

Full Length Research Paper

An analytical study on one of the dramatic rituals of Komeijan inhabitants in Iran under the light of Anthropological hypotheses and Aristotelian dramatic pattern

Mohammad Aref* and Hojatollah B. Farahani

Department of Humanities, Islamic Azad University, Arak Branch, Iran.

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This paper is an analysis of *whooping-cough*, one of Iranian pre-Islamic rituals that functions as a way of defending people against evil. The data collection derived from the three year anthropologic study of the researcher on drama done within 67 villages of Komeijan region in Markazi province, Iran. The methods and materials in this case were classic literature, Aristotelian dramatic pattern and anthropological approach to drama. The study showed that *whooping-cough* has done just in Komeijan and the present documents indicated that the last performance went back to 1970. The purpose of the study is the approval of the dramatic aspects of the ritual and clarifying the roots of drama originating from folklore rituals and beliefs. Moreover, the ritual, *whooping-cough*, had a key role in changing the way of life for inhabitants in Komeijan throughout past centuries.

Key words: Ritual, healing, escapegoat, drama, Aristotelian, *whooping-cough*, folk beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

Primitive people used to appeal supernatural powers to respond their material and spiritual needs; they even believed that their life depended on some unknown agents. The initial anthropologists thought of the powers as magical or supernatural elements that had determining role in their communal life, so they were likely to turn into customs and rituals and gradually changed into rituals, which in turn became a social/communal code of conducts. According to Brockett's viewpoint, rituals can be classified due to their advantage to people practicing them such as (Brockett, 1993: 34):

1. Ritual as a kind of knowledge.
2. Ritual as a kind of education.
3. Ritual as a controller, controlling the probable events in life: famine, victory in war, rainfall.
4. Ritual as an appreciation of supernatural powers.

Joseph Campbell reads the following tripartite elements

in the fusion of myth and rituals:

1. Pleasure (in nourishment and shelter).
2. Power (tending toward victory and magnifying one's self and nation.
3. Duty (appealing God/supernatural powers and social rites and rules (Brockett, 1993:30).

Iranian rituals are so much variant and rich that we see each and every one function effectively in life of Iranians through history. In a general classification, Iranian rituals are divided into two groups according to the way of performance. The first type is that of seasonal festivals, which are done annually, the rituals of the second group are carried out in the case of emergency, that is, disasters, infectious diseases, epidemics, mental disorders and other illnesses. Most of the rituals either of the first or the second groups are originated in the earliest time. To Marry Boyce most of Iranian rituals are historic and rooted in ancient time (Boyce, 1987:8).

Some of them have undergone definite changes through the course of time, while others are preserved in their initial forms. Several rites are being lost now owing

*Corresponding author. E-mail: m_aref_1961@yahoo.com. Tel: +98 - 9126854998, +98 - 8614130654.

to the certain changes such as technological and scientific developments. Quoting Andre Schauffner as the art of theater raises to its culmination, the rituals get a decline and vanish (Schauffner, 2004:35). Fortunately, a good number of traditional rituals are still alive in the memories of the aged people who have been either the participants or the witness of their performance.

Mary Boyce, as aforesaid, in her analysis of Iranian rituals states that the rituals (at least their elements) come from different traditions of different periods of time: Proto-Indo-European, Zoroastrian and Islamic. As she argues, often-times one and the same ritual may consist of various elements originated at different times. The very idea can be applied on *whooping-cough* as a ritual in which almost all of the above mentioned points are included. *Whooping-cough* (Qara –Iskiyrmah in the Azari language, Siah Sorfeh in Persian) a good adjustable sample to Brockett's idea, specifically deals with exorcism and is well-known as one of the outstanding rituals of the inhabitants in North-east of Iran (including Turkish, Persian and Tat) up to the present time. The ritual has been common and actively performed in Komeijan region until 1970. The tragedy is appreciated both for its anthropological potentiality and its dramatic features. In spite of the name *whooping-cough*, it is performed in different cases for different purposes such as healing and preventing *whooping cough* as well as many other diseases. In addition to its healing power, it functions as a remedy toward off any danger, disaster or tribulation. In this case and concerning its category, it goes to the class of rites averting the evil and defending people against it.

