

**AN ANALYSIS OF ECLECTIC THEATRE IN IRAN  
BASED ON TA'ZIYEH**

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**CULTURAL CENTRE  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
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Field of Study: **Drama/Theatre**

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## ABSTRACT

This present study analyses a kind of eclectic theatre in Iran based on Ta'ziyeh. Ta'ziyeh is well known as a kind of ritual form in Iran which contains tradition, religion and myth. In the contemporary setting, many directors and playwrights have been influenced by the form and content of Ta'ziyeh and use it in their works. The purpose of studying here is to analyse plays which influenced by Ta'ziyeh. Eclectic theatre is a new theory in postmodern theatre studies, which can be manifested in connection with theatre activities of Iran.

Specific theatrical forms have been developed in many geographical-cultural areas of the world which are indigenous to those areas. Ta'ziyeh is a kind of comprehensive indigenous form considered as being the national form of Iranian theatre which have pervasive influence in the Iranian works of drama and play. It originates from some famous mythologies and rites such as *Mithraism*, *Sug-e-Siavush (The Lamentation of Siavush)* and *Yadegar-e-Zariran*. Ta'ziyeh was developed in the Safavid period (1502–1736 CE) in Iran when the king of Iran allowed Ta'ziyeh groups to perform it at Muharram time. Originally the Ta'ziyeh depicts the Karbala events. Generally, the Ta'ziyeh plays can be divided according to subject matter and content into three basic categories. First, there are those plays that deal only with the events of the Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husain and his followers. Second, there are those that deal with other subjects taken from a variety of sources such as history. The third part deals with farcical plays, such as 'feminine Ta'ziyeh'. Although, they seem to be separate, they are

still connected to the Karbala events through either a verbal or a staged digression<sup>1</sup> (*guriz*<sup>2</sup>) that dramatizes the suffering and death of Imam Husain.

The Ta'ziyeh has influenced many Iranian theatre directors in recent years. Most Iranian directors and playwrights, especially since the 1970s, still think and write in a western style. They have brought the 'form' and 'content' of Ta'ziyeh into their work and combined them with western influenced theatre styles to create a new genre of works. This new style is known as 'eclectic theatre' or 'eclecticism', which is a new style in postmodernism. For instance, the play *A Lonely Person's Story* is taken from the Ta'ziyeh *the Martyrdom of Imam Husain* (Amini, 2004). *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* (Rahmanian, 2007) and *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* (Rahmanian, 2006) were taken from 'feminine Ta'ziyeh'. In this study, I will analyse these three mentioned plays, based on 'eclectic theatre', as clear examples of Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre as eclectic theatre in Iran. To this purpose, I have made some classifications and criteria determined by watching performances, based on techniques and methods of Ta'ziyeh, and analysed those plays through eclecticism as an alternative form in postmodern theatre. This method has proved favourable for comparative studies on one part, while the Iranian theatrical forms have been more clear and researchable, on the other.

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<sup>1</sup> Verbal digression: for more information refer to Malekpour, *The Islamic Drama* (2004: 95).

<sup>2</sup> This word has taken from Malekpour (2004: 95).

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menganalisis satu 'teater eklektik' di Iran berdasarkan 'Ta'ziyeh'. Ta'ziyeh merupakan sejenis ritual di Iran yang kaya dengan tradisi, agama dan mitos. Dalam konteks kontemporari, pengarah dan pengarang drama dipengaruhi oleh bentuk dan kandungan Ta'ziyeh serta menggunakan elemen-elemen ini dalam karya mereka. Yang mempunyai pengaruh seni persembalhan Ta'ziyeh. Teater eklektik merupakan teori baru dalam pengajian teater pascamoden. Hubungan antara teater eklektik dengan pementasan teater di Iran jelas kelihatan dan akan dianalisa dalam kajian ini.

Bentuk-bentuk teater yang khusus telah lahir dan dipentaskan di pelbagai kawasan geografi budaya di dunia. Ta'ziyeh adalah sejenis teater asli Iran yang dianggap sebagai teater kebangsaan Iran. Teater ini telah banyak mempengaruhi karya drama dan teater di Iran. Teater Ta'ziyeh dipercayai mempunyai asal usul dari mitos dan upacara-upacara tradisi seperti *Mithraism*, *The Lamentation of Siavush* dan *Yadegar-e-Zariran*. Ta'ziyeh diperkembangkan pada zaman Safavid (1502-1736 CE) di Iran. Raja pada zaman tersebut memberi kebenaran kepada kumpulan-kumpulan Ta'ziyeh untuk membuat pementasan teater tersebut pada bulan Muharram. Pada mulanya, Ta'ziyeh hanya menggambarkan upacara-upacara Karbala. Secara amnya, teater Ta'ziyeh boleh dibahagikan kepada tiga kategori mengikut kandungan. Kategori pertama adalah khusus kepada teater yang menceritakan upacara-upacara Karbala dan kisah kematian Imam Husain serta pengikut-pengikutnya. Kategori kedua pula merangkumi cerita-cerita dari pelbagai sumber seperti sejarah. Kategori ketiga ialah teater yang berunsurkan jenaka seperti 'Ta'ziyeh feminin'. Walaupun pembahagian kategori ini kelihatan seolah-olah mengasingkan jenis-jenis Ta'ziyeh, namun teater Ta'ziyeh masih berkait rapat dengan

upacara Karbala dari segi *verbal digression* atau *staged digression*<sup>3</sup> (*guriz*<sup>4</sup>) yang menceritakan seksaan yang dilalui oleh Imm Husain hingga kematian baginda.

Ta'zīyeh telah banyak mempengaruhi pengarah teater Iran. Kebanyakan pengarah dan pengarang drama Iran, terutamanya sejak tahun 1970an masih berfikir dan menulis dalam gaya barat. Mereka telah membawa masuk bentuk dan kandungan Ta'zīyeh ke dalam karya mereka dan menggabungkan dengan gaya-gaya teater pengaruh barat. Ini telah menghasilkan genre karya baru yang dikenali sebagai 'teater eklektik' atau 'eklektisisma', iaitu sejenis gaya baru dalam teater pascamoden. Sebagai contoh, teater *the Play A Lonely Person's Story* telah dipetik dari Ta'zīyeh *the Martyrdom of Imam Husain* (Amini, 2004) manakala *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* (Rahmanian, 2007) dan *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* (Rahmanian, 2006) pula telah dipetik dari 'Ta'zīyeh feminin'. Ketiga-tiga karya di atas akan dianalisa dalam kajian ini berdasarkan 'teater eklektik'. Analisis ini akan dijadikan sebagai contoh yang jelas menunjukkan teater pengaruh Ta'zīyeh merupakan teater eklektik di Iran. Kriteria dan klasifikasi juga akan dibuat berdasarkan kajian pementasan teater-teater tersebut, menggunakan teknik dan metod Ta'zīyeh. Teater-teater tersebut juga akan dianalisa menggunakan teori eklektisisma sebagai alternatif kepada teater pascamoden. Metod ini telah dibuktikan sebagai metod yang paling efektif dalam kajian perbandingan, manakala bentuk-bentuk teater Iran pula adalah lebih jelas dan memerlukan penyelidikan.

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<sup>3</sup> Verbal digression: sila rujuk Malekpour, *The Islamic Drama* (2004: 95) untuk keterangan lanjut.

<sup>4</sup> Terma ini telah diambil dari Malekpour (2004: 95).



## PUBLICATION

The following publications are based on the research presented in this thesis and may contain results and material presented herein.

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*Engineerig and Technology (WASET)*, 8(7), 2246-2248. View article: Google scholar, Academia.edu. Researchgate. PubMed/NCBI.

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University of Malaya

# CHAPTER ONE

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

### 1.1. Background of Study



**Figure 1.1:** The Tragedy of Karbala Events or Ashura (Seyf, 1990: 129)

Ta'ziyeh (تازیانه) is a form of passion play which appeared initially in Iran as part of the observance of Ashura for the commemoration of Imam Husain and his family during the month of Muharram. This event is part of the annual cycle of religious observance in Iran. Ta'ziyeh is also performed in several other countries, such as Iraq, Indonesia, Pakistan and India. However, only in Iran and India has the tradition developed into a formal ritual ceremony (Alizadeh, 2010: 411). The word 'Ta'ziyeh' means consolation, and it signifies the blessing that performers are believed to receive by dramatization the sacred events that befell the Prophet's family. This ritual takes

place in the month of Muharram; it is called the Mourning of Muharram, and also the remembrance of Muharram, giving a clear ideation of the importance attached by Shia Muslims to that period of mourning (see Figure 1.1, page 1).



**Figure 1.2:** The Tragedy of Karbala (Syef, 1990: 109)

Additionally, literary the word *ta'ziyeh* implies in the first place the lamentation for the martyred imams; however dramatically it refers to play in which poem, music, song, ritual, costume, history taste and aesthetics are performed in a narrative language by *shabih*<sup>5</sup> (*shabih-khan*, the actor of Ta'ziyeh). *The Encyclopedia of Islam* indicates that, in particular, it refers to mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Husain at Karbala.

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<sup>5</sup> Shabih is also known as religious representation, dramatization.

The *tabut*<sup>6</sup>, a model of the tomb at Karbala kept in the home and often very richly executed, is also popularly called a *ta'ziyeh*. *Ta'ziyeh* however, means particularly the mystery play itself. The time for its performance is during the first third of the month of Muharram, especially the 10th, Roze-i-Katl, the day of the murder of Husain and of the Ashura festival. In a wider sense, the plays include street processions such as the cavalcade with Husain Horse (a trope known as 'Husain Horse), the marriage procession of Husain's son, al-Kasim, and Hasan's daughter Fatimah, the procession to the cemetery with *tabut*, all these are popular celebrations of a kind at which the deepest grief does not exclude a part being played by comic figures (Rahmah, 1989: 99).

*Ta'ziyeh*, condolence and miracle-play meetings generally in the social traditions of the early periods of Islam were not considered as lamentations or mournful gatherings for the death of people, but they were used for Ashura ceremonies which were to show sympathy with Imam Husain. Such condolences were first performed in private homes then in public places and finally, with the formation and rise of the 'Karbala event', that it evaluated and became changed to a dramatic performance (Chelkowski, 1979: 4) (see Figure 1.2, page 2).

During the course of the centuries this event took the form of religious drama, with festivals for performances on occasions other than the Muharram ceremonies. The

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<sup>6</sup> Bengkulu has a number of traditions which still continue in Bengkulu people life, one of the cultural assets is the Tabot/Tabut (an Arabic word which means the coffin, catafalque), and it is an interesting attraction to enrich your experiences particularly to observe one of Indonesian's unique tradition and culture.

Tabot or now is called Tabut festival, the highlight of the Bengkulu people cultural calendar is the colorful and interesting festival, staged at Merdeka square nearby Fort Marlborough. The festival highlights music, traditional and new creation dancing contest, Bengkulu folk song contest, bazaar, telong-telong contest, effigies, and many more at Merdeka square. At the end of the festival the effigies are carried through the streets with much merriment and traditional music, and are finally tossed to the grave of Sheik Burhanuddin.

Tabut festival is held annually from 1st to 10th of the month of Muharram (Islamic Calendar). Because the date is fixed by the Islamic lunar calendar, it moves forward 10 days each year. Retrieved 30 September 2012, from,

<http://virtualadrian.blogspot.com/2013/05/tabut-cultural-festival.html>.

realization of the existence of dramatic features and the appearance of different types of Ta'ziyeh – “tragedy, comedy, and epic; romantic and ethical” (Shahidi, 2001: 262) – created a ground for its existence as a theatre genre that aroused the interest of travelers to Iran as well as dramatists and scholars, Iranian and non-Iranian, during the past centuries.

Some scholars believe that Ta'ziyeh has its roots in some ancient religions and mythologies. In this aspect, the existence of similarities between the death and resurrection of Tammuz (Dumuzi)<sup>7</sup>, Osiris<sup>8</sup>, Abydos<sup>9</sup>, *The Lamentation of Siavush (The Tragedy for Siavush)*<sup>10</sup> and the Ta'ziyeh has been acknowledged by scholars such as G. E. Von Grunebaum, Rosalie David and Bahram Beyzaie. In *The Islamic Drama*, Von Grunebaum wrote, “This ritual [Muharram], which is without parallel in Islam where a saint is never commemorated by a re-enactment of his funeral, incorporates rites of an earlier cult. A number of details regarding the arrangement and the symbolism of the procession corroborate the general parallelism of the ceremony with the festival of Adonis-Tammuz” (Von Grunebaum, 1951: 88).

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<sup>7</sup> The Sumerian and Babylonian god of pastures and vegetation; consort of Inanna. Retrieved 18 October 2012, from,

<https://www.wordnik.com/words/Dumuzi>.

<sup>8</sup> Egyptian Myth and drama. The king and judge of the dead, the husband and brother of Isis, and father (or brother) of Horus, killed by Set but later resurrected (after Horus killed Set): usually depicted as a man, partly wrapped as a mummy, having a beard and wearing the atef-crown. Name of a principal god of Egypt, from Latin Osiris, from Greek, from Egyptian Asar. Related: Osirian. Retrieved 20 October 2012, from,

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/osiris>.

<sup>9</sup> Greek Mythology and also was the holy city of the ancient Egypt, where Osiris and many Pharaohs were buried. (An ancient town of Asia Minor on the Hellespont in modern-day Turkey. It is the legendary home of Leander, who swam nightly across the strait to his lover Hero. An ancient city of southern Egypt on the Nile River northwest of Thebes. One of the oldest Egyptian cities, it was a religious center for the worship of Osiris and a burial site for the kings of the earliest dynasties). Retrieved 18 August 2012, from,

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/abydos>.

<sup>10</sup> Iranian Mythology.

Additionally, Rahmah points out:

*In Ta'ziyeh [it] is probable that ancient rites of earlier mythological festivals like the Tammuz and Adonis cults have survived in the subsidiary plays which in India have been adapted by some Sunnis and even Hindus; the banners for the processions, a large staff, the hand which is carried round by those who summon to the festival and is now interpreted as the hand of Husain which was cut off, have thus their ancient prototypes. That the significance of the sacred properties has altered is shown by the fact that among the Shi'a Tatars the tabut is called [the] marriage house of Kasim. In many places there are accompanying rites with water, which were originally indigenous; the throwing of the tabut into water among the Indian Shi'as may be due to Hindu influence. Even the style of the mourning garments is partly influenced by earlier forms. But the Passion Plays itself is the popular expression on that religious feeling which has its roots in the historic facts of Kerbela.*

(Rahmah, 1989: 100)

There was a gradual development of Ta'ziyeh in the Safavid era (1502–1736) in the form of the special ceremony of Muharram that included such legitimate forms as *rawza-khwani*<sup>11</sup>, *daste-gardani*<sup>12</sup>, and *marsieh-khani*. In the Zandieh era (1736–1776)

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<sup>11</sup> Razaw-khani is called narrative recitation, professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala or preacher. Rawza is also called Rauza, Rouza, Roza (Urdu: روضہ) is a Perso-Arabic term used in Middle East and Indian subcontinent which means shrine or tomb. It is also known as mazār, maqbara or dargah. The word rauza is derived in Urdu through Persian from the Arabic rauda meaning garden, but extended to tomb surrounded by garden as at Agra and Aurangabad. Abdul Hamid Lahauri, the author of the Badshahnama, the official history of Shah Jahan's reign, calls Taj Mahal rauza-i munawwara, meaning the illumined or illustrious tomb in a garden. Retrieved 17August 2014 from, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rauza>.

the performance came to be called 'Ta'ziyeh' (Azhand, 2008: 83). The literary and development of Ta'ziyeh will be discussed in the next parts.

The Ta'ziyeh has influenced many Iranian theatre directors in recent years. Most Iranian directors and playwrights, however, still think and write in western style. They have combined the theme of Ta'ziyeh with western-influenced theatre styles to create their works. This new style has become known as 'eclectic theatre' or 'eclecticism'.

A good example is how in 1955 an Iranian director – Parviz Sayad – presented the Ta'ziyeh *Abdullah Anif* on the stage [on the theatre stage not the Ta'ziyeh platform] (Shahidi, 2001: 52). Subsequently, since the 1980s (1360s AH) some Iranian dramatists have applied the 'form' and 'content' of Ta'ziyeh in their dramas. To name a few, for instance: the plays *Pardeh-Khaneh* by Beyzaie in 1993, *Namira*<sup>13</sup> by Larian in 1987 and *The Siavush Lamentation* by Hatefi in 1990 were taken from Ta'ziyeh on the martyrdom of Hussein (Alizadeh, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will analyse some other plays -which have been performed with a combination of tradition with western-influenced elements- which are considered based on 'eclectic theatre' or 'eclecticism' through to be clear how playwrights and directors applied this theory (eclecticism) into their works. Here, it is essential to refer to the background of eclectic theatre.

The word eclecticism is derived from the Greek word 'eklektikos', meaning 'selective' or 'choosing the best' (Liddell & Scott, 1940). It is a conceptual approach

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<sup>12</sup> Expressions of grief such as sine-zani (beating the chest), and zangir-zani (beating oneself with chains) emerged as common features of the proliferating mourning-processions (dasta-gardani). Retrieved 10 August 2014 from, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mourning\\_of\\_Muharram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mourning_of_Muharram).

<sup>13</sup> This book means in English: Immortal and the play of Eternity.

that does not merely include one paradigm or a set of assumptions. Instead, eclecticism adheres to or is constituted from several theories, styles, and ideas in order to gain a thorough insight about the subject, and draws upon different theories in different cases. According to *The Free Encyclopedia*, the term ‘eclecticism’ was first applied by a group and did not draw upon a specific system but a selection from some specific doctrines that looked plausible from the existing philosophical beliefs such as the Stoic Panaetius (150 BCE), Posidonius (75 BCE), and Philo of Larissa (75 BCE). Based on such collected materials, they came up with a new philosophy system (Eclecticism in Art, 2012). ‘Eclecticism’ is common in many fields of study such as psychology<sup>14</sup>, martial arts<sup>15</sup>, philosophy<sup>16</sup>, religion<sup>17</sup> and drama. For the purpose of this study, eclecticism is analysed in the field of theatre.

Eclecticism in the fine arts is ‘the borrowing of a variety of styles from different sources and combining them (D.Hume, 1998: 6). Eclecticism hardly ever constitutes a specific style in art because it is not considered a particular style. In general, eclecticism describes a combination of a variety of influences, mainly of elements from different

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<sup>14</sup> Most psychologists accept certain aspects of behaviourism, but do not attempt to use the theory to explain all aspects of human behaviour. In this case, eclecticism is recognized in approaches to psychology that see many factors influencing behaviour and the psyche, and among those who consider all perspectives in identifying, changing, explaining, and determining behaviour.

<sup>15</sup> Some martial arts can be described as eclectic in the sense that they borrow techniques from a wide variety of other martial arts such as Judo or Karate or any of the body contact sports.

<sup>16</sup> In philosophy, Eclectics use elements from multiple philosophies, texts and life experiences and their own philosophical ideas. These ideas include life as connected with existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language.

<sup>17</sup> In religion, Eclectics use elements from multiple religions, applied philosophies, personal experiences or other texts and dogma to form their own beliefs and ideas, noting the similarities between existing systems and practices, and recognizing them as valid. These ideas include life, karma, the afterlife, God and Goddess, the Earth, and other spiritual ideas. Some use a mix of Abrahamic, Dharmic, Neopagan, Shamanism, Daoic doctrines, New Age, religious pluralism and Syncretism. Eclectics are most interested in what really works, personally and communally.



historical styles in architecture, painting, the graphic and decorative arts, as well as music in a single work<sup>18</sup> (Eclecticism in Art, 2012).

During the 1960s and 1970s in the West, especially in America, a non-conventional process emerged, called ‘alternative theatre’<sup>19</sup> by some scholars (such as Spalding Gray, Elizabeth Le Compte, Robert Wilson, and Richard Foreman). This art has always tried to keep itself away from the foundations of traditional theatre, especially commercial theatre. According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani, it is worth mentioning that the foundation of the process associated with non-conventional theatre has been a type of eclecticism (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 44-45). To be more precise, theatre scholars create eclecticism through elements of different forms and styles, and combine the eclectic sources based on their aims and objectives, and give them a new identity. Generally, eclectic theatre has two features:

- i. Selectivity of different techniques and theatrical methods.
- ii. Associating these options based on the specific aesthetic of the artist.

It should be noted that avant-garde has several branches in contemporary theatre where eclecticism can be found. In fact, what is called avant-garde (experimental creations) in theatre, including alternative theatre and also postmodernism, are to some extent eclectic. Two figures associated with eclecticism in avant-garde theatre are Peter Brook and Sevolod Meyerhold. In many contemporary theatrical works, attitudes towards selecting from artistic, literary, social, and philosophical treasures and

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<sup>18</sup> Much of postmodern music is characterized by eclecticism, such as hip-hop.

<sup>19</sup> Alternative theatre is a form of contemporary avant-garde theatre based on experimentalism which has emerged as ‘collective’. Also, its structure and meaning is shown by actors and sometimes by audience participation. This style of theatre applies and accepts spontaneous activities, see Nazerzadeh-Kermani (2005: 474-475).

associating them with the foundation of specific aesthetic of the artists can be widely found.

Eclecticism as a theatrical form was developed particularly by two directors: Max Reinhardt (1873–1934) in Germany, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883–1922) in Russia (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2010: 401). Brief notes by Reinhardt, Meyerhold, and Brook are the earliest written mentions of ‘eclectic’. In *Experimental Theatre* James Roose-Evans noted that Max Reinhardt was an eclectic director who attempted to perform theatre based on his goals and give it a new identity. His theatre was performed in circuses and even in churches. By creating a relationship between the viewers as participators and the actors, he overcame the limitations of these two groups and believed that performance was possible not only on the stage, but also anywhere. Reinhardt brought *Oedipus Rex* (as a play) to the stage at Circus Schumann in 1910 in Frankfurt and attempted to maintain continuity between the spectator and the actors that could be traced back to Greek classical theatre (Roose-Evans, 2002: 62-63).

It was Max Reinhardt’s hope that this theatre would contain modern life as once the great arena had contained the Greek community<sup>20</sup>. But without a traditional way of life, or a shared creed, such a theatre was doomed to failure. What successes it did have in its brief existence under Reinhardt were the successes of a director who played on very emotions through the theatrical devices of light, colour, mass movement and music. If Reinhardt is not giving us Greek drama, what is he giving us? The reply is – Reinhardtism – an essence of drama of his own distilling. As eclectic as Meyerhold or Brook, he ran the whole gamut of theatrical invention, directing every sort of play in every sort of way. There is no one style or method, Reinhardt affirmed. All depends on

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<sup>20</sup> The Greek community: the play was performed in the large square in the Greek society.

realizing the specific atmosphere of the play, on making the play live. He could be intensely theatrical, or he could take realism and charge it with poetry, thereby adding to it an extra dimension (Roose-Evans, 2002: 62-63).

Vakhtangov was one of the eclectics who combined the Stanislavsky's psychological realism<sup>21</sup> and Meyerhold's theatricalism<sup>22</sup> (Mei, 2008: 189). He mostly worked in Moscow between 1921 and 1922, presenting plays such as *The Miracle of Anthony* (1903) by Maurice Maeterlinck, *Erik IV* (1899) by August Strindberg, *The Dybbuk* (1914) by S. Anski, and *The Princes Turandot*<sup>23</sup> (1762) by Carlo Gozzi (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2010: 401). His new eclectic styles of expression of theatre formed his special aesthetic principle.

*The Serpent – A Ceremony*<sup>24</sup> is an example of eclectic theatre from the 1960s, performed by the then radical and experimental Open Theater group in New York<sup>25</sup>. *The*

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<sup>21</sup> Influential system of dramatic training developed by the Russian actor, producer, and theoretician Konstantin Stanislavsky. The method was developed over years of trial and error, beginning c. 1898. It requires that an actor use his emotion memory (i.e., his recall of past experiences and emotions) to identify with the character's inner motivation. The technique was developed in reaction to the histrionic acting styles of the 19th century. Noted American practitioners began using the method in the 1920s; they have included Lee Strasberg, Marlon Brando, Dustin Hoffman, and Eli Wallach. To more info, refer to Malekpour, Ta'ziyeh Plays, in *The Islamic Drama* (2004: 78-79).

<sup>22</sup> Theatricalism first appeared in Russia at the time when realistic theatre had reached its peak with the works of Chekhov and Stanislavski. Berthold Brecht inherited this theatricalism later and built his own style, as Brechtian theatre. To more info, refer to Cody & Sprinchorn (2007 :927) and Farber (2008: 35)

<sup>23</sup> In the eighteenth century, Carlo Gozzi wrote *Turandot* for the *Commedia dell'arte*. Interestingly, since its birth, this pseudo-Chinese story has been adapted and performed in various theatrical Forms. Recently, for instance, it has been rewritten and interpreted in different forms of Chinese xiqu (literally, "theater of song"). To more info, refer to Mei, *A Meeting Point or a Turning Point: On Vakhtangov's Theatrical Activities and Thought*, (2008: 190). Retrieved 17August 2014 from,

<http://memo.cgu.edu.tw/cgjhs/1-1%2008.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Reviewed in the *Boston Herald Traveler*: 'While most of the work is choreographed movement, pantomime, human sounds and music made by bells, Horns, whistles, tambourines and other hand-held instruments, there is an accompanying text from the Bible and a number of speeches with contemporary sentiments. From the beginning, man searches for happiness, for self-realization and union with other men, seems to be the underlying theme. He is thwarted by violence, both from within himself and from other men. Eve is tempted by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, yields, eats the forbidden apple, tempts Adam to eat, too and man's eternal battle begins between self-gratification and obedience to external authority. There is a ritual enactment of the discovery of sexual love played by the group against the intoned recital of how the descendants of Adam begat the family of man that leaves little to the

*Serpent –A Ceremony*, written in 1963 by Jean-Claude Van Itallie, a Belgian-American dramatist, was directed by Joseph Chaikin for the Open Theater in 1969 (Nazerzadeh-



**Figure 1.3:** A Frame of the Movie the Serpent by Jean-Claude Van Itallie, Directed by Joseph Chaikin  
(Chaikin, 1960)

Kermani, 2005: 475). The play has ritual characteristics and, according to Antwan Arthur, it is a type of tragedy. This play, especially the way it was performed, is a remarkable type of eclectic theatre as well as an alternative one. In this play, the stories of Adam and Eve as well as Cain and Abel are narrated based on the Old Testament (see Figure 1.3, above).

