



Analysis of Gene and Race and Its Connection with Farreh in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

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Abstract

Context: Gene and heredity are central themes in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, closely linked with the concept of Farreh (divine glory or fortune). These elements significantly influence the characters and stories within Shahnameh. Lineage and heredity are believed to endow individuals with certain powers and abilities, with Gohar (essence, noble birth) being a divine attribute that inclines individuals towards goodness. Farreh, which legitimizes kings and heroes, is a divine power that is passed down hereditarily, forming the foundation of many events in Shahnameh.

Evidence Acquisition: In Shahnameh, the connection between lineage, heredity, and Farreh is explored through the actions and decisions of kings and heroes. The narrative emphasizes the importance of noble birth and divine confirmation in maintaining power and prestige. The text also highlights the significance of marriage and succession in preserving lineage and Farreh. The story of Goodarz's dream, where Soroush (an angel) reveals that only Giv can bring Keykhosrow from Turan due to his possession of Farreh, illustrates the hereditary nature of this divine power.

Results: Shahnameh portrays how Farreh is essential for kingship and heroism, with individuals of noble descent being the only ones capable of wielding this power. The narrative demonstrates that Farreh is not accessible to those of ordinary descent, and it underscores the interconnectedness of royal and heroic families in sustaining this divine glory. The story of Keykhosrow, whose mixed heritage initially raises doubts about his possession of Farreh, ultimately reveals his divine confirmation through his actions, such as the opening of fortress of Bahman.

Conclusions: Ferdowsi's Shahnameh intricately weaves the themes of gene, heredity, and Farreh, illustrating their pivotal roles in the legitimacy and success of kings and heroes. The text underscores the importance of noble lineage and divine confirmation in the continuity of power and prestige. Through its characters and stories, Shahnameh conveys the belief that Farreh is a hereditary and divine attribute essential for leadership and heroism.

Keywords: Shahnameh, Ferdowsi, Gene, Race, Farreh

1. Context

In fact, gene and heredity are among the principles that confirm the worthiness of a king or hero. "In the world of epics, Farreh and lineage are the foundations of greatness and the cause of individual and class distinction". Kings and heroes take pride in their lineage, and by boasting about their descent, they try to legitimize their position, status, and actions. After establishing the importance of the influence of Farreh and divine confirmation in the selection of kings and the actions of some heroes, which has an undeniable connection with lineage, the influence of lineage on

Iranian beliefs and the actions of kings and heroes will be discussed.

2. Evidence Acquisition

2.1. The Importance of Gene in Commemoration and Acceptance Among People

"Belief in race and lineage, which reflects the in-group tendencies of ancient societies, is a fundamental belief in Shahnameh... The stories of Shahnameh depict the value and importance of lineage and consanguinity in the individual and social lives of its heroes" (1).

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Keykhosrow, who considers the killing of his brother (Farud) and the massacre of Godarzian to be due to the unwise decisions and orders of Tus, insults and curses him, and even decides to seek revenge, but refrains from doing so because of his royal and heroic lineage from Manuchehr Shah. When Keykhosrow chooses Lohrasp as king, Zal and the nobles do not accept him and consider him nameless and without pedigree, but as soon as Keykhosrow introduces him as being from the lineage of Hushang Shah, Zal apologizes for his words, and everyone calls Lohrasp the king. Bahram Chubin also, after rebelling against Hormoz, the Sasanian king, says: "Your ancestors, Sasan the Fifth and Ardashir, were shepherds of Ardavan Ashkani (my ancestor); therefore, you are not worthy of this kingship because you do not have the royal gene and divine glory (Farreh)".

2.2. Boasting About Lineage Even from Tyrannical Kings

During the dispute and boasting with Esfandiyar, Rostam considers both sides of his heritage to be royal and boasts about it, which shows that the royal gene was of great importance, to the extent that the tyranny of a king had no weight compared to his royal status. Esfandiyar also praises his maternal lineage in addition to his paternal lineage and considers himself to be from the lineage of Salm, even though Salm is hated by Iranians for killing Iraj, but because he was the king of Rome, Esfandiyar considers it a source of pride for himself (2).