From the view point of anthropology it is a kind of apotropaic rite. Traditionally, people in Komijan have formed a series of rituals and resolutions to resolve many of events, say the seasonal events or natural/ climatic changes and so owing to their beliefs have been able to pacify their heart and mind. In respect to their folk culture, disease or misfortune is to be the direct result of evil spirits or their acts. Not only in Komijan region but in Iranian mythology, we frequently come to the same idea. To Zorvanis the only way to remedy the devil is to offer a sacrifice (Bahar, 2007:96). In the same regard William Beyman comments that any society which falls victim to violence or a terrible misfortune, blindly goes after victimization, that is, the people search for an abrupt and violent remedy and hurriedly admits that source of all clamity is just one sinful man who must be easily victimized (Beyman, 1991:295). In Zoroastrian literary Scriptures, like Bundahishn (which is based on ancient materials derived from the lost part of original Avesta and so preserving some pre-Zoroastrian elements) it reads that Drudge the lie who is the embodiment of female devilish essence and created by Angra¹ Mainya fecundated by human sins, so in its turn gives birth to

new sins, crimes, blots and defects. The horrible devilish spirit Angra Mainya, the destructive ruler, is the creator of human defects, psychological and physical illnesses like ulcer, leprosy, fever, bareness and so on which disseminate grief, sorrow or death (Rack, 1998:84).

Iranians apply different means to avoid diseases. Among them, there are special rites with the function of defending people against diseases and healing them. First of all, it is necessary to find the major cause of misery. As the findings of this study approve, in Komijan region in the case of epidemic or other misfortunes the inhabitants began to look for the cause of sudden misery, disease or consternations. To these people, it may be a subject, a man or an animal. In order to overcome the misfortune it is necessary to get the assistance of the supernatural Good Spirits who will defeat the Evil ones. One of the functions of *Whooping-cough* is to gain the Good Spirit's favor. But the first and the foremost problem is to find and exclude the one who is the reason of the guilt, fault, that is, the sinful person from the community.

The victim might be somebody who is mourning permanently or a paralytic one. These people are considered to be the bearers of the Evil Spirits or the victims of devilish acts. In the light of Wilfred Guerin's opinion the hero on whom depends the welfare and salvation of his tribe/nation, necessarily has to die to atone for their sins and to fertilize their farms (Guerin, 1978:166). When the sinful person is isolated from the community, he takes away the Evil with himself from the area. Therefore Nargess, the heroine in *Whooping Cough*, is sent out to retain peace and comfort to her people. As the man of sinful guilts becomes isolated, he/she keeps away devil spirit with his isolation, too. In Greek mythology we read of the identical beliefs (Frye, 1974:421). To name just a few examples of this idea briefly, we refer to the following figures. In Greek mythology as Tripp (1974:421) points out, Oedipus and Paris suffered from the same fate and were drawn away since they were considered to be the cause of evil. Oedipus was isolated twice. He was the only child of Laius, king of Thebes and Jocasta. Laius was warned that if he had a son by Jocasta, the son would kill him. He therefore pierced the infants' feet and gave him to shepherds to expose on Mount Cithaeron. Instead, the shepherds gave him to Merope or Periboca, the wife of Polybus, the king of Corinth.

In Iranian mythology, too, Siavash (Sjavar Shan) was driven away by his father Key Kavus (Kavi Usan), because he was viewed as the cause of his mother's death. But great Rostam took him to Zabol and raised him (Gerard, 1998:84). There is an interesting healing ritual for driving away the evil spirits among Tajik people. It shows the connection of the disease and the evil spirits on the one hand and the connection of healing and a goat on the other. This ritual is called *Kūc-Kūc* which is usually performed by women at night-time. First, the patient sits in the middle of the room with her eyes

1. Angra is equal to wickedness, ugliness, demon in old Persian

blindfolded. She holds two lighted lamps called *nukča* in her hands. Besides, *nukča* must be stuck into the flour poured on a tray or a kerchief.

