

# The Reflection of the Myths of Other Nations on the Persian Contemporary Poetry

**Saghar Salmaninejad Mehrabadi**

Department of Persian Literature and the English Language

K. N. Toosi University of Technology, Tehran, Postal Code: 15418-49611, Iran

Email: salmaninejad@kntu.ac.ir

**Sogand Noroozizadeh**

Department of Persian Literature and the English Language

K. N. Toosi University of Technology, Tehran, Postal Code: 15418-49611, Iran

Email: noroozizadeh@kntu.ac.ir

**Abstract** Having various applications such as religious, psychological, sociological, and artistic, the myths have been intertwined with humans and their minds from the very beginning and up to now it has still been the same. The special atmosphere that is dominant in poetry has allowed the myths to have a much clearer manifestation in poems. Most poets benefit from their national and cultural myths. However, at times, they also use the myths of other nations to convey their own social, political, and cultural messages. This issue is caused by the existence of international communications in terms of language, religion, and different cultures among various countries. Apparently, in our modern life such communications are not very little and as compared to the past, it is much easier for the poets and writers to become familiar with various cultures. In fact, to express various intentions, the Iranian contemporary poets have also benefitted from the myths of other nations, such as Greece, Rome, India, Egypt, and others. In this article, while considering the poems of four contemporary Iranian poets, namely Sohrab Sepehri, Ahmad Shamlou, Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani, and Tahereh Saffarzadeh, we studied the extent to which the Iranian poets have paid attention to the myths of other nations. The findings revealed that the Iranian contemporary poets have mostly benefitted from the myths of Greece and Rome; however, they have not been inattentive to the myths of other nations.

**Key words:** Persian poetry; contemporary poetry; myth; Greece; Rome; India.

**Authors** **Saghar Salmaninejad Mehrabadi, Dr. philo.** in Persian Literature

from Tarbiyat Modares University has also passed her post-doctoral program under the supervision of professor Mahdi Mohaghegh who is the head of the joint Institute of the Islamic Studies of Tehran-McGill University. Her research interests are mythology, archetypes, common human and cultural symbols, epic literature, poetry and poems especially Ferdowsi's Shah-Nameh. She has published almost 40 articles in ISC journals, specialist and expository journals. Besides publishing three books, she has also presented a collection of articles at national and international conferences in the aforementioned areas. **Sogand Noroozizadeh, Dr. philo.** in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) from Allameh Tabatabai University, is currently the Deputy of Education and Supportive Affairs of the General Teachings Centre at K.N. Toosi University of Technology. She has also been a guest lecturer at Amir Kabir University of Technology as well as College of International Relations (Affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Contemporary English and Persian Literature, Second Language Acquisition, Computer Assisted Language Learning, E-Learning, EFL Writing, and Psycholinguistics are among her favorite research areas.

### **Introduction**

Myths and poetry are closely related in such a way that separating them from each other seems to be impossible. Many researchers have tried to explain this relationship. Since a long time ago, the Persian poetry has also had a special relationship with mythology and the role of the myths in the enrichment of its concepts has been confirmed by the critics. Since a long time ago, by referring to different myths, the poets of this country have expressed their social, political, and cultural messages in the form of beautiful poems. The presence of the myths of each nation in the poems of its poets is something common and necessary; however, at times it can be observed that the poets of a country have also benefitted from the myths of other nations and conveyed their messages by benefitting from these signs. The most significant myths that have a major presence in Persian poetry are the Islamic, religious, and national myths of the ancient Iran; but the myths of Greece and Rome, India, and other places have entered the Persian contemporary poetry and their study and explanation is certainly pleasurable.

In this era, the close relationship between the culture and literature of different nations via many translations of the works of different countries into various languages can be regarded as the most important factor of the familiarity of the poets with the myths of other nations and their application in poetry. Moreover,

by considering the Persian poems of four contemporary poets, namely Sepehri, Shamloo, Shafiei Kadkani, and Saffarzadeh, we intend to study the non-Iranian myths in different sections of Greek and Roman mythology, myths of India and Buddha, and the myths of other countries.

