

Roodabeh and Soodabeh: White and Black Women in Shahnameh

Leila Erfaniyan Qonsuli

Kashmar Higher Education Institute, Kashmar, Iran

Reza Varzeshi

Binaloud Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran

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Abstract

In his book *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi juxtaposes good and bad deeds with light and darkness. Deep at the core of his verses, the poet invites readers to welcome the good and shun the evil through the description of the mannerism, conduct and fate of the book characters. Women are deemed so important in Ferdowsi's view; throughout *Shahnameh*, benevolent, vicious, villainous and honorable women such as Roodabeh and Soodabeh are traceable. Careful analysis of the lexis which describes the features of these women in terms of conducts and destiny leads researchers to conclude that Roodabeh is a figure who characterizes values and virtues, while Soodabeh is a lady with a tarnished reputation. Even their names, being similar morphologically, suggest what their characters are like considering their Persian definitions. Roodabeh, who takes steps along the road of righteousness, becomes the mother of the most reputable strongman in *Shahnameh*, named Rostam, the integrity and unity of kings and Iran relies upon him. Additionally, there is no mention of demise for Roodabeh in the book. On the other hand, Soodabeh, a mother whose son ascends to the throne, takes the evil path. She plans Siavash's death when he is supposed to inherit his father's throne and become the king. Eventually, Rostam, the legendary champion in *Shahnameh* and Roodaneh's son, manages to murder Soodabeh.

Keywords: woman, *Shahnameh*, evil, righteousness

1. Introduction

Ferdowsi is an able poet. The Iranian pride heavily depends upon this skilled and patriotic man and his amazing masterpiece, which depicts championships and chivalries all through, and includes the battles of the good versus evil, light versus darkness and malice against mercy. Generally, opposing characters abound in *Shahnameh*.

One of the most popular aspects of *Shahnameh*, which has been the focus of investigation among researchers, is Ferdowsi's attitude toward women. The word woman has been repeated in this book three hundred times and thirty two women have been mentioned by name (Siyaghi 1991, 133). Ferdowsi has illustrated noble women in *Shahnameh* by means of features through which original Iranian women can be defined. As a result, readers may find different and at times opposing characters among these women. Roodabeh and Soodabeh seem to be acutely different from each other, and their different features, which fashion different behaviors, determine their fates. All over his book, Ferdowsi illustrates dark and fine characters and, by reviewing their lives, leaves the readers free to decide whether to take the path to

salvation or devastation. Concerning women, he, in a similar scenario, presents two ladies one representing the good and another representing evil. Ferdowsi hopes to, implicitly, direct his reader to the path they consider the best via reflecting on the characters' destinies.

The present study investigates how different these two women are despite their phonemically similar names, what their behaviors may consequence in, and what, generally speaking, the Sage of Toos (Ferdowsi) seeks beyond their names. To achieve this goal, Discourse Analysis methods will be used, and discursal lexis and expressions carrying particular messages will be categorized.

In the first part, an account of these two ladies' fates is presented. In the second part, the discrepancies between their marriages, social conducts, marriages and fates will be addressed. Ultimately, the contradictions in these two ladies' lives will be presented along with Ferdowsi's descriptions of them.

2. Roodabeh and Soodabeh

Roodabeh is the daughter of Sindokht and the king of Kabul. Someday, Zal heads for Kabul to see to a task and hears the description of Mehrab's daughter; he falls in love with her without seeing her. Mehrab also describes Zal's chivalry and courage before his wife, Sindokht, and is overheard by Roodabeh; she falls in love with Zal. Roodabeh tells her maids her love story, and they inform Zal of her love through some particular trick; Roodabeh and Zal plan to meet up some night. On that particular night, Roodabeh drops her hair off the roof so that Zal can climb up it into her room, yet Zal had already used a rope to climb up. While there, they swear an oath to actualize their love and retain it up until their deaths. Mehrab and Saam (Zal's father), having heard this account, do not give their consent on grounds that Manoochehr, the king of Iran is a descendant of Fereydoon who has captured Zahak, and Roodabeh is a descendant of Zahak. Therefore, the king of Iran fears that this marriage will end in a child to harm Iran. When astrologers prophesy the birth of a child to benefit Iran and to support it, he agrees with this marriage. The result of this marriage is Rostam. There is no indication of Roodabeh's decease in *Shahnameh*.