2.3. Gene and Farreh, Conditions for Assuming the Position of Kingship and World Heroism

During the reign of Nowzar, the people, who are fed up with his tyranny, complain to Sam and ask him to sit on the throne instead of Nowzar, but Sam refuses and emphasizes the necessity of loyalty to the king. Then, by convincing the people and advising Nowzar, he helps to preserve and continue his kingship. When Nowzar is killed by Afrasiab, Zal takes charge of important affairs and states that Nowzar's sons (Gostaham and Tus) are not competent for kingship, and he chooses Zav Tahmasb, who is from the lineage of Fereydun. When King Zav passes away, Afrasiab seizes the opportunity and invades Iran. The nobles come to Zal and ask him to manage affairs. Zal sends Rostam to Alborz Mountain in search of Kay Qobad. Kavus, after ascending the throne, gives the position of Jahan Pahlavan (world hero) to Tus, even though this position belonged to the house of Godarz, but because Tus is from the lineage of kings, he considers him worthy of world heroism. Kavus and his entire army are captured in Mazandaran, and then he desperately asks Zal for help. Zal, despite having the

means for seizing the kingdom, never considers such an action and, by sending his son on this dangerous mission, causes the rescue of Kavus and the continuation of his kingship (3).

2.4. Special Attention to the Spouse's Genes for Kings and Heroes

For invading kings, choosing a spouse from the lineage of the kings of the conquered land is important to the extent that marrying a daughter from the former king's lineage is considered a means of establishing and continuing their rule over that land and its people. "Invaders took the women of the harem and the princesses as a source of power and legitimacy with them, for in those days, all the power of the tribes originated from women, who were the source of life and the origin of children and warriors, and possessing the women of another tribe or clan meant depriving them of power and authority and holding their source of power" (4). When Zahhak the Arab ascends to the kingship of Iran, he marries Shahrnaz and Arnavaz, who are Jamshid's two sisters, so that Farreh (the royal glory) may be transferred to him through this. Fereydoun, after overcoming Zahhak, in his first act, takes Jamshid's sisters as his consorts. Arjasp of Turan, by attacking Iran and defeating the aged Lohrasp and his army, takes Goshtasp's daughters (Homay and Behafarid) captive. Bahram Gur, by bringing the daughter of the king of China (Shangal) to Iran, makes her a tribute-paying subject of the Iranian kingdom. Kavus, after being freed from the captivity of the king of Hamavaran and defeating him, takes his daughter (Sudabeh) as his wife. The heroes of Iran, who go to a plain on the border of Turan, see a beautiful girl and take her to the king of Iran. The girl traces her lineage and ancestry to Fereydoun. "Kavus said to her: 'You intended to squander this hair, face, and lineage. Now it is fitting that I take you to my golden chamber and make you the head of my moon-faced women'", and by sending her to the harem, he introduces her as the first lady of his court. The marriage of Zal and Rudabeh is a prominent example of the importance of the spouse's gene and lineage in Shahnameh. The result of the union of Zal and Rudabeh, who both have royal lineage and essence, leads to the birth of the greatest hero of the land of Iran, who forever remains a symbol of heroism, courage, and power in the history of this land. Giv, who is one of the greatest heroes of Shahnameh after Rostam, marries Rostam's daughter, from which Bijan is born. Bijan is the bravest individual in the lineage of Goudarz. Goshtasp, who desires Lohrasp's throne and does not find his father in agreement with this, goes to Rome and, after

