

The Life and Death of Feridun in Shah-name

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ABSTRACT

In this essay “Feridun” as one of the ancient Pishdadian kings whose life and fate has been mentioned in Pahlavi and Zarathustra-language books is comprehensively analyzed based on different aspects like his children, ethics, personality traits, fame summarizing dominant conceptions of Shah-name and his activities within it.

Keywords: Shah-name, Pishdadian Dynasty, Feridun.

Introduction

“Feridun” is called “Fartan” is Pahlavi books and introduced as one of Pishdadian¹kings in Shah-name. In national stories, his father’s name is Atbin. Abtin is made of writers’ inflection error¹and semantically false. He was murdered by Zohak. Feridun’s mother was called Faranak leaving him in a plain to a guard possessing a milch cow. Faranak asks him to nurture her infant with that cow’s milk. The guard gave this infant to a religious man living in mountains after he becomes 3 years old.² Feridun had two younger brothers called Kianush and Purmaye helping him at the initiation of revolt and by his order offer making a cow-head cudgel by experienced iron smiths.³ Feridun’s brothers, when seeing his affluence and happiness, draw a plan to murder him so that when Feridun is sleeping on mountain side, they both go on mountain top and pull up a big piece of

rock so as to hit it on his head. They roll it down and due to God’s order, the roaring sound of rolling rock made him wake up and he stops the stone by using magic. His brothers come to know that is God’s will and Feridun forgives them and doesn’t mention their faulty action.⁴

In this essay, Feridun’ ethics, children, spiritual status and fame in Shah-name, his role in creating goodness and badness in world and raising long disputes between Iran and Turan will be explored by paying attention to this fact that Iraj’s family (Iranian) and Tor’s family (Turanian) both were descendants of Feridun.

Feridun in Zarathustra

Feridun in Zarathustra is called “Thraetaona” constituted of two parts. The first part is “Thrita” which means “three” and second section is “Vetavanat” that signifies “Such” the equivalent of which is “Aton” in Pahlavi language and “Adon” in Persian language. So the meaning of

¹ Comprehensive Dictionary of Shah-name, p. 152

² Masaheb Dictionary, First Volume, p.43

³ Shah-name, Joll Moll, First Volume, p. 40-41

⁴ Above, p.46-47

Feridun in “Three Adons” or “Three Such”
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His father’s name was Atoie which is equivalent of Sanskrit word “Aptya”. In Zarathustra he is usually called “Atoyane”. This is an adjective meaning “Of Atoya dynasty” which originates from Pahlavi language. 6

Feridun’s Dynasty in Zarathustra

Feridun’s dynasty and Family line is mentioned in “Bandeeshn” book, chapter 31 article 7 which says: “Feritun Aspian is son of Portora Aspian, son of Sok Tura Aspian, Son of Portura Aspian, Son of Tura Aspian, Son of Spidtura Aspian, Son of Kafirtura Aspian, Son of Ramktura Aspian, Son of Vanfar Ghashn Aspian, Son of Jam, Son of Vaive Naghan, Son of Aspian Portu Dainat”. 7

Reigning Regions of Feridun’s Sons in Zarathustra

In Zarathustra, the regions reigned by this 3 sons have been named too. In “Farvardin Yasht”, article 143 the following sentences have been written: “Peace and Blessing be upon the good men and chaste women of Turan. Peace and Blessing be upon good men and chaste women of Sairime Lands. Based on written materials in books, Salm, Tur and Iraj each have ascribed their names to their ruling lands.” 8

The Fame of Feridun in Shah-name

1-In terms of familial nobility, it was an honor for one to be considered as his descendant:

5 Above, p.48

6 Turanian in Historical Perspective till Conversion to Islam, p.19-20

7 Poshtha, First Volume, p. 193

8 Above, P.194

Trans: He is bred from lion’s den/you should know that you can’t fight him

You can’t fight side by side with him/nobody can organize arms like him among the Turks

A fighter that is descendant of Feridun/ is a brave man never given birth to before

2-On the subject of majesty:

Trans: May the creator stay permanent in poise/ which offered him every talent

May his head remain proud and his body sturdy/ His personality higher than that of cosmos

3-On the subject of Domination over Zahak:

Trans: A common man was asked on his family/that who you are descended from.