Soodabeh is the daughter of Hamavaran's king. When Kavoods defeats Hamavaran, he hears that Hamavaran's king has a beautiful daughter. He requests her from her father. When Soodabeh is consulted, her father, although unhappy with this, realizes that she is happy with this marriage. Hence, Soodabeh finds her way into Kavoods's women's quarters. Kavoods has a son named Siavash who is extremely handsome and charming. Siavash, having spent his childhood with Rostam and raised by him, returns home to his father. When Soodabeh meets him, she falls in love with him immediately. She asks him to accompany her to the women's quarters, yet he refuses. She then wants Kavoods to ask him to go to the harem so that he may like some girl and seek marriage. Kavoods orders Siavash to enter the harem; he inevitably accepts and goes. There Soodabeh offers her passion to Siavash. When she is met by Siavash's refusal, she scratches her face, tears her dress and begins to weep. As soon as Kavoods enters, she accuses Siavash of adultery. Kavoods smells Siavash's attire, but there is no trace of Soodabeh's perfume on them; hence the failure of Soodabeh's plot. Soodabeh then asks one of her attendants who is a witch to abort her offspring to convince Kavoods that his children are killed due to Siavash's treason. Kavoods's quest for the

truth allows him to know by his astrologers that the children do not belong to him and Soodabeh. Soodabeh claims that they say so out of Siavash's fear. To disclose the truth, Kavuos demands that Siavash should enter a massive fire. Provided he is innocent, the fire shall not harm him. Siavash passes through the fire from which he departs unharmed. Kavuos intends to execute Soodabeh, but Siavash mediates. She conspires once again and says Siavash has passed through the fire by the magic of the phoenix. To avoid Soodabeh's plots, Siavash enters a war against Afrasyab, but joins him, resides in his country and weds his daughter. He is eventually murdered. Rostam, who knows that Siavash had joined Afrasyab's corps so as to avoid Soodabeh's plots, enters furiously to Kavuos's women's quarters and cuts Soodabeh in half.

3. Literal meaning of Roodabeh and Soodabeh

Soodabeh: this name includes two particles: 'sud' and 'aave'. 'aave' or 'aabe' or 'aab', used in names such as Soodabeh, Roodabeh and Mehrab has got roots in Avestan and means 'to appreciate, admire, desire or preserve'. If 'sud' in Persian means 'interest' or 'benefit', then Soodabeh means *somebody who longs for benefits- someone obsessed with his/her own interests*. Soodabeh, as seen in the narration, is a selfish and lustful woman who seeks, in every task, her own interests and advantage and struggles to meet her sensual and sentimental needs. Christenson speculates that Soodabeh is the Persian form of 'Sa'di' being Hamavaran King's daughter's name in Arabic texts. Monshizadeh associates this name to 'Seo'tapa' of Indian origin and states that Soodabeh may have originated from 'Se'oot' in India and means 'second wife- in Persian Havoo'. Mehrdad Bahar, who relates Soodabeh to fertilization myths in Mesopotamia, compares this woman from Hamavaran with Ishaar, and believes this name means 'juicy' and 'light giving' (Kazazi 2003,498).

Roodabeh might have been 'Roodapak' in Pahlavi. According to M. K. Kazazi, the lexis 'Hap' stems from Avestan and means 'to appreciate, admire, desire or preserve'. Accordingly, the form of this name in Avestan may have been 'Re'oodeh Hap Ake' which means 'somebody who bears the thought of her own body.' Such a name suits an innocent and pretty lady like Sindokht's daughter (Kazazi 2003, 403). Islami Nadooshan believes that this name encompasses two parts: 'rud' meaning 'child' and 'aab' meaning 'light' and as a whole, this name means 'shiny child' (Islami Nadooshan 1995, pp. 280-281). This name suits Roodabeh because as shall be seen in subsequent parts, the adjective used frequently by Ferdowsi to describe her is 'moonlike'.

