each of them harvests the fruit of their deeds (Bolton, 2003: 86). Salm and Tur are killed by the grandson of İraj and the two sisters kill each other (Regan is poisoned by Goneril and Goneril commits suicide).

## 9. ANALYSIS OF PLOT AND EVENTS OF TWO STORIES

### 9.1 Identical Decision of Two Characters

Fereydün decides to divide the realm in three parts and gives them to his sons after their marriage. King Lear decides as well from the beginning of the story to divide the realm in three parts and gives them to his daughters.

What is clear from the first of both stories is that both kings decide to assign their realm to their children and both of them insist on their decisions and the reason of this decision may lie on the old age of both kings, especially King Lear wants to spend the rest of his life without any responsibility and put the youngsters on work (Celine, 1989: 125).

In these stories, two groups of children can be seen. In the story of Fereydün, there are three sons: Salm, Tur, and İraj, and in King Lear, there are three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. In the beginning of each two stories, the extent of love and interest of fathers to their children is clear. Both of them are proud of their youngsters and admire them; therefore, they decide to concede their countries to their children.

### 9.2 Examining the children

In Fereydün's story, the father examines his children for naming them and this issue can be justified as: he examines the manhood of sons (Joneydi, 2010:208). The father in the form of dragon blocks the way to his children. Each of them does a different act toward the dragon and Fereydün names them based on their

bravery toward the dragon. After that he names the elder sons as Salm and Tur and the youngest one as İraj and then he divides the world among them.

In Lear's story, the examination takes place when the king decides to make his final decision for assigning the share of each daughter to them. Prior to this examination, he asks them about their interest and love toward their father and he points that the most generous bounty belongs to the one who loves him the most (Bolton, 2003:126). In comparing the tests, there are two points which should be noted:

- In Fereydün's story, three sons should show in action that how they behave when they confront the danger and in these kinds of examination, any type of pretending (including courage or fear) is difficult. Therefore, determining the most deserving one is crystal clear (Jowdat, 1976: 84).
- However in King Lear's story, the father decides to examine his children by asking them how much they love him. In this way, it's possible and even certain that someone would pretend and flatter; therefore, discrimination between the interior and exterior is so difficult and choosing the most deserving one by asking such a question may not be wise.

### 9.3 Sharing Territories:

In Fereydün's story, the father shares the territories between Salm, Tur, and İraj. The western territory is given to Salm; Eastern Territory to Tur; and Iran to İraj.

In King Lear's story, the country is not shared like Fereydün; even though in the beginning he had the intention of sharing his country between his three daughters, he deprived his youngest daughter from her predetermined rights after examining them because "Cordelia" had given an answer without flattery and pretension; and according to Lear she only loved him as her natural father. While the father loved his youngest daughter much more than the other two (Goneril and Regan), and had been expecting much more of her. This answer was very difficult to accept for Lear who was enchanted by the fully pretentious answers he had heard from his two older daughters; that was why he deprived Cordelia from her rights and left the whole country for his pretentious daughters. This is how Cordelia is outcast by her father and travels to France along with the king of France, who had been her suitor, without any sort of dowry so as to leave Britain for Goneril and Regan.

In both stories everything proceeds perfectly; the countries are shared and governed by the sons and the daughters and the two fathers spend their times with their children; however, little by little the seeds of destruction are planted in the world, and evil and demonic forces emerge in the spirits of the protagonists.

In the story of Fereydün, after several years, the demon of envy awakes inside Salm and convinces his brother, Tur, to accompany him. They protest against their father's decision for they are so jealous; they send a message to their father and blame him for what he has done (Jowdat, 1976: 91).

In the story of King Lear, following ousting Cordelia and leaving the country for the two older sisters, it is decided for Lear to be under their protection, and receive some monthly pension from them; however, it doesn't take long for the two daughters to show their rebellion and disobedience towards their old father. (Celine, 1987: 89) Under the pretext of high cost of their father's life and his attendants they deprived the father from the right that he had granted them in the first place. It is necessary to mention some points here:

- It is worth noticing that in this part of both stories, the first children lead the disobedience and are captivated by their greed and avarice, and the youngest children are unassuming and very patient about the injustice they have suffered.
- Moreover, in the story of King Lear, the two sisters, who have also received the youngest daughter's share, act crueler than Salm and Tur; since İraj, Salm, and Tur had the same amount of share; however these two sisters not only arrogate the share of the youngest sister, however they also ignore the rights of their father.
- The evil and ugly intentions of the children of two kings are realized in this part, in one story with victimizing İraj and in the story of King Lear by maddening and displacing the King; the other point worth mentioning about the way two fathers face the evil actions of their children is the fact that none of them has the necessary motivation to take their revenge personally; Fereydün, depressed and sad awaits an offspring of Iran's generation, and Lear has become insane as a result of depression and pain.
- In both stories the protagonists enter the scene in order to protect other's rights and to take the revenge of two kings; however, this matter is less prominent for Cordelia; because she is more inclined to take the

revenge for his father because of the love she has, and the father has not asked for anything; however Manuchehr prepares to fulfil Fereydün's wish.