He said: I am from God/ that rubbed Zahak’s descendants from ruling power

4- On passing Arvand river to dominate Zahak’s capital city:

Trans: Feridun, on hearing that, got angry/and wasn’t scared of sea depth

He got resolute right on that spot/and got on that speedy ship

His mind got kin on fighting/ and slid the ship into the water

His fellowmen got resolute/ and headed towards the sea

They got to the beach with firm minds/from which they headed towards city

On his fighting ability

Trans: The brave men all acted like sturdy lions/all determined on revenge on Iraj

In the interior red swords showed up/all showing wars within with swollen swords

On division of world among his sons:

Trans: the wound of sword and god’s wrath/ will result in one individual coming out

And like wise Feridun which did offer/ lands to Tur, Iraj and Salm

Condolence of son's death (Iraj)

Trans: Feridun which shed tears with pain and sorrow/ his eyes got full of water drops like a sea.

Saturated with Iran's sorrow, full of kingly sorrow/ so poignant that moon didn't rise up due to that.

On making of Cow-head club that is his special weapon

Trans: Draw on that club the face of Jamshid/worshipper of moon and sun. The cow head/was ordered to be cut on it too

On wisdom

Trans: I saw him riding with high majesty/ wise and of grandeur
It was as if the Creator/ had bestowed him

On worshipping God

Trans: God! You created a good universe/ the end of which can't be seen from sky. Who can worship something other than you/sending his soul to hell?
Due to this, the God-worshipping Feridun/ got to such a position in life.

On sportsmanship

Trans: No strongman like you have been born on the Earth so high in levels

Feridun' Racial Origins

When Feridun was 16 years old, he visited his mother to ask of his racial origins. Faranak replied him by saying that he is a descendant of Tahmors.

Feridun's Children

Feridun had three sons two of which-Salm and Tur-were given birth by Shahr-Naz and Iraj born by Arnavaz which later chose

daughters of Yamin king for the three of them.

Feridun tests them in order to get aware of their intentions and forget the nasty fantasies murmured on their intentions to murder one another. Feridun names them based on their reactions and then divided the known world among them. He called the older son which ran to stay away from Dragon "Salm", the younger son which goes straight on to fight the Dragon "Tur" and the youngest son that has both features and fights without hurry "Iraj". He also called Salm's wife as "Arezo", Tur's wife as "Mah Azade Khoi" and Iraj's wife as "Sahi".⁹

Feridun and His Children

The events happening with Feridun's family is like opposition of goodness and evil surfacing as the murder of the innocent and retribution of the sinful people. This opposition is particularly shown within the whole period of sportsmanship the two stages of which begin with Iraj's death and decease of Siavash.¹⁰

In fact the seed of enmity between Iran and Turan initiated with division of Feridun's territory among his sons. He gave the East and Rome to Salm, Turan and China to Tur and Iran Cities and Naizevaran plain to Iraj. Firdausi says that he chose Iraj for reigning over Iran because of conceiving him a finer ruler.¹¹

Before dividing his throne among his sons, Feridun ordered astrologists to look for fortune of his sons. It was defined that fortune of Salm and Tur was inundated with peace and happiness while that of Iraj manifested nothing but revolt and war.²⁴It

⁹ Shah-name, Hamidian, 8th Volume, p. 370

¹⁰ Shah-name, Joll Mole, p. 69

¹¹ Life and Death of Sportsmen in Shah-name, p. 149

might be due to fear of his bad fortune that Feridun kept Iraj by his side.

After a while, the feeling of jealousy showed up in both brothers and both tried to send a reproofing message to their father.

Feridun just advised them in reply threatening to react harshly to them.¹² Then he talks with Iraj of their jealousy and Iraj decides to meet them to find a way out of it.¹³

Feridun's brothers helping him in the beginning got jealous and rolled down a huge piece of rock so that it might fall on him and end his life.

It is as if one of nature's laws that the evil part never understands the essence of the good part and finally being rejected from the realm of the good due to their innate nature even if brotherhood holds among them. This reminds one of Adam's sons stories (Abel and Cain) or Jacob's sons.

Firdausi while recounting these stories reminds us of this point that spread of jealousy, self-condescension and lack of affection will cause human beings to even sacrifice brothers to get to the intended result.

Feridun's Reasons for Division of World among his Sons

Feridun mentions the getting together of a group of tribe elderly men when answering Salm and Tur's message on unfair division of the known world in which the act of drawing boundaries between their lines occurred through their observations and advice. Did astrologists and authorities of ancient Iran decide to let Iraj stay and send the two other sons away? Feridun ambiguously touches the subject by these lines that:

Trans: I wanted the truth held in World/wasn't looking for separation in brotherhood.