As comparisons show, even the meanings of their names convey opposing ideas. Soodabeh is a woman who deems her own interests important, and as seen in the story, to achieve her goal, she steps on all moral and ethical principles, and is willing to commit adultery. She seeks advantage. She abandons her father and does not remain loyal to Kavuos. She is even jealous of the girl who intends to marry Siavash. Within the ethical framework of Shahnameh, Soodabeh is not considered free. She is a troubled woman in that she is a person constantly obliged to preserve his/her body and life. In contrast, Roodabeh is a chaste and virtuous woman who behaves emotionally based on absolute morality and reasoning. She is somebody who never crosses the red line when it comes to love and relationships.

4. The love of Roodabeh and Soodabeh

4.1 Frequency of Falling in Love

As reported in the story, Roodabeh falls in love once, but Soodabeh seemingly shares her love with Kavooos once and falls for Siavash, Kavooos's son a second time.

4.2 Motive and Love Manner

Roodabeh falls in love with Zal without seeing him. She does so by hearing about his chivalry and, according to the following verses from *Shahnameh*, because of his art. Therefore, her love is based on reasoning which means that her love is directed by her mind. She initially falls in love with Zal's character and chivalry and not his body given that Zal is an albino, with no real beauty.

In response to the attendants who say that Zal does not deserve her, she says:

Never do I long for Cesar or a Chinese knight, or even a Persian Prince
I desire Zal, son of Sam, who above all resembles a lion of mighty strength
I shall find repose by him, may he be called old or young in voxpopuli
May no one unlock my heart but him, may no one stay there but him
I fell for him before my eyes caught sight of him, all being what I heard of
I love him for his demeanor, not for his appearance and features

There is no trace of love in Soodabeh's marriage to Kavooos. She agrees to marry him for the sake of position. This is evident in the following verses. When her father is unhappy with this wedding and seeks his daughter's opinion, Soodabeh tells her father:

She told her father if choice is confined, there is nobody better than him

A man, the king of the world, is preferred by the prettiest
I cannot question his proposal cause the rejoice shall outrun sorrow

In her second love, there are two reasons for her loving Siavash: 1. She falls for him after seeing his charming face in order to extract pleasure. 2. She intends to reinforce her position after Kavooos's death through owning Siavash. She promises him to assist him with kingship if he accepts her love.

When the king is dead, you shall possess me afterward
Nothing shall hurt or disturb us, and I will be dearest to thy heart
I am standing before thee, with all features on my plate
Ready and willing to take thy orders of heart
I shall offer further than the king granted thee, wealth, fortune and order

How Soodabeh fell for Siavash:

She encountered Siavash, her heart leaping
Her imagination bird was flying high
It was as if she was a windswept string
Or some ice melting by fire

The way Roodabeh fell in love with Zal:
When she heard this dialogue, her face turned red, bashful
Her love for Zal blazed up, a love to remember and cherish

What these verses imply is stated in the following:

- a. In the verses related to Soodabeh, the word 'thought' and its priority over other words indicates that upon her visiting him, Soodabeh begins to think of trick and mischief, and she defines this love as a way to seek political power. In the verses that describe Roodabeh's status, the word 'red-faced' reveals that she is firstly embarrassed and shy- an indication of innocence and fidelity in Iranian culture.
- b. In the verses relevant to Soodabeh, which clarify her initial reactions to love, there is no trace of affection; no reason has been mentioned to express the motive behind her emotional revolution. On the other hand, the word 'Mehr=affection' implies that it is Zal's love that blazes up in her heart.

4.3 The First Features to Describe the Beloved

Three verses have been used to describe Soodabeh to Kavoos. They are the first few verses which acquaint readers with Soodabeh. Eight descriptive phrases are used to describe her; they are as follows:

Cedar, black must upon her head, tall, lassoed hair, sharp tongue, protruding lips, like a heaven filled with patterns, shiny as the sun

The metaphor 'sharp tongue' tells readers from the beginning what kind of woman is supposed to be discovered.

