

A Brief Study of Imagery in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*

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Article Info (٢٤١-٢٥٠)	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article	Abul Qasim Ferdowsi is one of the great epic poets of Persian Dari literature who dedicated his entire life to writing <i>Shahnameh</i> and completed it within thirty years, bringing the history of his ancestors to life. He was born in the year (325 AH) in Deh Baj, Tus Province, Khorasan. Some historians have called his name Mansur and his father's name Ahmad, but he is more commonly known by the nickname Abul Qasim Ferdowsi. Ferdowsi's <i>Shahnameh</i> , the greatest epic work of our people, is one of the great books in the thousand-year history of Dari culture and literature. <i>Shahnameh</i> is not a book that only describes heroes, battlefields, campaigns, and the defeats and victories of heroes. In this universal work, patriotic, moral, philosophical, and scientific thoughts are still very striking. In this research, we examined some of the illustrations of <i>Shahnameh</i> in a descriptive-analytical manner using library resources and concluded that Ferdowsi used poetic images in <i>Shahnameh</i> , the collection of which shows the power of imagery and the poet's high imagination.
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Introduction

Abolqasem Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings) stands as the supreme national epic of the Persian-speaking world, preserving the ancestral history, ethical wisdom, and cultural heritage of ancient Greater Iran. Composed over three decades during the 4th and 5th centuries AH, the monumental work transcends mere historical narration and heroic chronicles by weaving together profound moral, patriotic, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions. While the epic's historical and ideological significance has been widely examined, its rich poetic craftsmanship and artistic imagery (*tasvīr-pardāzī*) constitute a vital domain of literary inquiry. In particular, within academic research in Afghanistan, focused studies on Ferdowsi's visual and figurative techniques remain relatively scarce.

This study aims to examine the mechanisms and motifs of poetic imagery in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, exploring how rhetorical devices such as hyperbole (*mubālagha*), simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*isti'āra*), debate/dialogue (*munāzara*), and descriptions of animate and inanimate nature contribute to the epic's dramatic resonance and heroic grandeur.

Method

This research adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology supported by library-based archival textual analysis. The primary textual corpus consists of selected narrative episodes and verses from the *Shahnameh*, including the stories of Zahhak, Kaveh the Blacksmith, Bijan and Manijeh, and Siavash. The analytical framework categorizes Ferdowsi's imagery into specific rhetorical and thematic domains:

١. **Descriptions of Inanimate and Natural Phenomena:** Examining depictions of astronomical events (sunrise, nightfall), natural landscapes (Mount Damavand/Alborz, Mazandaran), and seasonal shifts (spring).
٢. **Rhetorical Figures of Magnification:** Analyzing the functional role of hyperbole (*ghuluvv* and *mubālagha*) in intensifying battle scenes and monumentalizing heroic action.

۳. **Lyrical and Heroic Tropes:** Investigating how similes and metaphors are structured, observing the deliberate interplay between martial motifs and delicate aesthetic descriptions of female characters (e.g., Tahmineh and Farangis).
۴. **Dramatic Dialogue (*Munāzara*):** Evaluating pre-battle verbal duels and dialogues as structural devices that construct heroic self-presentation and psychological A Brief Study of Imagery in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*

Results

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Conclusion

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۳. **Lyrical and Heroic Tropes:** Investigating how similes and metaphors are structured, observing the deliberate interplay between martial motifs and delicate aesthetic descriptions of female characters (e.g., Tahmineh and Farangis).
۴. **Dramatic Dialogue (*Munāzara*):** Evaluating pre-battle verbal duels and dialogues as structural devices that construct heroic self-presentation and psychological as superficial decoration, Ferdowsi seamlessly fuses hyperbole, simile, metaphor, and nature imagery with the overarching heroic and ethical ethos of the epic. The purity and dignity of his diction—characterized by an avoidance of coarse

language and a conscious reliance on native Dari Persian vocabulary—elevate the work into an enduring monument of literary art. The *Shahnameh* not only immortalizes the shared mythological and historical consciousness of the Persian-speaking world, including the historical geography and heroes of Afghanistan and ancient Aryana, but also stands as a timeless masterpiece of world epic literature.