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imagination. It is a passionate celebration of love. Passion gives way to maternal tenderness and the celebrants grow into doddering senility. They sink slowly to the floor and collapse into sleep. A hum starts and becomes a group song. "We were sailing along on moonlight bay," they sing, rising and moving into the aisles and up the stairs. They're smiling and their looks of love embrace the audience. They finish singing and stand there. The ceremony is completed. *THE SERPENT* is a fascinating experience.' (Itallie, 1998 ).

<sup>25</sup> The Open Theater group is associated with the revolutionary experimental theatre which happened from the 1920s to the 1970s in America and Europe.

The rhythmic repetition of questions by the Serpent and the responses by Eve results in an overlapping dialogue. The play has a rhythmic theme that ends up creating an incantation or magic effect (words that influence the audience). Due to the fact that the hissing sound is a kind of theme that exists in a ritual ceremony, the hissing sounds added by actors to this play theme makes the play more like a ritual (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 475-476).

In eclectic and alternative theatre, 'intercultural' movements are also used. The attitude towards ditties (folk-songs) in the play elements has emerged in the cultural geographic scope among some artists from the middle of the twentieth century onwards.

Another example is the *Mahabharata*, an old Indian national epic: Jean-Claude Van Itallie performed it in a ditty (folk-song) and multicultural style, and Peter Brook also created an intercultural production of this epic. The next example is related to Indian compiled plays, resulted from compilations of Indian and western tradition. *King of The Dark Chamber*<sup>26</sup> (1914), *Chitra*<sup>27</sup> (1894) and *The Cycle of Spring*<sup>28</sup> (1917) are examples of Indian ancient eclectic plays by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) (G.Brockett, 1977: 77-78).

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<sup>26</sup> *The King of the Dark Chamber* (in English translation), written in 1910, is a symbolic as well as a mystical play. The story is loosely borrowed from the Buddhist story of King Kush Mahavastu.

<sup>27</sup> *Chitra* is a one-act play written by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in English in 1913 by the India Society of London (Shaw, 1914: 503). The play adapts part of the story from the *Mahabharata* and centres upon the character of Chitrangada, a female warrior who tries to attract the attention of Arjuna. *Chitra* has been performed worldwide and has been adapted into several different formats, such as dance. Chowdurie, Tapati (June 9, 2011). In step with Tagore, *The Hindu*. Retrieved 16 August 2013, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chitra\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chitra_(play)).

<sup>28</sup> Tagore c. 1915, the year he was knighted by George V. In 1919 Tagore repudiated his knighthood in protest against the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre. Rabindranath Thakur was born in Calcutta under British rule. He was a poet, short story writer, song composer, novelist, playwright, essayist, and painter. For more information refer to: Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest for Jalianwalla Bagh mass killing. *The Times of India*. 13 April 2012. Retrieved 16 August 2013, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindranath\\_Tagore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindranath_Tagore).

Another example of intercultural movements is *The Conference of the Birds* by the Sufi poet, Farid ud-Din Attar (d. 627 AH). Peter Brook created this piece as a work of theatre that could be accessible to everyone wherever it was played. The poem tells how all the birds of the world, known and unknown, gather in order to discuss how to set out on pilgrimage to the court of the Simurgh (the city of God). Eventually, they set forth on their journey and reach the court of the Simurgh, where they finally attain union with him. What Peter Brook was advocating was not an exchange of theatrical skills, but an exchange of cultural experience, of which language is a prime experience. It was for this reason that Brook was concerned to explore a language of tones and sounds that had no conceptual meaning: the actor must be able to construct his own psycho-analytic language of sounds and gestures in the same way that a great poet creates his own language of words (Roose-Evans, 2002: 176-177).

Based on the above, eclectic theatre is a theory in Iran that is a postulation which can be manifested in connection with the theatre activities of Iran. It is a kind of theatrical form in Iran, the results of the efforts of artists who have tried to combine Iranian traditional forms (such as Ta'ziyeh) with European or American theatrical elements and achieve a theatrical form by combination of local theatrical techniques and methods. In this case, Ta'ziyeh as a passion play and also as a kind of ritual form in Iran is seen through several theatrical forms that have been incorporated with it. In fact, creators such as directors and playwrights are using the form and content of Ta'ziyeh with their own aesthetic principles to create eclectic theatre. This kind of eclectic work could be national, local and also universal.

## 1.2. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this research will be based on analyses of the aspects of 'Ta'ziyeh' and 'Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre'<sup>29</sup> that combine 'modern' and 'conventional' styles together and perform them as eclectic theatre on stage. The topic functions as a starting point for the consideration of the history of both indigenous forms of conventional and modern parts of Ta'ziyeh. It examines characteristic techniques of Ta'ziyeh which directors and playwrights have used in their works. Furthermore, it will determine the concern of this research and define the 'form' and 'content' of plays based on 'eclecticism'. In this case, I have selected three Ta'ziyeh plays which were performed in Iran between 2001 and 2012. This study does not address radio and television drama or children's and young adult drama. Thus, I selected only plays performed on stage.

At the start, it is necessary to indicate what the study is not able to cover, or what could not be covered in as much detail as would be ideal, and to give reasons why these limitations influence the outcome of the research. Some limitations are acknowledged in the analyses of the epics, the different characters, the music, the sound and linguistic criticism connected with this form. However, an in-depth analysis of these topics will not be covered as they are not the main focus of this study.

The present research does not judge the works studied as masterpieces, excellent dramas, or mediocre ones. The works studied are evaluated based on in their eclectic form, and then some classifications and criteria are derived by watching these kinds of theatre.

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<sup>29</sup> 'Ta'ziyeh influenced theatre' is the term coined by the researcher for eclectic plays.

As mentioned, one of the characteristics of eclecticism is the selectivity of different techniques and theatrical methods and associating these options based on the specific aesthetic of the artist. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, two theatrical elements in Iranian eclecticism are covered: 'content' and 'form'. These elements have been chosen to demonstrate how Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre is an eclectic theatre in Iran. The new styles of theatrical expression examined in this study through Ta'ziyeh are based on the special aesthetic principle categories that have been set out above.

### 1.3. Justification

The subject which has been selected for study here is important in theatre. It is remarkable that until now no Iranian or non-Iranian scholar has unequivocally commented upon the influence of European theatre on Ta'ziyeh based on Eclecticism theory or has followed up the similarities between the two. The topic has yet to receive attention and there has not been a single book or article published that deals exclusively with Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre based on eclecticism in Iran by either foreign or domestic writers. There are books and articles with information on Ta'ziyeh, but analysing the 'form' and 'content' of plays which are performed based on eclectic theory is a new area of study.

This thesis will be the first to directly study Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre based on eclectic theatre in Iran and is an important contribution to knowledge about Ta'ziyeh as dramatic literature as well as theatre. Furthermore, the primary information documented, in terms of observation, interviews, notes, recording photographs, illustrations and analyses of new theory, will be useful for other researchers to develop their own study on Ta'ziyeh influenced theatre, as an eclectic theatre in Iran.



#### 1.4. Statement of Objectives

The present research aims to determine how eclectic theatre are characterized according to methods of Ta'ziyeh and Western theatre styles. To show the explicit direction of the study, the following objectives are outlined: first, an investigation and criticism of eclectic theatre according to 'dramatic form' and 'content' and conventions of Ta'ziyeh in three theatre productions: *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* (Rahmanian, 2007); *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* (Rahmanian, 2006); and *A Lonely Person's Story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* (Amini, 2004) each of which uses different parts and content of Ta'ziyeh, to determine the meaning of Ta'ziyeh in the category of eclectic theatre in Iran. Second, to apply special terminologies and indicators within Iranian theatre. For example: Eclecticism, non- conventional theatre, Ta'ziyeh, conventional aesthetic principles, elements of content (substantial)' and 'element of form', in the construction of the three plays. The third objective is the investigation and evaluation of techniques and methods of Ta'ziyeh.

#### 1.5. Significance

The survey conducted for this study found that eclectic theory is a new style in theatre which many educators in directing and authorship have used in their creations. In most of the recent theatrical works, great emphasis is found in the relationship between the attitudes regarding the selection of artistic, literary, social and philosophical treasures and how they are associated with the foundation of the aesthetic of the artists. In this case using the form and content of Ta'ziyeh which is an Old Iranian rite, by directors and combining this theme with their aesthetic principle is a new attitude on stage.

The project is original and has not previously been studied in depth. Although the eclecticism as a new theory that has been presented in Iran, there is no data about the association between eclecticism and Ta'zīyeh. Therefore, there is a lack of studies done on eclecticism. This research shows how to apply the theory of eclecticism to plays combining the ritual and conventional forms of Ta'zīyeh with western theatre to create a new generation of works.

#### 1.6. Methodology (Research Procedure)

This section presents step by step procedure taken in constructing my proposed framework, which I call 'Ta'zīyeh-influenced Theatre' a traditional and religious ritual beside the postmodern. This review is also helpful in presenting the fundamental analyst's attempt to study traditional and postmodern theatre. Using the review, I draw out the specific aspects used to modify Iranian contemporary theatre. Hence, in the present research, only plays made in the context of eclecticism are considered. To this end, I made some classifications and selected performances that were based on techniques, methods and the identity of Ta'zīyeh beliefs. Literature review held in libraries in Iran and Malaysia to identify Ta'zīyeh as a traditional performance and its style when it has come to the stage. Therefore, there have been considered both convention of Ta'zīyeh and modern form of theatre. Drama of Ta'zīyeh which falls into the category of eclectic theatre is then discussed. The research also includes eclectic ideas in western theatre.

The qualitative method of data analysis in terms of the elements of eclecticism was then employed in each work regarding how new terminologies are applied. Finally, descriptive as well as qualitative analyses performed. In other words, these plays were

analysed based on ‘formal elements’ and ‘substantial elements’ that clarifies ‘specific terminologies’ and ‘indicators’, ‘theatrical styles’, ‘forms’, ‘plot expression’, ‘theme’ and ‘dramatic conventions’ for investigation of eclectic plays.

The present research started in 2012 and completed in 2014, in about three years. Field works in Iran (Tehran) took about nine months to complete. Library study, in Iran and Malaysia took another year, while one more year was needed for the thesis and papers to be written. The study methodology is qualitative, based on description and analysis. (See Table 1.1, page19).

Table 1.1: Gantt Chart

Month																																				
Activity	1-4				5-8				9-12				13-16				17-20				21-24				25-28				29-32				33-36			
Proposing Subject																																				
Library Study																																				
Data Collection Fieldwork																																				
Introduction, Literature Review																																				
Methodology																																				
Analysing Data (Plays), Result																																				
Candidature Defense																																				
Conclusion, Implication, Recommendation																																				
Journal Paper																																				
Conference																																				
Reports Writing																																				

### 1.7. Research Questions

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- Did experimental theatre activities in Iran enhance the performance style that is combined by Ta'ziyeh and the eclecticism movement?
- Could examining the Ta'ziyeh plays lead to understanding of eclecticism in Iranian theatre?
- To what extent are these plays successfully applied in eclecticism?
- What are the effects of Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre on the Iranian dramatization, as an investigation of eclectic theatre?
- What pattern can be proposed for the use of techniques of Ta'ziyeh in eclectic theatre in Iran?

### 1.8. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this research is associated with 'eclectic theatre', a sub category of 'experimental theatre', as used by Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani (2005) to describe form and content.

The framework of 'An Analysis of Eclectic Theatre in Iran Based on Ta'ziyeh' in this thesis takes into consideration one fundamental input – eclectic theatre. The theory of eclecticism helps us to realize the structure of eclectic theatre in Iran which is based on Ta'ziyeh and modern components. The contextual examples from a variety of plays which have been influenced by Ta'ziyeh and modern components are used to create

drama linking traditional and modern. The foundation of Ta'ziyeh and eclectic theory as applied are useful in analysing the particular characteristics of eclectic theatre in Iran.

Iranian theatrical forms have been categorized by Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani (2005: 44-45) into nine forms (types), as follows:

- i. Ritual performances
- ii. Processional performances
- iii. Dramatic storytelling, performatory storytelling, theatrical storytelling, dramatic musical storytelling and narrative dances
- iv. Outdoor street performances
- v. Puppet shows, shadow plays
- vi. Traditional farcical performances
- vii. Passion plays
- viii. Western-influenced theatre
- ix. Eclectic theatre

The first seven forms (Nos. i-vii) are based on traditional and local aspects in Iran. The other two forms (Nos. viii and ix) are influenced by western theatre, are not based on Iranian theatre and have modern origins.

As Nazerzadeh-Kermani explains, the elements of content include genre, literary theatrical styles and elements of theatre. Genre is about: tragedy, comedy, farcical, tragedy-comedy, and melodrama. Styles are such as realism, naturalism, romantics and symbolism. Elements of theatre are: theme, message, plot, setting, theatre conventions, atmosphere and mood, and dialogue.

## 1.9. Definition of Key Terms

For the broad application of some terms in the present research, some definitions are given here in order to prevent any ambiguity.

### 1.9.1. Theatre

‘Theatre’ is a broad concept. For instance, we might say, ‘I go to the theatre’, ‘I saw a theatre’, and ‘I am at the theatre’, ‘I plan to stage a theatrical production’, ‘I am involved in the Living Theatre,’ and ‘Troup’ or ‘I have seen a theatrical performance’. The word ‘theatre’ has different meanings in each phrase. For a better understanding, the definition of theatre in English is as follows:

- a) In general, the *theatron* was where the audience of a Greek tragedy sat to view the performance. A *theatron* could refer to the place from where spectators watched sacrifices, dances or theatrical performances. There is debate as to whether early Roman theatres had seats. A *theatron* came to refer specifically to semi-circular, tiered, stone seats for viewing performances (Gill, 2013). Therefore, in this case, theatre means: ‘place of viewing’ or ‘playhouse’. In the second meaning, the term theatre is synonymous with drama and artistic-dramatic (the art of drama and drama).
- b) In the second meaning: Theatre is a set of events which can be seen and heard, consisting of identified components, like Balinese theatre, or an arranged and organized part which is formed during preparation practices like western theatre (Schechner, 2005a: 70).

- c) Theatre as an artistic, cultural and social foundation: When we discuss Iranian theatre, it refers to all its aspects as a whole, inclusive of playwriting, direction, stage design, acoustic, sound, critics and budget. This is the general and comprehensive meaning of theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 31).
- d) 'Theatrical' is the adjectival form of 'theatre' and implies dramatic behaviour which is different from ordinary and normal behaviour. In fact it is a dramatic, spectacular, exaggerated, pretentious and expository. For instance, when the snake charmer brings a dangerous snake from its box in all his imitating and artificial action, his playing is theatrical. The same is seen in productions performed in circus tents or hotels in Iran in imitation or traditional plays (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 32).
- e) Schechner states: "the drama is the domain of the author, the composer, scenarist, shaman; the script is the domain of the teacher, guru, master; the theatre is the domain of the performance; the performance is the domain of the audience" (Schechner, 2005a: 70).
- f) Sometimes, a number of theatre artists forming a theatrical troupe or group are used as such in this type of theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 33).

The term 'theatre' has been used in this study to express two meanings: 'play' and 'theatre study'.

### 1.9.2. Play

According to the Oxford English Dictionary:



- Play means: To perform on a musical instrument; to perform music.
- To act in a play, film/ movie, etc.; to act the role of somebody
- The place where an act is played is known as a playhouse and the stage is known as playing area (play, product)
- Play is used to mean drama or is synonymous with drama

In the current research the second and fourth meaning of play has been used.

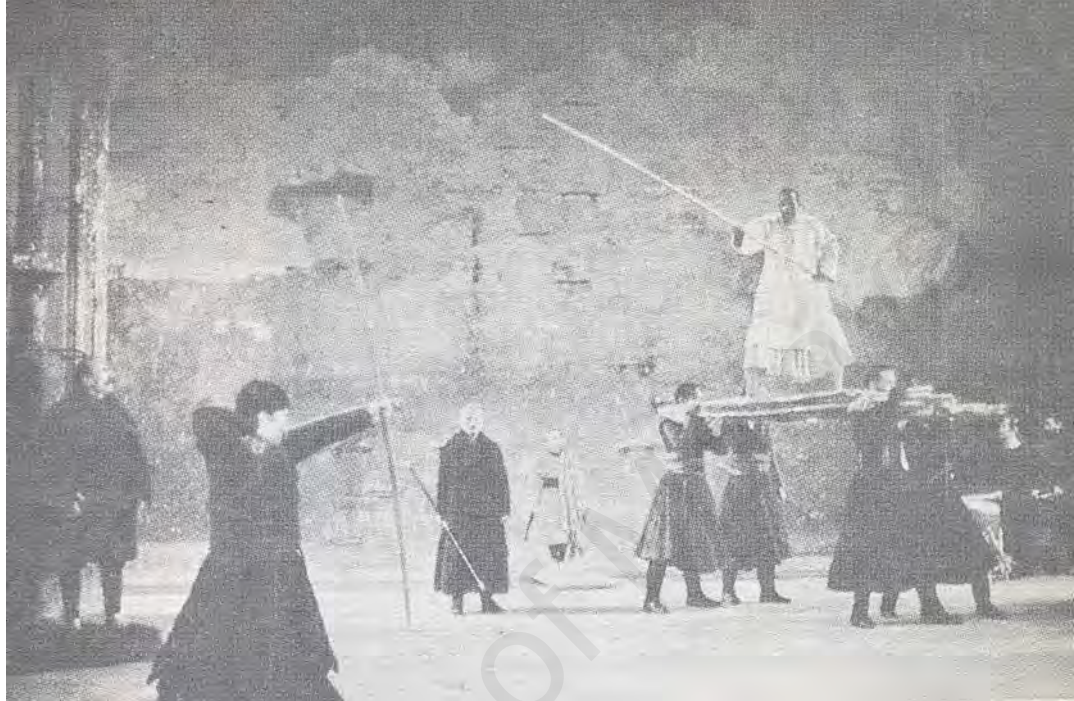
### 1.9.3. Rite

This may be considered as something which has reached us from both near and far predecessors. Rites have penetrated into the mind of people today and have in turn been manifested in people's behaviour and habits. The foundation of a rite is based on a certain culture but elements, habits or thoughts from other cultures forming an inseparable part of Iranian culture are now inevitable. The culture of any country or region confronts the rites as a living phenomenon which is born like any other phenomenon and would die in another time if it loses its performance and application. In *Performance Theory*, Schechner indicates that, "Living rite is a tradition rooted and branched among people. This rite can be studied in schools while symbols would survive among the people in the street" (Schechner, 2005d: 262).

### 1.9.4. Ritual

With reference to *Experimental Theatre* it is clear that ritual is a forgotten form of theatre. However, some rituals are timeless and are transferred during the centuries and times in the form of religious ceremonies, but other rituals may be created for a certain time, place and requirement. Such rituals may be in the form of important theatrical

works like the *Mahabharata*<sup>30</sup>, using professional actors, or may be in the form of dramatic art which tries to refer the human to visual arts (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 195) (see Figure 1.4, below).



**Figure 1.4:** ‘The War’ Scene from Peter Brook’s Production of The Mahabharata (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 174-175)

In past cultures and times there were rituals for national, community, social and individual events, but many such rituals have gradually become antiquated. According to Harvey Cox, an American theologian, we are drowning in rituals which have little or no meaning to us, however when we need to symbolically deepen an important

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<sup>30</sup> Maha in Sanskrit means big and Bharata refers to the great emperor Bharat, whose empire was known as Bharata varsha, and covers the entire world approximately five thousand years ago. The center of this empire was the region known today as India. As such, all aspects of India's millennial (Vedic) culture are compiled in this important epic of the history of mankind. This episode explores the myth of the Mahabharata, laying out the very roots of Indian mythology, religion and history.

The world's greatest and longest known epic poem with 100,000 verses exceeds the Bible and all of Shakespeare's plays put together. The myth tells of the founding of civilization and a protracted battle between the two wings of a royal family: the Pandavas and the Kauravas, bitterly opposed in a struggle for life and death.

experience we feel a shortage of visual behaviours and images. It is not surprising that we confront the problem of identity while we are alive. Rituals should observe the transition from a one stage of life to another (Roose-Evans, 2002d: 14).

#### 1.9.5. Myth

Myth is related to literature which is connected with the origin of the world, the creation of humankind, gods and goddesses, and heroes' wars or the calamities of the ancient communities. It can be considered as a transformed form of history but not history itself. It connects with the nature of religion in physical and divine fertility, but it clearly branched away from that. It sometimes manifests in rituals, and at times it justifies and implies the rituals, but it is not the ritual. "Ritual has been the practical form and method of expressing mythical beliefs and myth is the mental content of rituals. Ritual and myth are inseparable parts" (Rahbin & Rahimi, 2005: 112).

Ernst Cassirer discussed the relationship between myth and ritual and found that deeper layers were discovered beyond the concepts of myths which were ignored earlier or not considered to be as important as they had been. Researchers of Greek literature and religion have always been influenced by the Greek origin of the term 'myth' (μῦθος)<sup>31</sup>. In the myths they were seeing a story, novel composition or narrations related to the performances of gods and goddess or the story of ancestors' athletic adventures. Such a conception was valid while researchers were mainly studying and interpreting the literary sources and superstates of religion like those of Babylon, India, Egypt or Greece. Then it became necessary for the area to be broader (Cassirer, 1998: 95).

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<sup>31</sup> From Ancient Greek μῦθος (*muthos*, 'report', 'tale', 'story').

In fact, in the religious life of primitive society, myth is the epic element and rituals are the dramatic element. Myths are nothing more than the interpretation of rituals. They try to give a definition for what is clearly and directly present in rituals and religious ceremonies. Myths add the theoretical insight to the active and practical aspect of religious life. It is hard to distinguish the elementary and secondary aspect from the two – practical and theoretical – since they do not exist independently without the other. They are connected and correlated, supporting and explaining each other. To quote from Schechner, “from the ethological perspective, rituals evolve as a way of improving communications, removing ambiguities, making signals clear. These signals are preponderantly directed at conspecifics” (Schechner, 2005a: 68-69). As Shahidi wrote, Ritual behaviors by people are ancient cultural phenomena usually connected with myths and religious customs. The more they return to the past by such behaviours the more powerful the religious nature and mythical foundations would be (Shahidi, 2001: 334). According to Mircea Eliade, people are inclined to find meaning and justification beyond history for historical events. Therefore, historical figures are changed into the archetypal hero and historical narrations are changed into myth (Eliade, 2005: 142-147). People in primitive communities and in current society do not clearly distinguish myth from history. Myth for the public plays the role of history and expresses, like history itself, facts, near and far events and happenings.

#### 1.9.6. Ritual Play

Plays, games, sports, theatre and rituals have similarities including a type of order and specific arrangement: giving special value to objects, and being nonproductive in terms of making articles, goods and rules (Schechner, 2005a: 68-69). Such similar and joint specifications make the two theatrical forms closer. The combination of theatre

and ritual creates a type of art which is referred to as ritual play. The ritual play is placed along the ritual-theatre spectrum. Both aspects of profitability are equally present in such a performance. Different ideas have been given on the subject. For instance, the author of the book *Aspects of Ancient Rituals* proposes a stepwise model<sup>32</sup> which connects ritual to theatre. In the book the two types are different in terms of time, that is, ritual precedes theatre (or generally art). In the past, as at the present time, there was a serious gap between the realm of knowledge on relations and values, especially the aesthetic relation and feeling, knowledge and religious experience. Religious experience was itself the most powerful motive in instigation of aesthetic feeling and abilities and potentials of the artistic soul in man. Experience, feeling, knowledge and religious belief are in fact a ritual experience that is a patterned or stylistic allegory or an order which repeats itself in a spiritual order and focus and is always looking into a divine, more elevated and spiritual subject. When there is adherence, attendance and coordination between feeling and experience and religious experience with ritual action and behaviors on one hand and the aesthetic feeling and artistic creativity on the other hand, the result of such intermingling and connectivity would be a certain type of art which is referred to as Ritual Art (Molasalehi, 1999: 5-6).

However, Richard Schechner rejects the stepwise theory. He suggests that all types of execution are present at the same time. He believes that at any time there is a dialectic stress between the profitability-oriented and recreation-oriented inclinations (Schechner, 2005c: 134).

In *The Background of Ta'ziyeh and Theatre in Iran*, Jalal Satari distinguishes dramatic ritual from theatre. Ritual play has been and should be always repeated in a

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<sup>32</sup> In a series of steps, rather than continuously. In music (of a melody) moving in a way that uses only the notes that are next to each other in a scale (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, under the term 'stepwise').

more or less similar way and such repetition is a distinction between dramatic ritual and theatre, however such repetition is inevitable and creates which is, one of the distinguishing aspects of the ritual drama and the theater. But what is to be considered is the repetition and renovation, eternal creativity with the analogy and abundance which has been manifested for the first time and as the purpose of rituals is to repeat and renew an auspicious convention and covenant or a blessing and abundant event, ritual play is forced to observe the covenants and conventions and allegorical positions which have formed and framed the ritual and such obligation and constrain would be the main difference between ritual and theatre (Satari, 2008: 41).

#### 1.9.7. Tragedy, Comedy, Character, Dialogue, Monologue

Tragedy in Ta'ziyeh does not refer to the same tragedy as in Aristotle's classification. In tragedy, the hero is murdered tragically and his death comes with destruction and annihilation. As Satari states, tragedy is a dramatic poem whereby the subject of which has been extracted from myth and history and firm and good style of composition of poem face intimidating events in defining the fate of a well-known hero and is ended in a very bad and tragic manner. Greek tragedy is more influential than that of Rome, England and France. The descriptions are well known of heroes fighting with the cruel fate of dreadful forces more powerful than the [pagan] gods which will finally destroy the heroes. Such fate has no place in Ta'ziyeh. In comparison with Greek tragedy, in Ta'ziyeh, Imam is aware of his being killed and knows that it is the divine will, that he should be the model of struggle and endeavour towards the uplifting and exhalation of the God and Imam obeys it. Contrary to the hero in tragedy, he does not struggle and fight against destiny. If he is murdered in his fight with Omavi Cliff, Moavieh order is not the eternal fate to be followed blindly, but is required for

management of the properties and the government policy. So the word tragedy does not exactly fit the Iranian passion plays (Satari, 2008: 88-89).