On the other hand, the person who firstly describes Roodabeh to Zal makes use of eight verses including nine descriptive phrases:

Sun, good-looking, like a spring garden, colorful and fragrant from sole to crown, cedar, like a round moon, with a hat made of amber, like a heaven filled with desires

The phrases used to describe Roodabeh are supreme ones.

4.4 Expression of Love

Although Roodabeh is in love with Zal, she does not express this explicitly. She conveys this indirectly through her attendants. However, Soodabeh offers her love to Siavash indecently.

Ready and willing to take thy orders of heart
I shall offer further than the king granted thee, wealth, fortune and order

4.5 Roodabeh's and Soodabeh's Advisors on the Path of Love

Roodaneh's advisors are "sacred men" who are described by adjectives such as 'kind', 'wise' and 'pious'.

There were five sacred men, compassionate and believing
She told them she wanted the truth
Which shall not be revealed
You are pious and in manners gentle

Still Soodabeh's advisor to fulfill her love is a witch described as follows:

An ambitious woman obsessed with witchcraft and tricks, Satan, boogie, Witchcraft, corrupted woman, ill-intentioned woman, ill-starred woman, magician, and evil

4.6 Devotion to Reach the Beloved

Roodabeh and Zal welcome the obstacles which have been erected on their path to love. This is evident through Roodabeh's mannerism when she first visits Zal; she undoes her hair and drops it off the roof like a rope to help him to climb the wall. This symbolic act shows from the very beginning that they are to step on difficult ways. Mehrab is a descendant of the snake-carrying Zahak, and Manoochehr is Fereydoon's grand grandson who demolished Zahak's throne. The king fears that this marriage might result in a disobedient child who may well do harm to Iran (Kia 1992, 42). Zal and Roodabeh both know that their task is quite difficult because neither Manoochehr- Iran's king- nor Mehrab- Kabul's king- would agree with this marriage. However, Zal and Roodabeh swear an oath to protect their love till death. On this way, Roodabeh is willing to reach this man to the expense of her harm. Her wish is either to reach him or die. Nevertheless, Soodabeh seeks Siavash's love or his death.

Roodabeh offers her long hair to Zal to use as a rope:

She cast her tress, telling Zal to capture it as though a rope

On the other hand, Soodabeh is in quest of Siavash's death:

She called upon all evil for him

Bad luck, misfortune and a dark regime

4.7 The Place to Visit the Beloved

The description of the place where Zal visits Roodabeh is a reminiscent of heaven. The lexical items used to demonstrate this place are indications of heaven:

Like a green spring, walls portraying sages, ornate with Chinese paintings, with golden trays, aroma of wine, amber and musk, emerald and sapphire, violet and redbud, narcissus, lily, gold glass and turquoise, light and airy, rose water.

Eventually, Ferdowsi himself mentions the similarity between this place and heaven:

It was celestial, filled with light

The pious were upright, facing elves

However, the obligatory meeting place for Soodabeh and Siavash is women's quarters. Soodabeh's place is in the women's apartments and she is like a jewel. Kavooos, also, says when he hears about Soodabeh:

I shall ask her of my father

In that she deserves my companionship

And when Kavooos visits Soodabeh, he says:

He told her 'when we met

I fell for thy beauty and scent'

The word ‘Mashkoo’ means women’s quarters, yet Roodabeh cannot be caged into women’s quarters and flies away.

4.8 Fidelity

Roodabeh is faithful to her love to the end of the story, but Soodabeh betrays her husband (Kavoos). She falls for Siavash, and when she realizes she cannot fulfill this love, she seeks his death.

4.9 Behavior with Family

Roodabeh, having heard her mother’s scolds about Zal’s love, looks down and weeps.

