

Reflection of Ancient Iranian Culture in the Thought and Artistic Expression of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

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Article Info (1-20)	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article	The intellectual teachings and philosophical foundations of Shahnameh (Book of Kings) serve as the best example and model for constructing a desirable and refined society based on human principles. Some researchers have considered Ferdowsi's worldview the best model for creating a globally balanced world with relative happiness. "Wisdom," "Justice," and "Wonder" are the three main pillars of Ferdowsi's thought in Shahnameh. Alongside these principles, concepts such as joyful living, moral lessons, contemplation of the ephemeral world, the mystery of death and fate, freedom and liberty, and many other concepts find expression in the artistic expression of the grand palace of literature.
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	This article, collected through a descriptive-analytical method and library sources, explores the linguistic functions of Shahnameh and the range of linguistic capacities and concerns of the enduring face of Iranian culture and literature in creating a foundation of Persian language elements, unique Persian names, and authentic Persian vocabulary, which are essential aspects of the national epic of Iran. The article also analyzes and examines Ferdowsi's artistic expression in three axes: "simplicity of language," "tone and music," and "rhetorical and innovative principles."

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Introduction

Even after the passage of over a millennium, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* remains the definitive "Book of Iran," serving as the cornerstone of Persian national identity, language, and cultural heritage. Few works in the history of Persian literature have exerted such a profound influence on the communal psyche and intellectual foundations of the Iranian people. This epic serves not only as a repository of ancient myths and history but also as an ethical guide, offering lessons on governance, wisdom, justice, and the complexities of human existence. While previous studies have examined the *Shahnameh* through various historical and identity-based lenses, this research explores the specific philosophical underpinnings and artistic techniques that enabled Ferdowsi to weave a cohesive tapestry of Iranian thought and culture that has withstood the ravages of time.

Method

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology based on library research. By critically examining the *Shahnameh*, the researchers explore the philosophical system and intellectual world-view of the poet, focusing on core concepts such as wisdom, justice, and liberty. Additionally, the paper analyzes Ferdowsi's artistic approach, specifically scrutinizing the linguistic capacity of the epic, the poet's innovative use of Persian vocabulary, and the distinctiveness of his rhetorical and imagery-based style, comparing it with the prevailing literary trends of his era.

Results

The research highlights several key findings regarding the thematic and artistic structure of the *Shahnameh*:

1. **Philosophical Foundations:** The study identifies "Wisdom" (*Kherad*) and "Justice" (*Dad*) as the two primary pillars of Ferdowsi's thought. These concepts form the bedrock of his ontology, guiding his depiction of kings, heroes, and the nature of human conduct. Furthermore, the *Shahnameh* promotes a worldview centered on joyful living, the importance of learning

from history (*ebrat-amoozi*), and a contemplative stance toward the inevitability of death and fate.

۲. **Linguistic Mastery:** Ferdowsi is recognized for his pivotal role in safeguarding the Persian language. By constructing a narrative framework rich in indigenous Persian terminology and avoiding unnecessary loanwords, he created an “ideal style” (*namat-e ali*) that balances simplicity with elegance. His language is characterized by a “simple yet inimitable” (*sahl-o-momtane*) quality, making it accessible to the masses while satisfying the intellectual rigor of the elite.
۳. **Artistic and Rhetorical Techniques:** The poet utilizes musicality and carefully balanced rhetorical devices to enhance the impact of his epic. Notably, Ferdowsi’s imagery is deeply rooted in the natural world and Iranian motifs. Unlike many of his contemporaries who were heavily influenced by Arabic literary traditions and abstract intellectualism, Ferdowsi deliberately crafted his metaphors and similes using indigenous Iranian symbols, ensuring the epic’s cultural authenticity remained untainted.

Conclusion

The *Shahnameh* is not merely an epic poem but a conscious, deliberate project by Ferdowsi to revive and stabilize the Iranian intellectual and cultural identity. His synthesis of ancient ethics—anchored in wisdom and justice—with a robust, refined Persian language provided a bulwark against cultural dissolution. By rejecting foreign cultural influences in his imagery and focusing on an authentic Iranian aesthetic, Ferdowsi ensured that the *Shahnameh* would serve as a perennial source of national pride, cohesion, and cultural endurance..