It follows that in Ta'ziyeh the hero's murder is a type of victory indicating his to be just and fair. Such victory means martyrdom in Iranian culture. Therefore, what is called a dialogue in tragedy is known as 'Sokhanvari' in Ta'ziyeh and their differences are more in tune. The actors of protagonists who play positive roles (perform as prophets), sing their poem in an Iranian genuine singing styles and music always reminds them the pitch and melody. However the actors who perform the antagonist (disapproving actors) say their speeches in a declamatory, but aggressive styles. Their asking and answering are similar to dialogue and in turn the parties' speech in Ta'ziyeh are different from monologue.

This implies that if one singing the prophet's speech repeats some words and has single narrations, it is not resulting from his fear and inability but it is to warn and note, he sometimes repeats it to himself and at other times speaks it aloud to the family.

This can be extended to comedy. What is known to be comic or farcical plays in Ta'ziyeh may be comic but the meaning of comedy is different from farcical plays or comedy based on Aristotle's classification. Comedy in Ta'ziyeh may be closer to Farce play in which we face the type not the character. Type has a certain definition which is not changed by time or from one play to another while by definition a comedy cannot be referred to as Farce play in Iranian passion plays.

According to the above, although the words tragedy, comedy, monologue, dialogue and character are used in the present thesis, it is noteworthy that their basic structures are different from Aristotle's classifications since the beliefs and the ways of thinking of the people of the Middle East are different from the Ancient Greeks.

When conducting theatrical research in the Persian language, one faces many problems because international terms and standards used in this field are not easily understandable and clear. Lack of equivalent terms in the Persian language for the international terminology can make the research intricate and hard to follow (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 470). For instance, Aristotle divided modernity-theatre into tragedy and comedy. The Ta'ziyeh in Iran also can be divided into tragedy and comedy. However, tragedy in Ta'ziyeh does not imply the same concepts of tragedy used in Greek theatre. This is also the same with comedy. Comedy in Ta'ziyeh does not conform to the meaning of Greek comedy. Therefore, despite usage of the terms tragedy, comedy, dialogue, monologue, character and player in Ta'ziyeh, these terms are essentially different from those used in Greek theatre. This may have originated from eastern beliefs differing from those of the Greeks. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapters.

#### 1.9.8. Meaning of Some Terms and Themes

The director of Ta'ziyeh is termed *moin-al-boka*. The actors (*shabih*, dramatization) perform under the orders of the *moin-al-boka*. *Shabih* also refers to joyful Ta'ziyeh which consists of laughter and comedy.

The protagonist who involves the impersonation of the role of Imam or a prophet is called *olya* or *olya-khan* (approving actor, protagonist). In fact, approving actor is the term for an actor who involves the impersonation of the role of martyrs, such as Hazrat Abbas, Hazrat Aliakbar, Hazrat Moslem and Hazrat Kasim. *Ashghya-khan* or *mokhalef-khan* (disapproving actor, antagonist) is an actor who plays the role of an enemy of the Prophet's family. These two main types of Ta'ziyeh character are known as *Shahadat-khan* or *Ta'ziyeh-khan*.



*Bache-khan* plays the role of a small child of the prophet, like Sakineh, Hani son of Jenab Abdullah. *Zananeh-khan* is an actor who plays the role of women with face cover like the *zeynab*. The roles of women are always played by men.

Shabih *mardomi-khan*, *naghsh-khan* and *pish-khan* are actors playing secondary characters and are among the Prophet's family. These are roles like the courier (*Ghased*), Orator (*Khatib*), people of Medina, a butcher (*Ghasab*), King Gheisar and his minister, Gabriel, Caboli Dervish, Hare's wife and slave.

The performance is accompanied by a drummer and a trumpeter familiar with the *magham* music<sup>33</sup> of religious representation.

The finder or erector is the person who has founded the play scripts of the Ta'ziyeh, invited shabih-khans (shabihs, actors), and provided, entertained people and spectator. All this is done with the aim of getting reward from God. These rewards are such as, forgiveness of deceased persons and answering the needs (satisfaction of needs). Participators are the ordinary persons gathered and watching the performance who identifies with the actors of Ta'ziyeh. There is also 'the multitude', in costume, they enter the area/scene of Ta'ziyeh with the *shabihs* (actors), participate in wars to a limited extent and do not read the script and do not have any dialogue.

Particular colures are associated with certain roles. Green is associated with those singing the roles of the prophets, especially the role of Imam and his children. Blue is associated with those performers who enters in the stage in the middle of the laying the roles of the Imam's descendants. Black is associated with *Zananeh-khans* (those playing the role of women), who wear black costumes. Red is associated with ashghya-khan

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<sup>33</sup> Magham is a style of religious music.

(antagonist, disapproving actors), like Shemr and Hares. Yellow is associated with the character who has seen the right and the truth and has finally followed the Imams, such as Hur-ebn Yazid Ryahi and Zahir-ebn Ghein. White is associated with second performers like the butcher and the Dervish and is used for the shroud of *shahadat-khan*. Finally, gold-embroidered and glittering cloth is associated with the Angel Gabriel, and those opposed to Moavieh, the Roman Caesar, Yazid-Ebn Moavieh, Abdullah-ebn Ziyad, Omar-ebn Sad and irreligious rulers.

#### 1.9.9. Modern Theatre

The end of romanticism and the initiation of realism is considered as the starting point for modern theatre. The foundations of modern theatre are evaluated on the basis of text. Thus, dramas written from the point of realism onwards are called modern theatre. Before the nineteenth century, versified dialogues were used in plays and classified as poetry. A play was a type of poem and playwrights were known as poets. During the second half of the nineteenth century, playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), George Bernard Shaw (1856–1904) and Anton Chekov (1860–1940) created a movement towards realism in the dramatic arts which transformed the art of the playwright as prose (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 470).

More precisely, we usually describe as ‘modern’ any play written since 1877. In that particular year the great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen turned from writing verse plays to creating a series of plays in everyday language dealing with important social and moral issues. It was the impact of these and similar plays on the European Theatre of the late nineteenth century and the rapid spread of their influence to Britain, Russia and the USA that began the era of ‘modern drama’ (Pickering, 2007: 4).

Pickering considered certain criteria to be useful in the evaluation of modern plays they are as follows:

- a) All modern plays are in some way connected with human crisis in the age of science and industrialization (Pickering, 2007: 5). On this basis, are modern plays about periods of history, those using versified and epical works evaluated in this way? Pickering said “even modern plays set in earlier periods of history, they are still inviting judgments from a modern, scientific perspective” (Pickering, 2007: 5).
- b) Modern plays in some way reflect significant changes in the field of design and technology in theatre (Pickering, 2007: 5).
- c) Modern plays are more diverse in form. They include short and also long plays, one-act plays and brief sketches and plays for a single character (Pickering, 2007: 5).

#### 1.9.10. Structure of the Thesis

This section describe the issues of Iranian eclectic theatre which will be analysed and interpreted in terms of form and content. It will take the following five chapters.

The five chapters include:

Chapter One, ‘Introduction to Study’, includes: ‘Background Study’, ‘Scope and Limitation of the Study’, ‘Justification’, ‘Statement of Objectives’, ‘Significance Study’, ‘Research Methodology’, ‘Research Questions’, ‘Theoretical Framework’ and ‘Definition of Key Terms’.

Chapter Two is a literature review on the origin and development of the Ta'zیه, which contains the Birthplace of Ta'zیه, Development of the Ta'zیه, Myths related to the Ta'zیه, Characteristics of Ta'zیه, and Ta'zیه Plays.

Chapter Three, 'Eclectic Literary Theory of Theatre'. This structure of theatre includes, Brief definition of Iranian Theatre Taxonomy, Eclectic Theatre which contains: The Theory of Taxonomy, Theatrical Structure and Aristotle, Plot and Dramatic Elements, and Style. Ritualistic Performances, Aristotelian structure, Elements of the Art of Drama and Analytical Criticism.

Chapter Four, 'Result and Interpretations' includes the analysis of three plays: *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* and *Ghadamshad, the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran*.

Finally, Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Work.

When reading about criteria of modern theatre in Europe, another question may come to mind: is it possible to use such criteria to generate eclectic plays in Iran? For that some sources of scholars are to be considered which are thoroughly studied in the next chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TA'ZIEH

*Ta'zیه, this is exactly what I was searching for in theatre.*

*(Peter Brook, theatre director)*

(Shahidi, 2001: 52)

#### 2.1. Introduction

The present study is new; no research has been conducted on the topic of this thesis. This implies that there are no books or articles addressing this directly. The present literature review looks at works relevant for the understanding of eclectic theatre, as well as other materials which can help to develop this research. In order to demonstrate how 'Ta'zیه-influenced theatre' makes a significant contribution to eclectic theatre in Iran, the review covers some particular books and relevant practices that establish the context of this research.

The origin of Ta'zیه and the time it appeared in the Iranian community are two very important subjects in the history of Ta'zیه. Researchers are not all in agreement regarding the origin and appearance of Ta'zیه. None of the Ta'zیه researchers have given a definite and exact idea in their works, thus the subject is still open to more work and research (see Figure 2.1, page 37).

From literature on the anthropology of performance we understand that the shapes and conventions of performance traditions are not universal, but are inextricably bound

up in more complex patterns of cultural symbolism, logic, and presentational conventions. Further, performance traditions are among the most dynamic and powerful components of a given culture. Reference to *Selective Inattention: A Traditional Way of Spectating Now Part of the Avant-Garde* about the relationship between culture, ritual and performance, they bear a strong relationship to ritual, as Richard Schechner has pointed out on numerous occasions, in that they consist of symbolic elements made manifest through the offices of specialized practitioners whose purpose is to transform the spectators manner at the performance: to make them laugh, persuade them, create in them a sense of heightened reality, elevate their sensibilities, to create a powerful catharsis of emotion (Schechner, 1976: 17).



**Figure 2.1:** The Tragedy of Karbala (Syef, 1990: 129)

Chelkowski pointed out that “Ta’ziyeh is such a personal and serious drama that it captures the very essence of thought and emotions embracing life, death, the Supreme Being, and fellow men. To students of the history of theatre and to those who are engaged in experimental theatre, Ta’ziyeh holds the promise of stimulating new theatrical ideas and experiences” (Chelkowski, 1979: 11). Ta’ziyeh as a traditional play cannot be compared with western theatre by itself, because the specifications of western theatre are not seen in traditional plays. In summary, the specifications of western theatre are as follows: arbitrary space, changing rhythm, episodic structure, designing a position, theme, self-alienation and solitude, characterization. Thus, there is a very clear reason to study the subject by considering the two forms – Ta’ziyeh and western theatre. In the current study, combining Ta’ziyeh as an element of the Iranian traditional play with elements of western theatre has made it possible to study ‘Ta’ziyeh-influenced theatre’ in the framework of Iranian culture and western elements.

## 2.2. Ta’ziyeh

The Ta’ziyeh play is based on traditional elements. It implies the narrations and stories related to the life and calamities of the Holy Prophet’s family, especially the episodes and tragic episodes that happened to Imam Husain and his family in Karbala in Muharram of 61 AH. According to Gobineau, the Ta’ziyeh could not be considered as a non-religious play in its general meaning. Iranians did not consider Ta’ziyeh as a mere play of recreation but rather they thought nothing was more religious, weighted, important and worthy than Ta’ziyeh (Gobineau, 1990: 196). As stated by Wirth, “the paradox of Ta’ziyeh is that being basically a non-epic and non-dramatic event, it produces an epic demonstrative style of acting” (Wirth, 1979: 38). Jensen discussed the ritual play in comparison with the (non- ritual play): ritual play is counted as a certain

form of play. Play and ritual play are both fighting for something or to represent something (Jensen, 1973: 49).

Ta'ziyeh is referred to as, literally, 'the narration of Ta'ziyeh'. As Shahidi observed, the importance and value of the *Ta'ziyeh-khani* (Ta'ziyeh, Ta'ziyeh narrative) is more in the artistic method of reading [and sang] the poems and expressing the events than in the method of performance and events of the play. Therefore, this religious behaviour has been called Ta'ziyeh narration. This ritual-dramatic art was referred to as 'shabih'<sup>34</sup> in the Qajar period (1785-1925 CE). *Shabih* is synonymous with 'imitation', with the difference that the word *shabih* is used in religious dramatic art while the word 'imitation' is used for non-religious dramatic arts (Shahidi, 2001: 257). Therefore, there are differences between ritual play and play, with the most important difference being that a play is not spiritual but secular while ritual play is spiritual. In any community, plays and activities which are considered to be plays reflect the life and social activities of the community which fulfil its physical requirements, while ritual plays and all other activities related to ritual plays are symbols of myth which are placed in the realm of religious rites of the community and fulfil the requirements related to spiritual needs of the community. The feature film *Ta'ziyeh* (Mousavi, 2009: 257)<sup>35</sup>, written by Seyed Azim Mousavi and produced by UNESCO in 2009, introduced Ta'ziyeh to an international audience for the first time. It demonstrates that Ta'ziyeh is a good example of 'Ritualistic Drama'.

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<sup>34</sup> Resemblance, dramatization

<sup>35</sup> *The ritual dramatic art of Taazyeh*, by Seyed Azim Mousavi, produced by Cultural Heritage for UNESCO, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization, supported by Dramatic Arts, August 2009. Retrieved 12 February 2012, from,

<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/index.php?pg=34&kw=Seyed%20Azim%20Mousavi>.



### 2.2.1. Epic (Brechtian Theatre)

The basis of Brecht's theatre is the avoidance of the actor identifying with the characters. "Epic or Brechtian theatre does not necessarily have the connotation of a heroic scale, but simply the idea of a loosely linked series of events" (Harrop & Epstein, 2000: 294-295). Brecht sought a style which testified to the truth the artist was only an actor and the performance only acting. Taking into consideration that it was not easy for an actor to forget his own identity, Brecht recommended emphasis upon the separation of the actor from his role, both for the sake of the actor himself and for that of the audience. It should always be evident that the man who is striding across the stage is not the real Venetian commander Othello, but an actor doing his job in playing the part. For Brecht this method not only seemed more truthful, but also enabled the actor to exercise his own judgment (Mamnoun, 1968: 14 & 20).

In Brechtian theatre, the actor member is a knowledgeable person who is skilled in dealing with the events, who can relax in his seat, smoke a cigarette, evaluate, and assess the truth. Brecht theatre removes the fantasy and illusions where the audience is an astute and alert individual with an active and searching mind. Brecht emphasizes three factors: non-affective grasp, using social and economic subjects, and 'playing from memory' (narrative play), which were later termed distance [Verfremden] (Taavoni, 1976: 49-50).

The audience must be reminded that it is in a theatre, and that the play is not a seamless whole but is constructed from many parts, and that those parts must be kept independently visible so the audience may reflect upon the way the events are represented. The intention is to exhibit not only the action, but the manner in which they are subjected to the processes of theatre (Harrop & Epstein, 2000 a: 294-297).

### 2.3. Ta'ziyeh and Rituals

Rituals, which are mainly based on myths and mythical conceptions, are different from rituals based on historical episodes and those happening now.

Rituals based on myths are a dramatic form of thoughts while those based on historical episodes intermingled with myth are dramatic form of behaviour happened out of the community thought and in the historical-social life of the community, in which people have participated or were witness of. Such historical have been gradually and during many generations, the eternal nature of the community has mixed such historical episodes with a series of myths, stories, and beliefs taking the ritual-dramatic form. Ta'ziyeh is classified in the group of behaviours in which historical and religious episodes have been grown in the folk lore along with belief and myth and appeared as ritual-religious play (Shahidi, 2001: 334).

In Iranian tradition, Ta'ziyeh contains both ritual and play elements. It is rooted in ancient Iranian behaviour and rituals with a historical and religious structure and contains valuable parts of Iranian myths and stories. The episodes of each Ta'ziyeh specifically mix myth and story.

### 2.4. Good and Evil

Ta'ziyeh is based on the confrontation and conflict between 'good' (Imam Husain and his followers) and 'evil' (Yazid and his troops). Such fighting and struggle can be followed in ancient Iranian myths where Ahoura Mazda<sup>36</sup> and the Devil are the symbols

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<sup>36</sup> According to the *Shahnameh*, Ahoura Mazda was the first shah.

of good and evil. In their dramatic parts of these myths we find the story of Siavush, who was innocent but was killed by the ill-natured Garsivaz of Turan. The play is based on the fight between good and evil. However these ethical concepts have changed in history, it is undeniable that the character of the ancient plays had signified two concepts; good and evil (see Figure 2.2, page 42). Reference to *The Background of Ta'ziyeh and Theatre in Iran* if the tragedy of Siavush has changed to dramatic event the reason may be that the Siavush myth is rooted in the obvious confrontation of the two peoples – Iranians (Siavush) and Turan is (Afrasiyab) – so the fight between good and evil is not necessary. This means that they do not appear in the human consciousness or metaphysical world as immortal, but they happen in a mythical and mysterious history and have no political aspect, in the same manner in which historical episodes find mythical form in Ta'ziyeh (Satari, 2009: 53).



**Figure 2.2:** Symbol of Good and Evil (Right: Good, Left: Evil) (Syef, 1990: 51)

Although the religious personality of Siavush is generally removed from Islamic sources, there is sufficient evidence for a powerful religious ritual. Tha'alebi refers to a tradition according to which cosmic disorder would occur with Siavush's death: "a violent wind began to blow, a heavy dust arose and a stagnant darkness spread. Such phenomena could only point to the sanctity of the slain hero" (Yarshater, 1979: 90). The same happened at the time of Imam Husain's martyrdom. According to a Turkish epic poem, when Imam Husain's horse returns riderless the women immediately recognize the significance of this. Miraculous occurrences follow: "the day becomes dark, there is an earth tremor, a deep gloom spreads over the quaking earth and floods occur" (And, 1979: 252).

## 2.5. The Siavush Myth

Ta'ziyeh is a religious, mythical, and ritual play, and more importantly it is a kind of 'Asian theatrical forms'<sup>37</sup>. It is about the humans and mythological characters that fight with the devil and are martyred. The roots of these passion plays lie in the pre-Islamic period and the Avesta<sup>38</sup>, national and historical epic poems and ceremonies like *The Lamentation of Siavush* (Sug-e- Siavush). Why is the destiny of Siavush important

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<sup>37</sup>. For more information see Malekpour (2004), p (2- 3).

<sup>38</sup> The texts of the Avesta, also known as the Zend Avesta – which are all in the Avestan language – were composed over the course of several hundred years. The most important portion, the Gathas, in older Avestan (before the works of Johanna Narten 'Gathic'), are the hymns thought to have been composed by Zoroaster himself (Malekpour, 2004: viii). The liturgical texts of the Yasna, which includes the Gathas, is in the Older Avestan, with later additions in Younger Avestan. The oldest portions the Yasna may be older than the Gathas, later adapted to follow the doctrine of Zoroaster more closely. The various Yashts are in the Younger Avestan and are thought to date to the Achaemenid era (559–330 BCE). (Retrieved 13 July 2014 from, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avesta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avesta)) The Visprad and Vendidad, which are also in Younger Avestan, were probably composed even later but this is not certain. The Vendidad were written primarily for ritual purification. The Visparat, another group of writings in the Avesta, were believed to be made for the honour and prayer of the celestial lords (Nigosian, 2008). Retrieved 11 September 2014, from,

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Selections-Zend-Avesta-Unknown-Authors/dp/1500892513>.

for Iranians? The Siavush myth is one of the most significant myths in Iranian culture of ancient times. “The theme of redemption through sacrifice found parallels in such pre-Islamic legends as the passion of Siavush and in the ancient Mesopotamian ritual of Adonis-Tamuz” (Chelkowski, 1979: 4). There are other similarities between the myth of Siavush and the mourning of Imam Husain, “this ritual is considered by some scholars (such as Ehsan Yarshater) to be the original source of the Ta’ziyeh. Even though this theory has not been accepted by some scholars, it is difficult to deny the resemblance between the characters of Siavush and Husain” (Malekpour, 2004: 43) (see Figure 2.3, page 44).



**Figure 2.3:** Siavush Myth (the Tragedy of Siavush) Siavush Slain on Afrasiyab's order (Syef, 1990: 133)

In the Siavush myth we seem to be confronted with the sacrifice of a divine being whose death generated life, a myth familiar from ancient Mesopotamia and elsewhere. According to legend, an herb grew from Siavush’s blood, called ‘the Blood of Siavush’

(*khun-e-Siavushan*)<sup>39</sup> even though Afrasiyab<sup>40</sup> had ordered his blood to be shed over a barren rock (Yarshater, 1979: 90). According to Eilers, Chinese Veije and Tolstoy, Siavushan is the name of an annual Iranian ritual (Eilers, 1953: 91). In addition, the epic aspect of the Siavush story is a valuable work of *Shahnameh* (شاهنامه)<sup>41</sup>. However, despite the fact that the dramatic ritual was so widespread in ancient Iran, few documents and signs of it have reached the present.

Siavush was so revered in ancient Iran that people recreated this great and unfortunate event in the form of ritual plays and performed this tradition for a long time period. The tragedy of Siavush has been discovered on a wall painting in the Panjikent<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> This plant is the maidenhair fern (*Adiantum*, family Pteridaceae). In some places, people steep this plant and consider it to have healing properties.

<sup>40</sup> According to the Persian epic poem, *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings) by Ferdowsi, Afrasiyab was the king and hero of Touran and an archenemy of Iran. Retrieved 24 December 2012, from,

<http://en.inforapid.org/index.php?search=Afrasiab>.

<sup>41</sup> The *Shahnameh* or *Shah-nama* (شاهنامه *Shāhnāme*, "The Book of Kings") is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 AD and is the national epic of Iran and related societies. Consisting of some 60,000 verses, the *Shahnameh* tells mainly the mythical and to some extent the historical past of (Greater) Iran from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest of Persia in the 7th century. The work is of central importance in Persian culture, regarded as a literary masterpiece, and definitive of ethno-national cultural identity of Iran. It is also important to the contemporary adherents of Zoroastrianism, in that it traces the historical links between the beginnings of the religion with the death of the last Zoroastrian ruler of Persia during the Muslim conquest. Ferdowsi started writing the *Shahnameh* in 977 A.D and completed it on 8 March 1010. The *Shahnameh* is a monument of poetry and historiography, being mainly the poetical recast of what Ferdowsi, his contemporaries, and his predecessors regarded as the account of Iran's ancient history. Many such accounts already existed in prose, an example being the *Shahnameh* of Abu-Mansur Daqiqi. A small portion of Ferdowsi's work, in passages scattered throughout the *Shahnameh*, is entirely of his own conception. The *Shahnameh* is an epic poem of over 50,000 couplets, written in early Modern Persian. It is based mainly on a prose work of the same name compiled in Ferdowsi's earlier life in his native Tus. Retrieved 13 July 2014 from,

<http://en.inforapid.org/index.php?search=Turan>.

<sup>42</sup> Panjikent was a major city of Sogdiana, located on the Zerafshan River in Uzbekistan, about 40 kilometers (27 mi.) east of Samarqand. It was occupied from the fifth to the eighth century CE. The Sogdians occupied a strategic territory between the Syr Dar'ya and Amu Dar'ya Rivers, which controlled the east-west flow of trade goods along the Silk Road in modern Uzbekistan. They traveled widely and grew wealthy. Living farther east than Khwarizm, the Sogdians retained a greater degree of political independence, particularly from the Kushans. Excavations began in 1946 under the direction of A. Y. Yakubovky. He found four distinct parts of the city in an area exceeding 14 hectares (35 acres): a royal palace and citadel, the main occupation area, a suburban adjunct, and the cemetery. The palace and domestic structures reflect the taste and cosmopolitan contacts of rich Sogdian merchants, particularly during the city's heyday during the sixth and seventh centuries CE. The house walls were built of compressed loess and mud brick, with brick vaulted roofs. There is some evidence that clay tiles were



near Samarkand<sup>43</sup> (see Figure 2.4, page 48). As cited by Frumkin (1970: 72-78), the wall painting shows the Mourning of Siavush and was recognized by A.Y. Yakubovki and A.I. Terenzohki. This picture depicts the greatest example of the Siavush mourning ceremony. Siavush's body lies in a coffin which is carried by some men. "It has been surrounded by men and women who would rend their clothes, and beat their head, face and chest. The catafalque is carried on men's shoulders. The painter of this image seems to have seen the ceremony himself. In addition, it implies that such ceremonies would portray some scenes of Siavush's life and musicians would play music and sing songs about Siavush's death (Beyzaie, 2000: 31-32).

Jamshid Malekpour tells the story of the Siavush myth as follows: Siavush was the son of Kia-Ka'us<sup>44</sup>, the Shah of Iran. Siavush's stepmother, Queen Saudabah, fell in love with him, but he rejected her because he did not want to bring shame upon his father. This rejection caused Saudabah to hate him. She tore her robe, disarrayed her hair and accused him of raping her. According to tradition, Siavush had to pass a test to prove his innocence (see Figure 2.5, page 49). Kia-Ka'us wanted to kill Saudabah for the false accusation she had made against his son, but Siavush, the symbol of goodness and mercy, forgave the Queen and asked his father to spare her. Meanwhile, news came that Afrasiyab, the ruler of Touran (توران)<sup>45</sup>, had advanced towards Iran with a huge

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used in the opulent residences, some of which were two or even three stories in height. A particular feature of the domestic structures was the predilection of the owners to decorate the walls with paintings of events of everyday life, such as feasting, hunting, ritual bathing, scenes from mythology, and even scenes from Aesop's fables. The rooms of the well-to-do were decorated from ceiling to floor with richly colored images (Higham, 2004: 258).

<sup>43</sup> Samarkand is a city close to Bukhara.

<sup>44</sup> Also known as Keykavoos.

