

Moral commitments in Shahnameh

Leili Ghare Baghi, Kamran Pashaei Fakhri*, Parvaneh Adelzadeh

Department of Persian Literature and Languages, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: Pashayikamran@yahoo.com

Abstract: The aim of this research was to investigate moral commitment in Shahnameh as component of social capital. Although, Shahnameh is epic but it contains social, sociology, human relations and moral teaching issues and it reflects Iranian society characteristics in details. Firdausi's rhetoric of elocution and poetics in description, simplicity of speech and eloquence, validity and advantage add on the value of Persian literature. Accuracy and subtlety in description of details have led to consideration of Shahnameh as treasure of Iranian social traditions and customs. Firdausi's ideology has manifested in the form of eloquent literature besides his social perspectives. This article tries to investigate moral commitments and its components in the unique work of Persian literature and uncover broad meaning and moral commitments in Shahnameh in broad scope.

Key words: Moral Commitments, Social Capital, Persian Literature, Firdausi, Shahnameh, Didactic Literature.

Introduction

Religion is effective component in improvement of the social relationships and in most cases, it leads to attachment and trust among people which strengthens the pillars of social life and its decline causes to collapse of the society foundation and social life. By commitment and responsibility taking among the believers, religion causes to peace, kindness and interest and establishes healthy social and person life. This article tries to investigate different examples of moral commitments in different situations in Shahnameh by referring to some miracles and narratives and also uncover the value of the moral commitments from Firdausi's perspective by emphasis on different books and also Islamic teachings.

Firdausi was knowledgeable in ethics, philosophy and social issues and he has covered different dimensions of social capital. This article examines some examples mentioned in the Shahnameh:

Shahnameh begins with praising with God:

Wisdom is better than anything that God has created

Praising the wisdom is flourished by justice

Wisdom is guide and it is solution of the problems

The happiness is from him and pain is from him

Wisdom helps us in both worlds (Shahnameh, 1989)

Thousands years ago before renaissance and birth of Descartes and Walter, Firdausi had praised wisdom. The Iranian poet has adorned wisdom so that the reader is attracted by it. In his great book, he teaches us about human and he narrates the moral story with eloquent speech and invites us to humility and obedience.

Undoubtedly, his belief in this fact that humans can live happily and with sympathy and avoid hostility and revenge introduces Firdausi as a great poet.

Shahnameh narrates many fights in the battlefields which depict the vitality of the disputes and fights. We know the end of the fights between Rostam and Sohrab and the fate of Alexander who wished to establish peace between Iranians and Greek and the death of Dara and wounding of Sohrab.

Firdausi refers to religious, racial and social disputes and he has no hostile attitude towards the neighbors and for this reason, the Arabs, Turks and Indians now him the Iranian national poet. From this perspective, it can be said that he is one of the pioneers of peace who believes in prevention of wars by temperance and liberty.

In Shahnameh, the championship events as an imagery history of a nation flow in the real contexts and involve characteristics of social, political life and the people beliefs in intellectual and religious affairs. Shahnameh offers an image of Iranian society that depicts the efforts for independence, civilization, ethics and religion and besides them pleasure and philosophical and religious discussion among the heroes.

Since, social attitudes in the social capital is attention to the mutual relationship among people, the aim of Firdausi was considering the humanistic affairs, but since he was not a sociologist, he has not discussed on the subject matter from specialist perspective and he has explained these concepts from poetical perspective.

Promise is one of the main subjects in Shahnameh that plays an important role in the events, characters and their fate. This component has been recognized as a religious, moral and social principle in the Indo-European countries. The ancient Iranians were considered Iran as the country of promise (Hilinse, 1996). Promise and loyalty were important in ancient Iran; so that the demon promises at the beginning of the creation and cannot breach it (Amuzgar, 2000).

The word of Mitral is meant promise as the goddesses of promise (Razi, 2002). In Avesta, there is a Yashat called the god of sun that reminds his characters and traits and he has broad and wide fields (paragraph: 3, 4, 1 and 5) who offers good life and family to the people (ibid:30) and he is generous and protector of the cattle (Razi, 2002). However, among the characteristics of the god of sun, the faithfulness on promise is one of the main elements of the Mazdisna moral teachings that its great power, the holy magical force has been imagined (Amuzgar, 2000).