The earth discerned Soodabeh who was embarrassed before her mother
Tears of love streamed down her face, her eyes bleeding in love
She said, O crown of wisdom, love shall burn my soul
She also appreciates her mother when the obstacles against her love are lifted:
Her mother said, O queen of king, who deserves appreciation of all sorts
I shall worship the sand you walk on, and fashion my faith in the way you long
May evil be parted with you, and your heart be filled with joy

She also shows courtesy to her father and never answers him back in disputes (when he knows of Zal’s love of Soodabeh). Mehrab also scolds her, but she manages to silence him:

When Roodabeh heard learnt this from her father, her heart shattered and face turned
She closed her eyes and maintained silence
Nonetheless, Soodabeh tells her father who does not agree with her marriage:
Soodabeh said ‘if we are left with no choice, beware there is nobody better but him
He who is the king of world shall be chosen by the prettiest
I shall seek the cause of his joint for happiness shall not supersede sorrow

4.10 The Result of Soodabeh’s and Roodabeh’s Love

In the world depicted in *Shahnameh*, love is fulfilled. Unfulfilled love is an indication of an unhealthy society (Eslami Nadooshan 2003, p.96). Roodabeh and Zal’s love is materialized, and the most elegant wedding party in *Shahnameh* belongs to them. The fruit of this love is the most reputable champion in whose hands lies the fate of Iran. Iranian kings, also, need him in order to strengthen the bases of their principalities.

In his fight against Esfandiar, Rostam not only mentions his father but also his mother, Roodabeh, and takes great pride in her. Hereafter we get familiar with another Roodabeh- Rostam’s mother. On a trip to Mazandaran, the young champion bids farewell to his mother, Roodabeh, and father, Zal. In the story of Rostam and Sohrab, Roodabeh’s name gets a mention when Rostam, in his fight against Sohrab, disappointed, remembers his mother; he advises his brother, Zavareh, to soothe their mother. Roodabeh mourns his passing. In her old years, Roodabeh is a dignified lady who is respected deeply by Iranian sages. In a message to Rostam, Kavoos sends regards to Roodabeh. In the story of Rostam and Esfandiar, when Esfandiar reaches Zabolestan, he requires Rostam to establish a circle of the tribe’s

sages in order to share Gashtab's message with them. The mention of Roodabeh's name in this circle is an indication of her political and social status.

In Rostam and Esfandiar's fight, Rostam is badly wounded and faces death; Roodabeh grieves over this. There is no knowledge of Roodabeh at Rostam's funeral service, but a year after his demise, Roodabeh is refound. Here, she has a token from her youth: perseverance to death. Roodabeh stops eating due to Rostam's decease and starves in severe conditions until she, one night, after a week of starvation, journeys to the woods, catches a dead snake out of water and stuffs it in her mouth. At this time, an attendant comes by and pulls the snake from her. Roodabeh, now unconscious, is taken to the palace and fed. When she comes around, she recognizes Rostam's death and so she shares her wealth with Dervishes.

In the end, Roodabeh's righteous emergence is heard, which is unexpected. In Esfandiar's will, Rostam takes Bahman's custody after the prince's death. But the ungrateful Bahman, following Rostam's death, attacks Zabol to avenge his father's blood. Faramarz peppers Rostam's son with arrows and ropes. . Pashootan, Esfandiar's brother, advises Bahman to fear God and cease murder and depredation. As soon as Bahman takes Pashootan's advice and frees Zal, Roodabeh gives a loud cry:

May no one witness this hour, may the earth be wiped off Esfandiar

The resonance of Roodabeh's plea is heard in the air:

Pashootan got upset with Roodabeh, his face turning yellow of her moan

And Bahman departs Zabolestan. Her elegant cry exterminates the sacredness of Gashtab's kin. Roodabeh's voice, which reflects love in *Shahnameh*, is dimmed after a devastating curse.

Soodabeh represents sexual and fruitless love. Married to Kavooos, she does not bear a child to ascend to the throne after his father. When in love with Siavash, she does not welcome fidelity, and this love results in nothing but disclosure of secrets and Siavash's exposure to death. Her love to Siavash causes the demise of three people, two of whom are fetuses delivered dead, upon her persistence, by one of her attendants in order to tell Kavooos that her children are born dead on grounds of Siavash's betrayal. The third person is Siavash who, in order to rid himself of Soodabeh's plots, joins Afrasyab and is eventually killed.