<sup>45</sup> Tūrān (Persian توران) is the Persian name for Central Asia, literally meaning "the land of the Tur". As described below, the original Turanians are an Iranian tribe of the Avestan age. As a people the "Turanian" are one of the two Iranian peoples both descending from the Persian Fereydun but with different domains and often at war with each other. In fact according to the Shahnameh's account, at least 1,500 years later after the Avesta, the nomadic tribes who inhabited these lands were ruled by Tūr, who

army. Siavush, who wanted to be far away from his father and stepmother, asked permission to command the army of Iran in the forthcoming battle against the army of Turan. Siavush's petition was granted, and he went to fight against the army of Turan, which was commanded by Garsivaz, brother of Afrasiyab.

The two armies fought for three days and on the fourth day the army of Turan was driven back. Afrasiyab sued for peace and Siavush agreed on conditions. However Kia Ka'us did not accept this peace. Siavush disobeyed his father's orders and after the peace he went to join up with Afrasiyab, who received him with all honour and loved him as his son and even gave his daughter, Frangis, to him. Meanwhile Garsivaz, Afrasiyab's brother, jealous of Siavush's rising power and popularity, began to poison Afrasiyab's mind against Siavush and accused him of plotting against Turan. Finally, Siavush was forced to fight 'against' the army of Turan. He was captured and dragged to a dusty place where his head was cut off by Garsivaz. The dust did not absorb the warm blood. According to the legend, where Siavush's blood was spilled, a green plant called 'the feather of Siavush' or 'the blood of Siavush' sprang up, nourished by the hero's blood. The more this plant was cut, the more it grew (Malekpour, 2004: 43). Further details of the Siavush story may be found in Appendix A.

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was the emperor Fereydun's elder son. The association with Turks is also primarily based on the Shahnameh's geographical account where Turkification of Central Asia was partially completed during that time. Tur/Turaj (Tuzh in Middle Persian) is the son of emperor Fereydun in ancient Iranian mythology. In the Shahnameh, he is identified with the Turks although culturally, there is no relationship between Turanians of the Shahnameh and the culture of ancient Turks. In 19th century and early 20th century discourse, now obsolete, Turan was primarily an ideological term designating Altaic and Uralic languages. The oldest existing mention of Turanian is in the Farvardin Yashts of the young Avesta, which is dated by linguists to have been composed approximately 2500 years ago. The Avesta contains the names of various tribal groups who lived in proximity to each other. According to Prof. Gherardo Gnoli: "Iranian tribes that also keep on recurring in the Yasht, Airyas, Tuiryas, Sairimas, Sainus and Dahis".





**Figure 2.4:** The Wall Painting Mourning for Siavush. The Coffin is carried by Four Men and Surrounding Lamentation Women (Malekpour, 2004: 46)



**Figure 2.5:** The Revenge of Kia-Ka'us for Siavush (Seyf, 1990: 85)

The story of Siavush and his murder has been narrated in Iran for thousands of years and in the pre-Islamic period the murder came to be commemorated in the form of a ritual called The Lamentation of Siavush (*Sug-e- Siavush*). “The People of Bokhara have mournful songs on Siavush’s murder, which are well known in all provinces, are made by musicians, and are known by the storytellers as ‘Magus Cry’, which dates back more than three thousand years” (Narshakhi, 1974: 24).

## 2.6. Formation of Ta’ziyeh

For about two hundred and fifty years the Muharram processions and the narrative recitation<sup>46</sup> existed side by side, each becoming more complex and at the same time

<sup>46</sup>The narrative recitation also known *Rawza-khani*, professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala or preacher.

more refined and theatrical. Then in the middle of the eighteenth century they fused. A new dramatic form was born, *Ta'ziyeh-khani* or, as it is more familiarly called, simply *Ta'ziyeh* (Chelkowski, 1979: 4).

Moezodoleh Deylami<sup>47</sup> publicized mourning for the family of the Holy Prophet from which the form of *Ta'ziyeh* gradually evolved over the centuries. The transformation can be extracted to some extent from reports by European travellers. Edward Brown narrates Ibn-Kasir-Shami in his book regarding the historical background of religious representation: "That was Moezodoleh Deylami who ordered Baghdad bazaar to be closed, black clothing to be worn and *Ta'ziyeh of Seyed Al Shohada* to be performed in the first ten days of Muharram; the tradition was in place up to downfall of the Dialameh dynasty<sup>48</sup>. Brown also says that *Ta'ziyeh* was performed by Moezodoleh Boyeh in 963 (CE) in Baghdad" (Malekpour, 1983: 345).

In the earlier Safavid dynasty (1501-1732 CE), in the tenth century AH, due to the close relationship between the government and religion, the songs and narration of the Karbala episode were highly developed in a manner whereby mourning processions would pass through streets and alleys bewailing the Karbala episode.

Malekpour believed that such bewailing rituals were the starting point for the formation of *Ta'ziyeh* as a narrative arrangement of poems related to the Karbala episode which was the dramatic background for *Ta'ziyeh* from the literary viewpoint in

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<sup>47</sup> Moezodoleh Deylami, better known by his laqab of Mu'izz al-Dawla, was the first of the Buyid emirs of Iraq, ruling from 945 until his death. He was the son of Buya [Boyeh]. Born: Iran, Died: April 8, 967 AD, Iraq. Retrieved 14 July 2014, from,

<https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid>.

<sup>48</sup> Qazvin's historical background dates back to the Medean era, the ninth century BC. At that time, Qazvin was frequently attacked by tribes such as the Dialameh of Tabarestan. In the early years of the Islamic era, Qazvin served as a base for the Arab forces.

the tenth century AH. Therefore, it can be concluded that versification of Karbala episode by poets and the inclination to role playing in commemoration of the martyrs of Karbala, make the background for a complete sample of religious play, that is Ta'ziyeh, to appear and what remained was to go a short way in terms of time and perform a huge transformation in terms of play characteristics (Malekpour, 1983: 468-472).

## 2.7. Evolution of Ta'ziyeh

Over a long period of time people have made the stories of Ta'ziyeh, sung its poems, developed its characteristics, and created the characters. The government has always prevented such ceremonies and when impossible to prevent, the authorities organized the stories as they desires. However, the Ta'ziyeh continued its way and is known as the most important folk play in Iran.

The evolution of Ta'ziyeh from its origins in non-religious historical and mythical episodes and the development in Ta'ziyeh as dramatic literature did not keep Ta'ziyeh as ritual theatre away from religion, and its connection with the moral and cultural-religious beliefs of the people was not cut. Preserving such connection helped Ta'ziyeh's role and position in the traditional and religious community of Iran. Therefore, in Iran Ta'ziyeh has been always in place in its current concept and independent from the theatre. Shahidi states that in many sub-episodes (*gusheh*) and second episode of Ta'ziyeh (non-religious story), and in the process of the episode referrals are made to the Karbala episode once or more, that is the origin or religious theme of the performance is shown to the viewer of Ta'ziyehs (religious or non-religious) (Shahidi, 2001: 393-394). The tragic aspect is the most important and characteristic aspect of Ta'ziyeh. However, from the mid Qajar period onwards joyful

and comic Ta'ziyehs have also been made, most of which show no dramatic influence from the martyrdom Ta'ziyeh and are merely a type of public and recreational plays.

Ta'ziyeh has probably been created from a combination of ceremonies and narration<sup>49</sup> and traditions such as the commemoration of the martyrs of Karbala, religious representation in mourning groups, and religious bands in the first and last ten days of Muharram. Chelkowski has correctly found the relationship between the principle Ta'ziyeh with religious, especially with the principle of martyrdom he stated, "As a dramatic form it has its origin in the Muharram processions commemorating Husain's martyrdom and throughout its evolution the representation of the siege and carnage at Karbala has remained its centerpoint. Ta'ziyeh has never lost its religious implication" (Chelkowski, 1979: 6).

The writings of travellers, theatre experts and western authorities all make the important point that the commendation and tribute of Iranian Ta'ziyeh was more related to those about the martyrdom, especially the episodes of Karbala, and not the mythological Ta'ziyeh and the likes. According to Shahidi, some methods, conventions and rules of Ta'ziyeh conform to the principles and rules of theatre, like alienation effect (separation or estrangement effect<sup>50</sup>), connection between viewer (participation/ audience) and player, simplicity, purity all of which are among the characteristics of martyrdom Ta'ziyeh (Shahidi, 2001: 334).

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<sup>49</sup> Narration is to narrate a story in the form of poetry or prose using suitable movements, gesture and expression in front of the public. Narration is to amuse and intrigue [? Try to make crying audience] the audience's feelings and affection using an attractive story, suitable expression, having the movements and inducing gesture and dramatic states in control to the extent that viewers may feel the player at any time as the story myths. In other words, the narrator should be able to individually play and perform all the story characters.

<sup>50</sup> separation or estrangement effect imply being strange to , to keep at a distance and to keep away. To more info, refer to Mamnoon, *Ta'ziyeh from the viewpoint of the Western Theatre* (1979; 157).

Ta'ziyeh has remained as religious play in its evolution. According to Abdullah Mostofi in *Description of My Life* (in Beyzaie, 2000: 169), Naseredin Shah (1848 -1896 CE) who was changing Ta'ziyeh increasing employed non-religious subjects tried to indicate it the glory and magnificence of his kingdom and elevated its position. Princes and distinguished people followed the king and arranged some Ta'ziyeh ceremonies. Gradually the local places for religious rituals, which were formerly performed as folk passion plays, followed the way paved by others and added glory and ornamental elements to the religious rituals depending on local resources. There were between 200 to 300 Ta'ziyehs (Ta'ziyeh drama) performed in aristocratic households and *tekyeh*<sup>51</sup> for religious rituals in Tehran. With the aristocracy becoming involved in Ta'ziyeh, the narrations and organization was enhanced and some other elements were added which had in fact no connection with the former ritual character, like the Ta'ziyehs *Amir Teimour*, *Hazrat Joseph* and *The Marriage of Ghureish's Daughter*. Meanwhile in order not to obscure and remove the mourning aspect of the ceremony, a semi-recreational and ethical narration was added to the introductory part and an episode from Karbala was added to the final part.

This is how the prologue or presinging<sup>52</sup> came to be formed. From early in the reign of Naseredin Shah, in which Ta'ziyeh flourished and developed and viewer amusement made the recreational aspect of the Ta'ziyehs more developed than its mourning one, some type of prelude was added to Ta'ziyeh, which was known as the prologue.

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<sup>51</sup> Takyeh or Tekyeh has two meaning, congregation centers and also is platform for the performance of Ta'ziyeh. Stage is synonym of it.

<sup>52</sup> Prologue or presinging is included general topics of the Ta'ziyeh.





**Figure 2.6:** Prologue or Presenting. It Starts with Music Band and the Actors which Introduces General Topic of Ta'zیه (Mousavi, 2009)

The contents of the prologue were about the myths and local stories and in some cases, the public assisted the writer. Anyway, to conciliate their pain, the prologue explained the episode of Karbala, and then the main performance was started. In some prologues, they returned the past time and broke time sequence following came to the prologue. An example is *Amir Teimour*, in which, with the capture of Kofa and being informed of the Karbala episode, Teimour ordered a Ta'zیه to be arranged (further details relevant *Amir Teimour* may be found in Appendix C). In some other cases anticipation is used, as in *The Wandering Dervish and Moses (Dervish Biyabani va Mosa)*<sup>53</sup>, whose story has been taken from *Masnavi of Molavi*<sup>54</sup>. It is about disobedience

<sup>53</sup> There are several version of this Ta'zیه and differ from one another in the details (Malekpour, 2004: 82).

<sup>54</sup> The Masnavi, Masnavi of Molavi or Masnavi-I Ma'navi, also written Mathnavi, Ma'navi, or Mathnavi, is an extensive poem written in Persian by Jalal al-Din Muhammad balkhi, the celebrated Persian Sufi saint and poet. Author: Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi. Genre: Poetry. Retrieved 14 July 2014, from,

and denying who reaches Moses and after their confrontation and upon Gabriel's order, Moses indicates to him the (future) happening of Karbala between the two fingers of the right hand (Beyzaie, 2000: 138) (see Figure 2.6, page 54)

Ta'ziyeh initially contained only mourning episodes but gradually, with transformation of contents and reaching a new social status, sub- episodes of joy and laughter were added. There were historical, social and artistic processes which changed into comic and very non-religious positions. For this reason, some including Jamshid Malekpour, believe that it is not appropriate to use the word Ta'ziyeh and that these are rather *shabih* [the actor of Ta'ziyeh] (Malekpour, 1983: 468-472).

In the Qajar period there were more changes and transformations in Ta'ziyeh, in addition to the development and publicity of Ta'ziyeh among the people and different guilds:

- a) Ta'ziyeh dramas increased in number. In addition to the Karbala episodes and calamities of the Holy Prophet family, other religious and historical stories and episodes were added as sub-episodes which were first performed at the beginning or in the middle of the Ta'ziyeh and then changed into the main and independent Ta'ziyeh (Shahidi, 2001: 389-380), like the sub-episode that evolved into the Ta'ziyeh *The Wandering Dervish and Moses*.
- b) In old Ta'ziyeh, the performance of episodes was based more on narrations. Dialogue and movements were limited, so that in the past the *ashghya* (disapproving actors, antagonist) had limited roles in Ta'ziyeh. However, since the Naseri period (the reign of Naseredin Shah), narrations were shortened and



movements were increased, so that *ashghya* [disapproving actor, the antagonist characters] found better and more dramatic roles, especially in epics and martyrdom Ta'ziyeh. This confrontation of two opposing forces of good and evil in Ta'ziyeh added to the dramatic aspects of Ta'ziyeh and changed its simple and merely tragic state to some extent (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621). As Chelkowski observed, “interestingly, from the beginning, the antagonists [*ashghya*] recited their parts, while *olya* [the protagonist] sang theirs. The main theme was still the siege of Karbala, but the focus was on individual heroes around whom separate plays were written. Martyrs who predated and postdated Karbala were added to the repertoire” (Chelkowski, 1979: 4).

c) Ta'ziyeh performances took place in aristocratic and noble households, which were more managed by women, so these became known as ‘feminine Ta'ziyeh’. Feminine Ta'ziyeh was modern in appearance, and found common place from Fath Ali Shah Qajar, among women and girls and continued up to the end of the Qajar dynasty. Their audiences were the women of the court, men of distinction and young boys (Shahidi, 2001: 257).

i. Feminine Ta'ziyeh was performed in open yards or in the big halls in houses. Actors were those commemorating the martyrs of Karbala or have learnt about *rawza-khani*<sup>55</sup> (narrative recitation) and *naqqali* (story- telling or narration) and played in such gatherings. Only Hajiyeh Khanoom (Mrs. Hajiyeh), the daughter of Fath-Ali Shah was named as the only one by *moin-al-boka* (The leader of Ta'ziyeh). Their Favorite Ta'ziyehs in such ceremonies were those in which

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<sup>55</sup> Preacher or professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala.

women were acting the main character roles like *the Ta'ziyeh of Shahrbanoo* and *The Wedding Party of Ghureish's Daughter* (*aroosiye-dokhtar-e-Ghureish*) (Beyzaie, 2000: 151-152). Further Details relevant *The Wedding Party of Ghureish's Daughter* may be found in Appendix G. Those played the role of men required some simulation and cosmetics. Changing their voice and face they distinguished their role from that of men. Contrary to common principle, in Ta'ziyeh women did not completely cover their faces. Feminine Ta'ziyeh were sometimes performed up to the mid-Qajar period in aristocratic and nobles' houses and then gradually disappeared (Beyzaie, 2000: 31-32).

## 2.8. Types of Ta'ziyeh

According to what has been said above, Ta'ziyeh can be divided in terms of subject, content and structure of the episodes. In terms of subject, four categories can be distinguished:



**Figure 2.7:** Leili & Majnun (Syef, 1990: 105)

- ii. Episodes of Karbala and calamities of the Holy Prophet's family, e.g. Ta'ziyeh on the martyrdom of Imam Husain.
- iii. Historical and religious stories: Ta'ziyeh plays of which the subjects are historical and religious stories, e.g. *Joseph and Zuleikha*, which describes the story of Joseph up to the incident of falling into the well (Shahidi, 2001: 389-380).
- iv. Myths and legends: Ta'ziyeh plays regarding a series of historical and national legends and sometimes myths like *Binding the Devil Thumb*, *Leili and Majnun* (see Figure 2.7, page 57), *Mansour Halaj* (Shahidi, 2001: 52) and *Azmoon-e Siavush* (*The Examination of Siavush*, recently presented in Iran by Azim Mousavi. Further Details relevant *the Binding the Devil Thumb* and *Mansour Halaj* may be found in Appendix B and E.
- v. Beliefs and customs: Ta'ziyeh plays which are mainly based on beliefs, religious ceremonies and customs like *Being Disclaimed by Parents*, and *Pilgrims of Imam Reza* (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621).

In terms of dramatic contents, Ta'ziyeh can be divided into three types:

- i. Tragic Ta'ziyeh: Ta'ziyeh on martyrdom and those expressing doleful episodes like *The Martyrdom of Imam* and *Martyrdom of Moslem*.

- ii. Joyful Ta'ziyeh: Joyful or more or less comic episodes and critic Ta'ziyeh plays include *The Wedding Party of Fatimah* and *Taxation by Mr. Moin-al- boka* (*Maliat Gereftan-e Jenab-e Moin-al Boka*). According to Beyzaie on farce episodes, 'Exaggeration was from all sides the basis of farce episodes in Passion Plays. Sometimes this feature resulted in extremism and extravagancy. Combination of the text is usually based on glorification of a holy Shiite character and mocking by their opponents who at the end converted to Islam on seeing a miracle. Some sub-episodes were *The Wedding Party of Ghureish's Daughter* (*aroosiye-dokhtar-e Ghureish*), *The Wedding Party of Belgheis*, and *Binding the Devil Thumb* (Beyzaie, 2000: 162). Further details of the *Wedding Party of Ghureish* may be found in appendix G.



**Figure 2.8:** Joseph & Zuleikha (Syef, 1990: 99)

- iii. Epic, romantic and ethical passion plays: Like *Joseph and Zuleikha*, *The Egyptian Daughter in Love with Ali Akbar*, and *Binding the Evil thumb* (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621). Further details of the Joseph and Zuleikha may be found in Appendix C. (See Figure 2.8, page 59).

In terms of type and structure of the episodes, Ta'ziyeh includes two forms:

- i. Main episode: There are relatively detailed Ta'ziyeh in the form of a complete scene, being performed over two, three and sometimes five hours (like the *Martyrdom of Imam Husain* on Ashura day). The subject in this type of Ta'ziyeh is martyrdom, epic, historical and religious stories like *Joseph and Zuleikha*, and *Setting Ibrahim Khalil in Fire*.
- ii. Sub-episodes: There are brief and shorter Ta'ziyeh which are not usually performed individually, but are mixed in with suitable Ta'ziyeh, or as idiom by actors of Ta'ziyeh (dramatizations or shabih) in somehow sub-episode was adjusted in main Ta'ziyeh (episode). Examples are *The Kabuli Mendicant (Darvish-e Kabuli)*, and *The Wandering Dervish and Moses (Mosa va Darvish-e Biyabani)*. Shahidi believed that sub-episodes were performed within the main Ta'ziyeh or as a prelude and at the end the scene is immediately changed and the main Ta'ziyeh is performed. Some sub-episodes are performed in the form of independent Ta'ziyeh and in the process of references in the performance are made to the main play. Such referrals are only used as reminders (by Gabriel or the messenger angel) and sometimes a short scene of the episode is performed. For instance in the Ta'ziyeh of *Ismael's Sacrifice*, Gabriel reminds of the Karbala

even many times, and in the Ta'ziyeh of *Cain and Abel*, Gabriel shows a scene of Karbala episode to Adam (some martyrdoms) (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621).

In some Ta'ziyeh, the actors used the method of 'between two fingers' as digression (*guriz*), to refer to the episode. For instance, in *The Wandering Dervish and Moses (Dervish Biyabani va Moses)*, Moses indicated the gap between his two fingers to recall the Karbala episode. Moses and the Karbala episode belonged to two very different times. Or they refer the past time. For instance, in the film by Seyed Azim Mousavi about Imam Reza, the *moin al-Boka* (director of the Ta'ziyeh) indicated the Karbala episode in the Ta'ziyeh. Such Ta'ziyehs have in some ways broken the concept of time and invited characters from the past and future to the present time.

The structure of the Ta'ziyeh is thus outlined by Jamshid Malekpour:

- i. Episodes: Ta'ziyeh indicating the calamities and martyrdom of religious persons especially that of the Karbala and Imam Husain's family.
  - ii. Prologue: Secondary Ta'ziyeh which are not independent in terms of story, for they should end with an episode and are displayed in connection with an episode.
  - iii. Sub-episode (*gusheh*): Ta'ziyeh that are written and performed according to non-religious stories such as *Cain and Abel*, *Hanging Mansour Halaj*, *Taxation by moin-al boka*, *The Nomadic Mendicant* and *Naseredin Shah*. The content and theme are non-religious in such Ta'ziyeh plays (Malekpour, 1983: 468-472).
- Other writers, including Beyzaie, have considered the same classification for



Ta'ziyeh<sup>56</sup>. On the other hand, sub-episodes (*gusheh*) include *shabih* (resemblances) in which there is a comic element: “Sub-episodes include independent stories in which religious, historical, mythical, social and comic characters are found” (Malekpour, 1983: 86). Upon this complementary description and considering Malekpour’s classification Beyzaie indicates that sub-episodes may contain religious, non-religious and comic Ta'ziyeh (see Figure 2.9, below).



**Figure 2.9:** Joyful Ta'ziyeh. The concept of Ta'ziyeh is Happy and Funny (Mousavi, 2009)

## 2.9. Periodic Recurrence<sup>57</sup>

Each year when Karbala episodes are repeated in Ta'ziyeh plays during Muharram and Safar, the audience transcend time and space looking into the past to the

<sup>56</sup> For more information, see Beyzaie (2000), p.140.

<sup>57</sup>. Heading from: Eliade (1996: 392).

time when such events occurred. This way, each year the Ta'ziyeh plays of martyrdom go beyond history by presenting the resurrection and death of the religious martyrs as occurring in the present. Roger Bastide, discussing ritual in traditional communities, proposes that all ceremonies and formalities are nothing other than restarting things that happened at a certain instance in creation. Nature and history are enlivened through combination with eternity in the beginning of the world (Bastide, 1991: 56).

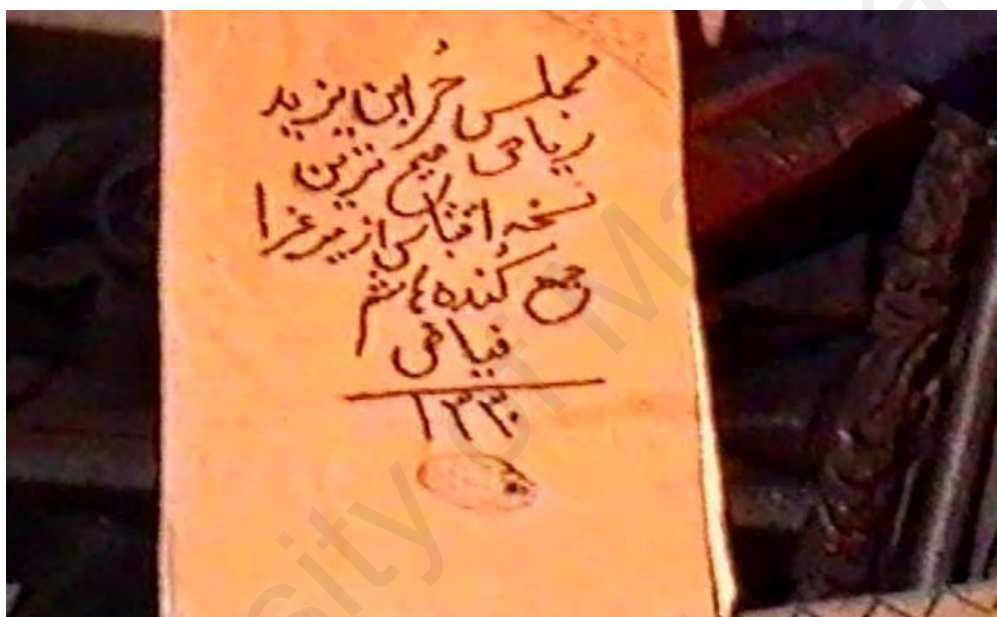
What is the reason for the periodic recurrence of Ta'ziyeh? According to Chelkowski, "early Shiites viewed Husain's death as a sacred redemptive act and the performance of the Muharram ceremonies was believed to be an aid to salvation. They also believed that participation, both by actors and spectators, in the Ta'ziyeh dramas would gain them Husain's intercession on the day of the Last Judgment" (Chelkowski, 1979: 11). In Ta'ziyeh, the actor is not in fact playing, but praying and taking part in a religious ceremony (Satari, 2008: 41).

Eliade considers the play and repetition of a spiritual event of the past as a materialization of its recurrence in the present time. He gives as an example that, for Christians, displaying the calamities and pains of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, in the religious ceremonies of Holy Week are not only reminders of the event, but the event itself appears and happens in front of the congregation's eyes. Therefore, each true Christian should feel him- or herself to be in the same time with these transhistorical events. Thus, with the manifestation of saintliness, events come true and reappear (Eliade, 1996: 392-393). As a result, each year with the representation of Karbala episodes and the calamities of Seyed-Al Shohada and the Imam's family in Ta'ziyeh performed during Muharram and Safar, the event happens again for people to witness.



## 2.10. Ta'ziyeh and Actors

Each complete Ta'ziyeh is called a *majles* (drama or playscript). Players are called *shabih* and there is a narrator as well as actors playing a multitude of characters. On a page of the script, a list of narrators and the props or equipments are written. Roles are written in the text in different parts, which means each role is written on a separate page (Beyzaie, 2000: 140) (see Figure 2.10, below).



