

An Anthropological Study of the Dramatic Elements of the Book of *ArdaViraf* in Iran

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ABSTRACT Eminent works in any culture, root in national and patriotic beliefs and origins of their creators. Benefiting from Iran's ancient and rich culture, Persian art and literature creates unique artworks that can be sources of inspiration, creation, and production of artistic immanent works, especially in the field of Iranian performing arts. The Book of *ArdaViraf* is one of the manuscripts that is rooted in ancient Persian religious beliefs and provides us with comprehensive information on religious thoughts and practices in *Zoroastrian* era. The present study examines the dramatic features in this invaluable book. It starts with an introduction of the necessary items that must be considered regarding dramatic features, including the theme, plot, dialogue, character, conflict, complication, suspense, climax, and setting. Secondly, these items are discussed and analyzed in the Book of *ArdaViraf*, showing that this work can be used as a successful film script or screenplay.

INTRODUCTION

Persian literature is replete with works that make up the rich culture of Iran and supports Iran and Iranian culture. "Iranians, among the old nations of the world have a prolonged history of pleasing literary works in different dialects. From the oldest Persian works such as the *Zoroaster's Gathas*¹ to the newest reviving ones, everywhere and always, the Iranian creative spirit and bright thought is evident" (Safa 1999).

The Book of *ArdaViraf* is also one of the most beautiful religious texts of ancient Persia. As Mojtaba Minavi says in the *Fifteen Speeches*, this book has been used as a source for great works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *Seyr-al-Ibadelal-Mama'ad* (The Excursion of People toward Resurrection) of *Sanayi*, etc. (Minavi 1967).

ArdaVirafNamak or *ArdaVirafNameh* (The Book of *ArdaViraf*) is the name of one of the books written in the Pahlavi language, which is a relic of the glorious reign of the Sassanid era. The Saint *Viraf* is the name of the *Zoroastrian* priests² that is believed by Persians to have Ascension, and the Book of *ArdaViraf* is the story of his Ascension.

The famous Book of *ArdaViraf* presents a comprehensive picture of Heaven, Hell, *Chinvad* or *Cinvat* bridge (the Bridge of the Requirer), reward and punishment (*padafra*) of peo-

ple in the other world according to the beliefs of the *Zoroastrians*. This worthwhile book (*nask*) seems to be written in the 3rd century A.D, and its source has probably been another book (*nask*), belonging to the end of the *Sassanid* Empire, before the Arab invasion. The content of the book indicates that its original text belonged to the late *Sassanid* period. The book deals with the story of a *Zoroastrian* priest who goes to sleep for a period of seven days, and with the help of other priests, he decides to remove the doubt of people about religion, resurrection, heaven and hell; his soul is able to see the good deeds of the righteous in heaven and the punishment (*padafra*) of the wicked in hell; after he wakes up he retells those stories (Bahar 1999).

In the *Stylistics* of Bahar, some imitated versions of the Book of *ArdaViraf*, the book of *Zoroastrian* ethics, and religious history are mentioned, and it is explained that most of the pages of the book have images and pictures, but there are no more findings available about it (Bahar 1970).

According to the definition of Mohammad Hadi Mohammadi in the *History of Children's Literature*, we could categorize the Book of *ArdaViraf* and place it in the ancient Iranian religious mythology. Persian religious legends are the most ancient fictional, narrative and historical form of literature in Iran; these legends that have roots in the Iranian mythology, reflect the legends and beliefs of the Iranians throughout

history. Understanding these myths helps us know the Iranian people's ideas in the historical context. The content of these myths is a blend of primitive mythology, indigenous religious beliefs in Iran before the migration of Aryan ethnics, mythical beliefs of migrant Aryan ethnics before the advent of Zoroaster and Mazdaism (Mohammadi and Qayini 2011).

The *Zoroastrians'* beliefs in the ancient Persia are visible everywhere in the Book of *ArdaViraf*.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is considered as one of the greatest literary works in the world, that reveals a strong bond between the material and realistic world and metaphysical world. "Although one can trace the main theme of the journey to the world of spirits in such works like *ArdaViraf*, Homer's *Odyssey*, and some parts of the *Bible*, but some parts of the *Divine Comedy* dealing with Hell and Heaven are more closely found in Sanai's work" (Hejazi 2015).