The fortune teller, *baxsi*, sings all sorts of incantations to the accompaniment of a tambourine. In this way, she drives out the spirits harming the patient. As the ceremony goes on, a goat must be slaughtered. It ends in a feast. In Kanibadam village, the Tajik women strip the patient naked and smear him with the goat's blood when performing the same ritual, *kūc-kūc*. They throw its skin over the patient's shoulders and tie up her eyes. She sits on the ground with the lamps between her legs. The sorceress takes a cord, makes knots symbolically tying up the spirits of illness(es). She hangs the cord over her patient's neck, unties her eyes and takes the goat's skin away as singing to the accompaniment of the tambourine. At the end, the patient washes and puts on clean dress (Sukhariova, 1929: 117).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

As one of the most essential ways to understand and analyze the cultural rules/aspects of any nation, tribe, race, etc. is anthropological studies, dwelling on the dramatic rituals, owing to its intimate relation with anthropology, seem of high significance. Moreover, due to the oral transmission of the conventions and rituals and the fact that the participants/ witnesses of ritualistic ceremonies are aged people, the recognition and record of the rituals in every nation seems urgent and needs immediate measures.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Continuity in anthropological researches to find out the roots and origin(s) of classic theatre in Iran is of crucial importance. In addition, based on the final results, the present study provides new motifs/experiences and dramatic plots and helps forward the improvement of experimental and documentary cinema for playwrights and directors working in different fields of stage theatre, national and television/radio theatre.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mohammad Mirshokraee is one of the acclaimed researchers, who have done a lot on folk culture and anthropological studies in Iran and in case of Markazi province he has explored and reviewed the dramatic ritual of *Kussa presentation*, but he has missed considering Komeijan with its rich background of rites. Godratollah Fathi, as the other prominent figure in this field, has attempted an ecological study upon the rituals in Markazi province, but like his colleague he left unnoticed to collect and analyze the rituals. The last man

of fame is Peter Chelkowski who has endeavored religio-theatrical rituals in Iran, though he did not examine Komeijan Rituals in his research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How many of the rituals are dramatic in Komeijan?
2. What is the dominant genre in these rituals?
3. How much adjustable is *whooping-cough* to Aristotelian drama?
4. What is the main cause of ritual making for people in Komeijan?
5. Which of the theories the data does it approve? Does it approve Frazer evolution theory or Strause universal method?

METHODOLOGY

The initial method applied to the present study is Aristotelian theory of drama wherein he considers six structural elements and the second relevant approach is that of current anthropological hypotheses. In his definition of drama, Aristotle refers to the crucial role of dramatic structure and dramatic plot. His eminent position in the realm of dramatic art is due to his perception of structure in which he names six elemental components: character, language, plot, materials, music and symbol. Under the light of his theory and in processing the data, he divides plot into five-part sections: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement or ending. This pattern has always been as the most enduring, attractive, influential and aesthetic one among the man (audience), imitator (actor) and work (ritual).

Undoubtedly, from the very beginning of anthropological studies of theater (1875 under the leadership of Sir James Frazer) until now, there has not been any reliable documentation indicating the interrelation between theater and its traditional ritualistic origin. So the only basis of study is the hypothesis introduced by theater anthropologist. Oscar Gross Brockett quoting Frazer argues that all cultures follow a pattern of development. In this case, the primitive societies can hand in a series of valid documents related to the history of drama through past centuries (Brockett, 1974:30). While in many cases Malinowski persists on the personal functionalism in anthropology and proposes that the basic functionalism dwells on just the present function of human culture, not the questionable and unclear reconstruction of the past, the researcher tries to review and analyze the field work findings in the light of Brockett's theory, Strause's structuralism and Joseph Campbell's three basic reasons about the function of myth and ritual. To him, the only way open to anthropological study of rituals is reconstruction of data provided by old generation. Such a view, for certain, stands against Malinowski's assumption and emphasizes that Strause's structuralism along with Frazer's developmental principles are sufficient reasons to argue why oral rituals in Komeijan region are still alive and fresh.

The second school belongs to Clude Leve Strause; like Frazer, he believes in a universal pattern in development of drama, though he argues that every society has its own cultural traits. He thinks of myth as a kind of logic and concludes that at least there are two ways of reasoning: mythologic/magic, and scientific (Brockett, 32). Moreover, the recent theater anthropological studies allow us to form the method and to found the basis of study on personal and plural unconsciousness.