**Figure 2.10:** The Script of Hurr. It is one of the collections of Ta'ziyeh script that is now kept in the Vatican Library (Mousavi, 2000)

Actors (*shabih*) in the Ta'ziyehs make the role of the characters for each Ta'ziyeh and in compliance with ethical and behavioural characteristics which people consider typical of their historical and religious hero. Thus, in addition to historical narrations in the mourning songs, the writers and performers of Ta'ziyeh use public beliefs regarding the Ta'ziyeh heroes when introducing these characters, and represent the desires and mental expectations of the public in the behaviour and features of the characters (Shahidi, 2001: 634). Actors use the methods of narration, styles of expression,

movement and musicology in narrating the episodes and events. Thus those with experience of narration are more successful in performance. A good and well known passion player is one who knows poetry and music, has a good voice, is completely familiar with the art and technique of narrating and is capable in performing the events and episodes.

The *majles* (drama or playscript) of Ta'ziyeh along with the bands that play during Muharram and Safar invigorate the atmosphere, heavy with sorrow and pain, in the sorrowful space of the *tekyeh*. During these months people are afflicted with missing the Holy Prophet and his family. The subject of most of the Ta'ziyeh performed in this period, especially the main ones, are related to *Tasoa* and *Ashura* and fit with sorrowful atmosphere of the period.

The dramatic features of Ta'ziyeh related to the Karbala event and its influence on the sensation and feeling of spectators are so powerful that when a well informed and experienced performer is singing, performer can create ambiguity in the viewer's mind and influence them to the extent of becoming ecstatic. It is said that during a performance of the Ta'ziyeh *The Martyrdom of Imam Husain* in Firooz Abad, when Shemr took out his sword after challenging (*rajaz-khani*, declaim or epic statement) and wanted to hit Imam, suddenly a man from Qashqaie came out of the crowd and ran toward Shemr, crying aloud, and hit Shemr with his walking stick. Shemr fell down from his horse under the foot of a camel carrying one of Imam's daughters. Then the Qashqaie said loudly, My Lord was lonely a thousand years ago but now, why should he be captured and caught when he has such a big number of followers around him? (Beigi, 1945: 72).

Ta'ziyeh dramas were written and performed in vernacular language rather than in Arabic. "There were other songs made using Arabic vocabulary, but since the public,

soldiers and women could not understand them, they do not exist. In Ta'ziyeh, contrary to official literary texts, conversation, the shortest forms of common sentences, abstracted speech and styles of daily conversations are extensively found" (Gobineau, 1990: 198-199).

The actors who are perform their roles with such high expertise may become known by local people and neighbours by the name of characters they are acting. For instance, as the film *Cousin Hashem*<sup>58</sup> has shown, the actor Hashem Fayaz, among the most famous passion players of Tehran, who was acting the role of Shemr (disapproving actor, *ashghya*) in the Ta'ziyeh was popularly known as 'Hashem Shemr' even though Shemr is an evil character (Mousavi, 2000).

#### 2.11. The Meaning of Representational Conventions in Ta'ziyeh<sup>59</sup> Compared with Some Other Dramatic Traditions

In order to understand the meaning of expressive conventions in Ta'ziyeh, comparison with the conventions of other dramatic traditions throughout the world may be useful.

##### 2.11.1. Wayang Kulit

Each eastern country has its specific dramatic tradition which is often highly advanced and variable. Shadow theatre is the most prominent type of drama performed

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<sup>58</sup> Further details may of course be found in Appendix I.

<sup>59</sup> Heading from: Beeman (1979: 28).

in various forms in different parts of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. The style seems to have originated in Indonesia and is referred to as *Wayang Kulit* in this region. According to Oscar Brockett, *Wayang Kulit* originated from Java, while some believe that it was brought to Indonesia from India and others say that it was brought from China. It evolved as artistic form from the eleventh century CE, in a different form from those of China and India. The current form of shadow theatre in Indonesia and Malaysia was formed between twelfth and thirteenth centuries while the visual features and executive conventions were stabilized in the nineteenth century (Brockett, 1977: 77). (See Figure 2-11, below).



**Figure 2-11:** Leather Puppet Show in Indonesia (Online Databases, 2014)

The Indonesian is one of the species of the tradition of leather shadow-puppet drama found throughout most of Asia. This dramatic tradition involves the presentation of stories which are both entertaining and of a sacred nature. The ‘high’ characters in the Balinese form of this drama – royal persons, major demons and gods – speak entirely in an ancient liturgical language which no one in the audience understands at

all. The ‘low’ characters – servants for the most part – speak in the vernacular of the spectators, and interpret the action while making broad jokes and humorous remarks (Beeman, 1979: 29).

The main characters in *Wayang* are usually taken from the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana*. They may be identified from their clothing, size, form, colour, and figure, while sub-characters are classified according to their types (giant, jester, god, etc.). *Wayang Kulit* includes about 300 to 400 types of puppets, while all puppets appearing in a performance are manipulated by a single person (such as Bima Pandawa Wayang character in epic area) (Brockett, 1977: 77-78). (See Figure 2.12, below).



**Figure 2.12:** Bima Pandawa Wayang, Epic and Drama (Online Databases, 2014)

*Wayang Kulit* music bands consist of players of different woodwind and stringed instruments: usually by xylophone, chord instrument, percussion, one flute and some singers. Performances start from sunset (about at 8:30 pm) and last until after sun rise as late as that. Only in certain conditions do performances take place in the daytime. Different parts of *Wayang Kulit* are performed at different times of the night. First a problem or situation is defined and then the plot is given, after this stage the hero appears, always accompanied by a jester (this section happens at midnight), and then there is the climax with the conflict between the hero and some monsters (this part of the story usually starts at 3 am). The story ends with the victory of the hero over evil which happens with the sun rise. *Wayang Kulit* drama is accompanied by music, the rhythm of which changes with the story and the time of the night. Performance is made in a bower and spectators sit on both sides of the stage, those sitting behind the stage see the puppets while those sitting in front see the puppets' shadows projected by lantern light (Brockett, 1977: 78).

*Wayang Kulit* drama traditionally should be performed at night only. Considering the advances in technology and industry, innovations in theatres and academic audiences, the time and place of performance of *Wayang Kulit* seems to have changed to adapt to the contemporary theatre scene, while preserving the traditional performances.

Some other forms of performance originate from *Wayang Kulit* in which three-dimensional puppets are used. There are other forms, including *Wayang Oran* and *Wayang Topeng* (a dramatic dance using masks to tell various stories), in which real players perform. They loyally play (reconstruct) only classic types of *Wayang Kulit* (Thierry, 1992: 32). (See Figure 2.13 and Figure 2.14, page 70).





**Figure 2.13:** Wayang Topeng (Online Databases, 2014)



**Figure 2.2:** Wayang Orang (Online Databases, 2014)

### 2.11.2. Katakali

Katakali (or *Kathakali*) is a traditional form of drama restricted to southern India. As Katakali is in the form of pantomime, it indicates some features of Sanskrit drama exaggeratedly. The stories are always about the anger and wrath of the gods and evil, love and hate in supernatural characters where good and evil forces are fighting with each other in endless struggle while it is always good that outcomes bad and wins. Characters are divided into seven major types each having its specific clothing and symbolic make-up. It takes hours for the actors to be ready to appear on stage. As Katakali requires much physical power, female roles are played by boys. Katakali is performed in the temple yard or other open spaces, with a shelter decorated with flowers, under candle light. The play takes one full night to be performed. According to Beeman, various Indian dance-drama traditions, notably the Kathakali tradition of Kerala, involve a similar set of conventions: “The actor-dancers in Kathakali do not speak their text, but indicate the plot of the drama through the use of gesture, called *mudras*<sup>60</sup>. The gesture language is somewhat esoteric, and singers in the background narrate the story for the spectator in song simultaneously with the dance presentation” (Beeman, 1979: 29). In these two Asian dramatic traditions, the story portrayed in the drama is largely known to the audience before it is seen in performance. If anything, the performance is designed to reinforce for the members of the audience in a particularly effective manner the important aspects of their cultural, ideological, and religious tradition. In Western naturalistic theatre the spectators expect to witness story material which is novel, but which is expressed in a manner comprehensible to them on the basis

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<sup>60</sup> There are 24 Basic Mudras (hand gestures) in the "Hasthalakshana Deepika", the book of hand gestures, which Kathakali is followed. There are 'Asamyutha Mudras' (that is shown using single hand) and 'Samyutha Mudras' (mudras shown in double hands) in each Basic Mudras, to show different symbols. Considering all these Mudras and their separations there are totally 470 symbols used in Kathakali. Retrieved 30 September 2013, from,

<http://www.cyberkerala.com/kathakali/mudra.htm>.



of their own knowledge of life which they bring with them to the theatre. What is repeated in Western theatrical traditions then, is not particular literal stories, but particular human themes played and replayed in infinite variation (Beeman, 1979: 29).

The shadow figures in *Wayang Kulit* are exaggerated representations of humans, they speak in exaggerated vocal contours in either an esoteric language which no one in the audience speaks or understands, or broad humorous speech which no one in the audience really uses in everyday life. Similarity, in Katakali the stage characters dress in surrealistic costumes and make-up and perform elaborate dance movements which require for their execution special arduous training starting in childhood, together with a gesture language which very few spectators can interpret (Beeman, 1979: 30). Asian drama is successful when it is able to create in the audience a sense that there is order in the world, that events are as they should be; that despite adversity and extremes in the vicissitudes of events, proper morality is reasserted.

Those in the audience in Ta'ziyeh are placed in the position of being both the symbolic murderers of Husain at Karbala, and being the mourners of Husain after his death. At the conclusion of the performance they must end up being converted, or renewed, through their profound expression of grief at Husain's death, and through their demonstrations of loyalty to the ideological order that Husain represents. There are numerous characters in the drama itself – nonpartisans of Husain – who undergo the same transformation: Hurr, the foreign ambassador and general of Ibn Ziyad; Za'far, king of the Jinn; and others. The implication presented here is that if even Husain's enemies, foreigners, and Jinn weep for and defend Husain, how can the spectators refrain from demonstrating their emotions in this matter?

Thus Ta'ziyeh performance offers the opportunity for the spectators ritually to renew their commitment to a religious and ideological order of which they are already

an integral part. This ideological order does not limit itself strictly to the religious dimension but includes a political and nationalistic dimension as well. The Ta'ziyeh contains the history of mourning, in the same manner as Iranian history. It is the history of abortive attempts, of repeated oppression. The traditional-religious play of Ta'ziyeh has evolved in the spirit of Iranian culture. Thus, it should be preserved as a folk play and a unique cultural manifestation. Dramatic myths and mythology have not been developed in Iran. Therefore no evolution and independent form of myth was created in the country and the drama remained in the purely religious framework.

## 2.12. Particulars of Ta'ziyeh

Ta'ziyeh as traditional religious play contains specific features that the most notable particulars are as follows:

### 2.12.1. Heavenly Reward

Being the sponsor of a Ta'ziyeh performance, giving financial assistance for performances, acting a role in the play, water-carrying, distributing tea among the audience, spraying rose-water in Ta'ziyeh, preparing the equipment and props for such ceremony, decoration of the *Husainieh*<sup>61</sup> and *tekyeh*, or cleaning the scene and the platform for a Ta'ziyeh performance, are all services that can attract heavenly reward or constitute fulfilment of religious vows (Shahidi, 2001: 52).

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<sup>61</sup> Husainieh is a public place to hold traditional ceremony.

In this way people make a spiritual connection with the religious, sacred power from their material life, asking the divine force to assist them in overcoming frustrations and healing them from diseases and complications.

#### 2.12.2. Myths Formed on the Basis of Archetype

People regularly make and present historical events and happenings in their lives into archetypes. People are interested to find transhistorical meanings and concepts for historical events and happenings. Thus, in changing history into archetypal ancient prototypes, the historical character is changed into the hero and a historical event is changed into a mythical narrative (Eliade, 1996: 392-393). Following this general principle, the Shiite people of the traditional Iranian community see the historical events of the first Islamic decade as beyond historical subjects. They mix them with mythical narrations and represent their religious and historical heroes with the archetypal heroic behaviour and features of their culture. In this manner Iranians justify history and give eternal and spiritual concepts and meaning to the life and calamities of their historical heroes. According to Henry Corbin, the faith of a believer originates from transhistorical objects and not historical ones. He refers also to Iranian followers of Mazda<sup>62</sup> and states that the beliefs and ethical principles of Mazda were based on a transhistoric theorem (Corbin, 1997: 144).

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<sup>62</sup> Mazda's origin is the Mazdean religion (Zoroastrian) of Persia. Ahura Mazda (/əˌhʊrəˌmæzdə/) (also known as Ohrmazd, Ahuramazda, Hourmazd, Hormazd, and Hurmuz, Lord or simply as spirit) is the Avestan name for a higher spirit of the Old Iranian religion who was proclaimed as the uncreated spirit by Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism. Ahura Mazda is described as the highest spirit of worship in Zoroastrianism, along with being the first and most frequently invoked spirit in the Yasna. The literal meaning of the word Ahura means light and Mazda means wisdom.

Ahura Mazda first appeared in the Achaemenid period (c. 550 – 330 BCE) under Darius I's Behistun Inscription. Until Artaxerxes II (405–04 to 359–58 BCE), Ahura Mazda was worshiped and invoked alone. With Artaxerxes II, Ahura Mazda was invoked in a triad, with Mithra and Apam Napat. In the Achaemenid period, there are no representations of Ahura Mazda other than the custom for every

Ta'ziyeh writers and performers are always trying to make the historical characters closer to archetypal heroes who are accepted by the people. They magnify and project the behaviours and ethics of the historical heroes of the Shiite religion and attribute to them unbelievable and miraculous behaviours and acts. LeBon believed that in traditional communities, the hero in drama should have characteristics, ethics and vigour which are never seen in real life (LeBon, 1990: 73).

### 2.12.3. Verse and Lyric

The three elements of word, music and movement are critically important in Ta'ziyeh. The application of poetry and music in the expression of the story and the coordination between poetry and music and dramatic movements play the most important role in Ta'ziyeh (see Figure 2.15, page 76). The speech has rhythm and is versified. The language of the poetry is living, healthy, expressive and very close to the folk and vernacular language. Writers of Ta'ziyeh combine both literary and vernacular languages and use common terms, allusions and words which clearly express the thoughts and concepts which are in the religious culture. Ta'ziyeh is narrated in a language and expression which is understood by everyone to some extent depending on their wisdom and knowledge. According to Rohollah Khaleghi as cited in Malekpour, this music is protected, preserved and continued by performers in the passion plays and the Ta'ziyeh framework educated the singers who became artists in singing (Malekpour, 1983: 345).

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emperor to have an empty chariot drawn by white horses, to invite Ahura Mazda to accompany the Persian army on battles. Images of Ahura Mazda began in the Parthian period, but were stopped and replaced with stone carved figures in the Sassanid period. Retrieved 14 July, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura\\_Mazda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahura_Mazda).



**Figure 2.3:** The Music Plays Leading Role. It Creating Atmosphere in Epic and Marshal Sings  
(Mousavi, 2009)

The most important and prevalent musical instruments in Ta'zieh are the trumpet and the drums. However, other musical instruments like the kettledrum, cymbal, oboe, flute and other local instruments were in use as well. Generally, musical instruments in passion plays were limited to wind instruments and percussion. Wind instruments used are trumpet, flute, horn and oboe, also well as western wind instruments; piston trumpet, bugle and clarinet. Percussion consists of drum, cymbal and timbale (Malekpour, 1983: 468-472).

#### 2.12.4. Symbols and Legends

Eastern art and especially the art of Iran is nominalist art in terms of form. Iranian artists have always tried to abstract the phenomena in their art. Examples can be found in Iranian paintings, carpet designs and poetry. Henry Corbin, the prominent French Iranologist, wrote that the eastern artist does not desire to transfer all the appearance and manifestation of objects. The oriental artist never inclines to transfer all that is manifested and expressed by the objects. He is aware of the futile tension, so his very

childish simplicity is nothing than wisdom (Corbin, 1980: 48). Ta'ziyeh, as one of the most important art forms in Iran, is no exception.

There are hidden secrets in Ta'ziyeh, in its speech, music, movement, costume, colour, head-dress, ornaments and arms, the understanding of which requires knowledge of the symbolic culture in Ta'ziyeh. Taking short or long routes, long journeys, the passage of time, invasion, walking and riding, sword and mace blows, killing, sorrow and happiness, kindness and anger, perplexity and bewilderment, dry deserts with no water or plants, green plains, streams and rivers, injury, murder, corpses with no head and hands, horses with no rider, injured horses, injured bodies and death are among the phenomena and objects which are represented in Ta'ziyeh along with certain melodies, by symbol, legend and allegory. Such symbolic signs are known and accepted conventions among actors of Ta'ziyeh and participants and can be understood by anyone familiar with Ta'ziyeh watching the performance. Such symbolic signs further indicate the unity and association between the actors and the audience (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621). (See Figure 2.16, page 78).



**Figure 2.4:** Two photograph of musicians in the Ta'ziyeh. The first is from the Qajar period (Malekpour, 2004: 136); and the second from recent years which is a small music band in Town (Mousavi, 2009)

#### 2.12.5. Sense of Unity

The play of martyrdom, the hero and his calamities in Ta'ziyeh connects the believer to the holy force beyond him. At the same time, by the unity it creates in the believers' behaviour and performance, it makes them closer to them. Therefore, "they reveal that the real aim of the Ta'ziyeh is the reinforcement of the sense of unity between believers, on the platform of Ta'ziyeh and spectators in the *tekyeh*. This takes the form of a mystical union, and is a ritualistic component in Ta'ziyeh" (Wirth, 1979: 37). This objective of mystical union is the main pillar of Ta'ziyeh.

#### 2.12.6. Extensive Use of Persian Tradition

One of the most interesting aspects of this drama is the extensive use of Persian traditions. Such traditions are used depending on the events and conversations at each stage. As Humayuni wrote,

The extensive utilization of Persian folklore and customs in many instances dominate the action, adding a delicate yet penetrating tranquility. Reference to *An Analysis of the Ta'ziyeh of Kasim* selecting the name Eagle for Ali Albar's horse, rubbing henna into the hands, feet, and face of the bride and groom, decorating the nuptial chamber, carrying the bride to the nuptial chamber on horseback, the tribal elders dressing the bridegroom in a robe of honor, preparing a tray of sweet henna, a cloth for applying it, rose water, giving sweets (a cone of sugar) to everyone including the enemy in order that all might join in the celebration, wearing black in mourning and scattering straw over the head upon the death of loved ones all have roots in ancient Persian tradition. Dressing in brightly coloured clothes after the completion of mourning. The manner in which goodbyes are said and many other details are examples of pure Persian customs. These customs help to bind the Ta'ziyeh deeply into the lives,



the consciousness, and the emotions of the people (Humayuni, 1979: 19-20). They create an emotional bond between the people and their clergy. The spectators themselves become participants in the joys and sorrows of the play. In addition, religious traditions such as asking one's loved ones for their forgiveness before taking leave, and the making of a final will and testament are expertly presented.

### 2.13. Roles

The actors in the Ta'ziyeh (*Ta'ziyeh-khan*, *shabih*) are divided into four groups with reference to the roles they play. They are as follows:

- a) Those performing the role of *olya* (approving actor, protagonist or *Imam-khan*), such as the Holy Prophet, Imams and their friends such as Imam Husain and the Christ (see Figure 2.17, page 81). These roles include Imam Husain and shahadat-khan (a group of valiant followers of the Prophet), such as Hazrat Abbas and Moslem (see Figure 2.18, page 82). This group also includes *Zan-khan* –male actors playing the roles of women, such as Om Kolsom, Zeynab, and Shemr's wife (see Figure 2.19, page 83). Also those playing the roles of children (Shahidi, 2001: 52).
- b) Those performing the role of *ashghya* (disapproving actor, antagonist,), characters opposed to Imam and the Holy Prophet's family, like Ebn-e Sad, Shemr, Ebn-e Moljam, and Pharaoh (see Figure 2.20, page 83). These consist of *Shemr-khan* (those playing the fighters and commanders of the enemy troops like Shemr), *Takht-khan* (those playing the role of oppressive kings, caliphs and princes like Moavieh and Pharaoh), and Arabs or antagonist

troop (those playing the role of the oppressive troop are known as Arabs, they have no dialogue and are mute) (Shahidi, 2001: 159).



**Figure 2.5:** Positive Group of Ta'ziyeh Calls Movafegh-Khan or Approving Actors (protagonist). They appear in green and white cloaks which signify blessing, perceiving, sacredness and goodness (Mousavi, 2009)

- c) Intermediary roles. Those playing the roles of nonmaterial and supernatural creatures (Shahidi, 2001: 334) like angels (Gabriel, Azrael) and nymphs, , souls of the dead (of imams, prophets, and others, dead bodies who 'speak'), or non-Muslims, like Christians, westerners, Zoroastrians, idolaters, etc., and other. Messengers and servants. They include messenger angels: for instance, in the Ta'ziyeh of *Martyrdom of Hurr*, when Hurr is moving toward Karbala, the messenger angel on the roof or at the back of the crowd or in one of the lower halls, presages to Hurr the outcome of his journey and going to heaven).

- d) Those performing the roles of animals (Shahidi, 2001: 634) (see below under 'Costumes' – Costumes of Shepherds and others-).



**Figure 2.6:** Mirza Gholam Hussain as Abbass (Benjamin, 1987, p.391)



**Figure 2.7:** Men Acting as Women (*Zan-Khan*) (Mousavi, 2009)



**Figure 2.20:** Second type of Ta'zieh are negative group of Ta'zieh. They call mokhalef-khan or disapproving actors. They appear in red clocks signify ferocity of the enemy (Mousavi, 2009)

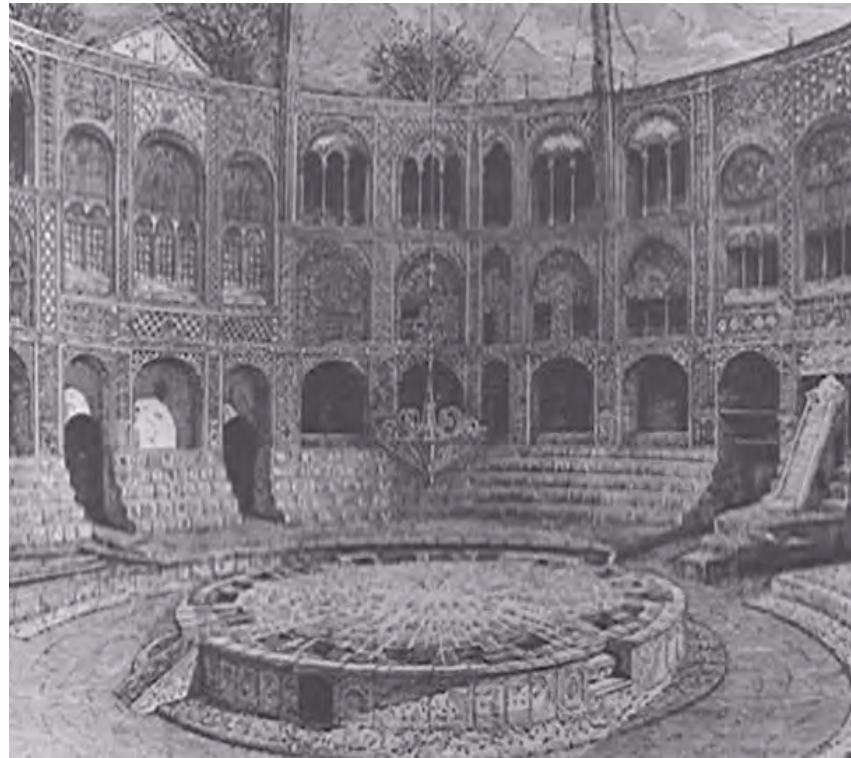
## 2.14. Costumes

From the period of Naseredin Shah onwards, more extensive ceremonial and formalities in public, the interest of nobles and aristocrats in Ta'ziyeh plays, the decoration of scenes, the use of expensive costumes and even changing the form and style of traditional clothing, has changed the natural and simple form of Ta'ziyeh. Mamnoon argues that, in contrast to the extravagance of the nobility in Ta'ziyeh, performance standards degenerated in some rural regions and many performers did not observe the standards and traditional conventions of Ta'ziyeh. For instance, *Shemr-khan* might wear the gendarme's uniform instead of his special costume, or one playing the role of Imam would wear the loose black trousers with light cotton summer shoes worn by the villagers in Esfahan, and *Zan-khan* used the head-cover typical of rural and tribal women. Some researchers and authorities accept the use of non-traditional clothing in Ta'ziyeh. The standards that sentence again Western dramaturgical principles (like absurd theatre<sup>63</sup>), it is time for us, if possible, to rely on the very principles and rules of the West to defend the Ta'ziyeh and to recognize its value (Mamnoon, 1979: 158-159). However, contrary to such extremes, in many Ta'ziyeh plays performed in public *tekyeh*, the performers observe the clothing conventions which are elaborated in the following section. For instance, an actor performing the role of Hazrat Abbas wears a white or green cloak and a helmet. (See Figure 2.21 and 2.22, page 85; 2.23, page 86).

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<sup>63</sup> The theatre with no ornamentation and decoration.





**Figure 2.8:** The Tekyeh or , Royal Theatre(Takyeh Dowlat after Nasserid Era), (Benjamin, Samuel Greene Wheeler, 1887. P. 373)



**Figure 2.22:** Tekyeh in the Caravansary. Nasser din Shah Era (Mousavi, 2009)



**Figure 2.23:** Tekyeh in the Caravansary in Kerman (Mousavi, 2009)

## 2.15. The Role Players' Costumes

In order to acquaint with the dramatization of the Ta'ziyeh performers -*olya* and *ashghya*- costumes of the performers (*shabihs*) are as follows:

### 2.15.1. Costumes of Protagonists and Antagonists

The *olya* (approving actor, approving actor or *Imam-khan*) wears a turban (green), a black or green cloak, with no armour, sword or dagger. On Ashura day, however, he carries a sword and wears high boots and, in some *tekyeh*, the *olya* wears armour. In all Ta'ziyeh they wear slippers, especially in yellow, however ordinary shoes are worn as well (Jennati-Atai, 1955: 42-44). Other *olya-khan* like Solomon and Belgheis wear a long, loose garment (a type of cloak) over their clothing. Imam's friends' costumes consist of a cashmere cloak and turban in different colour, for instance green and white. The cloak and turban are allocated to those playing the roles of Imam and *shahadat*-

*khan*. The second order roles in the group of *olya-khan* wear a shawl instead of a turban. For instance, the Arab messenger in the *Martyrdom of Hurr* wears a shawl and where the performer is a young man he wears yellow head-cover only (Shahidi, 2001: 389-380) (see Figure 2.24, below). Further details of the Solomon and Belgheis may be found in Appendix F.