Theoretical Foundations

According to Brockett (1977), dramatic elements could be found in any pre-humanistic society. Such elements are visible in daily events such as political championships, sport festivals, religious ceremonies and even in children's games as well as dancing and other ancient ceremonies. Little information about the origin of theatre is left.

The most common theory available for the origin of theatre is "Ritual theory," which states that theatre comes from the ritual, myth and ceremony. From the late 19th century up to now, anthropologists' theory about the origin of theatre has survived three stages. The first stage starts from 1875 to 1915. James Frazer claims that all cultures follow incremental patterns; based on this theory and as a result, the primitive society could be a basic resource for the latest theaters. Early societies perceived connections between certain actions performed by the group or leaders in the group, and the desired results of the whole society. These actions range from habit to tradition and then to ceremony and ritual. The formulation of these actions, and the consequent repetition and rehearsal, initiated the formation of theatre (Brockett 1977). In the second stage, which started from 1915, Bronislaw rejected the posteriori method and suggested a deductive approach. Unlike Bronislaw and Malinowski

(1951) believed that here culture is special in particular societies, and so there is an uncertainty about the origin of the cultural institutions such as theater. Malinowski believes that such institution is developed from different processes. After World War II, in the third stage, Structuralism led by Claude Levi-Strauss, as well as Functionalism, believed that each society has a special culture, whereas Frazer believed in the universal pattern. What is important for Frazer is the answer to the question: "How does brain act?" He found the answer in the analysis of myth. Considering myth as a kind of logic, he introduced two kinds of ideas: scientific mind and mythical mind (Brockett 1977). The term which Levi-Strauss (1966) used for mythical idea, deals with signs and symbols rather than concepts; it appears in mythical garb and settles on the mask and rituals. According to Brockett (1977), despite different anthropologists' perspectives in the past century, all of them agree on the primitive ceremonies as the origin of theatre. Most of the critics and historians believe that ceremony and ritual is just one of the factors in the emergence of theatre.

Objectives

This study attempts to analyze the dramatic features of *the Book of ArdaViraf* in the light of multiple perspectives, an anthropological perspective, drama and its structure. The key question is that: can a classical work, whose main purpose is purely religious, have dramatic features?; can it be used as a source for writing a play or a film script with anthropological perspectives in contemporary era?

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative and descriptive research method; also content analysis is conducted in the library method and note taking. Required data was collected by reading various books that define the nature and structure of play, and then samples were analyzed and classified based on the play structure.

DISCUSSION

The word dramatics applied to anything that refers to theatre and seems interesting. Dramatic elements of fiction refer to elements that make a

literary work interesting, wonderful, moving and dramatic. The main difference between a dramatic work with a non-dramatic one is “exponential and visual; it is concerned with movements and elements of the story, the elements that help the readers visualize the characters, events, etc. as is in their mind” (Hanif 2005). According to Hanif, “Identifying and recognizing the elements and features, one cannot ignore the good rhythm and favorable tone and atmosphere that integrated in fiction that requires minimum modifications to convey into drama” (Hanif 2005).

Drama as a literary-artistic work has two halves after creation. Drama manifests itself in play. However, to create a literary work that is specific, since the generation of drama in Greece, there are some principles and techniques considered” (Ghaderi 2001).

Every literary text cannot be recognized as a dramatic one, or performed on stage. A script has certain features that a dramatist considers during writing. “In order for a pattern to form the basis of a play, it should be a particular kind, that is, a pattern that pictures a significant aspect of life in the time” (Mahjoor and Farhad 2002).

On the other hand, “Play is a creative and fictional type of literature. The essence of literature is the words; therefore there is a similarity in this respect between fiction, poetry and drama. Nonetheless, since the drama is primarily not for reading, but created for performance on the stage for the audience, it has symbolic features and aspects that distinguish it from other forms of literature” (Kermani 2004).

Aristotle’s *Poetics* is the first source and treatise available in the field of dramatic theory. In this treatise, Aristotle defines the types of poetry, lyrical-descriptive literature, narrative-epic literature and dramatic literature. He believes that tragedies (dramatic literature) are endowed with special features among other genres. “Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete, and possesses magnitude; in a language which is made pleasurable, each of its species is separated in different parts; it is performed by actors, not through narration; through pity and fear, it affects the purification of such emotions” (Zarrinkoub 2003).

