

# Research Analysis in Eclectic Theory (Kaboudan and Sfandiar)

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**Abstract**—Present research investigates eclecticism in Iranian theatre on the basis of eclectic theory. Eclectic theatre is a new theory in postmodernism. The theory appeared during 60th – 70th century in some theatres such as “Conference of the Birds”.

Special theatrical forms have been developed in many geographical- cultural areas of the world and are indigenous to that area. These forms, as compared with original forms, are considered to be traditional while being comprehensive, the form is considered to be national. Kaboudan and Sfandiar theatre has been influenced by elements of traditional form of Iran.

**Keywords**—Eclectic theatre, theatrical forms, tradition, play.

## I. INTRODUCTION

NEW approach of Critical Theories in Eclectic Theatre has proposed Eclecticism as a branch of dramatic literature. Eclectic theatre has been created from combination of a set of traditional elements with western theatre. Having adequate familiarity with eclecticism makes it possible for us to know contemporary art of theatre in Iran [1]. In fact, this knowledge would not be possible or adequate without our understanding of eclecticism in Iran.

The present research tries to study formal and substantial elements in Kaboudan and Sfandiar on the basis of special aesthetic theory that was coined by its director. As specified in “*An Introduction to Drama*”, eclectic theatre is a relatively new form in the world. It seems that this theatrical form was developed by some directors during 60th and 70th century in America and was then followed by some other directors such as Max Reinhart in Germany, and Peter Brook in Britain. Those directors from America and Europe raised a new style as director; in other word they selected forms, combined their findings with their thoughts and created a new movement called eclectic theatre [2]. *Eclecticism in Drama* indicates that Iranian theatrical forms are classified in nine forms. Seven forms are based on traditional origins and the other two are modern. They include: 1- Ritual performances, 2- Processional performances, quasi-theatrical processions, 3- Dramatic storytelling, Performatory storytelling, Theatrical storytelling, Dramatic-musical storytelling and Narrative dances, 4- Street (outdoor) performances, 5- Puppet show, Shadow play, Punch and Judy show, 6- Traditional farcical, 7- Passion play,

8- Western-influenced theatre and 9- Eclectic theatre [3]. In the current study, researcher attempts to investigate *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* as a kind of Iranian contemporary theatre on the basis of and relying on eclectic theatre. The present research objective is to review the eclectic theater in Iranian current theater.

## II. SUMMARY OF THE STORY

Upon Garzam<sup>1</sup> trick (one of the king companions), Sfandiar is charged to overthrow Goshtaseb ruling. Goshtaseb (the king) asks others to help, but all are talking about Sfandiar conspiracy at night and capturing Bactria. Then, upon Goshtaseb order and in front of Sfandiar, children breaks his wing. Like mocking players they send him far from the palace and imprison him in Gonbadan castle.

Sfandiar is alone in the castle with Hamaronic<sup>2</sup> black slave, Pashootan. When king Goshtaseb is besieged by Arjaseb troops of Turan, Pashootan (Sfandiar brother) goes to Gonbadan castle upon his father orders to release Sfandiar and takes him to Bactria. But Sfandiar decides to go to Kaboudan-Hamavaran lands without even looking back. Because he finds out what the truth is, in the castle darkness, near Kaboudan. He finds the truth when Kaboudan is singing about his land. Sfandiar wants to revive the truth he found in Gonbadan castle’s darkness, in another form in the real Hamavaran land, where men are singing and women are whispering prosperity barefoot.

All Sfandiar’s dreams are destroyed hearing the news of Vakhshor- Zoroaster’s death from Varjaseb of Touran. However if Vakhshor is alive, Zarrir’s testimony (Sfandiar uncle) and then being far from and missing Sfandiar would kill him sooner or later. However, Vakhshor is not alive, the love in him is alive in the Creator, Ahoura Mazda<sup>3</sup>.

Sfandiar becomes deeply upset hearing about the news and decides to leave Bactria in order to bring freedom to men and women. So that men are singing and women are whispering again in the beautiful land of Hamavaran and are ready to fighting for the truth.

Hearing the sound of flute and Kaboudan song, Sfandiar falls asleep, dreaming the freedom of his land with and for the daylight to arrive and let him leave Gonbadan castle under the sun light.

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<sup>1</sup>The characters of Vakhshor-Zoroaster, Zarir, Sfandiar, Pashotan, Garzam, and Goshtaseb have been driven from *Shahnameh*.

<sup>2</sup> Mythical nationality

<sup>3</sup> Ahoura Mazda is a big leader of Iranian people in *Shahnameh*.

