

Comparative study of woman in “Dede Korkut” and “Shahnameh”

Ebrahim estji¹, Godsi Barati², Javad sadigi lighvan³

¹ Ph.D. of Persian literature, Hakim sabzevari university-faculty of foreign language and literature- Persian literature group)

² Ph.D. student of Persian literature, Hakim sabzevari university-faculty of foreign language and literature- Persian literature group)

³ Ph.D. student of Persian literature, Hakim sabzevari university-faculty of foreign language and literature- Persian literature group)

Email: javad.dadigi@gmail.com

Abstract: Culture, literature and art reflect customs, ethics and ideology of a nation. Firdausi’s Shahnameh is the oldest and reliable reference for familiarity with ancient Iranian attitudes and ideology. It can be said that this book is a valuable treasure containing images, love stories, thoughts, tendencies and ideology. The book of “Dede Korkut” in Azeri literature by unknown author is the only book that has preserved its status after countries.

The epics of Firdausi and Dede Korkut are the great epics in the world from fiction elements, conceptual status and wonderful narratives perspectives that deserve to comparative study. These books offer similar and different viewpoints about woman as the main element of the society. Since studying all aspects in both great works is out of this research scope, so some common aspects are investigated. This article tries to study the status of woman in Firdausi’s Shahnameh and Dede Korkut.

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Introduction

The epics of Dede Korkut are valuable resources in Azerbaijan folklore literature from historical point of view. UNESCO remarked 1999 as year of Dede Korkut stories and also, the head of UNESCO introduced this book as mankind historical and cultural heritage in international meeting of Dede Korkut held in Baku in 2000(Sherdoust ,2000:29).

Dede Korkut stories are great and valuable folkloric epics in all Azeri and Turkish countries narrated centuries ago and registered as a book in modern period. These stories narrate the events and incidents of epic life of some nomads settled in modern Azerbaijan in the past. Indeed, this epic and historical work narrates life of men and women of Oghuz tribe that they lived as semi nomadic in the tents and they considered warfare and bravery as prestige (Farzane ,1979:4).

The legendary heroes are introduced besides words of Dede Korkut in the introduction of the book. It should be pointed that most of the words are used as proverbs nowadays .Of twelve stories, eight stories compromise epic, two stories carry love content and two stories are mythical. Each story narrates adventures of a brave man or woman and the story is called by the name of the hero and heroine. The end of the stories are similar and the final part involves praising the hero or heroine in prayer of the parents and memory of the prophet narrated by the head of tribe, Dede Korkut in verse(Farzaneh,1979:12).

As other Azerbaijan folkloric literature, the stories of Dede Korkut are in verse and prose form. The prose of these stories is simple and eloquent and the phrases are colloquial and short. The chapters in verse are different from common metrics and they are similar to free verse that feelings and desires are expressed in natural way. The verse chapters contain 2000 couplets and they constitute thirty percent of the text (Rahmanifar,2000:144).

For the first time H.F.Von Dies the German orientalist in 1815 prepared a version of this book for Berlin library and published an article about this book and German translation of “Tape Goz ”.By comparison of the story of “Tape goz” with Polyphemus of Odysseus of Homer ,he suggested that Homer borrowed Dede Korkut epic in composing this epic and he was also aware of this work(Rahmanifar,2000:18).Dies writes :Tape goz is similar to other giants and also giant of Homer ,but the giant of Oghuz was not borrowed from Greece but the Greek giant is imitative((Rahmanifar, 2000:148).In this story, a giant attacks on Oghuzs and eats them and finally they decide to prevent him by catching two men and five thousands sheep in a day. We know that in Firdausi Shahnameh, Zahhak eats meat of two young men and sheep. In addition, in ancient Greek epics, Achilles is invulnerable and Esfandiyar is also is invulnerable in Shahnameh and Tape Goz has this trait in Dede Korkut stories(Rahmanifar,2000:147).In comparison between these stories and legends, it can be said that

Dede Korkut stories are folkloric it means that these stories are based on social life and they have been transferred by generations and they have undergone shift while Firdausi has used historical and legendary resources for composing Shahnameh.