Playwright and novelist are both the creators of a story. However, the main difference is between watching and reading. The most important feature that exists both in the novel and play is narration but with a little difference. In a novel,

narration is for reading and making the image in the mind of the reader, but in a play, it is for watching, hearing, and action. Finally, we can say that in the ancient literary texts, whether poetry or prose, there is a fictional element. It should be mentioned that they have abilities that can be strong motifs for a play or drama.

A work has dramatic elements when it has naturally incorporated dramatic features in itself. For example, a story must have one or some protagonist(s) and antagonist(s). A drama has a specific historic time. A specific location, settings for emergence of crisis, conflict, suspense, tension, denouement, and proper theme are among other features of a dramatic work (Hanif 2005).

The Structure of Drama

1. Theme

One of the features and requirements of a play is the theme. In fact, literary experts are characterized by different meanings for theme. According to Abrams, the term “theme” is applied to a “general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader” (Abrams 1999).

2. Plot

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle considers plot (*mythos*) the most important element of drama. In other words, it is the pattern and the basis of a story or play. “The word ‘plot’ in story means the narration of events in the story with an emphasis on causality. In other words, plot is a coherent and interlocking pattern that starts in one point and ends in another, and between these two points there are incidents that have a causal relationship. Due to the emphasis on the events, the plot is different from the summary of the story” (Dad 2006).

In fact, it is the framework and original pattern of a work that remains after briefing and removing additional contents in a story. Therefore, it contains the key points of the story, removal of which will defect the story. Plot shows the main tracks of the story.

What distinguishes the plot from pattern and framework is that in addition to summary of the story, a plot expresses the causal relationship of

the events. Professor Kenny in Manhattan University defines plot and explains: "When we speak of the plot does not mean the historical events in time sequence, there are more important things for the author. He creates the plot by ordering and organizing events in his story based on necessity. In other words, plot not only makes us aware of the time relationship of the events but it also is an important element in disclosure of causal relationships in the story" (Hanif 2005).

Plot is something complete and perfect. It develops from "the initial pattern of events and gives identity to the characters. Events of the story come one after another achieve the desired goal although with an emphasis on the causal relationships. The plot gathers the scattered elements and materials in the mind of the author and forms a single pattern" (Ghaderi 2001).

3. Dialogue

Dialogue means conversation, talking to each other and exchanging ideas. It is used in poems, stories, plays, etc. "Dialogue in the story is a critical element besides description, as it causes the plot to develop and the theme to show up. Through dialogue characters are introduced and the fictional action advances" (Dad 2006). Dialogue presents the conversations between characters in order to show the interplay of ideas and spiritual and mental characteristics of people. Some authors use dialogue to lighten the impact of serious, descriptive, or interpretive pieces; in fact, the burden of these pieces is removed by dialogue and the story refreshes and prevents boredom of the reader (Mir Sadeghi 1997). "Dialogue is a part of the structure that is not more important than plot or character, but it is not less important either" (Nobel 2006). The dialogue helps the story move on, and the work becomes stronger and firmer. Characters seem more real through dialogue and adventures between them seem more realistic.

4. Character

The character is a crucial element in dramatic or narrative works. The center of events in a plot is a character that will advance all the important events; and more importantly, it is his fate and end of adventures that becomes significant. We call this character the main character or the protagonist (Daghighian 1992). Character defines

himself by performing actions in a play." According to Aristotle's definition, tragedy is an imitation of human actions, not merely reciting some regretting events; a man's act shows his character" (Makie 2001). The reader, through reading the story, gets acquainted with the character's physical, mental, and moral characteristics, special habits and moods, and his social status" (Hanif 2005). What a character does and says reveals his mental and moral qualities. The act of creating a character within the story that looks almost real to the reader is called "*characterization*" (Abdollahya 2001).

In fact, "the most important factor in the plot, is fictional character" (Yunusi 2005). Creating characters attributed with certain moral and emotional characteristics in the narrative and dramatic world, as well as the motivation of dialogues and actions of created persona, all stem from the author's mood and mental characteristics. Fictional characters are like real characters with different aspects, some are hidden, and some are visible for the reader.