### III. REVIEW OF KABOUDAN AND SFANDIAR PLAY

In this part of the study, researcher proceeds to analyze the theatre of *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* based on Iranian Theatre's Taxonomy and eclecticism theory as one of Iranian performance models:

#### A. Myth in the Heart of Play

*Kaboudan and Sfandiar* theatre has been written and made in a manner that reader and audience are able to understand the myth's presence in it.

Under the same conditions, characters seem to be of certain time and place, contrary to what is said in Iranian traditional play about time and place. Myths have no certain time and place in Iranian traditional performances and the only certain point on the subject in mythological history books is that such mythical kings were living in very old ancient periods and before Median ruling, as myth. In fact, what happening in this play in terms of time and place, is related to the world of myths.

#### B. Play Elements

Content, message, style and type are some performance elements scrutinized in *Kaboudan and Sfandiar*, having considered the Iranian taxonomical elements, especially the theory of eclecticism. Myths are not living in true life, but are manifested as symbols in the world.

Thus, we should expect that all epic plays are symbolic, unless writer and director of theatre may reproduce mythical stories in the framework of other artistic styles. In fact, in such play, using mythological stories of *Shahnameh (The King Story of Iran)* in the heart of the work is the major attraction.

For instance, Sfandiar character evolves in the castle cellar and reaches the truths, grows such dreams in his mind and impatiently waits to make them sensed. The truth he finds out in darkness should be given life in green territory of Hamavaran (Mythical city). In fact, he decides to make clear the truth hidden in the castle darkness. Going to Hamavaran is the most effective way to this end. He, for the distress he suffered in that cellar, is ready to forget all about his descent and origin and leave to another land. But Arjaseb<sup>4</sup> of Turan

<sup>4</sup>Goshtasb/Goshtasf (etc.) is an abominable figure, altogether unlike the hero of Zoroastrian tradition. The reason for this discrepancy is unknown. According to "Sistan" tradition, Goshtasb is of the House of Rostam, lord of Sistan. Goshtasb demands the throne from his father, but is rebuffed, so he storms off to India. Goshtasb's brother Zareh (Zareh/Zarer etc., Avestan Zairivairi) is sent to fetch him, but Goshtasb flees to "Rum" (Roman/Byzantine territories) where he marries daughter of the Roman king, becomes a military commander for the emperor, and encourages the emperor to demand tribute from Iran. Again Zareh is sent to fetch Goshtasb, who is then promised the throne, and is thus persuaded to return. Back in Sistan, he imprisons his own son Sfandiar (Esfandiar/Isfandiar etc., Avestan Spentodata), but then has to seek his help in defeating Arjasp (Avestan Aurvataspā). Goshtasb promises Sfandiar the throne in return for his help, but when Sfandiar is successful, his father stalls and instead sends him off on another mission to suppress a rebellion in Turan. Sfandiar is again successful, and upon his return Goshtasb hedges once again and – aware of a prediction that foretells the death of Sfandiar at the hand of Rostam – sends him off on a mission in which Sfandiar is destined to die. In the *Shahnameh*, the nobles upbraid Goshtasb as a disgrace to the throne; his daughters denounce him as a heinous criminal; and his younger son Bashutan (Avestan Peshotanu) condemns him as a wanton destroyer of Iran

gave him no chance and Sfandiar had no other option than to confront him. What happens in the play is similar to the events in real world with the description that the work is formed on the basis of mythical stories. The event in this story is the truth in the realm of fable. Thus, according to Iranian mythology and understanding its quality in the play, the artistic style of *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* is based on symbolization. Kaboudan and Sfandiar is classified under tragedy class, the tragedy of *Shahnameh* characters, which expresses the kings and mythical gods' life. Kings may even use their children as a shield and put them to the enemy sword to protect the crown and throne for them. As a matter of fact, what known in this work as the ancient tragedy is indebted to mythical tragic subjects, happened in the very ancient era in the fable world. Courage as basic theme is formed under the banner of epopee (epic poem) and history, on the background of Sfandiar skepticism. The play contains the concept which is repeated in the work itself repeatedly: 'The errant is born for fighting to die in a war' [4].