### **The Myths of Greece and Rome**

After the Constitutional Revolution in the twentieth century in Iran and the translation of various Western works and the different trips taken by the poets to other countries, the ground has been paved for their familiarity with the myths and cultures of other nations, especially the Greek and Roman myths. Such myths have a considerable manifestation in the Persian contemporary poetry. Siren, Narcissus, Aphrodite, Megara, Apollo, Trojan, and so on are the most significant Greek and Roman myths that have been used in the Persian contemporary poetry. At times, the historical figures of these nations have also been transformed into mythological symbols and they have also been taken into consideration in the Persian poetry.

In his book, “the Sound of the Water Footsteps,” Sohrab Sepehri, a famous contemporary poet, speaks of one of the Greek myths in this way: “Conquering a city by three or four wooden horsemen” (Sepehri *Eight* 284).

These verses, in fact, are referring to the city of Troy which was set aflame by the attackers who had apparently been defeated and left the place. This story has been mentioned in detail in the 8th Song of Iliad (Homer 181) and also in Aeneid, that is, the 2nd book of the epic poetry (Virgil 59 onwards). Sepehri has only referred to a part of this story and he even avoids mentioning its name so that the reader can have a better chance of thinking it over. Another Greek myth which also appears in Sepehri’s poetry is the “Siren” or “Sierra:” Build a boat shall I / launch it will I/As such shall I ride/ Never shall I love the blues nor the Sea [...] the fairies emerging their head out of the water/and in the light of the loneliness of the fishermen/shall they cast a spell from the top of their ringlets (Sepehri *Eight* 363).

In these verses, Sohrab has taken “Siren” into consideration and, similar to Odyssey, he is trying to avoid being infatuated and deceived by these beautiful charmers. Siren or the Sea Fairy is at times portrayed as a creature with the body of a bird and the head of a woman and in other cases just as a woman. The sirens were the daughters of the God of the Sea (the Forks or Trident). Their singing was very beautiful and enticing and they could mislead the sailors with their beautiful voice and attract them to the fatal rocks on which they were singing. Odyssey, the legendary hero of Greece, could safely pass through their island since, following the advice of Sierra, the witch, he had asked his companions to fill their ears with some

wax and fasten him tightly to the mast so that despite their deception, the ship would not be misled and he could listen to their singing with no danger. According to another legend, a group of heroes known as the Argonets also succeeded in crossing the passage of the Sirens as a singer called Orpheus who was accompanying them sang so pleasant and heavenly songs that no one listened to the angels anymore.

According to some later legends, the Sirens who had failed as Odyssey had escaped and Orpheus was victorious, threw themselves into the sea and were destroyed. According to Avid (the Roman Poet), they had been very beautiful women who were the companions of the daughter of Demeter, the Greek legendary Goddess. They had been by her side when she was kidnapped. Since they had done nothing when she was being kidnapped, Demeter had turned them into birds with a head resembling the head of a woman (Grimal 128). The attractive voice of these sea fairies has also been mentioned in another verse by Sohrab: “The tarry wall! /Go away/the sorrowful end of the attractive voices! / Fall down” (Sepehri *Eight* 89).

This sorrowful end refers to death; as the heroes and sailors who were infatuated by the Sirens’ voices moved towards the fatal rocks which resulted in their death.

Narcissus is another Greek myth to which Sohrab has referred in his poems. Narcissus in Persian means Narges which is the name of a flower. While using this name, Sohrab has also referred to origin of this legend: “Oh, the oldest portrait of Narges in the sorrowful mirror/My attraction to you has also taken me/to the air of perfection/Perhaps” (Sepehri *Eight* 435).