5. Conflict

Clash and dispute occurs when a character needs to go through some obstacles in order to achieve his or her aim. The more severe the intensity and strength of motivation, the more important will be the intention. Every drama is based on a conflict because the way each individual fights represents his personality. Hence, how to show a conflict is of great importance (Shamas 2000). It is the confrontation of two forces or two characters that forms the foundation of events. Often the main character is accepted by the reader, and the latter sympathizes with him; "this character fights and confronts the forces that have risen up against him and oppose him" (Mir Sadeghi 1997).

In terms of story, conflict is the confrontation of two forces or two characters. Conflict is the primary element of plot. In any story, whether simple or complex, conflict appears upon creation of characters. This conflict can occur in various forms: physical, moral, mental, and/or emotional conflict (Hanif 2005).

Hanif has divided conflict into six types, based on the nature of the forces opposing the protagonist: man against fate, man against himself, man against man, man against society, society against the society.

6. *Complication (Rising Action, Falling Action)*

Rising action, or creation of conflict, is another important part in a narrative or drama, because it will be with the audience and will take him to the end of the story. "Rising action is a difficult situation that sometimes suddenly emerges and changes the existing plans, ways, and attitudes. Rising action contains characters' properties and details of positions and situations that changes the main plot's course and puts the protagonist in the face of other forces which create tension" (Mir Sadeghi 1997). Complication is a feature of the story in which an abrupt change occurs in the trend of events. Crisis takes a sudden leap upward, and these altogether develops conflict through the story. In this case, the first part of complication, that is, rising action, occurs in the story and later on by removing the escalation factors of conflict, the story enters the second stage of complication that is, falling action. The beginning of story takes us from exposition to primary introduction of conflict, and middle of the story takes us from conflict to the rising action, and from there to the climax and end of story" (Hanif 2005).

7. *Crisis*

Crisis is the result of conflict in the story. If the conflict between the parties is properly nourished with the inner conflict, the crisis will reveal itself well. In order to naturalize the crisis the required grounds must be pre-set (Hanif 2005). "Crisis is the moment that the interacting forces confront for the last time. It takes the narrative action to the climax, changes the life of character(s) of the story, and creates a definite change in the plot" (Mirsadeghi 1997).

8. *Suspense*

As a plot evolves, it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events, actions, and the way characters respond to them. The reader establishes a bond of sympathy and support with the protagonist or one of the characters and becomes interested in their fate. Such an interest, and lack of certainty, on the part of a concerned reader, about what is going to happen, is known as suspense" (Mir-

sadeghi 1997). The other term used for "conflict" is "panic," perplexity, and bewilderment; it is an element that will emerge after the crisis in the narrative. In other words, suspense is the very waiting after crisis or 'What happens next?' in the events (Hanif 2005).

9. *Climax*

Any conflict or dispute in the play should have an end. Climax is the result of conflict. At the climax, the audience finds out whether the character of the play would reach its purpose or fail (Shamasi 2000). After the rising action, and when crisis reaches its culminating point and the suspense ends, the story reaches its climax. Usually a climax, that is obtained after the protagonist goes through the impediments, is considered the end of a story (Hanif 2005). In fact, the climax of a story is the logical consequence of previous events, like some water flowing underground and hidden from the view; the flowing on earth is its inevitable end. The logic of the course of events in a story may be hidden from the reader, but when it comes to a conclusion, the reader accepts it. A work may have several turning points, one of which may be stronger than the rest; usually this major turning point precedes the rest (Mirsadeghi 1997).

10. *Setting*

The general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which the action of a narrative or drama occurs, is called setting. In other words, the setting refers to a time and place or places where the plot events happen (Hanif 2005). All the events of the play happen in a particular place. The locale could be anywhere depending on the topic or authors' will. Using locale, one can indicate the social status of the characters in the play (Shamasi 2000).

The framework that will contain the events of the narrative in order to convey them from the artist to the audience is time axis, which means the events come one after another on the time line - or are expressed by the artist to have the desired effect on the audience. Therefore, the dramatic structure is strongly dependent on the time, and the works of art in which time factor and order of time has no significant role, lack such quality (Maki 2001).

In ancient stories, time and place requirements have not been observed, and the principles of not considering the time, embedding incredible length of time, lack of geographical boundaries, and describing some specific locations, are the features of all traditional stories. The older the story, the more is the range of unavoidable changes. This depends on the time requirements and lifestyle. When a conflict is created in the dramatic course of events, the audience is involved with the story, and other factors such as climax and crisis, indirectly transfer the desired moral result to the people (Hanif 2005).