Cuisenier assumes that anthropologist, disregarding the statistic

and quantitative data; just by the usage of some information gathered by historians apply plural unconsciousness to work on their subject (Cuisenier, 1986:32). Though here there is no statistical data, it is actually the best and the most possible way to get in touch with the core of origin and stimulation in the life of people who are the subject of study. Brockett speaks about the significance of myth and ritual in human societies, too, he confirms that the new generation of anthropologists accepted the fact that drama and dramatic performances spring from primitive rituals (Brockett, 1974:32). Theater anthropologists always take into account the vital role of these societies, while discussing the role of climate and culture in formation of human rites. Joseph Campbell in his efforts to understand the unity of myth and rituals classifies them into three groups: those that follow pleasure, the rituals seeking power or those on founded duty (Campbell, 1974:34). So it is right to argue that some data collected in Komeijan region are really ancient and turn back to many years B.C.

The procedure practiced in data collection is of present measurement since dramatic rituals have their roots in the life experience of all generations, so many of them are no longer performed, or if performed undergone some changes. In getting the information the researcher benefited reviewing study, apparently the people questioned were all citizens who were present and alive at the time of event or ceremonial ritual.

Area of the Study

Concerning its geographical location, placed at the heart of Iranian plateau, Komeijan with a population of about 70,000 people and its historical background, hosting different tribes including Sekit, Guti, Lulubia, Ashori, Ilami, Tat, Mad, kassit, etc. since 2000 B.C. has had the capacity for collecting their folk beliefs and letting the researcher to explore the folklore dramatic rituals. The region contains one hundred villages each of which possesses its own rituals so that one hundred percent more than the information resulted can be found and examined here. At the present, only three ethnic groups (Azari, Tats and Pars), speaking Turkish, Tati and Persian dwell in the region.

The final noticeable point is that the region lacked any school till 1960, so the majority of settlers were illiterate/semiliterate, though after Islamic Revolution in 1978 the signs of civilization like school, library, clinic, etc. changed the rustic way of life toward civil. So the findings of the study within an area are deprived of economic educational facilities by it seem remarkable and noteworthy.

DISCUSSION

Returning to the rite of *whooping-cough* in the Isa-abad, it should be added that in case of epidemics and misfortunes women begin to observe and examine the course of events, look for the reason of misfortune and find the evil sign, for instance, a series of deaths or the indomitably natural calamities that might have happened. The only way to escape the trouble is to drive away its reason immediately. In this case, the reason might be a mischievous person or a mourner as we have already mentioned. According to popular beliefs, this sort of practicing to find the miserable person helps people to deserve the Good Spirits' favorable treatment. Based on the findings, on these occasions the women of village gather together and perform the ritual. First of all, they do their best to find a person who is to be blamed the bearer

of the evil and drive him/her away from the dwelling. Moreover, they began the ceremony at The Great Lady's command. The participants go playing and singing from one house to the other examining each countryman and deciding their destinies whether they are guilty or innocent.

So at last they find the sinful person, that is, an ugly creature, a murderer or an insolvent debtor and hand him to the leader of the ritual, to The Great Lady, who is the most honorable elderly woman of the village. But if it is impossible to find such persons, they choose a seriously ill, mentally retarded or the mourner of the village and if they fail, again one of the villagers volunteers to take the role of scapegoat. It is worth mentioning that until recently there were special mourners who performed the rite of Cheme¹. Sobbing over the deceased especially in Kurdistan and Luristan, Iran. These crying women embody ugliness, the foul force of spirit, the illness and the idea of sowing the evil. When people cannot find a suitable man toward the evil off, at *whooping-cough*, one of the inhabitants takes the role upon himself and when the main performer is chosen, people put a bridle around his/her neck and turn him/her round the streets and yards of the village barefooted, in old, worn-out clothes so that every one can see him/her as the leading cause of the epidemic, the devil force, the sower of the evil and God's punishment.