4.11 Roodabeh and Soodabeh's Death

The champions in *Shahnameh* consider death the greatest foe (Eslami Nadooshan 1986, p.12). There is no mention of Roodabeh's death in *Shahnameh* as though this brave and righteous woman has eternal life. On the contrary, the only woman who in a book of championship is killed by a champion is Soodabeh. Rostam, Siavash's uncle, goes to Kavooos's palace after Siavash's death, finds his way to the women's departments and cuts Soodabeh in half.

5 White Roodabeh, Black Soodabeh

The worldview of *Shahnameh* is the defending of the good against evil. A good woman in *Shahnameh* has the beauty of body and soul combined, grace along with gentleness and shame as well as desire (Eslami Nadooshan 1986, p.13). Ferdowsi has praised women with the most elegant features possible and over the course of his book he makes praiseful reference to his wife being his companion

during the preparation of the book (Javanshir 1981, 324). He has voiced his opinion in several parts regarding women and their attributes (Haeri 2004, pp.161-162):

If child is well-mannered and behaved, it is supreme be it son or daughter
If be pious and wise, it is deemed treasure-like
If be tall with long hair, wise, knowledgeable, and well-spoken
She shall be the greatest of women with whom the husband's consent
Woman shall be pretty, coquitos and wise to ease pains and sorrows.

As seen heretofore, Roodabeh meets all Ferdowsi's expectations for being good. Nonetheless, Soodabeh is somebody for whom Ferdowsi makes use of anti-women properties, not discernible this much elsewhere throughout *Shahnameh*:

The story reveals that love mingled with blood is not eternal
When the child is decent and women's love should be abandoned
Women's hearts and tongues are unconnected
Ferdowsi voices his opinion about women in another part:
When this story is heard, you'd better avoid women
Avoid women but the most pious for evil women shall bring misfortune

Ferdowsi, also, suggests not consulting women in some verses, however. For instance, he says through Siavash's words:

All I learned in the king's department was that women cannot be counseled
Or in another place, Rostam addresses Kavos after Siavash's death and says:
She who is the least important of the counsel
Deserves coffin more than a woman's counsel
Siavash lost it all on a woman's advice
The best of women in one's life shall be one's mother

Unlike these three verses in which Ferdowsi warns us against consulting women due to Soodabeh's inappropriate conduct, he- in one part of *Shahnameh* where Esfandiyar reaches Zabolestan- asks Rostam to create a large circle of tribe sages and mentions Roodabeh's name to be included. This is an indication of Rodabeh's status and position in Ferdowsi's view:

Everybody shall gather up and seek counsel
To praise Roodabeh, her name shall be eternal

White women in *Shahnameh* live a life which boosts the society's expectations of them. They are wise, productive, obedient, virtuous and kind women (Talkhabi 2005, p.100). Nonetheless, black women in literary works are either angels or devils. Black women are vicious women whose entire existence is the manifestation of wickedness and absurdities. These women oppose the white on grounds that white women are always companions and servants of champions, but the black always seek their destruction via tricks and witchcraft. They are accused of wizardry, usually parted from sophisticated and decent

expectations which a society holds for women. To achieve their goals, they try various ways in a strange, exceptional, fearful and somehow irrational manner.

Tabari believes that Soodabeh is a witch (Kia, 1991, p.143). According to a Persian account by Ibn Balkhi, Soodabeh is a witch. It is probable that Soodabeh may have found her way into king's accounts via myths, yet it is not clear which myth or which land might have directed her into national epics. Her character resembles the Sumerian Inanna and Ishtar in Babylon. On the other hand, George Dumezil shows similarities between the stories of Kavos and Kavi O Sens and evaluates the role of Soodabeh in *Shahnameh* against that of the great Kavi's daughter in the Indian great epic of Mahabharat (Kia, 1991, p.144). Also, the story of Soodabeh is redolent of Joseph and Zoleikha's story. In addition, in western literature, Soodabeh has been compared with Phedre, Thesee's wife, who makes affairs with her husband's son, Hippolte (Yoosefi 1991, 144).