This god has two duties, he aids the people in the war and supervise on the promises; he aids who obeys him and punishes disobeyers (Doustkhah, 1964). He is advocate of the country that does not breach the promises and destructs the country that breaches the promises (Mirfakhraei, 1988). In the past, the heroes priced faithfulness in the promises more than the kings and champions and they were aware of the end of who breached the promises. We refer to some examples in this regard:

The promise of Sam

When Sindokht comes to Sam, he asks her to introduce herself and her intent and she demands him to be faithful to his promise and damages her:

At first I want you to be faithful
Till I am never to be weakened
Promise to me neither you nor everybody not damage me
I have splendor palace and court
That is with treasure and relatives
When I am assured, say what you want to say
And Sam promises her:
Samtook her hands and promised her
When Sindokht heard his swear
Said the truth and established a relationship
Kissed the earth and stood
Said her secrets honestly (Shahnameh, 2010)
Then Sindokht introduces herself while she is assured and says that she is a relative of Zahhak and the wife of Mehrab and mother of Rudabeh:
Now, I have come, what is your purpose?
Who is your enemy and friend in Kabul?
If we are sinner and evil
We are deserved to this kingship
Now I am in trouble and powerless besides you
Kill me, if you want to kill me and release me if you wish
Do not harm on the Kabul innocents
Where a miserable man harms you
Sam replies that if I lose my life I never breach my promise:

He replied that I am faithful to my promise
Even if I lose my life
You and your relatives in Kabul are safe (Shahnameh, 2010)
The promise of Rustam

When Kaikhosrow is informed about the trouble of Bizhan in Turan asks Rustam to go Turn and recues Bizhan:

Now find the solution for Bizhan
Since he is trapped in Turan
Gather the troops, horses and swords and treasures
Take everything you need do let him to be in trouble
Rustam emphasize his promise:
My mother delivered me for you
You have to be happy and calm
I hear you order and never breach your promise
I come to you eagerly
I do what my king orders (Shahnameh, 2010)

In ancient religion, the person who breached his promise was punished heavily and some of these punishments are cited in the texts: "I saw a man was punished by spear and axe and stone and I asked his sin and I was told it is the soul of the man who breached his promises" (Afifi, 1963).

Faithfulness to promise is important an even in promise to the enemy, faithfulness is the main conditions and this is reflected in Shahnameh.

Rustam promises the son of the demon in the war of Mazindaran if he shows him the place of the white demon and the prison of Kaikavous he will offer the governance of Mazindaran:

Said him if you will be honest
I never kill you (Shahnameh, 2010)
If you show the place of the white demon
The prison of the Kiakaus
The demos said my body has your sings
My neck is under your chain
Promise me to not breach the

Rustam replies that he is faithful and he will offer him the governance of Mazindaran (Shahnameh, 2010)

Even the negative characters emphasize on faithfulness to their promises. In the story of Zahhak, the Satan asks him to make promise to not uncover the secrets:

Asked him to make promise
To not uncover the secrets
He accepted and took an oath
I never disclose since then what I hear from you

Then the Satan says him to kill his father and to become the king and he replies that it is not a correct way and he asks other solution

But Satan remind him his promise and the end of the breaching of promise (Shahnameh, 2010)

And he accepts his offer.

As it was referred the god of sun aids the people in war and being faithful to promises and punishes who breach their promises (Dustkhah, 1965).

In the story of the China emperor, when Rustam and Poladvand begin to wrestling they make promise to not demand aid from troops:

They began to wrestling
Two warriors and champions
They promised to not invite aids from their troops
When Shideh sees Rustam says to the father:
That powerful man said to his father
Call him Rustam the fighter with demon
Our troops have no solution except run
Do not fight with the powerful man
But Afrasyab says to Shideh:
That my mind is restless since then

Go and see that Pooladvand
Fights with him and catches his hand
Shideh replies that breaching promise is the reason for loss and misname:
Shideh said that the promise of the king
Was not this with the army?
When you break your promise
It will be your fault and you will be disloyal (Shahnameh, 2010)

Conclusion

Promise is one of the main subjects in Shahnameh that plays an important role in the events, characters and their fate. This component has been recognized as a religious, moral and social principle in the Indio-European countries. The ancient Iranians were considered Iran as the country of promise. Promise and loyalty were important in ancient Iran; so that the demon promises at the beginning of the creation and cannot breach it. Even the negative characters emphasize on faithfulness to their promises. In the story of Zahhak, the Satan asks him to make promise to not uncover the secrets. Sometimes the kings and heroes in the Shahnameh pay the heavy cost on faithfulness to promises that it might be losing of life. It can be referred to Agris, the brother of Afrasyab who was killed as a result of faithfulness to his promise and as the name of Siavash can be mentioned. In Iranian ancient religious texts, breach of promise is unforgivable sin and the sinner should be punished. In some texts, shortening of life, extinction of the generations has been mentioned as the end of breach of promise (Hundreds prose in Bundhenshn, 1909). In most of the stories of Shahnameh, the end of breaching promise is obvious that leads to death of the heroes and innocent people and destruction of the countries.

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