remarkable feats of heroism, manages to marry Katayoun (Caesar's daughter). It is after marrying the princess and having the support of the Caesar of Rome that he reaches the rank of the king of Iran. The same thing happens to Khosrow Parviz. He, who was driven out of Iran by Bahram Chobin and was unsuccessful in preserving his father's crown, when he goes to Rome and marries Maryam (Caesar's daughter), is saved from certain death by Soroush (a divine messenger) and receives the promise of kingship. On his deathbed, Dara advises Alexander to take Roshanak as his wife so that with the marriage of Alexander the Great to Roshanak, the glory and greatness of Iran and the Zoroastrian religion may endure. The Khagan of China, to avoid war and establish cordial relations, sends a letter to Anushirvan asking the king of Iran to take one of his daughters as his wife. The just king sends a worldly-wise man named Mehranshatad to the Khagan's court. The wise Mehranshatad emphasizes to Khagan that it is the command of the king of Iran that he should choose from among your daughters the one who is the result of your union with the queen. Soothsayers give Khagan the good news that the result of this union will be the future king of Iran, who will be a worthy and highly skilled individual, and when Khagan becomes aware of this good fortune, he sends his daughter to Anushirvan's court. When Mehrak the troublemaker becomes king, after a while, he and his family are massacred by Ardeshir, but his young daughter hides herself and survives. After years, Shapur of Ardeshir comes across her and inquires about her lineage. The girl, after receiving a letter of safe-conduct from him, recounts the story. Shapur secretly marries her, and after some time, they have a child. One day, the king sees this boy in the polo field, and when he asks him about his ancestry, the boy informs the king of the secret of his parents. The king, realizing that Ardeshir's wife is Mehrak's daughter, becomes very happy, because the king of India had given him the glad tidings that his affairs would be settled and he would find peace when these two genes were mixed. Although marrying close relatives seems reprehensible today, it is seen several times in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. The choice of a spouse by kings was very sensitive, because the continuation of sovereignty among the king's children and the character of the king's successors depended on choosing a worthy spouse from the lineage of kings, and it was a common practice, as if the king, to preserve the royal glory in his lineage, could not find anyone more worthy than his mother or sister for marriage. Esfandiyar the invulnerable, who has long harbored the dream of kingship, complains to his mother about his father's breach of promise and tells her that if he sits on

the throne instead of Goshtasp, "I will make you the lady of the city of Iran". Bahman also, by choosing his own daughter as his wife, intends to keep the royal gene and lineage among his children, and Darab, who is the result of this very union, after being hidden and banished by Hoday, through divine glory and the guidance of the blessed Soroush, his kingship becomes evident to all, and he ascends the throne.

2.5. Traveling and Choosing Spouses from Other Lineages by Kings and Heroes

Another manifestation of the importance of gene and lineage in Shahnameh is the failure to find a noble spouse for the king or hero in their own land, and for this purpose, the king or hero travels to other lands to find a spouse of royal lineage. Kai Khosrow, who is the most idealized king of Iran, and Rostam, who is the most renowned hero of Iran, are the result of the combination of two great lineages from two different lands. Fereydoun, to choose spouses for his three sons, commissions a worthy and worldly-wise man named Jandal to find daughters from the lineage of nobles. Jandal finds such qualities in the three daughters of Sarv (the king of Yemen). When Zal learns of the beauty and grace of the daughter of the king of Kabul, he asks Mehrab Shah for her hand in marriage. This request is initially not agreed upon by the king of Kabul and the king of Iran (Manuchehr) because the two Iranian and non-Iranian families of Zahhak are in conflict with each other. However, when King Manuchehr examines the horoscope of these two and becomes aware of the outcome of their marriage, he agrees to it, and this racial mixing is taken as a good omen. The union of Zal with Rudabeh leads to the birth of Rostam Tahamtan (elephant-bodied), who is the greatest hero of Shahnameh and, in the most difficult events, the guardian of Iran and Iranians and the savior of the throne of kings. Zal, who is the son of Sam Nariman and raised by Simurgh (a mythical bird), and Rudabeh, who is the daughter of Mehrab Kaboli and whose lineage reaches Zahhak, as she herself boasts of her dual noble ancestry. Tahmineh, after mentioning Rostam's courage and bravery, states that she wishes to marry him so that she may have a son with his strength and courage, and this is realized through their marriage because Tahmineh is of noble birth and the daughter of the king of Samangan. Just as Tahmineh desires a child from Rostam to be like him, the child's lineage and gene also benefit from his father and ancestors, to the extent that anyone who sees him instinctively confesses: "You would say that it is Sam the rider himself". Siavash does not find a spouse worthy of marrying him in the land of

Iran. Even the insistence of Kavus and Sudabeh for Siavash to choose one of their daughters is met with his opposition. After going to Turan, the marriage proposal to Siavash is first made by Piran Viseh, who is the greatest Turanian hero and of royal lineage, for his daughter Jarireh, so that Siavash can live in Turan with greater peace of mind. After some time, Piran suggests that he also marry Farangis (Afrasiab's daughter) so that the king would prevent any harm from reaching him. Siavash, who also sees Farangis as being of royal lineage and worthy of marriage, agrees to this union. Bijan, who goes to Turan after completing a mission in the land of the Armenians to watch the girls' celebration, falls in love with Manijeh and, after being freed from Afrasiab's well, brings his daughter to Iran as his wife (5).