According to the traditional beliefs in Komeijan, curing diseases is directly connected to sorcery. The people think that they get sick for the evil spirit gets in the body, so it is necessary to take it away with the help of incantations, spells or sorcery in general. Concerning the satanic spirits Dandamaev writes that not too much in the past it was commonplace to think of pessimistic people as men of devilish derives, to them such satanic tendencies were the main source of physical ailments; the very fact made them apply exorcism to clean up the body from evil (Dandamaev, 1980, 272). In ancient times the healer used to make the image of the evil spirits then broke them into pieces and thus treated the patient. Besides, they brought offerings to the gods, the forces of nature and the spirits haunting the houses. The idea of burdening somebody with all the sins is known and spread in different periods of time in different countries. In the bible, for example, the goat was burdened with sins. Returning to *whooping-cough*, its last performance in Isa-abad goes back to 1970. Since at that time women /actresses found no victim deserving punishment all because of her devilish sinful spirit or physical defects such as deformity or any birthmarks, a woman by the name of Nargess played the role of scapegoat. The recorded documents present the accomplishment of the ritual as follows: First, women bridle Nargess and tramp about the village with her and take her to the houses of well-known figures, playing some musical instruments, singing, making loud noise with curses and violent

1. "Cheme" means collective mourning and wail

exclamations of indignation. The inhabitants here give her an odd shoe, some flour, bitter pepper, barley bread and *fatir*,¹ a cudgel and a worn-out torn table-cloth. Then, reciting definite rhymes they throw stones after Nargess to damn her. The crowds stroll round the village with her till sunset to gather food-stuff for the ritual bitter soup which is called *Essiodeh Omaj*. Then women get busy with cooking the soup during the whole night, meanwhile Nargess is locked in a room till next day when the ritual is to be restarted.

In general, the senior woman, the Great Lady, is responsible for the discharge of all needed accessories of the ritual and the group performing it is obliged to address the Lady to solve any problem which might arise during the ceremony. Considering Brockett's view, the agents and participants of rituals perform the role of mythological characters or supernatural powers. To him, this role playing indicates the birth and appearance of a dramatic scene (Brockett, 1363:30).

Late at nights the group of women go to the Great Lady and deliver her the barely bread, *fatir*, the cudgel, the odd shoe and the extremely bitter and unpleasant soup to drink Nargess, meanwhile she is imprisoned, isolated, feeling hungry and thirsty. The women ask Senior Lady to set Nargess free, at least temporary for they are to be her attorney in one sense and express their sympathy with her. But the Lady refuses because she is the defender of her fellow villages and their security, especially the patients and those who are on the threshold of falling ill. The anti-hero, the Lady, has two options in front:

1. To let Nargess free for a while.
2. To reject the request of attorneys.

On the second day, Nargess has no other chance except to be driven away from the village in order to take the misfortune and distress away with her (like an escapegoat). So the women hold the bridle and take her along the streets, dragging her on the ground, after that they raise Nargess to the top of the hill, nail the bridle to the ground, burn the grass around her and express their extreme disgust and aversion to her. Their noise and curses are suddenly paused and interrupted by absolute silence. It is worth mentioning that mountains particularly the picks are highly valued to Iranians. Mountains are sacred places to speak to God, it is the dwelling for great mythological kings and heroes like Gubad, Freidoon, Zal, and etc. (Javadi, 1982:111).

People nail Nargess as they believe that the evil spirit is nearby and they confirm it by nailing it to the ground. According to the tradition, women lay table not far from Nargess that is, they spread the cloth then put the barley bread, the bitter soup and *fatir* on it. They keep silence for a while and wait until one of the women cursing and damning pulls Nargess by the bridle to the table. She

cries: "Hey, Nargess, you.....dangerous.... illness.... vicious....mischief....listen look....What I tell youlisten well.... You have handed us over diseases. If you are hungry and have come here to seize something you must have the bitter soup so that you may never wish to come back to our village. You have better run away; leave us for ever and never come back, take it, take it, take it!"

Nargess eats a little shuddering with fear, soon she begins to resist, but the other women force her to eat it all. In continuation, one of the women comes forth, stands before Nargess and says: "Nargess come on, take the *fatirs* for your journey as stock of bread" and she throws them on her dish. "These are sweet... taking and eat them in the desert, so that the desert seems sweet so much so that you never tend to come back..." The other woman with the cudgel in her hand comes up and tells her, "If you want to return to the village out of the fear of wolves and dogs, take this cudgel and you will feel safe. Now, disappear from our country! For God's sake! God forbids your return!" The third woman steps forward and puts the odd shoe on the ground before Nargess and abusing her she shouts, "If you are afraid of the stones and thorns in the desert, if you are afraid that they will hurt your bare feet, put on this shoe and leave our country so that the peace and safety may return to us." When she finishes her speech, the noise of the drums, the hue-and-cry of women raises to sky.