It should be pointed that all stories of Dede Korkut were shaped in old times in different historical and cultural contexts by generation and they have been preserved till present. Generally speaking, in progress of such works by folkloric and popular aspects the issue of creation of a work and its date requires to study in other articles. As before said, every folkloric work has certainly a narrator and it has been shifted by social and historical revolutions and it has been published (Farzaneh,1979:12).

Woman and personality of woman in Dede korkut

When we study this book we encounter with treasure of principal concepts required for human life and exalted aspects of civilization and culture the concepts that are seen in a few civilizations and cultures. It can be referred to critical attitude of Dede Korkut toward woman that the women are respected. This book represents the exalted culture of Turks that recognizes the importance of woman and does not impose limitations on her and never address her with inappropriate words and a man never abuses her wife and the woman does not confine at home. The women of these stories are brave and heroine that they attend in the society beside the men. This book introduces women as councilors of men.

In the stories of Dede Korkut, the women have exalted position beside men and in contrary to most of the oriental legends that a woman has blameful status the woman plays her motherhood role with emotions and self esteem. The men do not marry with several women and the woman is in the same rank of the man. Brevity and skill in wrestling, horse riding and swordsmanship are the criteria for selecting wife and marriage (Farzaneh,1979:14).

Of course among Turks societies, the women had superior position and they were appraisable. According to historical references in attack of Alexander on Azerbaijan one thousands women and girls participated in the war and also in the Chaldran war about six thus ands women fought with enemy and even in constitution revolution the Azerbaijani women wore male costume and fought in the battle field(Farazin, 2002:115).

Woman and personality of woman in Shahnameh

Women play numerous role in Firdausi's shahnameh and most of them live in heroic period. It can be said that the women of Shahnameh are wise and intelligence and the woman are praised in this book more than other books.

Although Noldeke, in his book about Iran and Iranian woman and personality of woman in great work of Shahnameh, writes:“women do not play so important role in Shahnameh and they only appear when there is a lust and passion”(Noldeke,2005:116).

The women of Shahnameh are superior to other Persian verse and prose. It is sufficient to compare Shirin in the work of Nezami and Shahnameh .Shirin in Nezami is amorist but Shirin in Shahnameh is a wise and brave woman and she is also a lover. Shirin in Shahnameh is more believable (although Nezami has exalted the love speech).

Shahnameh looks at woman positively and her attendance is deterministic and the role of woman as establisher of the family is considered as fundamental in gaining and declining of power.

In the major stories of Shahnameh like the story of Feridun that the sisters of Jamshid get married with him and his mother Faranak and daughters of Serv that get married with his sons and in the story of Kavous, Sodabeh the daughters of king of Hamavaran gets married with Kavous after attack of this country and women are powerful in these stories.

Comparison of woman in Dede Korkut and Shahnameh

1-Courage and heroism

Courage and heroism of woman in Shahnameh

Woman is a softhearted creature but she is unique in brevity and courage and she is consulter of man in wartime and feast. Firdausi says:

She was said you are a lady

You support Iran and China

You can move mountain by your tact

You can direct heroes

You are wiser than men

You guide them vigilant

All subordinates obey you

And you order and plan affairs (Shahnameh,v.7:123).

In other part, Firdausi praises Gerdafarid, the daughter of “Gag dam” the white fort hero in the battle field. When Sohrab arrives white fort in the boundary between Iran and Turks he captures Hajir the guard of the fort and Gerdafarid wears war costume and fights with Sohrab :

There was a woman on the horse

She was like worriers in the battle field

Her hair was under the armor

She was riding horse

She reached the fort like a lion

By the fast riding horse (Islami Nadoushan,1998:86).

(All narratives of Dede Korkut are from translation by Azabdaftari and Hariri).