Dramatic Features of the Book *ArdaViraf*

1. Theme

This story takes place in a fantasy and imaginary situation; in fact, it narrates a journey to the Hereafter, the result of which is the message and reminder of the outcome and consequences of man's deeds in the world after death.

2. Plot

The story has a very solid and stable plot, and the events are entirely based on causal relationships. The story begins with the invasion of Alexander, and the author considers people's secularism and disbelief in *Ahura Mazda*³, the primary cause of this bloody and devastating war; he also introduces Alexander as the symbol of the *Ahriman*⁴ (destructive spirit). Then when some people believe in God, *Anushirawan* the Just wins the throne and in order to make people believe in god, he decides to send a holy and virtuous person, who is approved by everyone, to a seven day spiritual journey to bring some news of the rewards and punishment (*padafrah*) of human deeds in this world, and their impact on the world after death. Among the several people, *ArdaViraf* is chosen and sent on this journey.

ArdaViraf, the protagonist, travels to the next world and meets many men and women who, due to some reasons, are sent to Heaven and Hell. There, he realizes that most of the women who are sent to hell, are present there because of their gender, and not because of a particular sin committed by them; that in spite of the fact that men are more prone to committing sins due to their types of professions, but women, who are con-

sidered inferior by the men of those times, are sent to heaven or hell because of their sexuality and gender identity. Some of the sins committed by women, and as mentioned in the book, are betrayal of their family lives, witchcraft, abortion, defying their husbands, marriage with the relatives (Tafazoli 2015). There, he travels to Heaven and Hell with the help of angels and *AmeshaSpenta*; after he wakes up he tells everyone all the events and scenes he has seen in his dream of the world after death.

3. Dialogue

The dialogues in this book are all uniform and consistent. In fact, most of the dialogues in the story are in the form of questions and answers, and the kind of words used in the sentences does not reveal the people's character to the reader, although, there are several exceptions. "And in that wind he saw his own religion and deeds as a profligate woman, naked, decayed, gapping, bandy-legged, lean-hipped, and unlimitedly spotted so that spot was joined to spot, like the most hideous, noxious creature (*khrafstar*), most filthy and most stinking."

"Then that wicked soul spoke thus: 'who art thou, than whom I never saw any one of the creatures of *Ohrmazd*⁵ and *Ahriman* uglier, or filthier, or more stinking?'" (Haug 1971). Some of the dialogues are more like sermons, that is, one person talks addressing several people and they respond to him. The narrator answers several people in sentences with his own words.

Then that Viraf, as he heard that decision, stood upon his feet, joined his hands on his breast, and spoke thus: 'If it please you, then give me not the undesired narcotic till you cast lots for the Mazdayasnians and me; and if the lot come to me, I shall go willingly to that place of the pious and the wicked, and carry this message correctly, and bring an answer truly. In addition, that Viraf had seven sisters, and all those seven sisters were as wives of Viraf; they had also learned the religion of heart, and recited the prayers. And when they heard those tidings, then they came upon them so very grievously, that they clamored and shrieked, and went into the presence of the assembly of the Mazdayasnians, and they stood up and bowed, and said thus: 'Do not this thing; ye Mazdayasnians; for we are seven sisters, and he is an only brother; and we are, all seven sisters, as wives of that brother' (Haug 1971).

In this example, it is seen that the narrator speaks on behalf of the seven sisters. Of course in turning this story into a play, the author's hands are not tied for making dialogues, because the author of the story have presented such comprehensive descriptions that the dialogues will form in the mind of readers as they read the story.

The story starts with a third-person point of view and most of the dialogues are in third-person. As the story evolves, the point of view changes to first-person and the scenes are described by *ArdaViraf*. The narrator speaks for the characters.

One of the best dialogues in this story is the conversation of *ArdaViraf* with a woman who is actually his own deeds. Perhaps this conversation could be considered as a monologue or soliloquy, although the characters vary. "And the soul of the pious asked that damsel thus: 'who art thou? And what person are thou?'" To him replied she who was his own religion and his own deeds, thus:

I am thy actions, O youth of good thoughts, of good words, of good deeds, of good religion. It is on account of thy will and actions that I am as great and good and sweet-scented and triumphant and undistressed as appears to thee. For in the world the Gathas were chanted by thee, and the good water was consecrated by thee, and the fire tended by thee; and the pious man who came from far, and who was from near, was honored by thee (Haug 1971).