**Figure 2.24:** Hurr Appears in Yellow Cloaks and Head-cover (Mousavi, 2009)

The costume of the *ashghya*, like Moavieh, Yazid, Haroun, and Ma'moun, is a turban in dark yellow with a red or black cloak, *Shemr-khan* wear armour, helmet and high boots (Jennati-Atai, 1955: 42-44).

#### 2.15.2. Western Clothing

Western clothing is the most common costume for clergyman, i.e. a hat and a relatively short cloak. Some wear a small coloured feather on their hat, similar to the



cavaliers of the middle Ages. Another type of Western clothing which was common in the Qajar period was the formal coat, trousers and French hat in red and brown. When coats and trousers were common among Iranian citizens, they were worn in the Ta'ziyeh as well (see Figure 2.25, below).



**Figure 2.25:** Western Clothing in Ta'ziyeh (Gobineau, 1990: 169)

### 2.15.3. Costumes of Shepherds and Others

The costumes of the Dervish (Mendicant) and shepherd are simply those commonly worn in the period: cloak, shawl and conical hat (Shahidi, 2001: 393-394).

The shepherd's costume consists of a *chokha*<sup>64</sup> and *fedora* (felt hat) (Jennati-Atai, 1955:

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<sup>64</sup> Chokha is part of shepherd costume. The Chokha (Georgian: ჩოხა, ტალავარი, chokha, t'alavari; Abkhaz: акъымжәы, ак'умzh'y; Armenian: չոխա, chokha; Azerbaijani: çuxa; Chechen: чoа; Lezgian: чуха, chukha; Ossetian: цухъхъа, cuqqa; Russian: черкееска, cherkeska) is part of the traditional male dress of the peoples of the Caucasus. Retrieved 15 July 2014 from,

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chokha>

43). Angels wear fine blue or pink lace, indicating their holiness and purity (see Figure 2.26, below).



**Figure 2.9:** Supernatural such as Angel Appears with Masque (Mousavi, 2009)



**Figure 2.10:** Prophet and Imam Husain Family (Mousavi, 2009)

Devils' costumes are extracted from the folk figures and drawings in stories and myths. Jinn and fairies wear figured and pleated women's shirts which are also used for the angels' costumes in Iranian theatre today. For dead persons, if from the Prophet's



family they appear in their normal clothing (while the face is illuminated) and if ordinary people they appear in white grave clothes (see Figure 2.27, page 89).



**Figure 2.11:** Animal Appears in Real and Symbolic Forms.

Above: Real animals on the procession play. Down: Symbolic ones in the yard of Tekyeh  
(Mousavi, 20009)

For an animal costume, the skins of the particular animal is usually used. For instance, in the *Martyrdom of Imam Husain* at Ashura, a lion skin (*shir fezeh*) is used (Shahidi, 2001: 52). (See Figure 2.28, page 90).

#### 2.15.4. Ta'ziyeh Props

After the *Mashrooteh* (Constitutional) revolution<sup>65</sup>, ceremonial and stage ornaments, as well as the tools and equipment used in Ta'ziyeh became more diverse and more elaborate, especially in new Ta'ziyeh based on mythological and non-religious events and stories. In some plays the performers even changed some of the traditional symbolic items and actions. For instance, the use of lace to cover the faces of certain characters was superseded by the wearing of masks, and the angel Gabriel brought to the stage by a special machine from the back of the *tekyeh* roof. As Mahjub pointed out, through long centuries Persians (ancient history from Cyrus' treatment of the Jews at Babylon until now) have shown that they are an open-minded and open-hearted people and they never approve of undue strictness and zeal in religious matters in one of the scenes there is a particular place in which the severed head of the Imam Husain recites verses from the Holy Koran. In Ardabil<sup>66</sup>, in order to enact this scene, a head was made of cardboard and mounted upon a box in which a phonograph was concealed with a record of Koranic verses placed upon it (Mahjub, 1979: 143) (see Figure 2.29, page 92).

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<sup>65</sup> The development of relations between Iran and Europe in the nineteenth century (thirteenth century AH) and Iran's defeat in the Iran-Russia war created broad transformations in economic and cultural structures and resulted in reformation in the Qajar period. Continuation of reformation movements in the later periods prepared the elements required for the appearance of new institutes and modern schools including the establishment of Darolfonoon High School, the publication of international governmental and non-governmental newspapers, the translation and compilation of new books, and the construction of new schools during the reigns of Naseredin Shah and Mozaffar ad-Din Shah in the Qajar period. In the same line the two main schools of thought in the community, the Intellectuals and Modernist Religious Scientists, proceeded to create coordination and combination between the basis of traditional thinking in Iran and new thoughts, considering the knowledge about political and social crisis in Iran and the necessity to transform the political and cultural structure of the country. The important consequence of such preparation was the intellectual basis for the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1907).

<sup>66</sup> A city in Iran.



**Figure 2.12:** Director of Ta'ziyeh (Moin al Boka). He provides theatre group by clocks, equipment and other props (Mousavi, 2000)

The most important equipment and props used in the Ta'ziyeh of Tehran, and especially in the Takyeh Dowlat, consisted of the following; sword, dagger, shield, mace, cudgel, hatchet, bow and arrow, javelin, helmet, horse, feather, armour, long boots, stick, chain, bridal suit, tent King where the army corps etc., (army come to introduce themselves or say hello) , pulpit, chair, tent, gallows tree, mask, sign, flag and banner, shawl (waist, head shawl), camel-litter, box; and real animals and actors playing the animals or symbolic forms such as horse, elephant, camel, mule and lion (Shahidi, 2001: 240).

## 2.16. Method of Performing Ta'ziyeh

The actor in Ta'ziyeh is like a *rawza-khwan* (narrator recitation, professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala or preacher) in the pulpit of a mosque – he narrates the holy history, religious events and passion of the Prophet's family by using words and movements from the platform of the *tekyeh*. According to Shahidi, the Ta'ziyeh player's duty is to narrate the religious history in poetry and musical expression using *naqqali* (the narration) style and to display religious events in a divine manner through organized movements with the purpose of informing the public of them. People see portrayed in Ta'ziyeh what they have heard from the *rawza-khwan* (narrator recitation, professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala or preacher) about, for instance, the Karbala events (Shahidi, 2001: 182). In a Ta'ziyeh there is an interval between the role of a performer (*shabih*, actor, *naghsh* and *naghsh-khan*) and the role itself. Role performers (the *shabih*) introduce themselves by saying which role they are going to play, making an interval between the actor and the role. Performers (*shabih*, actors) would never 'become' the role and they do not identify with it. The actor can only be similar to the character he is playing. Thus, he maintains his own personality and character and is able to react at any time depending on his performance and potentials (Shahidi, 2001: 620-621). Therefore, it is likely that we may see a performer drinking tea on the stage while waiting for to perform his role. Such an executive method is a specific feature of Iranian theatre.

The nature of 'performance' is different in Ta'ziyeh, as compared with other types of plays. Thus, using common terms (such as role and player) in this field may be misleading. In a Ta'ziyeh play, the players are known as *shabih* (actor, *naghsh-khan*). Each *shabih-khan* or actor holds a scripts on hand and recite his role and play it but as similar or *shabih* of that character. In other words, they try to remind the audience of

the *olya* (protagonist, approving actor or *Imam-khan*) and *ashghya* (antagonist, disapproving actors and *mokhalef-khan*) by reciting their role. The performers and viewers are aware of the interval between the two. As Mamnoun wrote on the subject,

contrary to the theatre of Brecht, the role played by an actor in Ta'ziyeh is not the role of an ordinary human like himself. The characters are prophets and imams, superhuman personalities possessing superhuman virtues. Between them and the Ta'ziyeh player (*shabih*), there is a vast manifest distance, both for the spectator and for the actor himself. No actor, even the most skilled artist of the realistic theatre, could eliminate this distance which is a concomitant of the conception of Husain held by the audience of the Ta'ziyeh (Mamnoun, 1979: 157-158).

Since viewers and performers are informed of the differences between the role and the *shabih* (actors), we might ask why no one is ready to perform the opposite, antagonist role. The answer comes from the performers' beliefs. Performing in Ta'ziyeh is an act of worship for the performer on the condition that he is performing the *olya* role. For this reason he denies the *ashghya* (antagonist, opposite) role. Therefore, even those performing the latter roles (disapproving actor or *ashghya*) express their true beliefs while performing and talk about the rightfulness of Husain and his friends.

The film *Uncle Hashem* by Mousavi includes this anecdote about the late Hashem Fayaz: In the past when we had performed Ta'ziyeh, after the performance, people would accommodate the actors in their homes until the next day. This practice is followed in all the villages, as is seen in the present time. The reason for such accommodation was that the performer would sing about the Prophet's family at night. Hashem Fayaz was performing *ashghya*, the opposite role but the host didn't know about that. That night Fayaz stayed in an old woman's house and after dinner they asked

him to sing. He replied: 'I am not a singer'. The old woman said, 'Do not you perform Ta'ziyeh? Let's start to sing'. Fayaz replied, 'I am not a performer, I recite the *ashghya* (opposite) role, I recite Shemr's song'. Hearing his words, the woman's husband cried, 'From all those performers you invited Shemr to our home?' And they started to quarrel. Fayaz told them not to quarrel and said, 'I will leave your home' (Mousavi, 2000).

Viewers are aware of the differences between performers and their roles. As Wirth wrote in *Semiological Aspects of the Ta'ziyeh*,

It is focused not on the character, but on the role. The performer appears as carrier of a predefined character, and concentrates on his role more in relation to the spectators than in relation to himself (empathy) or to the other performers<sup>67</sup> (dramatic interaction). In western terms acting in Ta'ziyeh is neither Stanislavski nor Brecht. The acting is frontal, expository (for the reason that the *tekyeh* situation is all around), based on stereotyped gestures and narration [naqqali] (Wirth, 1979: 38).

Schechner divided performers into two main groups: a player who does not forget himself and a player who takes the character's personality. For instance, promoting the latter group, Stanislavski "developed exercises – sense memory, emotional recall, playing the through-line of action, etc. – so that actors could 'get inside of' and act 'as if' they were other people" (Schechner 2005b: 199). Schechner quoted contradicts the 'two groups' as Nair speaks of doing both at the same time, half-and-half.

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<sup>67</sup> Shabih or Ta'ziyeh-khan.



As Padmanabhan Nair<sup>68</sup>, one of the best Kathakali actors told me in 1976, a good actor is one who understands the character and is changed into the character himself. However we should not forget very well, thus becoming a character itself. But we should not forget ourselves while acting. While acting, half of the actor is the role he does and half will be himself. Berthold Brecht, so affected by the Chinese acting, would have been very pleased with Nair's answer. The ('half actor' is the role is the one who has internalized the fixed gesture patterns of Kathakali; the 'half actor' who is himself is the one observing, manipulating, and enjoying the actions of the other half (Schechner, 2005: 262).

In this type of acting, both halves have to achieve a state of balance in which one never tries to omit or remove the other. They act with each other and both are present in the role playing. In this state, the self-performer is changed into a participant. When the actor instigates upon his performance, not in the position of a dramatic character but as a viewer, the participant is influenced. He, as well as others, can understand the dramatic position, crisis and individual sensation his role is playing. He expresses the sensation of that dramatic character and at the same time is subjected to his sensation toward such feeling.

Actors in Ta'ziyeh would select Schechner's first group-the actor who does not forget himself. In fact, the Ta'ziyeh actor is omitted. Contrary to others, he is not interested in being seen but tries to be removed from the viewers' eyes. The dramatization (*Shabih-khan*, *shabih*, the Ta'ziyeh actor) involves the impersonation of

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<sup>68</sup> Kalamandalam Padmanabhan Nair (1928–2007) was an eminent Kathakali exponent, equally known for his capacities as a tutor, theoretician and author of a few authentic texts on the classical dance-drama from Kerala in south India. Retrieved 17 July 2014, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padmanabhan\\_Nair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padmanabhan_Nair).

his role. Therefore, the audience of the Ta'ziyeh imagine in his mind the main characters of events to achieve who the Husain, his family, etc. are.

## 2.17. Narration in Ta'ziyeh

Ta'ziyeh is a ritual-religious play, a combination of different elements and factors. The main three elements are: speech or versified words, music and movement. While the three elements are closely related, they have not been transformed and evolved together and in coordination with each other in the history of Ta'ziyeh, except in certain and accidental cases. For instance, old Ta'ziyeh relied more on words and speech and had weak dramatic aspects. The dramatic aspects of Ta'ziyeh have increased to the extent that the poetry has changed in terms of form, content, quality and diversity. In Ta'ziyeh, speech or words can be divided into the following groups of types and expressions:

### 2.17.1. Soliloquy

It is speaking in which the performer speaks individually and does not expect an answer (Shahidi, 2001: 633). One type of soliloquy is when the performer refers to himself or talks on the stage individually. What is seen in the older versions of Ta'ziyeh indicates that such conversations with oneself were very limited, and in these limited cases only a few verses were spoken. In the later period, around the time of Mohammad Reza Shah<sup>69</sup>, soliloquy in the form of talking with oneself was improved and the

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<sup>69</sup> Mohammad Rezā Shāh Pahlavi (Persian: محمدرضا شاه پهلوی, pronounced [mohæmmæd-rezvɒː-ʃɒːh-e pæhlæviː]) (26 October 1919–27 July 1980) was the shah of the Imperial State of Iran from 1941 until he was deposed in 1979 by the Islamic Revolution. Retrieved 17- July 2014 from, [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Reza\\_Pahlavi](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Muhammad_Reza_Pahlavi).

number of verses increased and long pieces were allocated to this type of narration. In fact, talking with oneself, which is referred to as 'language of the current time' in Ta'ziyeh terms, was mainly limited to those performing the roles protagonist (*olya*, approving actor). Performers of the antagonist role (*ashghya*) rarely used this style because they appeared on the stage for a limited time and only had to deliver a few verses. In the next periods when the role of *ashghya* and those of the intermediary role (like a Westerner, or a Zoroastrian) increased, they gradually came to use this type of speech and dialogue also (Shahidi, 2001: 634). In Ta'ziyeh, Shahidi has divided the soliloquy into four parts:

- i. Incantation (to pray, to implore): In Ta'ziyeh plays while the Ta'ziyeh actor (*shabih*, *naghsh-khan* and dramatization) involves the impersonation of the Prophet protagonists (Imam and Innocent role) have the main role, the play starts with poems which are known as incantation. They are whispered to God, complaining of the times, hypocrites, the infidels and the like (Shahidi, 2001: 634).
- ii. Oration (*khatabeh*): Oration has a broad concept and meaning in Ta'ziyeh and covers the incantation as well. The concept and subject of many conversations and dialogues are to some extent public speech and general. Here we mean certain types of soliloquy poems which are different from incantation in terms of content and are addressed to the people, Moslem people or the viewers. For instance: The Prophet:

*Oh people, there is one God only*

*There is no other creator than Him in these two worlds*

(Shahidi, 2001: 57)

- iii. Challenge (*rajaz-khani* or declaim): An epic statement expressed by the *olya* (approving actor, protagonist) at the time of fighting with the *ashghya* (disapproving actor). Sometimes with the termination of bragging by the *olya*, the *ashghya* may answer them in one or two verses. For instance:

*The cruel do not know our God and have left the correct and good way and belief*

(Kasim in *The Martyrdom of Kasim* in some versions)

(Shahidi, 2001: 159)

Bragging by Moslem in *The Martyrdom of Moslem* which collected from Tehran scripts:

*For what purpose, do you, the Kofian*

*Took out the swords and*

*You should know that I am Pour Bo Taleb*

*I am Hojabr who overcame the foxes*

(Shahidi, 2001: 159)

- iv. Invitation to fight (Mobarezseh-Khani)

An epic speech opposite to chaleng (*rajaz-khani*, declaim) which is made by Mazloom Khanan (*olya* or protagonist), is to the action by *ashghya* (antagonist) at the beginning of confessional performance of Ta'ziyeh to fight. This type of speech is usually made before praying for Imam and the *olya* (protagonist). The action performs such as 'question and answer' style. The character of Ebn-e Sad plays this action in most martyrdom's Ta'zyahs that happens in the first ten days of Muharram. Such invitation to fight reaches its peak especially in Imam Martyrdom Taziyah in Ashura day. In this type of Taziyah, more numbers of *ashghyas* and Mobarezeh-Khans are used in order to express Imam impeccability

and to add the epic and dramatic aspects of Ta'ziyah, to summarize the events in the first ten days of Muharram. Therefore, those like Sanan and Kholi characters enter the scene one after another before Ebn-s Sad to stand in front of Imam to invite him to fight (Mobarezeh-Khani). Such poems are more of boasting and jactating contents to invite Imam to fight (Shahidi, 2001: 620).

#### 2.17.2. Prelude

The prelude is the first song of the Ta'ziyeh, sung by all the performers at the very beginning of the performance. Its purpose is to indicate that all participants in the play share the grief over the suffering of Imam Husain.

#### 2.17.3. Epilogue

In simple Ta'ziyeh dramas or those performed in public *takyeh*, at the end, the performers imprecate all the antagonists (Shahidi, 2001: 633). This imprecation is known as the epilogue and consists of condemnation of Shemr, of the killers of Karbala, and the like. The crowd reply to *moin-al- boka*, the epilogue by saying 'Amen'. Thereupon, they leave the Ta'ziyeh court. In many large *tekyeh*, the epilogue consists of praying for the sponsor's and the mourners' health, to which the audience replies 'Amen'. In the Takyeh Dowlat, Mirza Bagher moin al-boka had made some verses as epilogue which were usually sung by him. Most famous parts were:

*Lord, I swear you to the soul and body of Husain*

*To his young Ali Akbar*

*Give more life to Naseredin Shah*

Or

*Give the good people long life*  
*And also reply to the Fadaei<sup>70</sup> requirements and needs*

(Shahidi, 2001: 634)

#### 2.18. Space in Ta'ziyeh

What are the spatial potentials in Ta'ziyeh? In Ta'ziyeh, everything is based on similarity. The scene is similar to the place where the event happened. Thus, the *tekyeh* was indeed a model of the plain of Karbala; it was a tradition that actors in plays about the Karbala massacre never left the central stage as a symbol of the martyrs' encirclement by the enemy (Chelkowski, 1979: 4). In this case all elements of space are considered as the location of the event, which is the Karbala. The performers playing the roles of Imam Husain and his friends occupy one side and Yazid's troops the other side, while the audience represent the multitude and witnesses. Even the pigeons flying over the court or square would be regarded as the same as those flying in Karbala.

On one hand the architecture of the *tekyeh* is similar to that of a place of worship, the *mehri* in Iran. As Rahbin and Rahimi pointed out, the ancient world with its traditional stories, customs and natural searches for immortality and being eternal have all made the grave a holy place. Position and place of the grave changed long lasting adoration of time into worship of place. At first all sacred and holy places were nothing than grave, but then graves were developed into temples as suitable place of worship. People went there to honor departed famous characters, saints and heroes and performed ceremonies and anniversaries in their memory. In territories where worship of the earth was the most important rituals, people buried the dead. The ceremony is connected with

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<sup>70</sup> Meaning 'devotee', one who sacrifices his life for the sake of Imam Husain.

seed germination in one hand and reincarnation on the other hand. On this basis, belief in resurrection which creates life from death, made many nations to respect the grave and burial site as birthplace of the stories of their Gods, same as the birth place of Mitra (Rahbin & Rahimi, 2004: 108-109).

Chelkowski observed the Ta'ziyeh space as:

*A compromise between the moving procession and the stationary recitation. Ta'ziyeh was first staged at street intersections and squares. Soon, however, it moved into the courtyard of caravanserais, bazaars, and private houses. By the nineteenth century, the nascent dramas were performed in a theatre [space] called a tekyeh [congregation Centre], built usually by the well-to-do and upper classes, as a religious and public service. Many tekyeh were temporary structures erected especially for the Muharram observances. 'Even the British and Russian legations were drawn into the competition of arranging the most splendid Takyeh for the annual Muharram celebrations in Tehran.*

(Chelkowski, 1979: 4)

The second aspect in this study of the concept of space in Ta'ziyeh is the common beliefs shared among viewers and performers. Ta'ziyeh is formed in the social and public space, the elements of which are 'viewers' and 'performers' knowledge and life experiences. Ta'ziyeh viewers are fully aware of the Karbala story, which gives a certain form to Ta'ziyeh, making any intervention in the story forbidden in any manner. Any writer who knows about this does not neglect the subject but tries to emphasize this aspect of his work. According to Keir, in *The Semiology of Theatre and Drama*, 'the

spectator's very ability to apprehend important second-order meaning in his decoding of the performance depends upon the extra-theatrical and general cultural values which certain objects, modes of discourse or forms of behaviour bear (Keir, 2002: 11-12).

## 2.19. Replacement

When the attraction of Ta'ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for Ta'ziyeh. If Ta'ziyeh has no attraction among some people, such as intellectuals and modernist social groups, the attraction and acceptance is not of the same type which is seen among the traditional mass. The attraction towards Ta'ziyeh among this group is based on their attitudes to Ta'ziyeh as a racial dramatic art from the distant past. Ta'ziyeh is valued as a traditional and national theatre of Iran. Le Bon revealed that no culture would exist without long lasting narratives and there would be no progress without gradual elimination of such narratives. The problem is to find a balance between the result of the end and changing narrations. He also believed that the community is responsible to protect what has survived from the past and gradually to replace it (LeBon, 1990: 73).

The Iranian community today is different from the traditional community and that of the Qajar period. The system of thinking and behaviour of the community has been transformed, social, economic and cultural connections and tastes, and artistic talents have changed. Today Iranian people are looking for a drama which represents their religious history and beliefs in a very modern and artistic manner, with a new language and narration which better match the world today. Ta'ziyeh, the ancient Iranian religious tragedy, would not be able to maintain its status in terms of its position and



place in the Iranian community due to social, economic and cultural changes in recent decades.

The question is: How can we change the static manner of Ta'ziyeh and give it a dynamic and efficient role? During recent years, some cultural and public foundations have paid attention to Ta'ziyeh and have assisted Ta'ziyeh dramas in Tehran and other cities. Through this process some writers have made changes to the plays and scripts in order to perform them on the theatre stage for those more interested in theatre. These artists, with good intentions, try to preserve Ta'ziyeh and make changes in Ta'ziyeh literature and its execution and performance in order to release this ritual and religious drama from its current static position and make it a new, dynamic and acceptable form of art. In autumn 1955, Parviz Sayad first produced the Ta'ziyeh *Abdullah Afif* on the theatre stage in the Sang-Laj Theatre (Shahidi, 2001: 52). Today, theatre and cinema artistes have used the methods and techniques of Ta'ziyeh in their new works and have made Ta'ziyeh-based, combined theatre such as *Pole, Majles-Nameh (A Drama of Ta'ziyeh)*, *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-playing in Tehran (Shahadat-Nameh Ghadamshad Motyreb in Tehran)* by Mohammad Rahmanian, *A Lonely Person's Story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* by Rahmat Amini, *Veda-e Yaran* by Seyed Azim Mousavi and the cinematographic work *Mosaferan (Passengers)* by Bahram Beyzaie, in which executive methods in Ta'ziyeh, such as entry and exit, and in-the-round stage are used.

In this modern cultural phenomenon (which current thesis calls them: Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre), the narrative of the Karbala event is expressed in the form of dramatizing, while preserving its religious background. However, according to some critics, the new conditions have destroyed the Ta'ziyeh, as Parviz Mammoun stated:

we must not forget that on the day when the Ta'ziyeh costumes are brand new and historically accurate; that day on which, God forbid, imaginative sets are used; that day on which realistic artists under the Ta'ziyeh and natural acting replaces the present 'artificial' gestures; that day on which the performance is removed from the platforms of the *tekyeh*, from the bare fields of the villages, from the asphalt pavement of small towns, and is transferred to the boxlike stages from the beginning of the performance to the accompaniment of the usual mysterious dramatic music; that day, the day when Ta'ziyeh becomes realistic, will witness its death (Mannoun, 1979: 159).

However, considering the demands of society today, we cannot remain in the traditional and religious ways and preserve the ritual drama in its old form. However if we change Ta'ziyeh's semantic form and appearance and coordinate it with the social, cultural and religious system of society today and modern mental characteristics, it may be possible to protect and keep its values and create works of art which conform to demands expressed by the community.

There are some references which show the roots of eclectic theatre in Iran or other places as influenced by Iranian traditional elements. Iranian eclectic theatre is a theatrical form that emerged in Iran after 1979. This type of Iranian theatre was formed due to the efforts of artists who attempted to combine Iranian traditional forms with western theatrical elements. These artists have eclectically combined diverse theatrical forms and attempted to make them cohesive through various techniques and methods. The current theatre combines elements of Iranian traditional forms with those of western theatre, thereby creating a form of eclectic theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2003: 93).



**Figure 2.30:** Rostam and Sohrab (Syef, 1990: 155)

An early example was ‘the Firdausi memorial’ in 1935. The creators of these ceremonies (Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, Mojtaba Minavi, Noushin, Fekri and Garmshir) selected and performed three stories from the *Shahnameh* (the epic and legendary history of Iran by Ferdowsi<sup>71</sup>). They also selected poems including *Rostam va Sohrab* (see Figure 2.30, above), *Zal va Rudabeh* (lyric), *Ghobad* (epic), and *Rostam va Tahmineh* (mythical), and brought them to the stage (Oskouei, 1991: 167-170). Following, ballet theatre *Zal & Rudabeh* directed by Robert de Warren and music composer by David Goldstein based on epic in 2008 (see Figure 2.31, page 108). In addition, there is another version of *Zal and Rudabeh* the premiere of full-length contemporary ballet theatre ‘Zal & Rudabeh,’ conceived and directed by choreographer Anna Djanbazian, divulges a timeless tale of forbidden romance, war, triumph and the

<sup>71</sup> Hakim Abu 'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi, highly revered Persian poet and the author of the epic of *Shahnameh* - the Persian "Book of Kings" - which is the world's longest epic poetry created by a single poet. He was born in 940 AD, and died 1020 in Tous, Iran. He is well-known by his book ‘*Shahnameh*’. Retrieved 18 Hulu 2014 from,

<https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=firdowsi>.

transcendental power of love, based on an epic tale - 'Shah-nameh' [Shahnameh] - the Book of Kings - by Ferdowsi, an 11th century Persian poet (Djanbazian, 2014), in Glendale, California, in 2009 (see Figure 2.32, page 108). These performances involved some aspects of Ta'ziyeh, storytelling, puppet show, and traditional farce that were familiar to Iranians.