Little by little, the participants retire opening the circle enclosed Nargess and leave her standing before The Great Lady or Khanum. The Great Lady makes her way to Nargess solemnly and angrily. She picks out her bridle from the ground and sets her free: "Go... vanish...away with you! Get lost! God forbids your returning!" Finally, Nargess makes her way to desert. Women chase her for a short time drumming, bugling, and pelting her with stones and boughs until she is out of their sight. These people are sure that they have removed misfortune and the symbol of evil, darkness and death from the country.

Based on the folk beliefs in Isaabad, Nargess has no right to return to the village. It is forbidden to her to reappear among her fellow-villagers until the crisis extinguishes and peace re-establishes. If some one wants to bring Nargess to the village, she has to do it at night, secretly not to fill other people with indignation, no to bother their peace and faith.

As Nargess is one of the villagers, it is beyond any doubt that she has family and sympathetic friends. Anyhow, according to the tradition, she is obliged to leave the village in order to take the evil spirit and the disease away with her. But since wild animals like wolves and hyenas may tear her at night she is taken to the village secretly. Next day, early in the morning she is taken to the field and set free again; she is rather driven away.

The ritual *whooping-cough* is usually performed in three days. Sometimes, if needed, it is prolonged, depending on the expected result. As mentioned before, it is totally run by women; the only role for men is the material

2. A bread baked without Yeast

aide(s) for food. The next point is that people in Isa abad take the ritual very seriously and fulfill it scrupulously in all details. This level of seriousness in observing the ritual sounds reasonable rereading Rene Gerard's idea arguing "each society that becomes the victim of disasters has to look for different ways of confrontation against the evil. People try to find quick and acute methods of healing in order to persuade themselves that all disasters are arised by a real person" (Gerard, 1991:293).

The heroine, Nargess in *whooping-cough* never feels remorse for she is not guilty, the fact that everyone confirms and that is why people sympathize her and conceive of the exile not as a penalty of being punished, but a remedial solution to remedy the bad luck. For the same reason, people never sentence her to death, since her physical death removes nothing. They just banish her to make supernatural powers feel pity with damned people and return good luck to their community.

Frazer writes "in Iedra once a year the city is purified and it is done by stone throwing a man regarded as the scapegoat or sacrifice (Frazer, 2007:63). Findings of the present study reveal that there are two outstanding features in the performance of the ritual that make *whooping-cough* both in its form and structure a distinguished ceremony from other ones. First, in this ritual man is sacrificed for man's sake not for animal or vegetable life. Secondly, man is never subject of brutal death. By and large in Iranian rituals the victims at most are exiled or feared. It is interesting that in Komeijan even a hen which never lays egg is not killed, rather it is feared by putting it under the millstone, or to ward off Jackals they just turn down the shoes.

RESULTS

It is worth mentioning that *whooping-cough* is especially and especially interesting and considerable from the view point of dramatization. In the light of Northrop Frye's archetypal seasonal cycle, the present ritual matches autumnal myth(s) or tragedy. It contains all characteristic features of drama.

As already indicated, it involves actors (of course actresses), musical instruments, such as: bugles and drums, bitter soup, bridle, shabby cloths, cudgel, pepper and other symbolic accessories. There are special dialogues, the cursing formula, noise and special dressing. Concerning the structure, it perfectly accords with Aristotelian pattern, it begins with introduction, here the characters and the setting are introduced, then we come to rising action, after understanding that the characters are, the base of conflict is named. For sure, it is a fatal disease that has victimized a great number of villagers, who in turn manage to resolve the problem, so there happens a challenge between good and evil forces and we witness a confusion of a kind between them. As the conflict culminates to its apex, the villagers decide to

expel Nargess the main cause of trouble from the country. Passing the climax leads to falling action wherein the victimizers, particularly The Great Lady, does their decision in casting out Nargess as the victim/escapegoat; certainly, this communal effort is satisfactory to all dwellers and regarded as bribery to supernatural agents.

