

**An Ecocritical Analysis of *The First King of the World*, an
Adaptation of *Shahnameh***

Mohammad Jafar Yahaghi

Professor of Persian language and literature,
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Zahra Parsapour

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature,
Research Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies

Mehdokht Pourkhaleghi Chatroudi

Professor of Persian language and literature,
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Fateme Mohammadzade

student of Persian language and literature (Epic Literature)

Introduction

One of the concerns of contemporary human beings is facing environmental crises and finding ways to prevent these problems. Analyzing and reforming the relationship between human and nature requires new and effective approaches. In recent years Ecocriticism has gained momentum with an environmental approach to literary works. It presents the relationship between human and nature in these works in all literary genres.

In Persian literature, the four main genres (educational, epic, lyrical and mystical) can be analyzed from this perspective.

Nevertheless, the genre of epic is a suitable field for this type of criticism due to its mythological themes. Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is an epic whose mythological themes can be interpreted from an Ecocritical approach. This work has many narrative attractions for children and adolescents and the adaptors of children's and adolescent's literature have paid a lot of attention to it in recent years.

Mohammad Reza Yousefi is one of the adaptors of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* for children and adolescents who has many works in this field. *The First King of the World* is an adaptation of the story of Kiyomarth in *Shahnameh*, in which the relationship between human and nature is analyzed with an Ecocritical approach.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

So far, many researches have been conducted on adaptations of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* for children and adolescents. Karimzad (2005) in his thesis "The Influence of *Shahnameh* on Children's Literature", Jalali (2010) in his Ph.D. thesis "*Shahnameh* in Children's and Adolescent's Literature from the Constitutional Revolution to 2006", Akbarlou (2010) in his article "*Shahnameh*, Children and Dramatic Adaptation", Jalali and Pourkhaleghi Chatroudi (2013) in their article "Conceptual and Literary Adaptation of the *Shahnameh* in Children's and Adolescents' Literature", Jalali (2015) in his book "Characteristics of

Adaptation in Children's and Adolescents' Literature" have paid attention to issues related to adaptations of the *Shahnameh* for children and adolescents. However, in these studies, there is no mention of an Ecocritical analysis of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

The present research is conducted with a descriptive-comparative method and follows these steps:

1- An analysis of the relationship between human and nature in the story Kyomarth in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* from an Ecocritical approach.

2- An analysis of the changes made in the relationship between human and nature as a result of the adaptation of *The First King of the World* from an Ecocritical approach.

The purpose of the article is to present how the relationship between human and nature is depicted in the adaptation of *The First King of the World*, what changes this relationship has experienced as a result of this adaptation, and how it can be justified with today's environmental theories and concerns.

Discussion

The Ecocritical analysis of *The First King of the World* is presented in three parts: 1) the activities of Ahriman (the demon) as a force against nature; 2) the interaction between humans and non-humans, which has an ecocritical approach to nature; 3) the domineering view of humans over non-humans, from which an environmental anthropocentrism is perceived.

The First King of the World is narrated in a mythical atmosphere. In the age of myths, there is no inferior view of nature. Human and nature live as though they are inseparable. In this story, humans and non-humans both have the same enemy, Ahriman, or the demon; therefore, Kyomarth and other creatures are in one side, and Ahriman as the opposite of nature is on the other side. As the story continues, Kyomarth interacts with other creatures. He is in harmony with other beings and has common emotions and feelings with them. In this story, non-humans are equal in terms of the expression of emotions and the way of perception, as the animals also fully understand and feel the danger of the attack of the demons and are ready to help Kyomarth. In one part of the story, Kyomarth, who is connected with the cow in life and death in myths, also gets his power from this animal; however, in this adaptation, an image is presented that shows a kind of authority of Kyomarth on nature: Kyomarth rides a golden cow to battle with the demons. It seems that here a domineering view is applied to nature and the cow is used as a tool to destroy the anti-nature.

Conclusion

Ecocriticism aims to create an interactive relationship between humans and nature through literature. In this approach, literature is a method that changes the ways that humans think and feel at the same time and can be effective in changing his attitude towards

nature. This type of criticism looks at literary works through today's environmental issues. The story *The First King of the World* is an adaptation of the story of Kyomarth in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* in which the relationship between human and nature can be clearly understood. Kyomarth is a glorious king under whose rule humans and non-humans live peacefully and learn religion and rituals. Their only enemy is Ahriman. The interactive view of this story can be considered as one of the mythological features of the story. In this story, Kyomarth does not control nature but is associated with it. He never wants to domesticate animals and raising animals is not for human exploitation.

In *The First King of the World*, Mohammadreza Yousefi, knowingly or unknowingly in most cases, reflects the interaction of human with nature. In this story, humans and non-humans are in the same group. Human is a part of nature, in harmony with it, and with the same intelligence and emotions. He has injected the idea of saving nature in the story as it is necessary to free humans and non-humans from the hands of Ahriman or the anti-nature force in order for Kyomarth to establish his kingdom.

Nevertheless, one of the human-oriented instances of this adaptation is the use of the cow as a tool for battle. This animal, which in mythologies is linked with death and life, is used as a tool to fight with Ahriman. Eliminating or altering this part of the story can turn it into a story which advocates saving the environment, and can be effective in creating a sense of

responsibility in children and adolescents toward nature and its values.

Key words: Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, human, nature, *The First King of the World*, Ecocriticism

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