

Reading Symbols and Insights in the Mythical Sections of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this research is to compare symbols and insights in the mythological section of Shahnameh and Iliad and Odyssey, which have a special place in classical literary research. This research is fundamental in terms of its purpose and, based on the nature of the research, qualitative and descriptive comparative method. In view of the purpose of the research, the verses are the unit of analysis and the extracts are from the complete text of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, revised in eight volumes by Jalal Khaleghi Motlaq, and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, translated by Saeed Nafisi. The theoretical framework of this approach, including symbols, insights with cultural categories and metaphors, is the basis of the study. The research findings showed that symbols and attitudes in social communication based on rationalist intellectual philosophy in the eyes of Ferdowsi and Homer include components of peaceful coexistence with others, such as: constructive dialogue between individuals, a growth-based attitude and balancing and comprehensibility of values, the importance of courage and reliability in expressing opinions and correct actions, and social awareness. As a result, due to the broad dimensions and comprehensiveness of symbols, in the culture of nations, attention should be paid to the necessity of creating reliable tools and skill training packages that were identified in this study. The main question is what are the symbols of ethics in philosophy governing the types of insights in the mythological society of Iran and ancient Greece in terms of the differences and similarities between Ferdowsi's thought and Homer's view in the mythological and epic part.

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Introduction

Classical epics serve not only as repositories of cultural history but as living texts that offer profound insights into the human condition, social ethics, and political governance. This study provides a comparative analysis of symbols and underlying ideological “insights” in the mythical sections of Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. By examining these foundational works, the research seeks to uncover shared moral philosophies and political frameworks that remain relevant to contemporary social challenges. The study defines “symbols” as multifaceted signs—be they objects or beings—that transcend their literal existence, and “insights” as the capacity for profound perception and social awareness, exploring how both epic traditions utilize these elements to propagate specific ethical paradigms.

Method

This research adopts a qualitative, descriptive-comparative methodology based on library research. To ensure textual accuracy, the study utilizes the eight-volume edition of *Shahnameh* corrected by Jalal Khaleghi Motlagh and the Persian translations of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Saeed Nafisi as primary data sources. The analysis focuses on poetic verses as units of observation, categorizing the findings into recurring symbols (e.g., *Farr*, Simurgh, prophecy, dreams) and thematic insights (e.g., rationalism, social justice, oath-keeping, and the struggle against tyranny) to determine the convergence and divergence of Iranian and Greek epic thought.

Results

The comparative analysis reveals that while the cultural landscapes differ, the ethical foundations of both epics share a rationalist approach to governance and social life. Key findings include:

- **Symbolic Functions:** The study identifies essential symbols such as *Farr* (divine grace/duty), the Simurgh (a mythical guide), *Soroush* (angelic messenger), dreams, prophecy, and instruments of music. These symbols function as mechanisms for testing characters, providing moral guidance, and predicting destiny.

- **Divergence in Governance:** A significant distinction is found in the concept of authority. In *Shahnameh*, the concept of *Farr* acts as a divine validation of just rule and national duty, whereas in Homer's epics, kingly authority is tribal and favored by anthropomorphic gods (e.g., Zeus), who are often depicted as capricious rather than purely transcendent.
- **Ethical Synthesis:** Both epics emphasize the importance of constructive dialogue, social balance, and the preservation of values such as courage and loyalty. The act of oath-keeping is identified as a crucial moral pillar; oath-breaking in both traditions consistently leads to tragic outcomes, illustrating the interconnectedness of individual ethics and social stability.
- **Political Insight:** The study highlights the revolutionary role of symbols like Kaveh's apron in *Shahnameh*, which represents national unity and the collective struggle against tyranny—a contrast to the more individualized hero-centric conflicts often found in the *Iliad*.

Conclusion

The study concludes that despite the passage of centuries, *Shahnameh* and the Homeric epics act as a “manual for moral living.” They promote an ethics of resilience, justice, and humanity that transcends geographical boundaries. The researchers argue that due to the comprehensiveness of these symbols, there is an urgent need to develop educational frameworks based on these classic insights. By integrating the universal lessons of these epics—such as the commitment to peace, the importance of rational decision-making, and the protection of the oppressed—modern societies can find viable strategies to address contemporary political and social discord.