

**Research Article**

## **STUDY AND RANKING OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECLINE OF THE STATUS OF SHAHNAMEH'KHANI IN PERSIAN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Shahnameh'khani (to read from Shahnameh) is a kind of story-telling (Naghali), in which the tales of Shahnameh, one of the greatest epic works of all time, are read out in a special manner with special kind of melody. Some call it story-telling and some believe to be a one man's show (as it is a show performed only by one individual). But what's so apparent is that this sort of social activity and native art has undergone so much of a trouble and hardship on its way and it faces a disastrous future, and it seems unlikely to survive for a long time, if there aren't any special programming and planning to make this art stay and available for the coming generations. Here in this paper we are focusing on the Factors and the causes that contributed to the fall of Shahnameh'khani, in recent decades, in Persian. This was done Using a all men who had expertise in the subject and a thorough questioners, which enabled us to Show the basic factors at work, the best way possible, in graphs. This survey can also be helpful if in future. We can bring Shahnameh'khani, back to life, as it pin points and gets down to the major causes, that, Brought it already to where it is now.

**Keywords:** *Shahnameh'khani, Ghahve'khaneh, Factors of the Decline of Shahnameh'khani, Story-Teller' Scroll, Imaginary Painting, Naghali*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The art of story –telling has been such a common activity amongst all different nations, and Iranian has been no exception to this. The art-loving Iranian would celebrate their nights with such stories and would make their spare time filled with these insightful and meaningful tales of Shahnameh. The lovely stories of Khusru and Shirin in love, the death of Syavash, the stories of the great and almighty Rostam. And etc. One of the main function of language is communication, and Iranian did this in the nights of get together, and gathering, to listen and hear about their most iconic national heroes, and connecting the past to present by the use of language. Story-telling, creation of myth has its roots in a long and desire to discover the rules governing the universe and the world, by people (Najm, 2011). In Shahnameh the myth and epic plus history brings about a enchanting kind of attraction.

Shahnameh is all about the stories of good and evil. Its heroes and fighters and worriers are in a never ending war with the cosmos, the fight between Kaveh and the Cruel Zahak, retaliation of Manuchehr from Salm and Toor, the death of Syavash by her lover and etc. All show Ferdousi thoughts and goals, goals that would like it sincerely for good to prevail against the evil (Ashurpoor, 2010). Shahnameh is the story of law and order, stories of never quitting and surrendering to whatever is called Ahriman (evil). Today Ferdousi is celebrated everywhere in Persian, and he is remembered as the greatest and the best poets among Iranian poets. The scope of and the horizon of Ferdousi's thought not only made him popular in all Persian speaking countries, but also throughout the world. Ferdousi doesn't belong to Persian, he belongs to the world (H.Zarrinkoub, 2002). Ferdousi this one of a kind Iranian, thought of writing the Shahnameh, when Persian was in its most hapless time, there was the barbaric flow of Arab state of that time, to expand and conquer west into the Persian land from one side, and also from the north east it was the freshly new worriers who came over from the Seyhoon river to fight Persians. It was Ferdousi only who tried his best evoke the sense of pride and the grandeur of old Iranians by the means of his epic work and retell it to the people of his time, of all the courage, power and heroism of the old Persians. The subject

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contained in Shahnameh includes: the old Persian Empire history and the history of Iranian race from the beginning to the fall of the throne in Sasanian by the Arabs, it includes 60 thousands verses in three parts, mythical, heroic and historical verses (Ghoravi, 1975).

Some think of Shahnameh'khani, as a unique oral art, which there has been no record of it anywhere else. Naghali (epic story-telling) has been called the most important and most technical of all type of story-telling. What the name suggests, in the first look is to tell and envision the epic stories to the audience. Poems and epic poems doesn't necessarily describe bloodshed and war, but it mentions mostly the heroism and the ethical foundation of a nation, this has been plain in all sort of the epic story-telling and shows, in all over Persian. Considering that every nation consists majorly of a youth population, it seems so valid to show them the true spirit of manhood, brotherhood and championship, as well as make them acquainted with cultural and historical facts of their own (Nazerzadeh, 1994).

DR Bahar also mentions the fact that, the story telling also been so popular even in Ferdousi time himself. As it is mentioned that, people in Ferdousi time used to recite the epic victories of Rostam in the east of Persian, in streets, in neighborhood and in public places, and Ferdousi collected them in his book later on. Story-telling dates back to a very long time in Persian, but the only recorded documents are from the Safavid. The magnitude of the large influence of this type of art and story-telling is evident through the recorded history (from the Safavid to the mid Pahlavi era) (Bahar, 2011). Mr Lesan in his article recalls of the practice of this art in pre-war time to strengthen the spirit of the soldiers, by Bakhtiaries (a group of nomadic people in central west in Persian) he also mentions this kind of art and its popularity in different places, like in homes and in family reunion time, Zoor'khaneh (men's sport club in Persian) and in Ghahve'khaneh (a pub, but mostly it was tea which was served), he says Shahnameh'khani was at its best in Safavid time. But there appears a reversal of fortune as the new kind of entertainment steps into the new world of Iranian, the cinema. Cinema came stole the show, from the public pubs, that used to be the major place in public for get together and story-telling, in the past decade also we have seen much more decline in the story telling and story teller phenomena (Lesan, 1975).

