Traveling in Shahnameh

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ABSTRACT: Journey always takes place in human life for fleeing or escaping. Journey is of many types: land, underground, sea and air each requiring special equipments and facing some obstacles. However, its customs and rituals should not be ignored. Moreover, there is one theme for each journey according to its time and state. This paper attempts to analyze the journey in Shahnameh - with an emphasis on the mythic and epic parts, so that the readers observe the journey through a new and beautiful window.

Keywords: Journey, traveler, Shahnameh, Ferdowsi

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on a criticism and analysis of journey in Shahnameh and attempts to find clear and straightforward answers for questions such as these: Does the old human dream of achieving and travelling in the sky have any reflection in this precious work? What are the rituals and customs and incentive for travels in Shahnameh?

In Shahnameh, journey has been done in different ways. Since most travels have been displacement by land, and land travel tools have been more accessible, most trips have been taken by land. Marine vehicles including ships, carina and the like have also caused cruises to be significantly present in the Shahnameh, while some underground travels have occurred in Shahnameh. The air travels which have rarely done are also considerable.

Air travel

Air travel in Shahnameh, is carried out through birds such as the Phoenix and eagle; the first air travel in Shahnameh which we encounter is travel of Zaal by the Phoenix. When Sam, leaves Zaal in the mountain after birth, Phoenix, attempting to find food for their children, finds Zaaland brings him to its nest. It was a compulsory trip for Zaal, because he was a rejected and powerless child according to Ferdowsi:

When the Phoenix’s children got hungry, she hastily flew from her nest
She saw a crying sucking baby and found the earth like a raging sea
She hastily brought him to the Alborz mountain, where there was her nest(Kazzazi, vol a, 2007:101)

Zaal had grown for years beside Phoenix and had flown in the sky by the Phoenix for the second time, and went back to his father, Sam. (Ibid. 103)

King Keykavoos, is another character of Shahnameh who experiences air travel. Having listened to speeches of the devil, he tried to breed some eagles in order to fly with their help. However, he faced problem and fell due to unfamiliarity with the hazards of the way and not considering all aspects of air travel:

Then, he brought four brave eagles and fastened them to a bed tightly
But when the fast-flying eagles got hungry, they rushed to find some meat to eat
They carried the bed on the ground and took it with them from savanna to the cloud (Kazzazi, vol. 2, 2010: 104)

Cruise

In Shahnameh, vehicles such as ships and boat are used for cruises. The Fereydoon’s trip to overthrow Zahhâk and to avenge his father and other oppressed people’s death on him was a cruise. However, due to the refusal of river guard to permit the passage of water, Fereydoon and his associates travelled by horse:

When he came near the Arvand River, he greeted guards of the river that “let us pass the water by your ships and boat"
But the guard did not accept Fereydoon’s demand to bring their ships. When Fereydoon heard their refusal, he got angry. But he was not afraid of the sea. He was stirred to war and threw Golrang in water. Another case is King Kavouss who went to sea with his troops and numerous ships and vessels to war with King of Hamavran. (Ibid. 90).

**Underground travel**

One of the most striking points in the Shahnameh is underground travels, which are often done to save life secretly. After the Battle between Sohrab and Gordafarid, Sohrab had the idea to attack the castle, but Kajdeham with all the inhabitants of the castle went to journey at night in a secret underground way:

*there was one way below the castle of which the enemy was not aware.*

*at that night, Kajdeham went out of the castle with his family.*

In another part of the Shahnameh, we read that Afrasiab went to travel to save his life in an underground clandestine way:

*when Afrasiab saw what happened, he was hastily retreating from battle*

*he was dazzled from that position and lost his consciousness like birds.*

*In veranda which was built in the castle, there was an underground way.*

*nobody among his troop was aware that there was a way under the castle.*

*he selected two hundred people who disappeared in the byway.*

**Incentives for Travel**

Journey and travel requires several purposes and incentives. These motives are numerous at Shahnameh:

**Meeting**

Missing and being away from the beloved ones leads the man to take the journey example of which can be seen in the story of the marriage of Zaal and Roodabeh. Mehrab and Syndokht – Roodabeh’s parents - decided to travel to Zabol to see their daughter and son-in-law. At the end, the concerned mother stayed near her daughter and father came back to homeland:

*when Sindokht and Meherab got married, they went to Sistan.*

*they propitiiously arrived at noon, they were so glad laughing as illuminator of the world*

*Sam organized a banquet at that time and continued the banquet for three days.*

*then, Sindokht stayed there, he and his troop went to kabol.*

Zaal and Roodabeh had a baby after a while and Sam who had heard about his grandson here and there traveled to Zabol to visit Rostam, his dear grandson:

*His heart was beating hard to see that child.*

*he entrusted the troop to the commander of troop he went with his experienced associates.*

*when visited his son, he brought the troop to Zabolistan.*

**Marriage Proposal and Marriage**

Fereydoon who is seeking for worthy and deserved girls to marry his sons, chooses three daughters of Jandal - King of Yemen. However, Jandal invites Fereydoon’s sons to test their qualifications.

*King of the world called three sons to make the hidden fact clear.*

*he made speeches clearly after investigating Jandal and his view.*

*they went and made up and asked the*

Another story is related to Keykavoos’s suit of King of Hamavran’s daughter. To do so, Keykavoos chooses an eloquent and wise man and sends him to the king for suiting his daughter:

*the king selected a knowledge man among the group.*

*he went to Hamavaran as precious, courageous and famous man*

*The conscious man went to commander of Hamavaran*

**Searching for a King**

Another incentive for travel in Shahnameh is searching for a king. The first travel is seen in the story of Zahhak. When people of Iran are plagued of the tyranny of Jamshid, they hear about Zahhak. Then a few men go to the plain of riders with lance and find him and sit him as the King of Iran:

*the equestrians of Iran all supported the king and fought against Zahhak*

*he was admired as a king and was called king of Iran.*
* When the dragon slayer came to Iran like a wind, he crowned.
  Shortly after Zahhak’s oppression, people accompanying Kaveh the forger went to Feredyoon to plead for justice and to overthrow the brutal Zahhak.
* When the courageous man went to inside, an army accompanied him which was not small.
* He knew where Feredyoon was, he went inside and went straightly.

**Serve and save others**
Keykavoos who desired to travel to Mazandaran by devil temptation went to Mazandaran but he and his troop were trapped by demons. In the meantime, Rostam was trying to save them and inevitably pass Seven Stages.

After passing every Stage, Rostam went to his goal immediately. As we can see in the Fifth Stage: He didn’t sleep at the dark night and clear day, he rode to Esperooz Mountain. There, Kavoos launched a military campaign; he was involved in the demon and magic.

**Seeking assistance**
After the death of Zu, son of Tahmasp, Afrasiab misused the vacancy of King and invaded Iran. People went to Zabul to ask for help:
*they went to Zavolestan; the world was filled with the news.
*they said to Zal critically: you caught the world with fist.
*ifyouknowaway, makethis
In another part of Shahnameh, it is stated that Keykavoos king was imprisoned by King of Hamavran. Since foreign invasion was possible at any time, some heroes went to Zall and Rostam to save Keykavoos again and seat him on the throne.
*all pilgrims sought refuge and the world became dark for Iranians.
* They went to Zavolestan from two sides, they went to Pooredastan.

**Recreation and tourism**
Zaal having acquired life skills decides to go on an outing in the country, and goes to Kabul; ironically, his future was determined in this trip and he chooses a wife from that country:
*he came out with his special guards and one of them had different religion.
In another part of Shahnameh we read that after drinking, seven heroes including Goudarz, Toos, Rostam and others decide to go to Afrasiab’s hunting ground, hunt and enjoy themselves.
*all ambitious people went to desirable way with panther, hawk and cradle
*at time of hunting, Afrasiab hit mountain with one hand and river with another hand
* He sometimes galloped and sometimes took rest for one week with wine at his hands.

**Seeking for the Missing**
Goals and motivations of humans with help of their different approaches to the life are numerous. One of them is travel with hope of finding the missing things. The missing things however are different for each person. In Shahnameh, searches include finding child, discovering truth, horse and.....