One dramatic work that involves the same content as the Ta'ziyeh *Imam Husain's Martyrdom* is the play *Namira* (Larian, 1987). This is based on the Ta'ziyehs of Imam Husain's martyrdom with some changes to the dramatic elements of its structure; with the content of the play being the same as that of the Ta'ziyeh. Indeed, all dramatic plays that have used national ceremonies are subjected to this specification. In the event of any changes made to their dramatic elements, the content will not change. This means that, in the structure of a dramatic work, only the dramatic elements are changed and the content remains constant.

In *Saba ta Nima* Mirzadeh Eshghi (1893–1924) combined western opera with Iranian theatre and formed a new style of opera, which is classified as eclectic theatre based on theatrical forms, such as *Rastakhiz Salatin Iran Opera (Opera of the Resurrection of the Iranian Kings)*. This work presents a fantastic, poetic and musical picture of the splendour of ancient Iran. Its only real personality is the author (Mirzadeh Eshghi), who is manifested in the dress of a travelling man (Aryanpour, 1996: 272-273). What marks this work as eclectic theatre is related to the use of national anthems and the melody from the opera *Leili and Majnun* in parts which have been narrated. Its music is based on Iranian forms. Furthermore, narration, which is another symbol of Iranian forms, is found in this work. Mirzadeh Eshghi has taken advantage of the dramatic elements of western opera and the theatrical forms of Iran in creating this

work. Thus, the drama *Rastakhiz* is considered an eclectic work, and Mirzadeh Eshghi as an eclecticist.



**Figure 2.31:** Zal and Rudabeh (move) (Warren, 2008)



**Figure 2.32:** Zal and Rudabeh. Written and Choreographed by Anna Djanbazian at the Shahnameh anniversary celebration. Performed on 18 January 2014, and 26 January 2014. Rudabeh

Eclectic theatre is a relatively new form internationally. This theatrical form was developed by directors such as Max Reinhardt (1873–1934) in Germany; Sevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), Mikhail Chekhov (1891–1955), Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883–1922), and Alexander Tairov (1885–1945) in Russia; and Peter Brook (1925–) in Britain. These created a new style in directing as well as selecting and combining forms with their inner thoughts to create a new phenomenon called eclectic theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

The director Peter Brook in his book *There Is No Secret* described Ta'ziyeh as a very powerful form of theatre. He first saw a Ta'ziyeh performance in 1970 in a village in the north of Iran (Brook, 1994). In *Peter Brook, A Theatrical Casebook*, several theatre critics, such as David Williams, claim that it was the Ta'ziyeh that fired Brook's imagination towards experimental productions such as *Orghast*<sup>72</sup> and *Conference of the Birds* (Williams, 1988: xiii).

According to Avery's *Modern Iran* (1965), the evolution of Ta'ziyeh involves the incorporation of countless elements drawn from religion, mythology, folklore and traditional forms of Iranian entertainment. This development took place over a long period of time. However, Ta'ziyeh, in its fully evolved theatrical form, came into existence in the mid-eighteenth century. In Iran, it reached its highest point during the rule of Nasser din Shah (1848–1896), who built the Takyeh Dowlat. This magnificent playhouse for the performance of Ta'ziyeh provided seating for a large number of spectators. Ta'ziyeh suffered significantly in the twentieth century, when it was attacked by a number of pro-Western and nationalistic movements who objected to such religious dramas because of their belief that the performance encouraged social

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<sup>72</sup> *Orghast* was performed for the first time at the Shiraz Festival in Iran in 1967.



stagnation. Ta'ziyeh groups were forced to take refuge in rural areas far from the reach of the authorities (Avery, 1965: 290-291). (See Figure 2.33, page 110).

However, the support of faithful spectators (most of who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds) as well as the theatrical appeal of this form of drama with its simple, powerful and flexible style of performance, have kept Ta'ziyeh alive. Today it is possible to see many styles of performance of Ta'ziyeh throughout Iran.



**Figure 2.33:** Tekyeh Dowlat. It is the most Splendid Theatre. A Painting by Kamalol Molk from Qajar Period. Nasser din Shah Qajar has built Takyeh Dowlat very Capacity of 200 People as so Ta'ziyeh Turn in the Deep and Influential and Active Currency (Mousavi, 2009)

## CHAPTER THREE

### ECLECTIC LITERARY THEORY OF THEATRE

#### 3.1. Introduction

No theatrical form and process in its searches would enjoy mere and absolute dominance and there continually would be researchers who may ignore the background and prevalent aesthetic principles of theatre or recommend new principles instead. Therefore, theatrical principles are of relative nature. As Theodor Adorno, the German critic has said, “Art may reach nobility where making itself totally free from the concept of nobility, which means the concept that it should be this way and no other way” (Adorno, 1990: 220).

Below is a discussion on ‘eclectic theatre’ which contains a new chapter in the field of theatre. However, it should be recalled that in the current research I have tried to give suitable information and knowledge regarding the identification of eclectic theatre. Therefore, I used the ideas of Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani along with those of others like Aristotle, Oscar Brockett, Jamal Mir Sadeghi, Khosrow Shahriyari, Jack Vagune, Kathleen George, John Harrop, Christopher Innes, Robert Cohen, Theodor Adorno, Jacobos, Lawrence Cahoon, and Jonnie Mobley.

#### 3.2. Theories about Theatrical Forms in Iran, Recommended Nine Taxonomies or Nine Patterns

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) divided Greek theatre into two types: tragedy and comedy, and described their properties. As a result Greek theatre can be researched and



comparative criticisms made possible. Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani has used the objective and methods of Aristotle and other theatrical theoreticians as his guiding light in trying to study and define theatrical activities in Iran. As no phenomena can be researched without correct definition, Nazerzadeh-Kermani has tried to define and describe the Iranian taxonomy<sup>73</sup> (Iranian forms) in order to make research and criticism possible in Iran.

The theory proposed by this Iranian theoretician in the field of theatre can be applied to Iranian theatre. Based on the proposed theory, the terms used in theatrical forms would be used in research on Iranian theatre in order to give a clear definition of Iranian theatre. The taxonomy of Iranian theatre is based on elements of form and of content. Nine taxonomies of form and theatrical models are listed below with brief reference to elements of international theatre:

- i. Ritualistic performance (such as masked dance<sup>74</sup>, and *Zaar*<sup>75</sup> -mourning rituals and ceremonies)
- ii. Processional performance (such as the carpet washers (*Ghali Shuyan*) ritual performed at Mashhad-e Ardehal in Kashan<sup>76</sup>)

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<sup>73</sup> Form

<sup>74</sup> Animal dances- masked dance

<sup>75</sup> *Zaar* is a mourning ritual ceremony that is common in the south of Iran

<sup>76</sup> The Carpet Washing (*Ghali Shuyan*) Ceremony, one of the most interesting religious ceremonies of the Shiites, is held in Mashhad-e Ardehal. It is a traditional/religious/historical mourning ceremony. The origin of the ceremony can be traced back to the time when Sultan Ali (who was invited from Medina to Mashhad-e Ardehal more than twelve centuries ago) was killed in the village by his enemies. After his followers from the area arrived too late to help him they wrapped his body in a carpet. They then washed his body in a stream 150 metres away, before burying him. So for hundreds of years people in their thousands from the surrounding area and beyond (including Qum, Kashan, Nashlaj, Khomein, Mahallat, Saveh, Delijan, Golpayegan, Yazd, and many other towns) have flocked to Mashhad-e Ardehal to mourn and represent this event each year on the second Friday of the Iranian month of Mehr (early October), since this was the day Sultan Ali was killed. Some pilgrims even walk to the shrine from places that are long distances away. The crowd of pilgrims then leave the shrine carrying the remains of the same sacred carpet that was used to wrap the body of Sultan Ali on their shoulders, and while mourning, they symbolically beat the remains of the carpet with long sticks to show their hatred towards the enemies of

- iii. Dramatic storytelling (such as *Shahnameh-Khani* (reading the *Shahnameh*)<sup>77</sup>, *Naqqali* or narration)<sup>78</sup>
- iv. Street and outdoor performance (such as juggling or *Mareke-Giri*<sup>79</sup>)
- v. Puppet theatre (such as puppet shows)
- vi. Farcical plays (such as *Siah-Bazi*, and *Takhte-Hozi*<sup>80</sup>)
- vii. Passion plays (such as Ta'ziyeh)

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Sultan Ali and to demand revenge for his martyrdom, and also as a means to clean the carpet. Throughout the ceremony no outsider is allowed to touch the remains of the carpet. The pilgrims wear black clothes, sing religious songs, cry and beat their chests (as a sign of grief and mourning) and rotate their sticks in the air and carry the carpet in circles around the yard of the shrine. They then wash the carpet in a special stream of water near the shrine. People believe the water then becomes holy, with many pilgrims applying the stream water upon their bodies and also bottling the water to take home with them. The pilgrims then return the carpet to the shrine and the mourning ends at noon with a giant feast, where thousands are fed for free, before finally returning to their homes. In 2009, 200,000 pilgrims gathered in Mashhad-e Ardehal for the Carpet Washing ceremony. Retrieved 30 September 2013, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashhad-e\\_Ardahal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashhad-e_Ardahal).

<sup>77</sup> The *Shahnameh*, the national epic of Iran and the Persian-speaking world, was written by Hakīm Abul-Qāsim Ferdowsī Tūsī (Persian: *حکیم ابوالقاسم فردوسی توسی*, most commonly known as Ferdowsi (*فردوسی*); also spelled as *Firdausi* or *Firdusi*; 940–1020 CE), a highly revered Persian poet. The *Shahnameh* was originally composed by Ferdowsi for the princes of the Samanid dynasty, who were responsible for a revival of Persian cultural traditions after the Arab invasion of Persia in the seventh century. After the fall of the Samanids, he dedicated his work to the new ruler, Mahmud of Ghazni, who was also a great patron of Persian arts and literature. The *Shahnameh* chronicles the legendary history of the pre-Islamic kings of Iran from Keyumars to Yazdegerd III. Ferdowsi spent over three decades (from 977 to 1010) working on the *Shahnameh*, which became one of the most influential works of Persian literature. Retrieved 30 August 2013, from,

<http://cdn.worldheritage.org/articles/Ferdowsi>.

<sup>78</sup> Narration that is known as *Naqqali* is to narrate a story in the form of poem. Using suitable movements, gestures and expressions in front of the public. Narration is to amuse the audience feeling and affection using an attractive story, suitable expression, having the movements and inducing gesture and dramatic states in control to the extent that viewer may feel the player at any time as the story hero. In other words, narrator should be able to individually play and perform all the story characters.

<sup>79</sup> *Mareke-Giri* is a type of juggling. *Mareke* means an open space where jugglers display their art. *Mareke* in a traditional performance in Iran consists of movements like breaking chains by hand, breaking stones by hand or head, or playing with snakes. Watching *Mareke-giri* (juggling) is free and at the end of the play people pay money to the *Mareke-Gir* (juggler) if they wish to. *Mareke-giri* (juggling) has totally disappeared and is seldom seen even in remote points of Iran and South Tehran and within the Fajr Festival.

<sup>80</sup> *Siah Bazi* is a type of folk play featuring a blackfaced harlequin who stirs the audience to laughter with his amusing ways. *Siah Bazi* and 'Takhte-Hozi', also known as 'Ru-Hozi', are forbidden Iranian play improvisations. Those plays were common in the past, especially before modern theatre came to Iran. These days, they might be performed in the traditional festivals. For more information see 'Siah-Bazi, a Forbidden Play' (Fathalibaigi, 2012).

- viii. Western-influenced theatre (such as translation of Berthold Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (*Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*) (1943–45/1948) into Persian and its performance according to the styles and methods of epic theatre)
- ix. Eclectic theatre (any theatre and performance which has been created with eclecticism of elements in items i to viii (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 44-45) including *Pasto-Khaneh* (*Closet*) by Hamid Amjad, 1999; *Kaboudan and Sfandiar* by Arman Omid, 1994 (Alizadeh and Hashim, 2014: 2234).

### 3.3. Brief Definition of Iranian Theatre Taxonomy

It is necessary in this part to give a brief definition of Iranian theatre taxonomy. As the current project plans to review the research problem of this thesis according to the proposal by Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani, it will suffice to use the definitions and terms of this theoretician.

#### 3.3.1. Ritualistic Performances

Ritualistic performances consist of two sections: masked dances and supplicatory rituals.

- i. Masked dances have been performed since thousands of years ago in Iran to worship the Goddess, to praise totems (the tribal animal symbols) as well for reunions and as entertainment. Players of such ritualistic dances wore zoomorphic masks (animal masks) and then started to sing and dance. Players with rook and lion masks were the followers of Mitra rituals, goat and cow masks were used as

well for these two animals were considered to be sacred, they may have been the tribe totem as well (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

- ii. Supplicatory rituals (supplication for requirements and needs) were in some cases performed for healing, for repelling the devil and for rain. It is noteworthy that in many primitive and ancient cultures, supplications of the goddess were performed in the form of theatrical rituals, which is manifested in the form of ancient Greek tragedy in the suppliant drama (436 BCE) by Aeschylus (456 to 525 BCE) (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2003: 94-95). Supplicatory rituals have been performed in Iran as well, of which two movements are known: *zaar* shamanistic rituals which were sometimes performed in the south of Iran and dramatic rituals requesting rain. *Zaar* ceremonies are possibly a memory of shamanism (Shaman<sup>81</sup>: Tribal priest, physician and player). Performers of this wizard-medical play apparently heal the patient using rhythmic movement, rhythmic moves accompanied with percussion singing songs when needed and sending away the evil souls.

### 3.3.2. Processional Performances

There are two types of processional performance: mourning (lamenting) and festive (marrying). Mourning processions are held by Shia Muslims in the month of Muharram and are the more dramatic. *The Carpet Washers' Ritual in Mashhad-Ardahal*

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<sup>81</sup> A person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits, especially among some peoples of northern Asia and North America. Typically such people enter a trance state during a ritual, and practice divination and healing. (A member of certain tribal societies who acts as a medium between the visible world and an invisible spirit world and who practises magic or sorcery for purposes of healing, divination, and control over natural events ("Shaman Definition," 2014).

in Kashan is an example of the mourning play while *Haji Firuz* (or Mir-e-Norooz)<sup>82</sup> and *Koseh Bar Neshin*<sup>83</sup> are examples of festive processions. Some processional performances with ritual and traditional aspects, such as *The Tragedy of Siavush*<sup>84</sup>, *Magus Killing*, *Haji Firuz* (or Mir-e-Norooz) and *Koseh Bar Neshin*<sup>85</sup> have more or less disappeared. Some other forms appeared after Islam in Iran, like the Carpet Washing ceremony in Ardahal-Kashan and mourning processions in Muharram month. Supplication for rain is still performed at certain times (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 762-763). However, this does not mean that pre-Islam ritualistic themes have disappeared. For instance, Siavush mourning ceremonies are performed in theatres, with the same titles and in the traditional narration and storytelling style<sup>86</sup> (see Figure 3.1, page 117).

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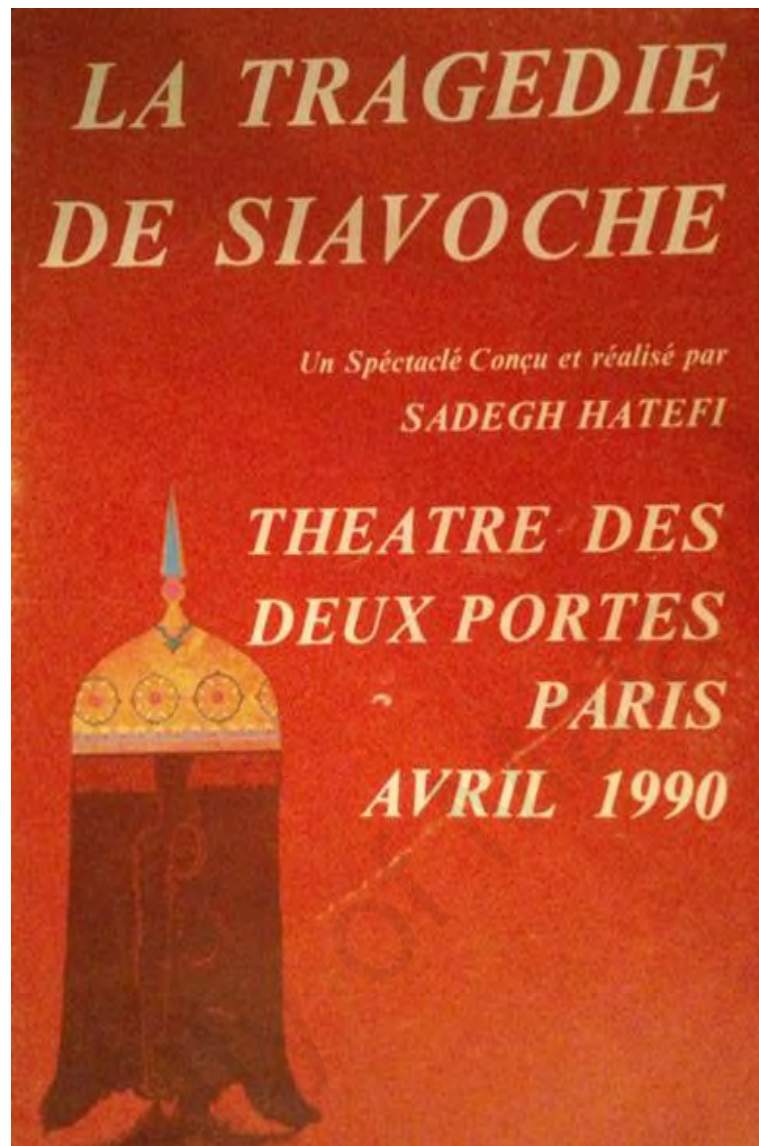
<sup>82</sup> Hāji Piruz, Mir e Noroozi, Hajji Piruz or Haji Firuz (Persian: حاج پیروز) is the traditional herald of Nowruz, the Persian New Year. He oversees celebrations for the New Year perhaps as a remnant of the ancient Zoroastrian fire-keeper. His face is covered in soot and he is clad in bright red clothes and a felt hat. While ushering in Nowruz, Hajji Firuz plays a tambourine and sings ‘*Hāji Firuz-e, sal-i-ye ruz-e*’ (It is Hāji Firuz time, It happens one day in a year). People of all ages gather around him and his troupe of musicians and listen to them play the drum, *saz* or *kamancheh*, and dance through the streets with tambourines and trumpets spreading good cheer and the news of the coming New Year.

<sup>83</sup> This was a celebration of the beginning of spring in Iran in the manner that a thin-bearded, one-eyed, ugly and ridiculous man is mounted on a donkey, rubbing his body with a warm natured material. The ridiculous man has a fan in his hand and regularly fans himself complaining of the warmth. People throw snow and ice at him. Some of ‘the king’s slaves’ accompany him and take one dirham of gold from each shop. If any shopkeeper refuses to pay such amount of gold then thin-bearded man sprays black mud and ink over their clothing. All amounts collected from the morning to the noon prayer belong to the king and after that those collected up to the evening prayer belong to the thin-bearded man and his attendants. If the thin-bearded man should be seen after evening prayer by the shopkeepers they would hit him as far as they could.

<sup>84</sup> The passion of Siavush is also known as the Mourning of Siavush.

<sup>85</sup> Koseh e Bar Neshin

<sup>86</sup> *The Tragedy of Siavush*, written and directed by Shokrkhoda Godarzi, performed in Sanglaj Theater, spring 2013; *The Siavush Lamentation*, written by Sadegh Hatefi, directed by Siavush Tahmores, performed in City Theater, 1998.



**Figure 3.1:** The Tragedy of Siavush. Performed in Paris 1990 (Hatefi, 1990)

### 3.3.3. Dramatic Storytelling (Pardeh-Khani, Naqqali or Narration)

According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani, *Pardeh-Khani* is a religious example and *Shahnameh-Khani*<sup>87</sup> is a recreational example of dramatic storytelling. *Naqqali* (narration) has an ancient and rich background but it has gradually disappeared with the passage of time. *Ghaval*<sup>88</sup> is considered as a type of dramatic storytelling by minstrels

<sup>87</sup> 'Shahnameh telling' is reciting stories from the Shahnameh.

<sup>88</sup> A *ghaval* (singer) is one who sings the poems in gatherings in good song. There are also narrators and accompaniments who repeat a part of the poem sung by the *ghaval*, like the tradition seen in the

(Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 191). In many parts of Iran before 1979, dances telling a story (narrative dances) were performed in women's parties such as *Khaleh Roro*<sup>89</sup>, *Amoo Sabzi Foroosh*<sup>90</sup>, and *Gandom Gol Gandom*<sup>91</sup>.

### 3.3.4. Street and Outdoor Performances

Street performances like *snake charming*, *tricks* and *juggling*, *monkey shows*, *athletic games* are subtypes of outdoor and street performances. Such fun for having some theatrical elements have been referred to as 'quasitheatrical entertainments'.

### 3.3.5. Puppet Shows and Shadow Plays

These appear in two forms: In the first form, puppets move with different tricks and, in the other form, the puppets' shadows are displayed and not the puppets themselves. Sometimes the puppet players talk for the puppets. Puppet plays performed with music is an important sample of traditional puppet play in Iran.

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lamentation and prelude to Ta'ziyeh. In the tradition of narration, the poems are in praise of the Prophet and describe Imam Hussein or other leaders of Islamic religion. The minstrel does not only sing but his harmonic and repeated clapping accompany the song. Songs were generally sung in places of pilgrimage or sacred places after the evening prayer. *Ghaval* is a performer, and this action has been known *ghavali*.

<sup>89</sup> *Khaleh Roro* is a play performed nonprofessionally and commonly in private houses and women's parties. It is the story of a young woman who falls in love with a young man, becomes pregnant by him and marries him. Her husband leaves her after a short time. She holds a party and the infant in her womb discloses her secret. The interesting and innovative point in this play is that without any change of set, each sitting together indicate the time span of about one month.

<sup>90</sup> The title translates as *Uncle Vegetable Seller*. It is a drama performed nonprofessionally and commonly in private houses and women's parties. It is a single act (in a vegetable shop) performed by two players and tells the story of the women's love life and telling her secrets to the vegetable seller. The text is much versified. This play has been forgotten today.

<sup>91</sup> A poem based on old folklore songs.

### 3.3.6. Ta'ziyeh or Passion Plays

Ta'ziyeh is the most well-known ritual and traditional theatrical form in Iran since the arrival of Islam, which is sometimes referred to as *Passion Plays*. Ta'ziyeh is based on the narrations and stories related to the life and calamities of the Holy Prophet and his family, especially the events and tragic episodes that happened in Karbala to Imam Husain and his family in Muharram in 61 AH. However in the Qajar period (1779–1925) this dramatic art evolved, whereby humorous and recreational Ta'ziyeh appeared.

As the rituals derived from the Shiite religion such as Ta'ziyeh are performed annually, playwrights have paid more attention to imams and prophets. In this field, dramas such as *Namira* (by Nematollah Larian, 1987), *Majles-Nameh* and *Horses* (by Mohammad Rahmanian, 1998 and 2004 respectively) are counted as examples.

### 3.3.7. Quasitheatrical Play

Quasitheatrical activities are farcical and recreational plays performed by musicians in streets and houses for parties and festivals from the early days. As such plays were sometimes performed in the yards of houses, where the stage area had to be covered with carpet or panels, the play was known as *Takhte-Hozi* or *Ru-Hozi*. Quasitheatrical activities, based on central character types were known as *Kachalak Bazi*<sup>92</sup>, *Baghal Bazi*<sup>93</sup> and *Siah Bazi*<sup>94</sup>, the latter being the most famous and common

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<sup>92</sup> *Kachalak Bazi*: A poor young man who repeatedly woos a merchant's daughter quarrels with the father each time, leaves the court and then returns. This is the summary of *Hassan the Baldhead*, which has two characters, the businessperson and Hassan the Baldhead. In this story, the writer talks about accumulation of wealth in one side and its shortage in the other. Therefore, it clearly indicates the two elements of wealth and poverty.

In a land where there are very few and limited moments of happiness, the farcical play, if any, indicates some difficulties and problems. It is performed to compensate the bad moments through playing the fool and shows that carelessness is a way to intemperance. Retrieved 19 July 2014 from,

[http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/arts/A\\_IRN5.html](http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/arts/A_IRN5.html).



type in such plays. As Beyzaie has indicated, narrative dances like *Ghahr va Ashti*<sup>95</sup> and *Chahar Sandogh*<sup>96</sup> were the foundations for quasitheatrical performances (Beyzaie, 2000: 705).

### 3.3.8. Western-Influenced Theatre

In about 1828 the term 'theatre' was seen in the report of Mirza Mostafa Afshar on his visit to Europe. He was possibly the first to write and publish the term 'theatre' in the Persian alphabet. Since then, the non-original and non-conventional forms from western theatre gradually became rooted in Iran and spread. The movement was further developed with the emergence of modern and revival aspects after the Constitutional Revolution<sup>97</sup> (1906) in the fields of the history, culture and society of Iran (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 705).

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<sup>93</sup> *Baghal Bazi*: The character usually portrayed in these plays is a rich and stingy grocer, who has possibly gone to Mecca for pilgrimage. He usually has a lazy and forgetful slave who understands and performs his master's orders in different ways and creates funny situations. Retrieved 19 July 2014 from,

[http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/arts/A\\_IRN1.htm](http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/arts/A_IRN1.htm).