On the other hand, there are those who believe that Soodabeh is admirable since she actively endeavors to make her dreams come true; she does what most men are not blamed for. They consider Soodabeh a gray woman similar to most women within the society, that is, neither good because they are prone to commit crimes, nor vicious and ill-starred (Talkhabi 2005, 184). However, from the author's vantage point, Soodabeh is not an ordinary woman and is deemed a black woman on the grounds that on various occasions in *Shahnameh*, her witch orientation and her relationships with wizards are mentioned. Conspiring against Siavash, she and her witch accomplice plan an abortion while she had tasks to see to with wizards and witches heretofore.

There was a woman, secretive and dark
With her there was so much trick and malice

According to verses, it can be construed that she is really a witch, not even a pseudo-witch, in that the children she aborts, trying to suggest that they are king's offspring, are in fact wizard kin.

There were two children born of evil
How can such offspring be devilish?

The astrologer states that
Both of these are born of a magician
They are born but are kin of devil

In *Shahnameh*, although Soodabeh is a king's daughter who is beautiful, she possesses a witch's temper and knowledge (Kia 1992, 149). Upon Kavos's first visit to Soodabeh

Discerned Kavos and gazed
Murmured the name of God when facing Soodabeh

As can be inferred from the story of Rostam and Esfandiyar, when facing a witch, they would have invoked God's name [to protect themselves against evil]. Kavos, as mentioned above, does the same which discloses the fact that Soodabeh, though not being a witch, owns a witch-like temper and attitude.

The only woman who in a book of championship is killed by a champion is Soodabeh- just similar to the witches murdered by Rostam and Esfandiyar being indicative of the idea that she is witch-like.

Rostam, who is Siavash's caretaker, goes to Kavoo's women departments after Siavash's death and halves Soodabeh.

Siavash speaks to himself somewhere stating:

He plead God to keep him safe

From all evil, devil and goblins

Whose referent by Div (evil and goblin) is Soodabeh.

After the termination of Soodabeh's plot and her cooperation with a witch, she has been mentioned throughout *Shahnameh* being involved in witchcraft and wizardry. For instance, upon Siavash's emergence out of fire, Kavoo confronts Soodabeh, shouting:

Thou had evil intentions, jeopardizing my son's life

Thou cast his life on fire via magic and thy tricks

Again Soodabeh tries to poison Kavoo's mind against Siavash:

Once again he manipulated

The king of the world

Through magic and tricks

The adjectives and expressions used to describe her personality throughout *Shahnameh* all indicate the witch-like nature of this woman. Sixty eight adjectives have been written in *Shahnameh* to modify Soodabeh. Regardless of the expressions modifying women and their beauties, there are twenty four adjectives indicating her rebellious character:

A sharp tongue, angry look, interrogator, keen, filled with secrets, Div-kind, Satanic, luring, witch-kind, ill-thinker, rising, hurt, difficult, vicious, fussing, bold, bad, flirtatious, ill-natured.

In contrast, Roodabeh has a celestial and light face. There are no stories in Persian literature more pleasant than the story of Zal and Roodabeh (Eslami Nadooshan, 2002:88). While Roodabeh, like Juliet, knows that her family are foes with Zal's family, is not hesitant on her romance path with Zal. In private with Zal, she does not do anything against the principles of chastity [popular at that time in that context] (Eslami Nadooshan 1986, p.119). Roodabeh's position in *Shahnameh* is so high she is given the adjective 'fær' [in Farsi: splendor, majestic]. However, seemingly, this adjective has got nothing to do with God's strength and grace and power in championship; it is simply indicative of concepts like beauty, glimmer and tradition (Servatian 1971, 154). For example, Zal refers to Roodabeh and is surprised at her beauty, hair, majesty and grace:

There are 164 adjectival expressions describing Roodabeh. Regardless of the expressions modifying women and their beauties, there are sixty-six adjectives expressing her celestial and heavenly nature. She has often been compared with heavenly objects or elves or heaven, all indicative of her clean and transparent nature. Among these expressions, the frequency of 'moon' is the highest (26 times). In a number of adjectives, her conduct and mannerism have been implied:

her face lighter than the sun, heaven looking, she resembles the moon, she is like the ornate paradise, sun, full-moon, like a paradise filled with desires, light-hearted, there is nothing lighter than your face, the

messenger of the God of east, moon, Kabolestan's moon, with a decent crown on her head, like a cedar and like a star, stars and moon would praise her, ornate moon, moon-like lady, sun-face, elf-like, elvish, grace, graceful moon, light-nature, good-nature, new-moon, precious moon, as green as heaven, like the sun of the east, an ornate paradise so decorated, like the shimmering sun in the spring, paradise-like, well-reputed, champion-like heart.

