The Role of Communicative Concepts in Shaping Communication Messages in Firdausi's *Shahnama*

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Abstract

Shahnama is a symbol and a complete pattern of human communication. By creation of this great work of history, Firdausi has always kept alive the identity of Iran and has demonstrated all humanity and spirit of heroic epic of Iran. Thus, the existence of this glorious history is sufficient for each Iranian. Shahnama is a communication message in the form of a book and media for cultural development in Iran. This research is interdisciplinary, drawing connections between Persian literature and communication sciences as a new field of studies in communications, which has studied communicative concepts and theories in Shahnama. The study analyzes the role of concepts in the formation of communication messages in Firdausi's Shahnama. The research method is qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis as well as study of documents. The study sample included 11 main stories of Shahnama which were 14,787 verses and were analyzed on both levels of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The concepts in Shahnama are categorized in four general categories of human concepts, spatial concepts, animal concepts and symbolic concepts which are studied and analyzed through qualitative and quantitative analysis using SPSS software.

Key Words: communication, communicative concepts, communication messages, Shahnama, Firdausi

1. Introduction

Communication is sharing our feelings, ideas and opinions with others. This can be intellectual, personal, spoken or written in nature. We live in groups and man is invariably a social animal. As the social needs insist that we share our thoughts with others. This can be called communication.[1]Ever since ancient times, people continuously have devised new techniques and technologies for communicating their ideas, needs, and desires to others. Thus, many forms of increasingly complex communication systems have appeared over the years (Basic Concepts of Communication Systems, 2004).

The purpose of art (poetry, drama, sculpture, etc.) is to 'communicate' and not 'exhibit 'The work of art should rather communicate, and communicate effectively, with accuracy and perfection of the 'imitations', the divine truth. It does so by using forms with right analogies and balanced ornamentation (*alaṅkāra*), eventually to establish a harmony between the 'spiritual' and the 'intellectual' self and the universal truth. The later, in poetry, is savored through the generated 'flavor' (*rasa*), which is known only through 'tasting' it.

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[1]http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=concept%20of%20communication&source=web&cd=3&sqi=2&ved=0CDkQFj
AC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.svcetedu.org%2FOLD%2Fhasdownloads%2Fmba%2FCONCEPT%2520OF%2520COMM
UNICATION.pdf&ei=D9eMUufyD9D5kQe1kIC4Bg&usg=AFQjCNFE84p6b1bnc7lzN7ZITEgeKfkWJg&sig2=6nInfQcLM
ctChIfA99RVhw&bvm=bv.56643336,d.eW0

The poetic experience is a state of contemplative-beatitude (*cinmaya-ānanda*). It is not for poetry to educate morals and facts, at least not as an end. The ultimate aim of poetry is to provide 'aesthetic rupture'; an experience above all physical things; an ecstasy of 'tasting' the 'God'. Such an experience is a harmonious combination of emotional and intellectual elements, but more profound than the emotional and more colorful than the intellectual experience[2].

The poem communicates so much and communicates it so richly and with such delicate qualifications that the thing communicated is mauled and distorted if we attempt to convey it by any vehicle less subtle than that of the poem itself.'(pp. 72-73).Poetry communicates substance through form via rhythm, sound, words and meaning. Communication is multi-axis in Shahnama (the relationship between man and man, man's relationship with God, man's relationship with Tiki and supernatural beings.) Characters in Shahnama themselves cannot make interactive or contrastive communications; their connections are formed to establish and ensure Iranshahr patterns. The content of the communication pattern is formed in line with certain units.

In this study three types of communication including concepts, themes of communication and their formation type are studied in four dimensions (human, animal, place, and symbolic) as well as the role of concepts and connotations of communication in the creation and consolidation of Iranshahr. Also, how to shape their message is reviewed.

2. *About Shahnama and Firdausi*

The Shahnama or "Book of Kings" is the longest poem ever written by a single author: Abu'l-Qasim Hasan Firdausi, from Tus in northeastern Iran. His epic work narrates the history of Iran (Persia) since the first king, Kayumars, who established his rule at the dawn of time, down to the conquest of Persia by the Muslim Arab invasions of the early 7th century A.D.

The Shahnama contains approximately 50,000 verses (*bayts*, each consisting of two hemistiches, misra'), and is generally divided into mythical, legendary and historical sections. The first includes the formation of human society, the domestication of animals, the struggle with the forces of evil and the definition of Iranian territory vis-a- vis her neighbours. The long central section incorporates the 'Sistan cycle' of legends about the hero Rustam and his family, and the endless cycles of wars with the lands of Turan (approximately Turkestan or modern Central Asia), Iran's traditional foe. These 'legendary' sections in fact contain many mythical features and more or less form a continuum with the first.