In the ancient Greece, Narges has been the symbol of dying early. According to this myth, a handsome youth named Narcissus was infatuated by himself when he gazed at the reflection of his own face in the water and he was turned into a flower after his death. In China, similar to Greece, Narges means “the fairies of the eternal sea and since this flower blooms in the Chinese New Year, it will lead to prosperity after twelve months” (Hall 308). By using the word Narges, Sohrab intends to associate the mirror and the blood of this ancient myth. The words attraction and perfection also better support this concept. Narcissus has seen his own picture in the mirror of the water, and he is infatuated by it and, in a way, he has caused his own death as well as sadness and grief. In his own words, Sohrab, himself, has said: “Close to the water, Narcissus reaches the loneliest moment of his own life” (Sepehri, *Blue* 49). That’s why he regards the attractiveness of Narges as his leading light to reach a kind of perfection. Being so handsome was the reason that Narcissus had become very proud of himself and that he ignored everyone even the Goddesses.

Apparently, Sohrab was highly interested in the Greek myths. Sepehri was so

highly connected to these myths that, at times, he expected his readers to understand and remember the whole myth by merely referring to the name of a city. Please note the following verse: “Life is a slow blow/ upon the rock of Megar” (Sepehri *Eight* 323).

Megar is the name of one of the ancient cities of Greece which was located close to Athens. “According to the Greek myths, there is a rock in the city of Megar which makes a sound in case it receives a blow by a pebble and the reason is that once Apollo had put his harp on it” (Abedi 345). Sohrab has considered the attractiveness of this sound and has resembled the brevity and loveliness of life to the same blow upon the rock of Megar.

Icarus is another myth that can be mentioned among the international myths used in Sohrab’s poetry. In two parts of “Eight Books, Sohrab has referred to this myth. Of course, in each reference, he has included the myth in the context of a poem. In the poem named “Shasoosa,” Sohrab says: I leap/I leap/on a faraway plain/ my wings are burnt by the sun/and fall on the ground shall I while hating this awakening” (Sepehri *Eight* 140). After a few more pages, he has also written: “a face is smiling at death in the silvery water” (ibid. 143).

Icarus, the son of Deadarus, was an artist, craftsman and artisan of the ancient times whose innovative inventions including labyrinth and the brass cow are considered as his most original and noble works. Icarus could escape the prison by making wings both for himself and his own son. The wings were attached to his body and that of his son by some wax. Despite his constant warnings to his son regarding keeping his distance from the sun that would melt the wax away, his son flew so high in the sky that the wax was melted away and he fell down in the sea and was drowned” (Meghdadi 29). As a result, the burning of the poet’s wings in the sun and the face that smiles at death in the water are reminders of the melting of the wax on the wings of Icarus’s son and his drowning in the sea.

Among other contemporary poets, Shamloo is a poet who is interested in non-Iranian myths. He is highly informed about the Greek and Roman mythology and is impressed by the Western works. In the following phrases, Shamloo has juxtaposed the Greek myths and has conveyed his social message to his readers by the association of these myths:

“Forgiveness your gods would bestow upon Sisyphes/ the unfortunate Prometheus am I/ who has spread a food table / from the exhausted<sup>1</sup> liver /for the crows with no fate” (Shamloo 306) and in another verse, Shamloo has referred

---

<sup>1</sup> In Persian, the word “exhausted” has two meanings, namely being physically tired and being injured. Here, apparently, the poet has used it in its second meaning. However, he may have also taken the first meaning into consideration.

to the Achilles Heel as follows: “With the Achilles Heel/ he passed through/ the bloody field of fate” (ibid.727). Of course, Shamloo has used many Greek myths in his writings and, at times, a special myth is associated without making any direct reference to it. For instance, I wish I could / — only for a moment I wish I could — / let all these people be seated upon my shoulders/and take them around the bubble of the soil/to see with their own eyes/and to believe me/ where their sun is” (ibid. 658). Obligated to carry the earth upon his shoulders, “Atlas” is also associated with the Greek myths.