Old and skillfull story-tellers are no longer working and some have died, like the great Mr Torabi, the great story teller, who died only recently. In modern times by the emergence of other mass media, such as television and satellite and the internet, people have lost their zest and appetite to listen to the stories of Shahnameh, And as we get more into these new world, the more we forget about our national and cultural heritage. This article tries although it seems very little, to show the cause of the decline and the ways to reborn this beautiful art again appearing in stage.

### **Shahnameh'khani**

The fight-stories (Jang'nameh) or Shahnameh'khani (story-telling) is a song that is performed in the soiree and the get together of the educated and the literates. Shahnameh'khani is a kind of song enunciated with a big voice by the performer, without any melody. Story-tellers choose from a variety of subject to perform, including epic, religious, mythical subjects or love stories, but mostly they center around Shahnameh, most popular themes. From the point of view of the experts in the field of the historical art and play study, Shahnameh has been important in the evolution of theater. The history of story-telling in Persian dates back to pre-Islam period. Story-tellers (Gousan'an) were people who would tell the epic and historical stories with help of a singing instrument. This simple tradition developed to, buskin, oratory, screen story-tellers Pardeh'khani, latter on in Persian. Ashurpoor defines Naghali as a single performer show, and categorize it to different types, 1. Story-telling for the kings 2. Epic story-telling 3. Shahnameh'khani 4. Story telling in ancient Persian 5. Story telling in Mashrooteh era (constitutional era) 6. Story-telling in the present Islamic republic of Persian (Ashurpoor, 2010). Mahjoob In his book entitled "Naghali" (story-telling), defines a story-teller in its simplest way, a story-teller is someone who performs a subject to an audience and makes them either to laugh or cry or excitement. Telling the story is the most profound root of the play; as well as the fact that our performer is himself the story-teller an Iranian story-teller like a smart actor who has memorized the whole script of a movie, uses different kind of technique to reach to his audience, he lower his pitch as he tells the story and all of a sudden rises his voice, he describes the scene and tells of the specific technique in wrestling to get to the most intricate

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details of the work of the heroes in action. Story-telling is a kind of being in the exact scene as it is described and coming out of it and giving description orally of what happened (Mahjoob, 2011).

#### ***The Place of Performance***

Pubs (Gahveh'khaneh, in an Iranian term) where the main platform to the story-telling in the past. Pubs played a significant role in the social changes and the informing of the masses. When the working hours were finished during a day people would go and sit and took their time to relax and then they would talk about the current news of the day and would exchange ideas. In the night time the story-teller would begin and people anxiously would listen to Shahnameh, if there was a news broken in a society pubs also where the first place for people to gather and learn about the event. The oratories, and speeches in the honor of the past loved ones of the elites were as well of common practice (Najm, 2011). The story teller had with him a painted screen, and it was his only tool to depict the events and adventure of Shahnameh.

#### ***Imaginary Painting***

The painted screen was one of the important tools in the tradition of story-telling. This imaginary painting is one of the ancient Iranian art. This art was more developed in the Ghajari time. To put it another way, this art originates from two main sources, one the epic adventure of Shahnameh and the other, the great incident of Karbala. Both having the same epical background and intertextual relationship. Sometimes they are mistaken as one of a sort. But these painting are used in story telling of Shahnameh. There is one big painting with assorted pictures relating to the Shahnameh's major events. Some of these scenes include, the death of white monster, death of Sohrab, the fight of Rostam and Ashkboos, the passage of Syavash from the fire, or his bloodshed, and the story of Baharam (a male name) The fit body. The story would be told by these beautiful pieces of painting (Ebrahim, 2004).

#### ***Story-Tellers' Scroll***

The scrolls are secret documents in hands of story-tellers only. They are mostly hand-written and are in a shape of a notebook, and it includes tales of Shahnameh, and other religious stories, they are in prose and poem, with a kind of language easy to comprehend for the people (Ashurpoor, 2010). These scrolls include the stories of Kiumarsh to the end of the Bahman kingdom. The experienced story-teller, have gathered the required information both from historical books other than Shahnameh and his own imagination (Omidi, 2009). In addition to scroll there is the *wand* and the symmetrical movement of it in story-teller hand as he goes back and forth and as he points to the screen.