### IV. ECLECTICISM AND KABOUDAN AND SFANDIAR

The screenplay is formed by an election, a dramatic storytelling like the story of *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), and combination of the two above with western theatre. For usage of *Shahnameh*, by Persian epic poet Ferdowsi, this theatre has been included in the taxonomy of eclectic theatre. However, the theatre is made on the basis of epic stories of Goshtaseb, Arjaseb, and Pashootan. Omid said: "Kaboudan, son of Res, son of Gebt is an imagination which I regained. He is Sfandiar indecision. While his name is not referred to anywhere in *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), his shadow is seen everywhere beside Goshtaseb son; first in Balkh and the last in the midday. Phoenix charm was the death of Kaboudan; an end to indecision by invulnerable prince, Sfandiar" [5]. Omid likes to explain that, although the theatre was made based on *Shahnameh*, he changed some stories following his aesthetic and made a new story.

### V. SHAHNAMEH STORIES

*Shahnameh* is one of rich resources introducing Iranian myths from which visual arts such as painting and book illustration have been inspired. In addition, *Shahnameh* is manifested in visual arts, especially in storytelling and by the storyteller, a big part of which covers Iranian performance. In half of theatrical works written and performed on the basis of *Shahnameh*, storytellers have been used with their complete potentialities, including the storyteller's power of expression and usage of words in performance, playing musical instrument when telling the story and reading *Shahnameh* poems such as *All Kaveh Sons (Hame- e Pesaran Kaveh)* [6].

### VI. THEATRE CONVENTIONS

As in *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* theatre two clear features of Iranian-traditional performance, known as profitability of Iranian conventions have been used, the theater has two characteristic elements therein. The elements of Iranian ritual

include: Using *Shahnameh* poem and Naghali (Narration).

1. Players use Naghali (narration) depending on their character performance.
2. The play is laid on the basis of *Shahnameh*.

Like other styles of performance, Naghali (narration) would help the audience to identify the characters. For instance, in Ta'ziyeh, Naghali (narration) is organized depending on what is happening on the stage and the process of events in the play. It implies that antagonist characters such as Shemr and Yazid, are evil doers and the protagonist characters speak same as good natured. In Naghali (narration) the tone of storyteller and his wording indicate his personality. Samples of this kind are seen in all traditional performances such as juggling, street performance and farcical play. In the current play, characters are identified in the process of Naghali (narration) using special songs such as what we said regarding Ta'ziyeh, while speeches are character-specific, for instance:

Sfandiar: Welcome, my brother

Pashootan: How are you my brother?

Sfandiar: Fine, with the castle mice

Pashootan: Mice?

Sfandiar: My friends, Moles, my loyal soldiers

Pashootan: What a warm welcome after missing you for three falls!!

Sfandiar: I can call the moles to play lyre for you! Sfandiar palace is always dark, Sfandiar, king of the hell

Pashootan: Seems I galloped from Bactra to Gonbadan for such a warm welcome by my brother!

Sfandiar: What a swift footed horse my brother! .... Three falls running! How delightful! ... Strong desire to visit your brother made you to come this way? Amshaspandan elevated the Bactra to the sky or Gonbadan evil destroyed the castle? (Yelling), Thou, Kaboudan! Amrod .... New Amrods for Pashootan, who has suffered the hardship of travelling to reach the seat of darkness king [7].

## VII. PLAY DESIGN

*Kaboudan and Sfandiar* has been created on the basis of a theatrical model (dramatic storytelling), but it is not considered as a ritual play, and the process of the story is like *Shahnameh* stories. Writer of this theatre, having his new aesthetic of principle of art, has created a new works following *Shahnameh* (The King Story of Iran). *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* has a special structure. Its dramatic structure is based on cause and effect relation. Each dramatic action has a reason in it, with which the reader or audience may face and involve while reading the playscript or seeing the play, instances of such involvement may be how Sfandiar is captured in Gonbadan castle (as a place), discovery of truth in Gonbadan cellar, Pashootan's arrival, ... and fighting with Touraine's.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

*Kaboudan and Sfandiar* is based on a masterpiece that includes theatrical taxonomy. Therefore, it is a valuable sample for research analyses of eclectic theatres.

It is influenced by western theatre in terms of traditional plays patterns (eclectic" theatre and its specific resource

"*Shahnameh* -Epic poetry and legendary history of Iran by Firdausi). This means that traditional patterns are acting as a catalyzer in creation of a new work, traces of which are seen in it.

If the traditional forms of theatre appeared and emerged in Iran, are studied and investigated relying on scientific terminology of the world, it would be made clear that the forms are similar to some theatrical forms in other geographical-cultural areas and that they are in some cases close to each other in terms of content and form. Thus, in this case, the way has paved for comparative studies to be done while on the other hand Iranian theatrical forms are more clear and researchable.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to express our thanks to the University of Malaya Research Grant (UMRG) with project number [RG431-12HNE], University Malaya of Postgraduate Research Grant (PPP).

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