Shamloo also mentions the Roman myth Janus: “A fatal ugliness is/ your other side/Oh! The life-giving profile of Janus” (ibid. 974). Janus is one of the gods of the ancient Rome, guardian of the doors and had two faces: one facing the past which induced death and the other facing the future which promised life.

Saffarzadeh is also another poet of the contemporary period of the Persian poetry who has also been interested in the myths of other nations. Among the Greek myths, “Aphrodite” is the first myth which attracts her attention. In the following phrase, the poet has mentioned: “Impossible is taming the aliens /without the Aphrodite belt” (Saffarzadeh, *Movement* 41).

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is more renown with her Roman title “Venus”. Being the most beautiful and seductive goddess, Aphrodite is regarded an alchemist goddess. She chooses her own lovers and is never the victim of any lover (Bolen 28). Although goddesses such as Hera, Demeter, and Persephone have been seduced by male gods, Aphrodite has always been successful and fleeing. Some regard her as the daughter of Zeus and others consider her as the daughter of Uranus. When Cronus castrated Uranus and threw his penis into the sea, a girl named Aphrodite, a woman (born from the waves) or (born from the god’s sperm) was given birth. Aphrodite was the wife of Hefesjos; however, she was in love with Ares, the god of hunting. In a competition that was held to choose the most beautiful goddess among Aphrodite, Hera, and Athens, Paris chose Aphrodite. Her favorite animal was pigeon and her special plants were the red rose and myrtle (Grimal 82-85). Being familiar with this myth, Saffarzadeh has used her name since it was due to the supports of Aphrodite that the extinction of the people of Troy was prevented after the collapse of this city. After the city was set afire, with the assistance of her father and son, Aphrodite could evacuate the Penates, the family gods of Troy, out of the burning city and settled them down in other lands of Rome. As a result, they regarded Aphrodite (or Venus in the Italian language) as the supporter and protector of Rome and the great grandmother of Julii [...] (ibid. 84). Saffarzadeh has regarded Aphrodite as the protector of the people against the invasion of the aliens.

Moreover, Aphrodite is equal to the Iranian Anahita, the Mesopotamian Ishtar, and the Egyptian Isis which are all mother goddesses and the symbols of fertility.

### **The Indian and the Buddhist Myths**

Another group of non-Iranian myths which have been used more often in the Persian poetry belong to India and the Buddhist myths. India and the ancient Persia have had common myths although Iranians have forgotten many of them; however, some of these myths and some other myths that belong to India and Buddhism have appeared considerably in the Persian poetry. Buddha, Veda, Nirvana, and Narges [...] are some of these myths.

In other verses of his poem named “the passenger,” Sohrab Sepehri has written: “I am the interpreter of the sparrows of the Gang’s Valley/at the side of the road of “Sernat”/I have described the Sufi earring representing Tibet/ for the ears of the Benares girls having no ornaments/ Oh! The morning prayers of the Vedas /Put upon my shoulders all the weight of freshness” (Sepehri *Eight* 321).

The Gang is a sacred river in India which passes at the side of the city of Benares. The city of Benares and the Sernat Road refer to the great myth of “Siddhartha” who was changed into Buddha. Buddha means brightness and light. This person whose life has been wrapped in a halo of myth was born around six centuries ago before the Birth of Christ. He was a prince whose mother had died one week after his birthday and who was brought up by his aunt; however, he was always deeply contemplating. He was married at the age of sixteen and underwent austerity for a long time to grasp the true meaning of life and its suffering; but when he realized that austerity could not help him reach the truth, he quit it. Then, for a long time, he sat under a tree named Banyan which is also sometimes called Sepidar and thought deeply until he could find the truth and his being became quite brilliant and he truly became Buddha. He was looking for Nirvana and finally he could find it. Before giving birth to Buddha, in her dream, his mother had seen a white elephant coming down from the sky and entering his body. All the dream interpreters had predicted that she would have a son that would become the ruler of the world and he would truly become Buddha.