When Zaal is left in the mountains for being grey-headed, Sam dreams of him, and goes to mountains to search for his son several years later:
*he ran into the highland, then, he came down.
* The phoenix looked on top of mountain; it noticed Sam and his group.
*his coming was due to seeing the baby, not phoenix.
Rostam who has gone to a trip to change his mood, goes to sleep in a plain land near the Turks; Turk riders see Rakhsh alone and take it with themselves. When Rostam wakes up and see no effect of Rakhsh, reaches the land Samangan in search for it:
*when Rostan woke up, he searched for a horse.
*when he didn’t find horse, he hastened to Semangan.

**Security and prosperity**
After sitting on the royal throne of his kingdom, Freidoon went to travel in search for security and prosperity. He brings security and justice by eliminating rebellion and brings prosperity through construction and forgiveness:
*after that, Freidoon travelled around the world and saw the unhidden and hidden facts.
*what was the injustice way and all the inhabitable places
he kindly removed the badness as the kings deserved to do.

Sam having delegated the rule of Sistan to Zaal, goes to Gorgsaran and north of Iran to kill the fighters. (Kazzazi, vol. 1, 2007: 151)

Kaykavousi having being released from prison of King of Hamavran and the victory over Afrasiab sent athletes to different parts of the country to kill the rebels and returned peace to the country again. (Kazzazi, Vol. 2, 2010: 102)

Escape and rescuing oneself

In most battles of Shahnameh, peace and reconciliation are seldom found. In some cases, the losing side prefers to escape and doesn't accept captivity humiliation. For example, when the splendor of his divine left Jamshid, and he missed the throne, Ferdowsi narrates that he was escaping and hiding for saving his life for hundred years, until he was finally captured and killed by Zahhak:

* when Jamshid had chance of being slow moving, he was captured by the new general.
* when he didn't see anyone for hundred years, he was named a king and he disappeared.

In sacrificing of young people and cooking stew from their head brain for snakes on the shoulders of Zahhak, cooks who sought to find a way to save them decided to use only brain of one person every day and freed another person to leave his homeland and to save his life.

Afrasiab repeatedly was defeated by Persians and fled to rescue his life. (Kazzazi, Vol 2, 2010: 47)

Conspiracy

Once Fereydoon divided the scope of his empire among his three sons Selm, Toor and Iraj, the two older sons were jealous of Iraj and were unhappy with their share and decided to conspire against Iraj:

When this brother went from Rome to China, they mixed honey with poison.

They arrived one by one, they spoke expressly and secretly.

Defending the family honor

In many battles of Shahnameh, imprisonment of losing group is natural and evident. However, this is of crucial importance for women. For example, when Nozar has to fight against the army of Afrasiab, and sees failure of the troop close, he commands Toos and Gostaham to transmit the women to a safe place to protect them against enemy.

You should take women to Pars
And you should take them from there to AlborzMount and
Go to way of troops from there and hide yourselves against these troops.

Barriers to Travel

Any journey has obstacles and difficulties and Shahnameh journeys are not exceptional. For example, many obstacles are natural such as mountain, sea, extreme heat ... Some barriers are supernatural forces of evil forces such as the giant creatures, spells and magic which made it difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve goal.

In the journey of Kaykavous to Mazandaran, despite all the warnings of Zaal about the obstacles to way of Mazandaran, Kaykavous attempts to do so resulting in his captivity by demons:

ZalZar said to king: live joyfully and drink and be merry.

After that, one told the story and made proper speeches.

How precious great men we have such as Zu, Àba Nozar and Keighobad

The invaders and the corruos didn't come to Mazandaran

That house belongs to magician demon, it has become spellbound

In the same story, Rostam who intends to go to Mazandaran to save Keykavoos and his companions is informed by Zal about its dangers and obstacles and this causes his success in passing all Seven Stages.

You will face lion and demon and darkness, you will stare at it with two eyes.