Eventually, the victim's exile to desert brings back hope among villagers to overcome the issue and stop the devastating death in their village. The procedure above indicates that people in the region are highly talented in their confrontation with the crisis; it is more interesting that the majority of these men have been illiterate at the time of practicing the ritual and quite unlearned about a dramatic structure and form. In addition to be dramatic in its performance, *whooping-cough* benefits a rich symbolic language. Each and every of the essential elements has its symbolic meaning(s), for instance, the heroine/Nargess denotatively means disease and connotatively signifies catastrophe, it stands for a sinful man, a man who represents illness and communal death, *whooping-cough* refers to a communal sin that makes the people compensate for endless pains; the worn-out dress symbolizes an aversion for the disease, which pains people and causes anxiety and fear.

Moreover, it connotes to a long-lasting confusion. Feeding Nargess on a terribly bitter and repulsive soup means to give disgusting and sickening food to the disease; an odd shoe foretells a dangling state, a sort of maladjustment, it deprives Nargess of the ability to walk and deciding to come back. In Arta Viraf, it is mentioned that a man who walks in one shoe or barefooted suffers after death (Abrahamian: 43: 144). Providing Nargess with some *fatir*, which is considered to be sweet and pleasant tempts her not to come back to the village while she is wandering lonely over the desert. It helps her to feel so contented that she will give up the wish to return. The worn-out table cloth communicates existence and life; the cudgel implies bribery, security and a good means to protect life; the ragged bridle/rope conveys the sense of captivity and the dram is the sign of a secret divulged. Women, the main participants, suggest the sense of fragility and generativeness fertility; the hill stands for Alborz, highlands and elevation and finally, the fire here presents dialogue with supernatural elements, wisdom and warmth of life. Though *whooping-cough* has been especially popular in Isa abad village of Komeijan, it has some elements in common with Iranian traditional beliefs in general.

Today, the rite has lost its important functions due to cultural changes and development in public health and care, so unfortunately, the rite has come to an end. But at the time of its crucial active role in the social life of the people, it was nourished by a series of reasons and necessities some of which are listed as follow:

1. The heavy snow fall throughout seven months a year.

2. The deadly darkness of the nights in the region.
3. Desertic climate of the region and the emotional nostalgia of people Coming and going of the tribes and ethnic groups with cultural variety from the past millennium up to the present time.
4. The presence of numerous animal species and their co-existence with the people.
5. The impassable ways drawn through the region working as an obstacle against easy movement for the people.
6. Using too much raisins and walnuts in their nourishing program and so having high rate of intelligence.
7. The close connection between the natural elements and economy of everyday life.
8. Staying up late at night and so having plenty of free time to exchange the news and togetherness.
9. The focal role of women in the formation of folk culture and their active presence in conducting the family.

Consequently, all the features above make the people to appeal to fancies, legends, subjectivism, fortune telling, hardwork and patience against loneliness. The villagers are typically contented, introverted, tireless, intelligent and ritual makers. In contrast, the elements like anecdote, joke and humor are a rarity in their folklore literature. To wrap up a summary, needs the writer to point to major classes of rituals in Iran. Some of them like *whooping-cough* are dramatized, others are undramatic, to provide an example for the second group let's have a brief look at *Donkey's Milk* or *Shire-e-Khare* that is identical to *whooping-cough* just in its function, if not in structure, it works as a prophylactic means of preventing disease. Since the illness mainly spread among children it explains why people in Isa-abad choose a white donkey, the whiteness of the animal and the milk symbolically accords with the innocence of children.

To treat the disease, whooping-cough, first the healers wash the udder, then milk her and drink it to the child. The villagers think that it works to heal the patient. As pinpointed in the lines above, the dramatized rituals consist of performers, spectators, dialogues, monologues, corresponding gestures, sometimes accompanied by dancers and dancing, music, especially wind instruments of percussion. From this point of view, *whooping-cough* as a dramatized ritual seems very appealing. It is valued both as an absorbing ancient ritual

and a kind of dramatized folk performance. Studying the ritual clarifies the fact that the theatrical art has its roots in ancient rituals. To the writer, the most modern and up-to-dated method in ritual anthropology considers collection and reconstructing of data through communal observation or interviewing old people. For certain, the method varies Malinowski's theory and links with Strause's structuralism and Frazer's evolutionism.

Conclusion

It goes without saying that the significance of this investigation about Iranian rituals in general and in particular *whooping-cough* lies in the high value of saving them by their record, for they are vocal part of priceless folk culture and literature containing elements of different regional cultures. It is really needed to save them as components of the national culture which are condemned to failure.

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