The historical section, that is, in which some reference to known historical events can be identified, starts only with the appearance of Alexander, also treated as legend. It is remarkable, for example, that there appears to be no reference to the reigns of Cyrus the Great, Darius, or the Achaemenid dynasty that preceded the arrival of Philip of Macedon and Alexander on the scene. Alexander (Iskandar) is followed by a very brief treatment of the Ashkanians (Arsacids, Parthians), and then the Sasanian dynasty (from A.D. 226). The last episode is the murder of the Sasanian ruler Yazdagird III (632 - 52), and the punishment of his killer, MahuySuri. Its last pages echo with the gloomy predictions of the Persian general Rustam, killed at the battle of Qadisiyya by the Arab commander Sa'd b. Waqqas.

Firdausi was born c. A.D. 935 and died in around 1020. He was thus writing his life's work approximately four centuries after the fall of the ancient Persian Empire and the coming of Islam. The first draft was completed in 999 and the final version in 1010, dedicated to the most powerful ruler of the time, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (modern Afghanistan, ruled 999-1020).

His work was conceived as a memorial to Iran's glorious past at a time when its memory was in danger of disappearing for good under the twin assaults of Arabic and Islamic culture and the political dominion of the Turks. It has since been used by many subsequent regimes, both imperial and provincial, to assert their proper place in the political traditions of the country, and for dynastic legitimization.

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[2]http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=poetic%20communication%3A%20the%20art%20of%20saying%20the%20unsa id&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCgQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fhome.iitk.ac.in%2F~ag%2Fpapers%2FAnuragDirections. pdf&ei=uNKMUq3ZEdPQkQeWmYGgAw&usg=AFQjCNH5Q-GizauILJIEO4mwjlb5W0hwGg&sig2=-NVMK1UuPfDHJCVxhUYkLw&bvm=bv.56643336,d.eW0

One of the chief ways in which the text could be appropriated, along with the ethical messages it conveys, especially concerning just kingship and the ordering of society, was by commissioning illustrated manuscript copies of the poem. This started at least in the middle of the Mongol period, with the earliest known illustrated texts dating from c. 1300. The production of illustrated copies continued into the late 19th century, when lithographic printing slowly replaced the creation of manuscripts.

The Shahnama Project is devoted to the study of Firdausi's Shahnama in all these interlocking aspects: as epic poetry, as the core text in the history of Persian book production, as an important element in court patronage and the vehicle for the development of Persian miniature painting. Above all, it encapsulates and expresses, as no other work of Persian literature is able to, the Iranians' view of themselves and their traditional cultural and political values[3].

A consequence of the Shahnama's preoccupation with kingship and legitimacy is a perception of the political relevance of the work to later rulers, who in turn sought to exploit it as propaganda for their own dynastic aspirations. It is in this context – that is, the patronage of Shahnama production in a specific political context – that we should situate Bernard O'Kane's analysis of the 'Muzaffarid' Shahnama of 1393, shortly after the extirpation of the dynasty by Timur, and Ulrich Marzolph's study of the lithographed 'Bahaduri' Shahnama, produced during the crisis of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran[4].

The world's great epics from the most ancient empires have always played a major role in giving the peoples a sense of identity, language, religion and more important a sense of historical continuity that all together create a form of early nationalism. Epics truly help generate a sense of nationhood.
From the morphological point of view, epic is a literary form that embodies other kinds within its domain (Sarrami 1999: 41). Epic, compared with other literary genres, has a sort of totality in itself that enables holistic reflection of the soul and fate of a people, the essence and nature of a nation. In other words, the national traits and attributes of a land are exemplified in their great epics.

Firdausi's epic, Shahnama, is little known to world literature. It is my contention here however Shahnama is arguably one of literature's most precious classics. It tells hero tales of ancient Iran. Firdausi's epic genre allowed him to unite the mythological, cosmological and historical times so that facts and fables of the ancient Persian empires, to a great extent, create an empirical, logical, and real sense of the past. In Shahnamafor instance, we can find narrative, mystical, lyrical, and folkloric modes artistically intertwined.

Shahnama, the national epic of Iran, is the reminder of all the remnants of Iran's past honors. The stories and the poet's style in versifying the narratives takes the readers back to the events in the ancient times, to those who populated the land when the events took place, and help them discover through the magical realm their lost national identity whilst situated in the present time (Zalipour, 2005).

3. Research Population

The population of this research includes eleven stories in Shahnama namely: the story ofZahhāk, the story of Fereydūn, the story Kay Kāvusand going to Mazandaran, Kay Kāvus and fighting with King Hamavaran, the story of Sohrab, the story of Sīyāvash, the story of Kai Khosrow, the story of great war of Kai Khosrow and Afrasiab, the story of Gashtasb, the story of Rostam and Esfandyar and Rostam and Shoghad. About all 14787 verses of all above-mentioned stories were counted and analyzed. Hence, no sample was chosen.