He was a freeman and, thus, he was self-confident. He never forced anyone to his creed/religion and he disliked it if anyone changed his religion abruptly. He talked to people very simply and he had actually found the true meaning of life. Shamsia believes that “Sernat” is the name of the same road by which Buddha travels to Benares and the first school of Jiddu Krishnamurtiis was also located at the side of the Sernat Road, close to the city of Benares. After discovering four

eternal truths, Buddha goes to Benares and makes a sermon.

“Veda” is also a collection of poems and religious songs of the Aryans whose most ancient part is the Book of Vedas which has been written at the time when Iran and India were joined together. It is comprised of 1017 pieces of poetry and 10500 verses and is, nowadays, still used in the religious rituals of the Hindus. It is one of the oldest texts which exists in the Indo-European language and its old age reaches 1700 to 1100 Before the Birth of Christ. Sohrab has also referred to the same sacred book of Hindus in another place: “The neighboring woman is weaving a net at her window/ singing/ I am reading the “Veda” (Sepehri *Eight* 343).

Due to the significance of the Buddha myth, Saffarzadeh addresses the Indian poet “Sharat” and says: “Sharat! What have you done that Buddha has gifted his fate to Japan?” (Saffarzadeh *Echo* 24).

Moreover, Saffarzadeh also mentioned the tree under which Buddha could reach the truth and said: “At that time near the river appeared a woman /... while opening her little umbrella under the Buddha tree” (Saffarzadeh, *Dam* 55).

The interest in the myths of India is not just seen in the poetry of Sepehri and Saffarzadeh. Moreover, in this regard, Shamloo has also mentioned that: “Sorrow surrounds him [...] and similarly Nirvana does surround Buddha” (Shamloo 51).

Shafiei Kadkani also mentions the myth of Nirvana as follows: “I know not where you are taking me/toward the sky/or to the silence of the soil/or toward Nirvana and the light/Where are you taking me so stealthily? (Shafiei Kadkani 431).

Nirvana is the outstanding goal of Buddhism and it is the final stage of the Buddhist creed on the way to reaching complete enlightenment, consciousness, and absolute tranquility. Nirvana is the state in which the human being is completely released from ignorance, suffering, lust, desire, dependencies and achieves complete wisdom. Moreover, it is the last stage of Buddhism and is considered as the ultimate goal of Buddhists.

Nirvana also appears in the poetry of Saffarzadeh: “the sound of the bells of the caravan encourages me to meet the Nirvana” (Saffarzadeh *Dam* 18).

Another verse in the poetry of Saffarzadeh leads us to another myth from India. This myth is actually “Rama.” Rama, one of the oldest kings of India, is one of the off-springs of Vishnu. Vishnu is one of the three main gods in India and plays the role of the protector of the world. Vishnu has various off-springs and different manifestations and Rama is one of those off-springs (Zekrgoo 72). In Rig Veda, Rama means darkness. Rama rules over the “Ivicies” and is the husband of Sita, the goddess of the Hindus. Based on this background, Saffarzadeh says: “Let’s sing with them/Rama is god/ Rama is the truth” (Saffarzadeh *Echo* 18).

Another concept that Sohrab has considered and used several times in his poetry in different ways is lilac and the myths that are related to it. Although lilac is also related to the Iranian myths, it seems to be much livelier in India.