3. Results

3.1. *The Upbringing of Kings and Princes by the Nobility*

When Siavash is born, Rostam Tahamtan comes to the sovereign and requests to raise the lion-hearted child. The king, who deeply considers this matter, agrees to Rostam's request. Esfandiyar, in the final moments of his life, asks Rostam to adopt Bahman as his son and teach him everything befitting a prince. When Bahram Yazdgerd is born, the king asks the astrologers and soothsayers to examine his son's horoscope. After studying Bahram's fortune, they give Yazdgerd the good news of his auspicious destiny and ask the king to entrust him to good tutors so that this child may excel in all arts, and the king agrees. Finally, No'man and Mondhar come to the court and, while expressing their servitude and stating their abilities, undertake his care and education. Mondhar chooses three teachers for him to perfect him in all arts: A teacher to teach scribal skills, a teacher to teach hunting, and a teacher to teach archery, polo, and the ball.

3.2. *Some Famous Kings and Heroes Harmed by Their Own Kin*

One of the fundamental points in Shahnameh is the defeat and demise of an immortal king or an unparalleled hero at the hands of someone from their own gene and lineage. These individuals, who, with their extraordinary characteristics, are perceived by the reader as invulnerable beings whom no foreign enemy can defeat, are ultimately defeated by their closest relatives, which demonstrates the undeniable influence of gene and lineage in the destiny of some famous heroes and kings. Merdas the pious, who is a benevolent king, meets his death at the hands of his own son (Zahhak), and Ferdowsi attributes such an event to the

gene and lineage of this impure son. Sohrab is the only one who has been able to defeat Rostam, a person with whom no demons, heroes, or the renowned dare to fight; in battle with his own son, he is helpless and defeated. It is the characteristic of his gene and blood that causes him to lose against Sohrab, who is his inner strength. Sohrab also possesses his characteristics. A young, powerful hero whose single charge decimates the Iranian army, and the fear that arises in the hearts of the king and heroes of Iran because of him is seen nowhere else in Shahnameh and in the case of no other enemy. In the great war of Kai Khosrow, Shideh of Afrasiab seeks single combat with his nephew, Rostam. The wise king tells Iranians that Afrasiab has enchanted Shideh, and no one's blade can harm him except mine, for I possess divine glory and am of the same lineage as him. Also, Afrasiab the enchanter, who whenever he was in trouble, resorted to magic and saved himself from the fray and repeatedly escaped from Rostam's grasp, when he is besieged by Kai Khosrow, finds no way to escape and is killed by his own descendants. Zal also establishes another union; this spouse of his is a musician and singer in Zal's harem, and the result of their marriage is a son named Shoghad. Due to the weak and ignoble nature of his mother's lineage, this son not only lacks the glory and auspiciousness of the gene in his being, but there is also much ominousness in his nature, so much so that the astrologers and soothsayers consider him the destroyer of the lineage of Sam and the annihilator of Sistan. Marriage with inferiors causes the gene of this child to become dark, and as much as his brother was the protector and guardian of Iran and Sistan, he is its destroyer and annihilator.

4. Conclusions

Manifestations of the emphasis on lineage and heredity in relation to Farreh in Shahnameh are evident through actions such as the importance of gene in glorification and acceptance among the people, assuming the position of kingship and world-champion status, choosing a spouse from the lineage of kings to acquire and preserve Farreh and royal or heroic power, the travel and marriage of kings and heroes with those of other lineages, boasting about heredity even by tyrannical kings, the harm inflicted upon famous kings and heroes by their own kin, as well as the upbringing of kings and princes by noble-born elders. Given the numerous recommendations of the wise man of Tus (Ferdowsi) on the essence of humanity and noble lineage, kings and heroes, who are respectively the guides and guardians of the people and the homeland, pay special attention to this topic. This is because the

right choice by kings leads to the glory and prosperity of the realm, such as the marriage of Siavash and Farangis, which resulted in the birth of the ideal Iranian king (Keykhosrow), and the unsuitable marriage of Keykavus with Sudabeh led to the death of Siavash, which caused numerous wars between Iran and Turan and the death of thousands of Iranian and non-Iranian heroes and soldiers.

Footnotes

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