4. Research method

To obtain more useful information, it has been tried to apply three approaches of documents and the combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis for data collection in this research.

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[3]http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/page/about-shahnama.html
　　　　[4]http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=hile%20firdausi%E2%80%99s%20epic%20poem%20itself%20needs%20no%20introduction%2C%20it%20may%20be%20appropriate&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ames.cam.ac.uk%2Fgeneral_info%2Fss1_introduction.pdf&ei=TuGMUqmxNtL6kQeyyoDYBQ&usg=AFQjCNFTmJvtjY0nHHgRsvH8pRzuBcvWyw&sig2=nmCV4sdJN6g14eMHqZDpWA&bvm=bv.56643336,d.eW0

5. Research objectives

4.1. Main objective:

Finding similarities and what differences are in communication in Shahnama with today's common communication patterns. This form of human communication is not necessarily based on the demands and desires of individual, because there is no individual action. Thus, the connections are formed on other Axes and issues.

5.2. Secondary objectives:

5.2.1. Studying the communication basics in Shahnama
5.2.1.   Studying the communications in Shahnama based onthe communication basics

5. Research questions:

6.1. Main question:

What role do the concepts in Shahnama play in creating the types of communication?

5.2.   Sub-questions:

6.2.1. Which concepts in Shahnamaare more abundant in communications?
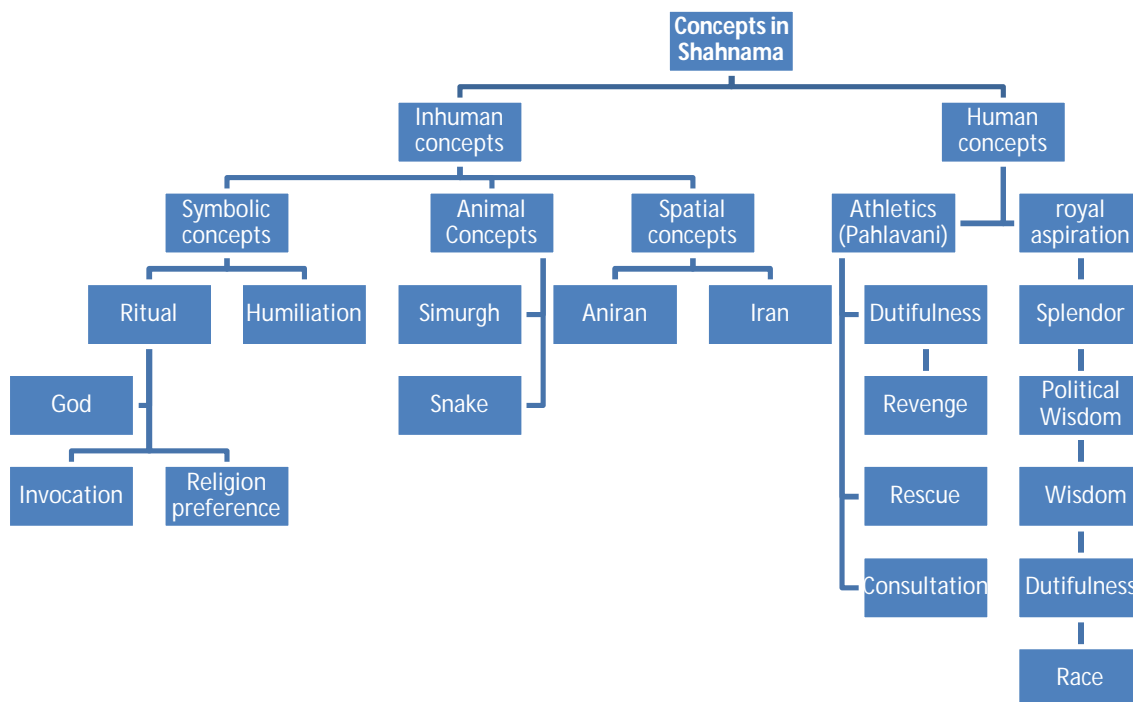6.2.2. What are the communication patterns in Shahnama and what are their characteristics?

6. Research hypotheses:

7.1. Communication messages in Shahnama are sometimes interactional and sometimes in opposition.
7.2. The more the key role of personality is, the greater and more affective are the communication dimensions.
7.3. Individual communications in Shahnamahas no place in all its aspects and everything is related to the Iranshahr basis.

6.   Research conceptual model

Figure 1: Communicative concepts in Shahnama

7. Research findings

The stories were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The epic stories which made great developments in Shahnama
2. The stories which make main concepts in Iranshahr
3. Shahnama heroes in the original stories dealing with original concepts

The results from qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data indicated that:

1. Communication messages in Shahnama are sometimes interactional and sometimes in opposition.
2. The more the key role of personality is, the greater and more affective are the communication dimensions.

7.3. Individual communications in Shahnama form through keeping the principles of Iranshahr basis.

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