Did people of ancient Iran accept a new order different from the initial one? Could it end in rebellion? It might seem that giving the throne of Iran to Toraj had two reasons: private and public. The public reason meant the future of different parts of throne namely Iranian people preferred Iraj to his brothers due to his virtue and favorable behavior. Evidence proves this point. When Iraj goes to see his brothers, soldiers of both armies praise and regard him as the only one suitable for the kingdom. Iraj has got a charismatic feature which gest other to him. In addition, Iraj was preferred to his brothers by Feridun and other authorities. In Dragon fighting, only Iraj showed up with favorable outcome. He sought the middle way, was brave and wise all of which shows a complete man. The private reason is related to Feridun's affection for Iraj. It seems that Feridun loved Iraj more due to his aptitude, acuteness and being younger. The astrologists' ideas seeing Iraj's fate full of war and misery led to feeling more sympathy for Iraj by his father.¹⁴

But Feridun caused disunion among these territories finally resulting in Iraj's murder through his act of division of his throne creating Iran, Turan and Sarman creating permanent enmity among two nephews namely Afrasiab and Manuchehr. In ancient world of legends this events doesn't raise blasphemy for Feridun due to his resolutions still depicting a good fame for him.¹⁵

Finally was ruthlessly killed by Tur when visiting his brothers. Iraj had one daughter

¹² 23-Shah-name, Joll Mol, 1st Volume, p. 70

¹³ Above, p. 10

¹⁴ Life and Death of Sportsmen in Shah-name, p. 161

¹⁵ 28-Twenty One Article on Shah-name and Firdausi, p. 333-334

which was married to her nephew, of Jamshid's dynasty, by Feridun's order. They then had a son which feridun named as "Manuchehr" and raised by him which at last was bestowed the throne and treasures.¹⁶

Spiritual State of Feridun

Feridun was a virtuous man receiving revelation before war with Zahak so as to be taught magic, good deeds and keys to solve problems. He was a privileged man.¹⁷ He is generally regarded a just king fighting against unfair deeds and that is why in adolescence tries to revolt against Zahak with help of Kaveh. He ends years of cruelties done by a foreign government against Iranian people. He held justice to a level that he never forgave the sinners nor gave up their retribution even if those liable to punishment might be his sons. But he shows his forgiveness when coming to know that his brothers had planned to murder him. He survived that plot but doesn't take revenge or doesn't mention it to them. He was harshly strict in giving back people their rights so that he orders Manuchehr to take revenge on his uncles for murder of his father. But one can't say that he was ruthless and unrelenting. He was genuinely upset due to murder of Salm and Tur too.

In fact, Feridun in Shah-name was an emblem of good deeds which later on causes evil and good deeds at the same time. So the principal concepts in Shah-name are summarized in his actions, namely:

1-Death and Nihilism: Feridun has to leave the world against his majesty and power offering his throne to another.

2-Lack of Stability in World: On Feridun's death, it is admitted that material world remains loyal to nobody.

3-Totalitarian Domination of Pre-destination over World: Feridun was a knowledgeable man aware of the revelations, magic and a half-prophet that is predestined to have descendants committing sin and evil deeds. His tragedy is familial.¹⁸

4-Retribution: Feridun, Manuchehr and other Iranian authorities believe that they fighting against evil and they should punish the criminals.¹⁹

Contradiction: Shah-name is manifesting a colorful show of contradiction. Within this literary work, good and bad, sorrow and happiness and perfection and defect are intertwined as it is epitomized in Feridun's life. He has both good and bad children living side by side.

Revenge and Necessity of taking it: Revenge is the permanent theme of Shah-name because war is not left out in any section of this book and is fought for retribution. Feridun takes revenge on his two sons through Manuchehr punishing them for their crimes.

Ambiguity in World: There is a kind of ambiguity in worldly deeds as it is evident in unfair division of Feridun's throne among his sons. No satisfactory answer is given to them.

Fame Seeking: All sportsmen in Shah-name try to obtain fame therefore they try to murder others just as Salm and Tur kill their brother.

Conclusion

Feridun in Shah-name is among kings and sportsmen of Zarathustra type fighting against Evil. He is of well-famed kings in this literary work praised by the poet for

¹⁶ Shah-name, Jole Moll, 1st Volume, p. 83-85

¹⁷ Above, p. 48

¹⁸ Life and Death of Sportsmen in Shah-name, p. 171

¹⁹ Life and Death of Sportsmen, p. 171

his justice and epitomized as somebody that should be carefully understood by readers. Although he is among good men but later becomes source of sharp division of Goodness and Evil. Firdausi shows the unavoidability of existence of contradiction in worldly affairs and believes that though Tur and Salm are of Feridun's dynasty, but this doesn't preclude them from fighting one another. One could say that Firdausi has summarized the common conception of Goodness and Evil in life and death of Feridun as source of contradictions emerging. In fact, Feridun's story is an introduction to all other stories. His effect is almost felt till the end of story and even within the story of Iranian's fighting with foreigners acting as a sign of victory and power.

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