Courage and heroism of woman in Dede Korkut

Courage and warfare traits in women constitute the major part of Dede Korkut epic. There are many heroines in these stories and in order to achieve these traits, it is necessary to eliminate the barriers and differences between men and women in the society and learn war techniques and this goal is achieved only by shifting the attitudes toward woman and Turks had these attitudes. In the first story (Bogaj khan, the son of Dierse khan), when Dierse khan returns home without his son from hunting, his wife thinks her son has captured and says:

Say me if you gave him to lion or a leopard
I will go to father, the head of khans
And I will gather together the worriers

And attack on the pagans

Fight until my dress becomes bloody

And I will return my son

And I never return without my son even if I lost my life (Dede Korkut :39).

In the third story (Bamsi Baereh), when “Baerak ” enters to the tent of “Chicak” the heroin and powerful lady ,she introduces herself as Chicak nurse and says: “ I am ready to horse ridding and fight with each other and

If you win me you will win her and we can compare our power”(ibid:72).

In the fourth story (Oruz, the son of Ghazan khan), when Oruz is captured by the pagans his mother becomes aware and says to Ghazan khan:

“I never take out my boot and I scratch my red chicks whenever I could not find my son, I will fight whenever I lost my life and I will release my son and I never return without my son”(ibid:113).

In the sixth story (Ghan Turali,the son of Ghanli koja),when “Seljan khatun” hears that the enemy seeks her and Ghan Turali she gets ready for fight:

“She wore the armor and took the spear and fought besides her husband and said him: we must fight with them since the pagans are numerous and then she attacked on the enemy”(ibid:153).

In the tenth story (Sergarak, the son of Oshun Koja), Sergarak says his wife: wait for me for six years then if I won't return know that I am killed and she says:

“I will wait for you and if you do not return ,I will camp in six ways and I will look for you and I will give gift who brings your coming news and in other hand I will beheaded him”(ibid:202).

2-Woman and her modesty and prudency

Woman modesty and prudency in Shahnameh

Firdausi believes that modesty and prudency lead a woman to sublimity and exaltation. Modesty is valued trait for women and indecency causes to infamy:

The women who are not modest

They are dishonored (Shahnameh,v.7:192).

He was asked what conduct is unpleasant

He replied the shamelessness of a woman (Shahnameh, Mohl, v.7:252).

The main duty of a woman is preservation of her husband rights and in Islam it is emphasized that a woman should provide calm and healthy environment for his husband and be modest and stylish.

A woman should have three traits

She has to be modest, lovely and stylish

And deliver many boys

And pleasing her husband

Then she be beautiful and cover herself (Shahnameh,v.7, Russia publication :433)

Woman modesty and prudency in Dede Korkut

The nobility and modesty are traits of Turks women. Turk's women have showed that they never misuse their freedom and they are modest and virtuous.

In the second story (Qarachoq choban), when the wife and children of Ghazan khan are captured by Shokelimalek, he decides the wife of Ghazan to bear wine for him and his officers and when Burlan hears she asks all captive women to say that they are Burlan and and Shokelimalek asks to bring meat of Ouz the son of Burlan to identify her and when she becomes aware goes to her son and announces him and he orders his mother to eat his meat to preserve her and his father prestige(Dede Korkut:53-56).

3- Respect to woman and her personality

Respect to mother in Shahnameh

Respect to mother is advised in all religions .Firdausi depicts the gratitude of mother in a story; after death of the king, the authorities and officers consider the opinions of queen mothers and queens .After death of the third Dara, his wife ,Roshanak got married with Alexander according to demand of Dara. When Alexander died his mother ruled out the territory and Alexander had demand his officers to obey his mother after him.

He asked his minster and councilor

And advised him about affairs of country

Wrote a letter to his mother that

“After my death do not regret

Since death is not a new phenomenon

You will be the ruler of the country

And everybody will obey you (Shahnameh,v.7, Russia duplication :103).

Respect to woman in Dede Korkut

The woman is addressed respectfully and she is praised in this book. In the first story, Dierese khan calls his wife with sweet words and praises her and respects her and considers her as his inseparable person in his life(Dede Korkut:31).

4-Attitude of men toward women

Mircea Eliade writes about the status of woman in the primitive societies: "the primitive man knew creation of mountains, valleys, rivers and seas and growing and destroying of plants on the earth aligned with power of pregnancy and birth in the woman"(Eliade,1993:24).