#### ***There Reasons of the Decline of Shahnameh'khani***

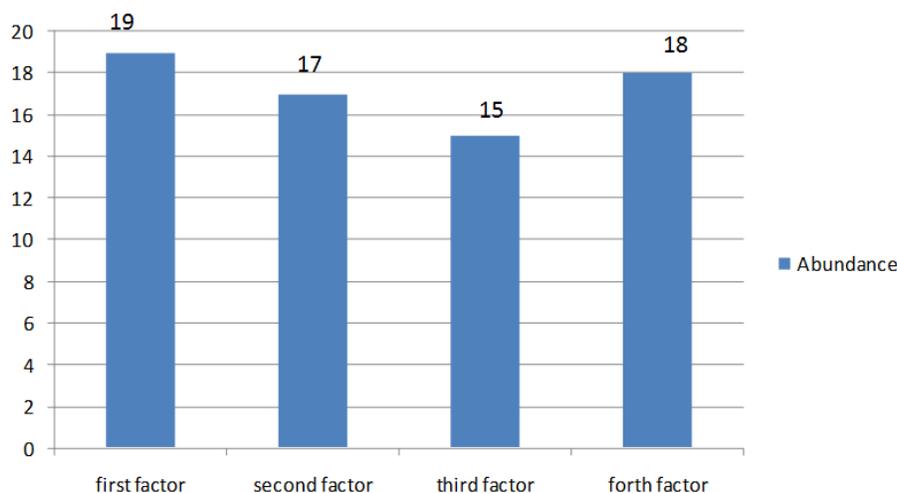
We know that every kind of native art or historical heritage of any given country is endangered, but in some countries with the aid of effective measures, people were able to rebuild the forgotten arts and cultural practices, In Iran it seems unlikely that any attempt has been done yet for Shahnameh'khani to survive.

Shahnameh'khani in essence is the biggest of Persian national art and heritage, as same as the so-called Taziye'khani (the religious story of saints in Islam) (Mirshokraiee, 1976); if these two are not complementary to each other, they are not against each other as well, so why Taziye'khani is flourishing whereas Shahnameh'khani is losing ground little by little?

Now we discuss the main reason why do we see this major decline in Shahnameh'khani. In our statistical population we made questionnaire and asked about the 20 experts and known figure in the field. The process of analyzing the answers, in the opened questioner led us to reach to the similarities, afterwards we put 4 non-homogeneous factors taken from the answers back into the questioner and ask the participant to rank them as 1, the most effective reason 2, to the least effective reason, that finally brought us to these conclusions

1. Lack of the support by the government and associating organizations
2. Lack of monetarily support for the story-tellers
3. Lack of knowledge of the youth generation about this kind of art
4. Lack of places and grounds to devote to perform this art

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**Diagram 1: Effective factors contributing to the fall of story-telling**

By looking at the diagram 1, we can figure that almost all the participant had more or less the same idea about the causes. Based on the diagram 19 people voted the lack of the support by the government, 17 people voted lack of payoffs to the story-tellers, 15 chose the lack of awareness of the young generation about the art, and 18 preferred the lack of special places as the least causes of the fall.

According to the results it seems obvious that most of the expert in the field found the government faulty of this decline.

To their mind if the government pays more attention to forgotten national art, the other three main reasons could be fixed consequently. Lack of support by the national media in hands of the government to make agenda about this national art, and the shortage of televised talk shows and interpretation of the subject can easily be seen.

Second factor is the lack of pay offs and salaries to the story-tellers. Although in religious story –telling there is no demand for money from the people (they do it as a kind of appreciation of god gift to Muslims) the Shahnameh story-tellers are in real lack of making a living out of their job and that's why little by little they will lose their interest to perform and be active. If the payoff is well enough there is a hope that this national art will be back to stage kicking and alive again.

Third reason is the lack of the young generation awareness of story-telling. Experts believed unless there is not programming and shows in schools and media, about the philosophy of story-telling, we are hardly going to find people who would like to choose this career as their whole life career. There must be good story-tellers with the same kind of ethical and native background to surpass the secrets and knowledge involved, up to the next generation. We can have something like a talents show in schools of arts and university to find the personalities who would like to tell stories and reach out to people and make them aware orally of never dying spirits of heroes and championship, ethics and good values. This can by itself create some good jobs in the society.

The forth reason, is lack of proper places to perform this art. As mentioned before after the loss of the popularities of (Gahve'khaneha) and they being replaced by modern places for gather ups and entertainment. It's hard to find for a story-teller to do his job, but since this art doesn't demand a very much equipment and tools, it can be held in streets or in theater scenes and in cinema's scenes.

## CONCLUSION

Although Shahnameh'khani is a national and native art like Taziye'khani (religious story-telling) and many others, But it is not supported and paid any attention in comparison. This is when this native art does not demand a lot of money at all. This decline has been so severe that, unless there is no proper programming and special attention, there is no hope for it to survive any longer

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According to the result from the questioner, most expert in the field strongly believe that if there is government backing and support, there will certainly be bright future for this national and historical art. This means as well as monetarily funding we need the government to develop the cultural background needed for this national art to grow and thrive, including making room and expanding the room for story-telling in universities and schools and public places.

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