6. Conclusion

Ferdowsi has depicted good and bad in *Shahnameh* and indicated the true path through a careful and thorough description of their ways and fates. He so assists the readership with the righteous. There are many women in *Shahnameh*, among them are Roodabeh and Soodabeh who have opposing characters. Through an analysis of the lexis used to describe each, it can be construed that Roodabeh symbolizes light and righteousness and owns a celestial face in the book. On the contrary, Soodabeh represents darkness and viciousness and has a witch-like fate in *Shahnameh*. Eventually, Roodabeh gives birth to a son, the like of whom was never born in the world heretofore. He possessed all good deeds without which the continuation of the kingdom would not have been possible. He fought evil and darkness and loved beauty and light. On the other hand, not only did Soodabeh not have a son to inherit kingdom, but also she threw the only king's son and the heir of throne into death. While Roodabeh and Soodabeh symbolizing light and evil did not directly oppose one another like other characters in *Shahnameh*. Soodabeh was eventually killed by Rostam, Roodabeh's son who was the fruit of her righteousness. Roodabeh yet was granted eternal life.

رودابه وسودابه، المرأة البيضاء والمرأة السوداء في الشاهنامه

ليلا عرفانيان قونسولي

معهد كاشمار للتعليم العالي ، كاشمار ، إيران

رضا ورزشي

معهد بينلود للتعليم العالي ، مشهد ، إيران

الملخص

في ملحمة الشعرية المسماة بالشاهنامه، يصور الفردوسي بعمق في أبياتها، الأفعال الخيرة الطيبة، والأفعال السيئة الشريرة، مثلما يصور النور والضيء، والظلمة والسواد، حيث يوجه القراء للاحتفاء بكل ما هو طيب وخير، والبعد عن كل ما هو شرير وسيئ، وذلك بوضعهم وجها لوجه أمام وصف دقيق لسلوكيات ومصائر البشر السالكين لكل مسلك من مسالك الحياة ودروبها. والمرأة من وجهة نظر الفردوسي، تشغل مكانة في غاية الأهمية؛ حيث نجد المرأة المنيرة البيضاء والمرأة المظلمة السوداء الممثلتين في رودابه وسودابه، مثلهما في ذلك مثل الرجال الطيبين والشريرين يمكن تتبع آثارهما في جميع أنحاء الشاهنامه. ومن خلال تحليل دقيق للمفردات والألفاظ والعبارات المستخدمة في وصف ملامح هاتين المرأتين تركيزاً على سلوك ومصير كل واحدة منهما؛ يمكن الخلوص إلى أن رودابه هي امرأة تتمتع بوجه أبيض منير، بينما سودابه على النقيض منها، امرأة ذات وجه أسود مظلم. حتى في اسميهما رغم التشابه الشكلي في تركيب الاسمين إلا أنهما يشيران إلى شخصيتين مختلفتين. فردابه التي تسير بخطوات ثابتة على طريق الخير والأعمال الطيبة، تصبح أم الرجل الأكثر شهرة والأقوى بلا منازع في الشاهنامه، إنه رستم، المنوط به الحفاظ على وحدة إيران وسلامة ملوكها وأراضيها، إضافة إلى ذلك لا يظهر في الشاهنامه أى دليل على زوال رودابه؛ مما يوحي بخلودها. من ناحية أخرى، فإن سودابه التي تسلك سبيل الشر دائماً، لم تنجب ابناً يرث عرش أبيه، وليس هذا فحسب؛ بل إنها عرضت سياوش للموت وهو الذي كان من المفترض أن يخلف أباه على العرش ليكون ملكاً على إيران. وفي نهاية المطاف تقتل سودابه على يد رستم بطل الشاهنامه ابن رودابه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: رودابه، سودابه، الشاهنامه، الفردوسي.

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