In some dialogues, such as the example above, the audience can also become familiar with the religious customs of Zoroastrianism.

In the second chapter that *ArdaViraf* is speaking, the dialogues are only between *ArdaViraf*, Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel. "I also saw the souls of a man and a woman whose tongues were put out, and ever gnawed by the jaws of serpents. Moreover, I asked thus: 'What sin was committed by the body of these? In addition, who are those souls?' Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel, said thus: 'these are the wicked souls who, in the world, ever committed slander, and embroiled people together'" (Haug 1971).

What is important about the ancient Persian religious texts such as the Book of *ArdaViraf* is that dialogues are purely dramatic, the names of the questioner and the responder are specified, and according to dramatic terms, the relative people are identified?

4. Character

The narrator describes the characters in this work. In fact, characterization is done directly and through narrator's word. "In this method, the author himself directly reveals all mental and physical features of characters, and speaks about their mindset, behavior and other inward and outward characteristics. In this way, the author, usually through generalizations and characterizations, directly defines a character to introduce it" (Okhovat1992).

...and the hostility of the evil-destined, wicked Ashemok, the evil-doer, brought onward Alexander, the Roman, who was dwelling in Egypt, and he burned them up. In addition, he killed several Dasturs and judges and Herbads and Mobads and upholders of the religion, and the competent and wise of the country of Iran. Moreover, he cast hatred and strife, one with the other, amongst the nobles and householders of the country of Iran; and self-destroyed, he fled to hell (Haug 1971).

Using the direct method for characterization on part of the author is a very good guide for creating a dramatic atmosphere and helpful in making fantasy and imaginative situations for a playwright or screenplay writer.

I also saw the souls of warriors, whose walk was in the supreme pleasure and joyfulness, and together with that of kings; and the well-made arms and equipments of those heroes were made of gold, studded with jewels, well-ornamented and all embroidered; and they were in wonderful trousers with much pomp and power and triumph. And it seemed to me sublime. Everywhere, even the lesser noxious creatures (khrastras) are as high as mountains, and they so tear and seize and worry the souls of the wicked, as would be unworthy of a dog (Haug 1971).

He further continues: "I came to a place, and I saw the soul of a man, through the fundament of which soul, as it was a snake, like a beam, went in, and came forth out of the mouth; and many other snakes ever seized all the limbs. And I inquired of Srosh the pious, and Adar the angel, thus: 'what sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers so severe a punishment?'" (Haug 1971).

Although there are many characters in the story but most of them are without dialogue. Actually, they play a role and get out of the story. As already mentioned, in the second part of

the dialogues are only between *ArdaViraf*, *Srosh* the pious, and *Adar* the angel. However, the dialogues are about the different characters that *ArdaViraf* sees in different situations and asks *Srosh* the pious, and *Adar* the angel about them and they answer him.

One of the most remarkable points about characters of the story is character conflict, for instance, beautiful female character in the heaven versus the ugly one in the hell. We could say that by presenting good characters against evil characters, the author had planned to double the impact of his work and make his work easy to understand for everyone, not just for a particular group of people, as the author himself points out at the beginning of the story:

Until the time when the blessed and immortal Ataropad-iMarspendan was born; on whose breast, in the tale which is in the Denkard, melted brass was poured. And much law and justice were administered according to different religions and different creeds; and the people of this religion deposited in Shaspigan⁶ were in doubt. And afterward, there were other magi and Dasturs of the religion; and some of their numbers were loyal and apprehensive. And an assembly of them was summoned in the residence of the victorious Frobag fire; and there were speeches and good ideas, of many kinds, on this subject: that it is necessary for us to seek a means, so that some one of us may go, and bring intelligence from the spirits; that the people who exist in this age shall know whether these Yazishn and Dron and Afrinagan ceremonies, and Nirang prayers, and ablution and purifications which we bring into operation, attain unto God, or unto the demons. And come to the relief of our souls, or not. Afterward also, with the concurrence of the Dasturs of the religion, they called all the people to the residence of the Frobag fire. And from the whole number they set apart seven men who had not the slightest doubt of God and the religion, and whose own thoughts and words and deeds were most orderly and proper. (Haug 1971)