The word lilac has been used twenty-two times in the poems of Sohrab. "Padme" is also the name of one of his poems. Pashae believes that the Indians have named Lilac as such and sung different songs in its praise from the ancient times until now. In India, it is a valuable secret both for the Hindus and Buddhists. They regard the life of human beings as the story of the lilac. From the moment when it blossoms in the water until the morning when it comes out of the water and opens its bud with the first kiss of the dawn, lilac is similar to a human being that has blossomed from a bud to a full bloom. In the history, Padma has been regarded as a sacred flower and it has reached the status of a god from that of a simple flower (Abedi 334). Yahaghi believes that Padma actually refers to a lilac which is in the fourth hand of Vishnu. Lilac is also known as the water flower, the flower of life and creation. "Lotus" is another name by which this flower is called. The research studies have shown that this flower has extraordinary significance in different countries and it has been related to the gods.

Various types of lilac have been worshipped in ancient Egypt and many areas of Asia. At the beginning, its sacred aspect was based on its watery environment since water was the ancient symbol of an old ocean from which the universe has been created. Lilac, moving on the surface of the water, was similar to the uterus. Both in the myth and the art of Egypt and India, the petals in full bloom represent a creator god. Since it is opened at the dawn and closed at the dusk, lilac is similar to the sun which, itself, is the Divine source of life (Hall 309).

At times, lilac took the place of the sacred tree and in its relationship to Brahmas and Vishnu, the sun of the gods of India is also associated with the lilac because Brahmas is born from a lilac and a lilac is grown from the uterus of Vishnu. Shakti, the wife of the gods, is also accompanying lilac. As a result, most of the gods and goddesses of India are all related to lilac. Moreover, lilac is one of the valuable secrets in the Buddhist teachings. It is the same paradise that has been promised by Buddha and it is also the sign of "Amitabhs," the god who is the leader. Moreover, lilac is one of the eight signs which existed at the back of Buddha's feet as a symbol of being blessed and blissful. Some also believe that the statues of Buddha and lilac "represent the same thing: the great serenity of a soul that is awakened in itself" (Burckhardt 159).

Shamisa considers lilac in India as a sign of the spirit of ether and purity which is rising from the swamp of the world; however, it is not contaminated by it and he

regards the same reason for the way the Jukis sit. He regards lilac as the secret of eternity and presence in all places as lilac can live both in the soil and in the water. Lilac is also significant because it has a circular shape and it can be the symbol of the carrousel and the wheel of life. Buddha regards lilac as the secret of the world (Shamisa 134).

Lilac also has a special status in the Iranian mythology and is related to the Nahid flower; it is considered as the main symbol of duality and from this viewpoint, the Iranian and Indian myths are similar to each other. Moreover, according to the myths, the semen of Zoroaster is preserved in the seeds of lotus in the Kayanase River and this is the reason why there is a relationship between Zoroastrianism and Sun Worship or Mithraism. Of course, this can be proved only on the condition that we accept that based on some myths, Mitra is not born from the stone but from the fruit of the pine or from the lilac bud. Apparently, Sohrab is familiar with these myths as he has considered the lilac as a mysterious flower and he is connected to this flower whenever he is in a state of fascination and supernatural attraction. The first time that lilac is mentioned in “Eight Books” is when Sohrab uses it as the name of a poem in which he mentions that the seed of a lilac is brought by the wind and whenever the poet refers to his own death, he witnesses the growth of a lilac in that place. All of the columns are covered with lilac and finally Sohrab says: “lilac covered all my life/it was all my soul” (Sepehri *Eight* 120).

In the poem of “the Mirror Flower” Sohrab (*Eight* 145) also mentions the blue steam of the lilac flowers and calls the god of the lilac plains. The verses of this poem are so juxtaposed to each other that it seems the poet is waiting for Succinates or the successors of Zoroastrianism or Zoroaster himself or is expecting the emergence of another Buddha. In fact, Sohrab is preoccupied with a mystic or spiritual contemplation. In another place, he refers to the place of the lilac blossoms as the Divine Heaven: “At that place, there are lilacs, there are doors to the Divine Heaven” (ibid. 222). He says: the gardener of the blue lilacs/the doors of consciousness were opened” (ibid. 150). That’s why when Sohrab returns from the spring of sleep, he sees that “there were birds that sang and the lilac was opened” (ibid. 241). The significance of the lilac seed, especially in relation to the Zoroastrian myth, has led Sohrab, while flying in an airplane over the skies, to see it on the earth in the following way: “I saw a train, taking the lilac seed and singing of the Canary” (ibid. 279).

