

Old Age and Youth in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

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ABSTRACT

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elderly and youth are important concepts in the culture and literature of every nation and many articles have been written about them. In Shahnameh, the characterization in relation to the youths and the elderlies and their personality traits can be clearly seen. The current research, which was carried out with a descriptive-analytical method and using library sources, is based on Ferdowsi's view of positive and negative characters, both young and old in Shahnameh, and the change or lack of change of this view. Also, the static or dynamic nature of positive and negative characters in Shahnameh has been investigated. According to the results of the research, Ferdowsi's view of the characters in the story, both young and old, is not constant and changes throughout the story. It means characters who are more believable and attractive because of their positive and negative aspects. In general, it can be said that Ferdowsi attributes qualities such as patriotism, bravery and greatness more to the youths, and on the other hand, attributes such as knowledge and wisdom are more attributed to the elderlies.

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Introduction:

Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, a monumental epic of Persian literature, is not merely a collection of heroic tales but a profound exploration of human existence and social dynamics. One of the subtle yet significant dimensions of this epic is the portrayal of human life cycles, specifically the dichotomy between youth and old age. This study aims to examine how Ferdowsi constructs the identities of characters through the lens of age, exploring whether these portrayals are static archetypes or dynamic evolutions driven by narrative necessity.

Method:

The research employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, focusing on the characterization techniques used by Ferdowsi. By analyzing selected episodes and character arcs within the *Shahnameh*, the study investigates the shifting attributes assigned to "youth" and "old age." The analysis focuses on the distribution of virtues, such as bravery, wisdom, and political agency, across different age groups to identify patterns in Ferdowsi's narrative construction.

Results:

The analysis reveals that Ferdowsi's perspective on age is not fixed but fluctuates according to the requirements of the plot and the specific needs of the characters. The findings indicate a clear thematic distribution of qualities:

- **Youth:** Predominantly associated with physical prowess, bravery, patriotism, and heroic action. Youth is portrayed as the engine of change and the embodiment of martial strength.
- **Old Age:** Characterized by wisdom, profound knowledge, foresight, and strategic insight. The elderly characters often serve as the intellectual and moral compasses within the epic.

Furthermore, the study finds that Ferdowsi avoids purely idealized portrayals; despite their epic stature, characters—regardless of age—

exhibit human flaws, errors, and vulnerabilities, which enhances their psychological realism and makes them more relatable to the audience.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that age in the *Shahnameh* serves as a multi-dimensional tool for character development. Rather than being a rigid biological category, youth and old age function as symbolic representations of different stages of human capacity and social roles. Ferdowsi successfully balances the archetypal expectations of age with a nuanced humanism, creating a dynamic interplay between the vigor of youth and the sagacity of age that drives the epic's moral and narrative progression.