5. Conflict

Conflict in the Book of *ArdaViraf* can be divided into the following types:

- *Mental Conflict*: “it is when two thoughts clash together” (Mirsadeghi 1997); the conflict of man with himself can be placed in

this category. Based on this definition most conflicts in the Book of *ArdaViraf* are mental, because people, particularly in the hell, are struggling with their deeds and actions.” I also saw the soul of a man, the skin of whose head they ever widen out, and with a cruel death they ever kill him. And I asked thus: ‘what sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers such a punishment?’ *Srosh* the pious, and *Adar* the angel, said thus: ‘This is this soul of that wicked man who, in the world, slew a pious man’” (Haug 1971).

- *Emotional Conflict*: “it is when there is a rebellion and revolt that agitates the characters emotions; it is like when someone is sitting silent but is restless inside, suddenly he overflows and causes turnovers and changes; or like passion and ambition of love that creates a lot of changes in characters” (Mirsadeghi 1997). The struggle of *ArdaViraf*’s sisters not to accept the responsibility that is placed upon him, is of this kind. However, this conflict is due to the sisters’ love for *ArdaViraf*.
- *Physical Conflict*: “It is when two characters are in physical confrontations and resort to violence and physical force” (Mirsadeghi 1997). If we define the physical conflict as the effect of internal and external factors (actions, words, deeds, etc.) and their outcomes on body, physical conflicts in the Book of *ArdaViraf* are the very punishments imposed on body in the Hell.” These are the souls of those people who, in the world, have been apostates and disbelievers; and men were ever ruined by them, and led away from the laws of virtue to the law of evil; and many religions and improper creeds were made current in the world” (Haug 1971).

6. Complication and Suspense

Complication in this story is very simple, tangible, and used in many cases. It keeps the narrative interesting and makes the audience follow the story.

There is a complication when they are going to choose a man among seven, and when he is going to sleep; but the main complication of the story occurs when the *ArdaViraf* goes from heaven to hell. When his the trip to heaven is over

and gets back to the *Chinvat* Bridge, there rises the complication, the audience is impatiently looking forward to the next event, the suspense motivates the audience's curiosity make him follow the story to the end.

7. Crisis

ArdaViraf's conflict to accept this responsibility by himself, and finally accepting to do this with a religious test and examination, can be a complication and crisis that resolves when he passes the test honorably. Another crisis is when *ArdaViraf* travels from Heaven to Hell, the audience gasps and is waiting for scenes *ArdaViraf* is going to face.

8. Climax

The protagonist, *ArdaViraf*, has many ups and downs through the story, and there are several rising and falling actions, all of which are simple, tangible and easy to understand. This story doesn't have the complexity of contemporary stories. Although it is not expected from such an old work to have all characteristics of modern fiction, it should be noted that this work is unique in its kind and the story's is very like present fiction in narrative structure.

9. Setting

This story takes place in old times and it begins from Alexander's invasion of Persia. But that's only part of the time used in the story. The main time of events is an abstract time and does not happen in reality. The main story begins when *ArdaViraf* drinking wine, going to sleep and getting up again after seven days. The interesting point is that the author describes the events that happen around *ArdaViraf* while he is sleeping, for example, what his sisters are doing at this time. Then, after seven days that he wakes up, the author changes the whole story with a flash back, even the viewpoint changes from third person to omniscient.

The locations of the story, except for the beginning of it, are all abstract and fantasy. For example: "And the soul of *Viraf* went, from the body, to the *Chinwad* bridge of *Chakat-i-Daitik*⁷, and came back the seventh day, and went into the body" (Haug 1971), or again, "Afterward, the width of that *Chinwad* Bridge became

again nine javelin-lengths. With the assistance of *Srosh* the pious, and *Adar* the angel, I passed over easily, happily, courageously, and triumphantly, on the *Chinwad* Bridge ..." (Haug 1971).

The main locations of the story are Heaven and Hell. Heaven is comprised of seven positions. (1) Position of Stars, (2) Position of Moon, (3) Position of Sun, (4) Position of *Garotman* (5) Position of *AmeshaSpenta*, (6) Position of special servants (7) Position of *Ahura*.