When he reaches the stage of self-knowledge, he refers to lilac like Buddha: “It is my time, oh! The door on top/oh! The road give my message to the silent lilac” (ibid. 264). Since lilac is secret of mysticism and Sohrab thinks that not all people

can comprehend the truth of mysticism, thus he says: “Probably it is our duty/to seek the truth/between lilac and the century” (ibid. 299). The significance of lilac in different religions and myths of different people has not been hidden from Sohrab’s viewpoint and this is the reason why he has whispered to himself: “Under the rain, one should write things, one should speak, one should plant a lilac” (ibid. 292).

Perhaps planting a lilac is a type of expectation for the birth of the predecessor of Zoroaster, the birth of Buddha, the birth of Brahma or Mitra, each of whom could open a valve of truth to the materialistic world. The fact that lilac is not contaminated nor is it soaked by the water of the swamp, which are both signs of a type of detachment and disinterest in the materialistic world, is mentioned as distance by Sohrab: “Although a good pillow is the curve of the water /for the loving and fragile sleep of the lilac/a distance is always there” (ibid. 308).

On the whole, Sohrab’s viewpoint regarding lilac has been based on his knowledge of all the myths related to this beautiful flower and every time he has shown his awareness in a beautiful way.

### **The Myths of Other Nations**

In addition to the Greek, Roman, Indian, and Buddhist myths, the Persian poets have sometimes mentioned myths from other nations such as myths from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and so on. In this section, some myths from the aforementioned nations shall be mentioned. In his poem, named “the traveler,” Sohrab Sepehri mentions a place: “The owl sings in the hanging garden” (Sepehri, *Eight* 284).

The Hanging Gardens are one of the Seven Wonders. These gardens were located in Babylon and it is said that these gardens “were built by King Nebuchadnezzar II for his wife, Amytis of Media. Apparently, the reason why these gardens are called hanging is that they were built in seven stories” (Shamisa 86). These gardens are now destroyed, and they are more mythological in state. This destruction is related to the singing of the owl. During his trip, Sohrab looks all around and with the following verses, he has also referred to this myth.

Another such myth that can be named in the poetry of Shafiei is the myth of the creation of the world with speech. This can be found in the myths of Egypt. Moreover, similar myths can be found among those of Mesopotamia. For instance, among the myths of Mesopotamia, when the gods want to challenge the strength of their son, Marduk, they ask him to destroy and recreate one of the constellations by the power of his speech. “A constellation did they put among themselves /Then their son Marduk was addressed/to influence the gods with his command, they asked him /Do command the constellation to be destroyed and recreated and let it be that way/

Say a word so that this constellation would be demolished! / He began to speak and the constellation was destroyed/ Once more did he begin to speak again and the constellation was recreated” (Mc Call 77).

Of course, the effect of the miracle of the words and the starting point of the Creation have also been mentioned in the holy Quran and the phrase “Say it and it shall be” actually considers the Creation of the world under the influence of the Power underlying God’s Speech. In the following verses, Shafiei has said: “At the beginning, there was only the Speech and the Speech was alone/ and the Speech was beautiful/you shall give the Speech its old glory/ Amen! / also the virginity of the first day, Amen!” (Shafiei Kadkani 350).

Among various verses and poems of Shafiei, we can see another non-Iranian myth from Egypt which is named Sphinx. “Sphinx” is the giant from the Egyptian legends and the myth of Oedipus is a combination of a human being and an animal with the body of a lion, decorated with the wings of an eagle and having the head of a woman. This legendary creature actually killed those who could not solve his riddle and the ancient Egyptians regarded him as the symbol of the sun. The statue of the great Sphinx which is located in Egypt is carved from a rock and it is 17 meters high and 39 meters in length.