Man and woman are equal in Islam. "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.(An-Nahl:97).

Attitude of men toward women in Shahnameh

Christiansen the Denmark scholar believes:

"The attitude of men toward women in ancient Iran was respectable .The women were liberal in private and social life"(Christiansen,1958:75).

The image of women in Iran classic verse and works lacks intelligence and ability to decision making and this issue can be understood by referring to books like "Zire Magnaeh" by Banafsheh Hejazi,"Tasiver zan dar farhang va tamodone Iran"(the image of woman in Iran culture and civilization) by Mohamamdali Jamalzadeh,"Fardasti va frodasti zanan"(superiority and inferiority of women) by Maryam Paknahad. This tendency is seen less in folklore works. In story of Arabian nights, the storyteller prevents some disasters by her intelligence and wisdom. In addition in tales like "Molke shareman and Ali Nuredin", it can be found the effective attendance of women (Samini,2000:226).

"So based on this functionality it can be said that woman in Shahnameh has exalted soul and she is perfected and her image is not affected by the passion and desires; while in other stories particularly the love stories ,her personality is progressed according to the story consequences"(Hariri, 1986:27).Firdausi considers woman sometimes as gift and sometimes as disgrace:

There is no difference between son and daughter
If the child is wise and believer (Firdausi, Shahnameh,Russia,v.1:90)

He had three daughters and no son

The other had a daughter

She was wise, intelligent and artist (Firdausi, Shahnameh ,Russia ,v.7 :351)

He introduces girl as disgracing creature in other part:

He replied that I do not want any daughter

Since she leads to disgrace

Do not act by order of a woman

Since she cannot act decisive (Firdausi, Shahnameh ,v.6: 218 ,couplet 24)

Firdausi believes that the person who does not have any daughter he is happy and daughter brings misery for family:

The person that does not have any daughter is happy
A daughter ceases to misery (Firdausi, Shahnameh, v.1:170)

The person who has a daughter

He is unfortunate even if he is king (Firdausi, Shahnameh, v.5:263)

Attitude of men toward women in Dede Korkut

The marriage criteria are brevity and modesty of the women not beauty and female traits in this book. These selection criteria show valuable attitudes of our ancestors towards woman, since their marriages were not based on passion and sensuality, so the women were respected among Turks.

In the sixth story, Gantoralı says his father his criteria for marriage as follows: I want a girl that she wakes early than me and rides her horse faster than me"(Dede Korkut:139).

In the third story, Baeriak announces his criteria for marriage as follows:"the woman should be clever and intelligent and be familiar with war techniques and act like a man"(ibid:70).

5-Loyalty and devotee

Loyalty and devotee of woman in Shahnameh

Firdausi refers to loyalty and devotee of women. A society is proud of its loyal women .This trait is so powerful in a woman that she scarifies her for his man.

You are immortal and you protect other's life

The heroes are alive due to your spiritual thinking

Everybody knows Ashkbous ,Rustem ,Zal and Kif and Tust (Firdausi in Shahnameh ,Habib Yaghmaei:178).

Manifestation of loyal woman in Dede Korkut

As we know everybody could not sacrifice her and his life and a devotee person achieves perfection and reaches to exaltation and accounting this trait for women indicates the exalted attitude of Dede Korkut and Turks toward women.

In the fifth story (Dadali Demerol), when the angle of death asks him to find other one instead of him to die, he goes to his father and mother and they do not accept and when he asks his wife she accepts and says:

"I do not want to continue my life after you; I do not have any hope except you; the mountains and deserts are my tomb without you. The water that I drink is blood for me after your death and I sacrifice my life for you that you could live" (Dede Korkut:137).

Conclusion

By comparative study of the women personality in Shahnameh and Dede Korkut, it can be concluded that although there are differences but similarities can be found in these books. The commonalities of brevity and courage, loyalty and respect to woman personality and men attitude toward women, loyalty and devotee empower cultural effectiveness. It can be concluded that women of Shahnameh and Dede Korkut are exalted and praised and they are adventurous personages in these literary masterpieces.

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