Each of these position belongs to different and certain people. The author has ranked goodness in this way. The more humans have Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds, the better and higher their position is. Unlike Heaven, Hell is uniform and has no special divisions; only punishments, depending on wickedness of deeds, become severe or weak. Hell is a dark frightening place, perhaps, it is the *Asfal al-safel* in (the lowest of the low) where are the entire wicked are.

And when I went farther, I also saw the greedy jaws of hell, like the most frightful pit, descending in a very narrow and fearful place; in darkness so gloomy that it is necessary to hold by the hand; and in such stench that every one whose nose inhales that air will struggle and stagger and fall; on account of such close confinement no one's existence is possible; and everyone thinks thus: 'I am alone'; and when three days and nights have elapsed he says thus: 'The nine thousand years are completed, and they will not release me!' (Haug 1971).

As the text says, hell is located in the north and it is the place of demons, devil and evildoers. "Afterward, a stinking cold wind comes to meet him. So it seemed to that soul as if it came forth from the northern quarter, from the quarter of the demons, a more stinking wind than which he had not perceived in the world" (Haug 1971).

By presenting heaven and hell in contrast to each other and dividing Heaven in several parts and leaving Hell uniform, the author may have intended to show the effects of good and evil on the after death fate more tangible for the audience and tried to make him think more deeply.

Providing such fictitious and fantasy places and things in an ancient work is wonderful, and it suggests the strong imagination of the author, which is a surprise. It is not far from reality if we say this work could be a good example for creating fantasy stories, animations, movies, and plays.

CONCLUSION

Ancient Persian literary works support the Iranian rich culture, paying attention to which can affect the growth and promotion of present Persian literary level.

The researches and their results indicate that the Book of *ArdaViraf* can provide great content for plays. This book is very significant in terms of dramatic features and elements.

Although the author describes the characters in this book directly and by narrator, but the descriptions are so clear and complete that the reader can read and imagine all the scenes and characters. Even though the dialogues are simple and bookish in tone, by reading the story, the reader can easily connect with the characters and even guess their position.

Complications and suspense are all simple and tangible. Time and place in this book are absolutely fantastic and abstract. This is one of the most beautiful and attractive aspects of the Book of *ArdaViraf* because it is directly related to the reader's imagination. This quality of the book engages the reader's imagination and makes him follow the story. The book is a good model for fiction writers and playwrights in fantasy genre. The Book of *ArdaViraf* is one of the strongest and most beautiful works remained from ancient Persia, so that the scholars believe Dante have benefited from the book in creation of *Divine Comedy*.

This book, along with its coherent narrative and dramatic structure, is rich in information about Zoroastrian religious customs and beliefs regarding the afterlife, and is full of religious symbols and ideals of that time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the ancient texts of each country by historical background represent the thoughts and opinions of their people, and since the social and cultural life of those people has been featured in these classic works, a better understanding and introducing them, along with a behavioral acknowledgment, can serve as a good source for an anthropologic drama. Therefore, the book of *ArdaViraf*, by its semantic enrichment should be a source for researchers and scholars of anthropology, art and literature in order to reach a better understanding of the people's conditions and behaviors through its cre-

ation time that can help to achieve better relationship between the elements of literature, art and anthropology.

NOTES

- 1 *Gathas of Zarathustra*: The oldest part of the *Avesta*.
- 2 *A mobed* or *mobad* is a Zoroastrian cleric of a particular rank. *Mobed-e Mobedan* or *Mobedan-Mobed* is a Zoroastrian cleric of highest rank in Sassanid era.
- 3 *Ahura Mazda* (also known as *Ohrmazd*, *Ahuramazda*, *Hourmazd*, *Hormazd*, and *Hurmuz*, Lord or simply as spirit) is the name of God in Zoroastrianism.
- 4 *Ahriman* or *AngraMainyu* is the *Avestan*-language name of Zoroastrianism's hypostasis of the "destructive spirit." The Middle Persian equivalent is *Ahriman*. *Ahriman* is evil and tries to destroy the good but as it is vile and vulgar and Mazda is aware of all things, so finally in the end, *Ahriman* will be destroyed and *Hourmazd* will defeat him and the world will be all in good.
- 5 *Ahura Mazda*
- 6 Shaspigan, was a treasure. It is said that the words *Shayegan* and *Shahjan* are derived from it.
- 7 *Chakat-i-Daitik*, is the name of a mountain that the *Chinwadbridge* starts from there.

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