“At night, close to the Nile River, and in the absence of astronomy/in the long shadow of Sphinx/where the light did illuminate/ the bed of the treasury of Pharaoh/ in the long shadow of Pharaoh/one can grab by the hand/the death that is like a callus on the body of life” (ibid. 330).

To convey the social message of his poem, Shafiei has benefitted from the Egyptian myth of Sphinx and has persuaded the mind of the readers.

## **Conclusion**

Besides using their own national and religious myths, the contemporary and Persian poets, at times, benefit from the myths of other nations to express their own thoughts and ideas. Such familiarity has apparently taken place after the translation of the English works. Our research in this study has revealed that among the non-Iranian myths, the Persian contemporary poets have shown more interest in the myths of Greece and Rome. Such an interest has been more a result of their familiarity with the myths of Greece and Rome due to the translation of the poetry and prose works of the Western authors. Moreover, the myths of India have been of more interest to the Iranian poets. Such an interest can be a result of the period of the relationship between the cultures of Iran and India. For instance, the lilac is one of the common myths between Iran and India.

In addition, some of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian myths have also appeared in the Persian poetry and this point indicates that the Persian poets do not restrict themselves only to their own specific culture and benefit from the whole global capacity in order to convey their own message.

### Works Cited

- Abedi, Kamyar. *From the Sunshine Companionship: (Thoughts and Searches in the Poetry of Sohrab Sepehri)*. Tehran: Nashre Revayat Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1997.
- Bolen, Jean Shinoda. *Mythological Symbols and Women's Psychology*. Translation. Azar Yousefi, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Tehran: Roshangaran Publications, 1984.
- Burckhardt, Titus. *The Sacred Art (Principles and Methods)*. Trans. Jalal Sattari. Tehran: Soroush Publications, 2001.
- Grimal, Pierre. *The Mythological Dictionary of Greece and Rome*. Translated by Ahmad Behmanesh. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Tehran University, 1968.
- Hall, James. *A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols in the Art of East and West*. Translated by Roghayeh Behzadi. Tehran: Farhang Moaser Publications, 2004.
- Homer. *Odyssey*. Translated by Saeed Nafisi. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications Corporation. 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 1999.
- McCall, Henrietta. *Mesopotamian Myths*. Translation. Abbas Mokhber. Tehran, Markaz Publications, 1995.
- Meghdadi, Bahram. *Analysis and Poetry Selection of Sohrab Sepehri*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Tehran: Paya Publications, 1999.
- Saffarzadeh, Tahereh. *Echo in Delta*. Tehran: Amir-Kabir Publications. 1970.
- . *Movement and Yesterday*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Tehran: Ravagh Publications, 1979.
- . *Dam and Arms*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Shiraz: Navid Publications, 1986.
- Sepehri, Sohrab. *The Blue Room*. Tehran: Soroush Publications, 1990.
- . *The Eight Books*. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. Tehran, Tahoori Publications, 1995.
- Shafiei Kadkani, Mohammad Reza. *The Second Millennium Mountain Goose (The Collection of Five Poetry Notebooks)*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Tehran: Sokhan Publications, 2000.
- Shamisa, Sirus. *A Glance at Sepehri*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Tehran: Sedaye Moaser Publications, 2004.
- Shamloo, Ahmad. *A Collection of Poetry: First Notebook of Poems*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Tehran: Negah Publications, 2008.
- Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Translated by Mir Jaleddin Kazazi. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Markaz Publications, 1991.
- Yahaghi, Mohamad Ja'far. *The Dictionary of Myths and Fictional Suggestions in Persian Literature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1995.
- Zekrgoo, Amir-Hussein. *The Mysteries of the Myths of India*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Tehran: Fekre Roaz Publications, 1998.