



A Comparative Study of Archetypes in the Myths of *Edda* and *Shahnameh*

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Abstract

Adapting a comparative manner of analysis this study tries to examine the correlation of two classic books of The Icelandic *Edda* (c.1300) and The Persian epic, The *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings* (c.1010); through archetypal criticism. Jung's key term is "collective unconscious", emphasizing the idea that unconscious contents and modes of behavior are more or less the same in individuals and in form of symbols and archetypes can be manifested in mythology and fairytales of different nations. The study resulted in coming across common concepts in terms of archetypal criticism in either of *Shahnameh* and *Edda* that comes to agreement with Jung's idea.

Key Words: *Edda*, *Shahnameh*, mythology, archetype, Jung

Introduction

Mythology is the most archaic and deep investigation of mankind in an attempt to form explanations in response to his basic questions about existence and the most basic record of his nature and spirit. Tracing back to our ancestors, as far as it could be, the fundamental language through which they have recorded their mysterious experiences and realization of life and nature had been the language of myth. An objection against myth is that it doesn't contain a structured framework and a rule governing meaning or a specific implied message while the world of myth possesses its own regulations, laws and realities. Although, irrational images replace the logical pattern in structure of myth, they are not meaningless. Capturing the meaning must be by decoding myth symbols and images. This was what Carl Jung (1875-1961) considered as the symbolic approach to myth and dream.

The core question here is how psychology and mythology are connected? The two approaches are discrete, yet psychological approach and mythological criticism are in close connection in a way that the fundamental things they deal with are

human's attitudes, desires, thoughts or generally human behavior. Mythology takes a broader domain as it is formed by motives, mentality and orientations of people during centuries among different nations. Hence, every myth is a symbolic reflection of prevailing desires and anxiety of a generation to which it belongs. As dreams reflect the unconscious desires of an individual, study of myth manifests minds of community. On the other hand, myths are important since they, through their attractive and imaginative accounts of gods' adventures, can teach us the things that philosophy and history are not able to. It should be noted although a myth necessarily does not possess such accuracy historically or scientifically, it refers to events that recur in an endless cycle in time. If it is supposed that this quality is typical of a myth in general, then it can be claimed that a common pattern or cycle is realizable among different myths. Exploration of these common patterns or cycles involve within the scope of comparative studies.

The comparative approach is the pivotal axis to a symbolic realization of mythology. Through comparison, certain patterns which recur in totally diverse cultures with different languages and too distant either by time and place can be discerned. Despite differences in geographical sites and beliefs and ritual motifs, there are similarities and affinities in terms of some basic principles shaping ancient epics and myths between different nations. These underlying patterns are what Jung called "Archetypes" (Cuddon 54). Psychological criticism came from the Jung's psychology critique, is one of the contemporary approaches in the realm of literary criticism which claims to explain the unconscious aspects of human psychology in literary works. This approach aims at achieving mythical and archetypal elements, discovery of their essence and function in literary texts.

In this regard, the most suitable contexts in order to be considered from archetypal point of view are those whose creation and advent are mostly