You see wonder and your companion will be the Creator

As mentioned, natural barriers were regarded as one of the travel problems, for example, Rostam and Rakhsh in the second adventure experience intense heat and thirst. (Kazzazi, Vol. 2, 2010: 65)

Travel Customs

Rites and rituals of travel are different based on culture of each society. Of the travel customs which we find throughout Shahnameh are praying for passenger, escort, welcoming, gifts, and souvenirs;
Praying for passengers

Praying for the person who wants to travel causes the person to move toward his goal with confidence. In the story of the Battle of Fereydoon with Zahhak, we see mother of Fereydoon praying for her son before departure, and wants God to help her child in this way:

* he went to his mother and he wore hat of Kian
* His mother shed tears and called his son with great sorrow.
* She said to God: my God, protect my ruler.
Protect his body and clean the world of the unwise.

Escort

Sometimes people accompany passenger to console and calm him in a distance, which is called escort. For instance, King of Yemen who lets their daughters marry sons of Fereydoon, prepares the trip equipments for them and escorts them:

He packed his load on the restive savage horse

The insightful young people went toward Freidoon.

When Sam returned after visiting her dear grandson - Rostam - Zaal and Rostam escorted Sam up to three houses as a sign of respect and honor:

* Sepahbod turned to the west and told: don't talk rudely and offensively
* his two children accompanied him while he advised them.
* They went up to three houses and retuned, that general went on a long way.

Also, when Rostam prepared him for traveling to Mazandaran to save Keykavous, Zaal and Roodabeh who were concerned about their children escorted Rostam with tearful eyes. (Kazzazi, Vol. 2, 2010: 64

Souvenir

A sweet result of trip is souvenirs. Of course, sometimes the gift is presented by the host to guest and passenger. In Shahnameh stories, we see diversity of gifts and souvenirs. Due to the presence of kings, these gifts have concepts such as requests, announcement of commandership and the like while being noble and wise. When Fereydoon sit on the throne, many individuals presented diverse offerings to thank and show their obedience:

* after that, the experienced people started moving toward the king from different corners
* they took pearls and gems and poured them on throne of the general.

Sindokht, wife of Mehrab - King of Kabul - was a politician and tactful woman; after understanding the story of her daughter's love for Zaal, she gave noble gifts as a souvenir to Sam with the hope that Sam will give up the attack in Kabul. (Kazzazi, vol 1, 2007: 138)

greeting and welcome

In Shahnameh, greeting has a glorious form, especially of the kings and elders. In some of the stories, we see that the host King splashes saffron and jewels over the passengers and pour gold and jewel and decorate the city with Diba and silk to welcome them. Of course, all greetings have not been joyful and sometimes have been sad and mournful.

Welcoming the King of Yemen by Fereydoon's sons was very majestic and beautiful:

When the king was aware of their arrival, he decorated the troops like feather of pheasant

The three rich persons went to Yemen, all men and women came out of their house in Yemen

They all poured gem and saffron, they poured mush with wine.

Mane of horses was full of musk and wine, dinar was dispersed over the ground

In another part of the story we read that Fereydoon who intended to make arrangement for welcoming Iraj is suddenly faced horrible and shocking and this welcoming is mournful and saddening:

* they decorated all things at time of welcoming, they asked wine, river and dancers.
* he came like Khosro and returned from welcoming of the troop:

The torn banner and overthrown drum, face of the famous people had color of ebony

Sam went to the royal palace of Manoochehr Shah and was warmly welcomed by the king and the nobles. (Ibid. vol 1, 130)

When Keykavoos and his army were saved from the demons and returned to homeland, they are welcomed by people. (Kazzazi, Vol 2, 2010: 87)
RESULTS

The interesting point about the types of travel in Shahnameh is that there are two cases of air travel, which indicates the long dream of human to reach the sky and travel in it. Furthermore, in any journey, there is a goal. In Shahnameh, these goals include meeting, marriage proposal and marriage, serving and saving others, help-seeking, entertainment and recreation, search for security and prosperity and so on. Since long ago, journey in Iranian culture has customs and rituals such as: escorting and welcoming, praying for the travelers and souvenirs which are seen in stories of Shahnameh.

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