- It is interesting about the revenge battle that in both stories the protagonists are at their peak to start their battle and fight against traitors and criminals; however it is unbelievable that only one of them is the winner of this battle, and the other one, who is King Lear's Cordelia, loses the battle. Manuchehr goes back to Fereydün victoriously, and the defeated Cordelia is captured with his father (Pruner, 2006:146).
- In both stories we witness the repentance of the protagonists and the antagonists of the story; however, these repents have different purposes:

I) Superficial and deceptive purposes: in Fereydün's story, when two brothers, Salm and Tur, are informed of the regained glory of Fereydün's court, which has been adorned by Manuchehr; they understand that their position is in danger and know that Fereydün wishes to take his revenge by Manuchehr. Therefore, in a deceitful and cunning act, they decided to send a letter along with lots of gifts to Fereydün in order to show their repentance and to remain safe from the possible invasion of Manuchehr; however, Fereydün ignores their request.

II) The real and modest purpose: In the story of King Lear, after the insults and humiliations of the older children towards their father, we can witness that he is repentant for the mistake he has made about his devoted and caring daughter, Cordelia. He is affected by Cordelia's personality in such a way that he can't confront her in the beginning, and he even deems himself worthy of blames for her part; however, after the insistence of his goodwill daughter, they finally meet each other. It is quite obvious that the repentance of Lear is not to deceive her daughter to remain safe from her grudge and revenge, however it is sincere and heartfelt (Homaie, 1981:133). In both stories the introductions for taking revenge from the antagonist is made and it is time for each of them to meet the consequence of their actions:

In Fereydün's story, Manuchehr faces Tur with an army made of the greatest champions of the time and beats Tur in a fierce battle, and sends his head to Fereydün; then he chases Salm, beats him and kills him in the end as well, and sends his head to Fereydün. That is how the revenge of İraj is taken by Manuchehr.

In the story of King Lear, the army of France (Commanded by Cordelia) stands against the army of Britain (Commanded by Goneril and Regan); however, Cordelia loses this battle and is captured and imprisoned in a castle with his father by her two sisters. That is how the mission for taking the revenge from two sisters was finally aborted.

## 10. THE PROMINENT FEATURES OF TWO STORIES

### Justice

Both Kings warn their children of a bad end and curse them when they face the cruelties and problems that are imposed upon them by their children. This shows the beliefs of two kings on justice and natural and divine judgment system that the guilty cannot escape from their punishment as a result of the justice which rules the world. In the story of Fereydün, Manuchehr is a tool to do this justice (ZarinKub, 2002: 128). However, unlike the story of Fereydün, in the story of King Lear the justice ruling the story is a rough, unruly, and less efficient kind; since it imposes death and destruction upon everything at the end.

### Collapsing Rules

In these two stories, all the worldly values, rules, and system of world have been cluttered. Sons rebelled against their fathers. Brothers kill their brothers. Honest and truthful people are banished and the guilty are rewarded. Sisters commit sororicide and "the humankind dignity lowers to that of an animal" (Stephen and Frantz, 1999: 128).

### Kingdom and Governance

Kingdom is one of the most important topics of the story. In these two stories, both kings don't want to be involved in governing the realm due to their old age. After giving their countries to their children, they face a bitter truth that they are just a human being without the glorious kingdom and this fact is shown to them by their "insubordination" and "rebellion". In facing this fact, Fereydün makes wiser decisions and again pride, ambition and splendour are given to him by Manuchehr. However at this moment, Fereydün does not wish something as "kingdom" (ZarinKub, 2002: 113). By the events that happened to him, Lear understands that if he doesn't have a title of king, there will be no difference between him and ordinary people. In these

problems, he achieves a self-realization to which he already hasn't achieved and the relationship between self-realization and realization of kingdom becomes clear for him (although he is at the end captured by death).

## Love

In both stories, the protagonists tend to a non-selfish and sincere love (Cordelia and Īraj). Their love disregarding their worldly reward is their leader as long as they are alive, while Īraj's love to his family and brothers leads him to death, however about Cordelia, this love leads the father to be shameful and regretful on his behaviour toward his child (Proner, 2006: 149).

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this analytical study of plot, battles, events, characters, and the highlights of the stories of Fereydūn and King Lear, the noticeable point is that these two stories are from two separate cultures, nations, literary styles, however considering the core of story of events, protagonist, antagonists, even the messages, and ethical points, they are close to each other. It can be concluded from the similarities of these two stories which take place in a different part of world and with 9 centuries interval in which they have been written, when the mind and thought of human considers the Current eternal and common issues in the world, so many similar works will be created. The theme of the stories of Fereydūn and King Lear is nothing but "the battle of good and bad". In the era of globalization (especially in the cultural field), considering the similarities and common themes of intellectual, literary and artistic works of various nations could be new ways to link ideas and cultures open up to each other.

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