<sup>94</sup> *Siah Bazi*: It is an improvisational Iranian theater similar to commedia dell'arte in the West. Actors perform at weddings and parties as well as in theaters. But the theaters featuring this are closing down, and women can't perform at weddings. Retrieved 19 July 2014 from,

<https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=siah+bazi+definition>.

<sup>95</sup> Sulkiness & Peace

<sup>96</sup> Chahar Sandogh or 'Chahar Sandoogh' (Four Chests, translation into English by Mohammad Reza Ghanoonparvar and John Green). Retrieved 10 July 2013 from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram\\_Beyzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahram_Beyzai).

<sup>97</sup> The Constitutional Revolution Development of Iran and Europe relations in 19th century (13 A.H) and Iran defeat in Iran-Russia war have created broad transformations in economic and cultural structures and resulted in reformation in Qajar period, Continuation of reformation movements in the later periods prepared the required elements for appearance of new civilization institutes and modern school of

### 3.3.9. Eclectic Theatre

This type of theatre in Iran is the result of the work of artists who have tried to combine the elements of Iranian traditional forms with elements of European or American theatre. This is done by joining the styles and methods of native theatre with the contents and forms of western theatre to obtain a native and national theatrical form which is also international. They mix their selections from different theatrical forms using various methods and styles to establish such forms. Knowledgeable and artist eclectics have their own aesthetic principles. Generally any creativity containing the selection of different incompatible elements and the mixing of such elements would be a subtype of this theatrical form (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

Seven forms are rooted in the traditional and native domain while two others are influenced by western theatre; they are not rooted in Iranian theatre and have modern (non-native) background.

The taxonomy of the nine forms or types was introduced above, where in addition to theatrical activities and development in Iran, the international scene has been considered. Traditional rituals and ceremonies in Iran contain specific characteristics. For instance, Ta'ziyeh is a traditional and Iranian ritual with its own conventions. However, its principal conventions remain intricate in the process of time. It is worth recalling that, when new conditions emerge for performing given rituals, they evidently develop in different ways.

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thoughts including establishment of Darol Fonon, publication of international governmental and non-governmental newspapers, translation and compilation of new books, construction of new schools during Naseredin Shah and Mozafaredin Shah periods. In the same line the two main school of thought in the community, the Intellectuals and Modernist Religious Scientists proceeded to create coordination and combination between traditional thinking basis in Iran with the new thoughts, considering the knowledge about political and social crisis in Iran and the necessity to transform the political and cultural structure of the country. The important consequence of such preparation was intellectual basis for Constitutional Revolution. Retrieved 13 May 2012, From,

[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/constitutional\\_revolution/constitutional\\_revolution.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/constitutional_revolution/constitutional_revolution.php).

Rituals have characteristics in their structure that are known by everyone and when they are placed in a dramatic context, it is only the 'dramatic elements' that are subject to transformation while the theme remains unchanged. For instance, when the Ta'ziyeh of Imam Husain is performed under the influence of western theatre, it still contains the same theme of the original play and if changes were made in the theatrical performance, the theme would experience no change. *Namira* is a theatrical work based on *The Martyrdom of Imam Hussein* with some changes in performance elements but the theme remains the same as in the Ta'ziyeh. In fact, all performances using pervasive or national rituals have such characteristics. Therefore, it is better to use the terminology of global performances to research Iranian theatrical forms so that the research may find scientific and international aspects and evaluate them in international terms. For this reason, in the study of 'An Analysis of Eclectic Theatre in Iran Based on Ta'ziyeh' this research has continually used specific terms for theatrical forms and styles regarding plot (used in the form of plot expression), theme, message and dramatic conventions.

#### 3.4. Drama, Origin of Theatre

Drama is the starting point for theatre while the objective in all theatrical activities (such as actors, designers) is stage performance. As Nazerzadeh-Kermani indicated, drama is the seed of theatre and performance so, in the same way that the whole plant emerges from the plant seed and are potentially existent in the seed; in theatre the players or performers change the seed (drama) into the plant (performance). Without such a seed, nothing would be created and no plant would be grown. Unless the definitions and concepts of theatre are principally transformed in future while avant-garde and experimentalism in this field results in transformation in the theatre principle and concept (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 59).

### 3.4.1. Aristotelian Structure

The first works of theatre art in ancient Greece started in the fifth century BCE, becoming manifest in Aristotelian poetry (about 335 BCE). The art of theatre has followed its evolutionary route since then, especially in western countries.

#### 3.4.1.1. Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy

Aristotle divided the tragic drama into six elements which have been expressed as the most fundamental theatrical terms. In his *Poetics* Aristotle said that, necessarily, there are six elements in tragedy from which the tragedy is evolved and on which its nature depends. These elements are plot (*mythos*), character (*ethe*), speech (*lexis*, diction), thought (*dianoia*), spectacle (*opsis*), and melody or Melos (*melopoia*) (Brenes, 2011: 105).

##### 3.4.1.1.1. Plot (*mythos* or *muthos*)<sup>98</sup>

Aristotle believed that plot is the first and most important theatrical incident which organizes the drama arrangements. A combination of incidents (arrangement of incidents) is the most important element of the six elements. Tragedy does not aim to imitate the human but is the imitation of activities, living, prosperity and misfortune (Aristotle, 1998: 71).

##### 3.4.1.1.2. Character (*ethe*)

Character is referred to as the second element of the drama by Aristotle and is as important as plot. This is because the character creates the plot through his performance (Aristotle, 1990: 123). Character may be divided into four groups:

- i. Physical characteristics such as sex, age, appearance;

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<sup>98</sup>. Heading from Aristotle (1999: 10)

- ii. Mental characteristics such as courage, revenge, loyalty, insincerity, brutality;
- iii. Societal characteristics such as job, wealth, prestige; and
- iv. Ethical and ideological characteristics such as ethical, religious and philosophical inclination (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 467-470).

#### 3.4.1.1.3. Theme (*dianoia*)

It is the third element in Aristotle's classification. In Greek, 'theme' means 'thought' and reflection, the ability to find, interpret and express the drama. A theme contains the meaning, message, advice, examples and mental interactions in a drama (Aristotle, 1990: 124).

Sometimes the title of a drama is the same as its theme. In *Waiting for Godot*<sup>99</sup> by Samuel Beckett the theme is 'waiting', it can be said that the time does not go on and does not stop, it has no starting and no ending point, human just has hope to be alive and wait<sup>100</sup>.

#### 3.4.1.1.4. Diction or Speech (*lexis*)

Speech (*lexis*) is another element of drama. Speech is defined as on the explain of the idea and thought with the use of words as well as other properties. Dialogue, pauses and rest are the subtypes (Aristotle, 1995: 4). Speech is related to the dramatic terminology and how it is expressed in the play. According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani, speech is meant to include feeling, thoughts and even invisible forces in the drama terminology and to transfer it to the audience (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

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<sup>99</sup> *Waiting for Godot* is an absurdist play by Samuel Beckett, in which two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wait endlessly and in vain for the arrival of someone named Godot. It was first performed on 5 January 1953

<sup>100</sup> However it should be noted that a drama's theme depends on its interpretation.

#### 3.4.1.1.5. Spectacle (*opsis*)

In the fifth section of his poetics, Aristotle describes the *opsis*: all the special visual aspects necessary for the creation of drama and changing it into the play. However, *opsis* influences the public, one arranging the set and costumes could be more powerful than the writer (Aristotle, 1990: 125).

#### 3.4.1.1.6. Aural Elements of Drama or Melody (*Melopiia*, *Melos*)

In some cases aural elements of theatre have been translated into sound. By *melopiia*, Aristotle means sound which includes music, word, and dance, rhythmic and harmonic movements. *Melopiia* includes music, word and all the aural elements of drama (Vaughn, 1980: 124).

Critics often refer to the *six Aristotelian structures* in any drama and play. In this regard, some drama researchers find Aristotle's classification to be based on the principal concept of 'drama' and 'play'. It is not clear, however, whether Aristotle has explained the elements of drama or that of a play. Some others have defended Aristotle's classification and his six elements of tragedy and replied that this classification is based on the fact that drama is in itself a potential play and when reading the drama it would be changed into a play in the reader's mind. Thus, the six elements of Aristotle can be used in connection with both drama and play (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 761). However, it should be noted that elements of drama change with the passage of time such as theatrical concepts. For instance, we can refer to Jacobos who has included seven elements in the classification of drama instead of Aristotle's six elements: I. Plot, II. Character arrangement, III. Time-place, IV. Dialogue, V. Music, VI. Movement, and VII. Theme (Jacobos, 1977: 16-24).

### 3.5. Elements of Drama

Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani proposed nine elements of drama on the basis of his study and researches on classifications devised by drama experts and other researchers. These elements consist of: 1.Genre, 2. Style, 3.Theme, 4. Message, 5. Character Arrangement, 6. Dialogue, 7. Time and place, 8. Space and state, 9. Dramatic convention (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 33).

### 3.6. Elements of the Art of Drama and Analytical Criticism

The language of art or artistic expression has its components and an aesthetic plan. Theatre has its own aesthetic expression as well, by which theatrical elements can be analysed. There are two elements of theatrical expression: *form* and *content*. Form is the plan and map which connects the elements of artistic expression in an organic manner, makes them the objective and gives them the unity of impact, while content includes the theme and the message. Examples of formal elements in drama and plays are genre, theme, plot, character arrangement, time and place, space and state, theatrical conventions, stage arrangement, light, colour, and audience (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 762-763).

The question here is: How are Iranian traditions and theatrical forms combined with the western style? It seems that to answer this question it is better to present a suitable plan on the basis of form and content elements and analyse the plays in a correct manner. To avoid complexity, I have selected some components of *form* and *content* elements: *plot, genre, theme, message, dramatic conventions* and *style*. To make these elements more clear, it will explain them here in brief:

### 3.6.1. Plot (Mythos)

The plot is different from the story. A story is a detailed description of an event or a series of events which proceeds based on a time line, from the past to the future. A plot or story plan, on the other hand, is an organized selection of the episodes on the stage and in front of audience. In other words, the plot is a map on the basis of which the activities and central events of the drama story and play are organized. It reflects and manifests the character, space, state, time and place.

### 3.6.2. Genre

It is generally accepted that the theatrical genres in Iran consist of tragedy and comedy. According to modern research in Iranian theatre, 'genre' has a more specific meaning in the field of literature and is used for the literary works which are the same in terms of content and form. Literary genre may be classified in five types: 1. tragedy, 2. comedy, 3. melodrama, 4. farce, 5. tragicomedy. Of these, tragedy and comedy have been identified as the main two genres and other genres are obtained by combining these two genres in different proportions (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013: 761).

#### i. Tragedy

The main genres in theatre, according to Aristotle are tragedy and comedy. These two genres are the most ancient and focal genres in drama, including in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE in ancient Greece. In tragedy, dramas and plays contain the sorrows and hardship of human beings. These two literary genres can be classified in two methods: the classic method and the modern method. According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani, in the classic form of this literary-theatrical type, the gods, kings, princes and commanders of troops appear and are subjected to deep sorrow and the audiences were



moved by their sorrow. Modern tragedy deals with ordinary people who struggle against the dominant administrative, political and economic system and not against the fate and will of the gods. They are sometimes defeated in such confrontations but their destruction and defeat still results in some type of victory and message (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 475-476). *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles<sup>101</sup> is an example of an ancient tragedy whereas *The Wild Duck*<sup>102</sup> by Henrik Ibsen<sup>103</sup> is an example of a modern tragedy. Similarity in Iran, *The Tragedy of Siavush* (1990) by Sadeh Hatefi is an accurate reproduction of an ancient dram and *Namira* or *Immortal* (1987) by Nematollah Larian is an example of a modern tragedy.

## ii. Comedy

These comic dramas and plays, display the contemporary problems and complications. Here, comedy genre is a mask for protesting characters. In comedy, many works contain a serious theme which is not satirical and thus the comedy theme cannot be divided from the tragedy. For instance, *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's*

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<sup>101</sup> Oedipus (US /'ɛdɪpəs/ or UK /'i:dɪpəs/; Ancient Greek: Οἰδίπους *Oidípous* meaning 'swollen foot') was a mythical Greek king of Thebes. A tragic hero in Greek mythology, Oedipus fulfilled a prophecy that said he would kill his father, and thereby bring disaster on his city and family. The story of Oedipus is the subject of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*, which was followed by *Oedipus at Colonus* and then *Antigone*. Together, these plays make up Sophocles' three Theban plays. Oedipus represents two enduring themes of Greek myth and drama: the flawed nature of humanity and an individual's powerlessness against the course of destiny in a harsh universe. Retrieved 19 July 2014 from,

<http://www.cyclopaedia.info/wiki/OEdipus-1>.

<sup>102</sup> *The Wild Duck* (original Norwegian title: *Vildanden*) is an 1884 play by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen.

<sup>103</sup> Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) was a major nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright, theatre director, and poet. He is often referred to as 'the father of realism' and is one of the founders of Modernism in the theatre. Retrieved 19 July 2014 from,

<https://www.overdrive.com/media/1499151/the-best-of-henrik-ibsen>.

*Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran*<sup>104</sup> is a comedy but it contains the elements of tragedy and at the end of the play, audiences are caused to weep. In this regard, Cohen believes that comedy is always related to serious confrontations in human life: searching for love, ambition and greed, and struggling for social success and money are among the ancient themes of comedy. These themes can be hardly distinguished in comedy and tragedy and it is the plot, style and method of composition of comedy (and the cosmologic view of the playwright before that) which has in fact distinguished the comedy from tragedy (Cohen, 1988: 29). Examples of comedy are *The Miser (L'Avare)*<sup>105</sup> by Molière (1668)<sup>106</sup> and *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov (1896)<sup>107</sup>.

### iii. Melodrama

This drama has the theme of excitement, suspension, sensation and affection. As *Dictionary of Theatre and Drama Term* indicated, such dramas first appeared in England in the nineteenth century and are based on sensationalism and sentimentality. Melodrama has come closer to the structure of tragedy, stock characters, dual ethical viewpoint; black and white and the fact that good people would win at the end and evils are punished are among the specifications of melodrama. Another feature of such dramas is a sudden change or transformation in the conclusion or ending (for instance in the dramatic point the hero is released and antihero is punished). Since melodrama strives to evoke passion, such dramas are considered to be participatory for the

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<sup>104</sup> *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom in Tehran (Shahadat Nameh Ghadamshad Motyreb in Tehran)* by Mohammad Rahmanian (2007).

<sup>105</sup> *L'Avare ou L'École du mensonge* (Septembre 9, 1668).

<sup>106</sup> Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, known by his stage name Molière (1622–1673), was a French playwright and actor who is considered to be one of the greatest masters of comedy in Western literature

<sup>107</sup> Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860–1904) was a Russian physician, dramaturge and author who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short stories in history.

audiences of melodramatic drama are willingly or unwillingly bias the hero, applaud him and hoot the antihero (Mobley, 1992: 90).

Based on this description many television dramas, films, and radio performances such as mystery, dramatic and love stories are considered as melodramatic plays including, *The Inspector* by J. B. Priestly.

#### iv. Farce

Is known in Iran as 'imitation'. *Takhte-Hozi* and *Siah Bazi* are the prevailing examples of this type. This genre contains funny and happy based on public language public and native plays. "A farcical drama indicates the status of one incomplete in the social system. The main subjects in such plays are unfaithful in marriage, they quarrel and deceive. They are guilty of hypocrisy and other human weaknesses. The hero is usually a smart person, even if the guilty. Silly person should be punished by failure to obtain his desire, for he is foolish and credulous. Sentiment has no place in these plays. Farcical plays are usually short in length and are written in prose. There is a limited number of characters with no complexity: dramatic movements are developed simply and quickly" (Brockett, 1977: 82). *Pastokhaneh (Closet)* by Amjad (1999) and *Mazhakeh Jangnameh Gholaman (Farcical Play of 'Gholaman's War Epistle')* by Bahram Beyzaie (1990) are examples of farcical plays in Iran.

#### v. Tragicomedy

Joy and sorrow are mixed in human life and are displayed together. Thus tragicomedy displays real life as a mixture of these two main genres. It contains the specifications of tragedy and comedy. As Cohen has indicated, tragicomedy, as its name implies, bridges the two traditional types of dramatic literature: namely tragedy and comedy. In such drama a new theme governs the play in full but contrary to the tragedy

the theme goes on with a refreshing trend (Cohen, 1988: 30). *Pardeh-Khaneh* (1993) by Bahram Beyzaie is an example of Iranian tragicomedy, and *The Visit of the Old Lady*<sup>108</sup> by Friedrich Durrenmatt<sup>109</sup> is a non-Iranian tragicomedy.

### 3.6.3. Theme

Close connections with plot and is more clearly explicated and described with its connection with plot. In defining themes we can refer to some concepts: content and context and the message meaning (ethical conclusion). A theme contains some pervasive meanings, like the term 'theatre' which contains the concepts of play, drama, theatre and theatre organization.

As Jamal Mirsadeghi stated, a theme is the main and dominant thing in every work. The line or stream drawn in the process of the work and can join the story locations. A theme is defined as the governing think and speculation which is expressed by the writer (Mirsadeghi, 1988: 20-22).

Khosrow Shahriyari writes that a theme is generally an axial thought on which the play has been structured, in fact it is an absolute concept by which the character performance is made sensible and imagined. Theme is a term more or less an inaccurately although frequently used by critics. Theme is more the point we find by plan, characters, language or combination of them. Theme is the conclusion of consequence of a set of work. Theme is usually used in a different way from supposition or idea. Theme indicates the general idea of the work, whereas the supposition or idea has a special message in it (Shahriyari, 1986: 275).

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<sup>108</sup> *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (1956).

<sup>109</sup> Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990) was a Swiss author and dramatist. He was a proponent of epic theatre whose plays reflected the recent experiences of World War II.

#### 3.6.4. Message

This is synonymous with theme. 'Message' in English and French languages is read as theme. Drama has a message, an ethical conclusion, byword or theme which around which the plot summary turns (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 470). For instance, the theme of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1596) is pure love in an environment full of aversion. Thus, the drama's message should appear in the circle of such theme. One of the main messages of the drama is that: pure love can never bear fruit in an environment full of aversion, asperity and hostility, even in the cemetery in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*. Thus, message means the concept and meaning which has place in drama and play.

#### 3.6.5. Dramatic Convention

The aim of studying 'dramatic convention' is to know the dramatic signs and symbols in the framework of a modern play, which will be fulfilled in the detailed examination of the dramas studied in the current research work. Dramatic convention is an element of theatrical expression, covering part of theatrical semiology. In addition to that it is considered as part of theatre. In fact, audiences are confronted with dramatic conventions to the same extent they face the elements of drama and play. When dramatic convention is not understood by audiences or is rejected by them, the theatre would not be formed. The acceptance of any theatrical form (such as *Taghlid*<sup>110</sup> or *imitation* and *Ta'ziyeh*) depends on the acceptance its dramatic conventions.

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<sup>110</sup> Taghlid is a farcical play (mimicry): Farce contains a short and funny story, which is started by vocal and with two or three players and ends with beating and/or escape and pursuit. Farcical story mimicry, which was accordingly originated from the farcical play between the minstrels, had longer stories in which vocaists had more roles. There could be separate vocals in the play proportionally but conversations were not made in vocal. Players, imitating the local accents of residents of villages and cities, created funny situations. For more information refer: Beyzai (2000: 159).

Dramatic convention is initiated from the inception of the play or by reading the drama. In fact, what makes the drama or play acceptable is the dramatic convention. In *The Mahabharata*, Peter Brook, had the ability to use simple tools for deep objectives. “The result of these years of performance and research is that Brook is able to apply the utmost simplicity of means to complex and subtle ends. In *The Mahabharata* a piece of cloth becomes a cloud or a lake, a single wheel a war chariot, a stick a sheaf of magic arrows” (Roose-Evans, 2002 e: 195). Such conventions are invented, recommended and used by playwrights, directors (actors, designers, directors) and are on the other hand accepted by audiences in a two-way process subject and replace the truth. On the one hand, the playwrights and directors create them (dramatic conventions) and on the other hand the audience desire, as put by English poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge<sup>111</sup> (1772–1834), to yield the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’, replace it with truth and accept it, however, unconsciously to some extent (Vaughn, 1980: 131).

Ta’ziyeh performance and dramatic theatres that have used Ta’ziyeh methods, are the performances which containing examples of dramatic convention. As noted by Saghayan, characters in Ta’ziyeh are totally Arab but while performing the play they speak in Persian language which is also versified. This is a convention invented by those making Ta’ziyeh and is accepted and understood by audiences. If such conventions were not invented and accepted as a custom and norm; and audiences and readers would not be able to willingly suspend disbelief, no Ta’ziyeh would be performed (Saghayan, 2000b: 11).

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<sup>111</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He wrote the poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as the major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. His critical work, especially on Shakespeare, was highly influential, and he helped introduce German idealist philosophy to English-speaking culture. He coined many familiar words and phrases, including the celebrated ‘suspension of disbelief’. He was a major influence on Emerson, and American transcendentalism. Retrieved 16 February 2013, from,

[https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Samuel\\_Taylor\\_Coleridge.html](https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Samuel_Taylor_Coleridge.html).

George asks what makes it possible for stage designers to make the walls from canvas and tarpaulin, rocks and wood from Styrofoam and snow from paper and/or using special effects? A stage designer makes a cloth to appear as a tree, the costume designer makes new clothing to appear old, and the lighting specialist with the use of projectors makes the player face appear more bright, as if the sun cast light on his face through the window. A player pretends to fall down and faint on the stage but some minutes later he joins his colleagues in a café and drinks with them! Theatrical elements are totally artificial and the art of the play is that it is in fact a play. In many plays there are some true things and some others that are artificial. Tables, chairs, furniture, weapons and jewellery may be real but there are possibly many artificial things there too. In fact, the attractive thing for play makers, especially for playwrights, is to combine the truth and untrue things, that is, to mix the truth with fantasy (George, 1994: 5-6).

There are many dramatic conventions. Theatre is formed by conventions. Cohen considers these conventions as part of semiology in theatre. For example, when a playwright writes ‘the scene opens’, he means, the play initiates upon his convention and ‘the scene closes’ means that the play ends. Opening and closing of the scene are signs of the play’s initiation and termination (Cohen, 1988c: 39-40).

According to what has been said above, it can be claimed that different theatrical forms are established in different geographical and cultural areas. In Iran, according to Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani, nine different forms have been established with specific conventions. For instance, any forms of *narration*, *imitation* and *Ta’ziyeh* are established with their specific dramatic convention. In this way, in the current project, Ta’ziyeh conventions are defined based on the project objective in a chapter ahead.

### 3.6.6. Macrodesign of Drama

Macrodesign of drama is synonym for 'construction' of the play or performance. Construction is different from structure. Construction is equivalent with macrodesign while structure refers to microdesign.

Structure is defined as the style and method of election, makeup and arrangement of events and activities. Structure gives plot a pattern and rhythm to the plot and joins the dramatic point. In fact, it is for the structure that the story summary is changed into plot. Structure is the aesthetic quality and quantity of this movement (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 33). In other words, structure is a small part of construction and in plot forms the elements of drama and play; it is used for plot only. Based on this supposition, instead of structure and construction I will try to use dramatic macrodesign which contains drama and play structure and construction.

### 3.7. Three Theatrical Forms in the West

According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani, western theatre is divided into three forms: dramatic theatre, epic theatre and non-conventional theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 307-308). These three forms are known by other names, which are the projection of tricks and methods correlated with these theatrical forms while each may refer part of the foundations of the three theatrical forms.

Epic theatre is also known as Brecht theatre, narrative theatre and theatrical story-telling (Taavoni, 1976: 34). As Harrop put it, in epic theatre, linear plot and ascending have no meaning, emotional focus is kept away and Aristotle's structure is not effective (Harrop & Epstein, 2000b: 294-295). Dramatic theatre is also known as traditional theatre and is a theatrical form dating to fifth century BCE, to the period of classicism.



It has been developed and continued in styles like classicism today (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

Brecht set out a theory, comparing ‘epic’ theatre with dramatic theatre. The principles of the two theatres are as follows. In dramatic theatre, the “plot involves the spectator, wears down his capacity with sensations, experience suggestion, instinctive feeling preserved, [the] spectator shares the experience, [the] human being is taken for granted, he is unalterable” (Harrop & Epstein, 2000b: 294-295). In epic theatre: “Narrative, makes the spectator an observer but arouses his capacity to action, forces him to take decisions, view of the argument, brought to the point of recognition, spectator studies the experience, human being subjected to inquiry, he is able to alter” (Harrop & Epstein, 2000: 294-295).

Turning to the third type – *non-conventional theatre* – as non-conventional drama and plays are considered as individual work and activity, they have their own principles. Thus, they do not contain the same principles and rules. This means that they have fewer similarities. According to Mikhail Bakunin<sup>112</sup>, non-conventional theatre is synonymous with avant-garde theatre (Innes, 1993: 59). Avant-garde theatre follows the objective to participate which in the process of the play and not to involve them totally like dramatic and epic theatre.

### 3.8. ‘Rituals’ in Contemporary Setting

Why do many theatrical artists incline to the East and its myths? Roose-Evans proposes that, “People are starving for richness and meaning to life. It seems to me

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<sup>112</sup> Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814–1876) was a Russian revolutionary, libertarian socialist, and founder of ‘collectivist anarchism’ philosophy.

probable, therefore, that the next major development in theatre will be in the area of ritual” (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 197). In the current time rituals have been used in a special manner and new form of ritual theatre has been prevailed which is the branch of non-conventional theatre.

Ritual is the reflection and repetition of events which have special meaning. Ceremonies of marriage, birth and death and festive processions have been all counted as rituals. There are many rituals, the events which are repeated for their meaning and are always displayed in people life. Ritual has a more or less conventional and typical structure, which is seen in the dramatic works of contemporary directors such as Eugenio Barba’s<sup>113</sup> *Macbeth* and Peter Brook’s *The Mahabharata*. These works contain aspects of oriental rituals in their structure.

### 3.9. Three Theatrical Movements (Alternative Theatre, Postmodernism and Eclectic Theatre)

Victor Hugo said, “Life, and life alone in all its variety, was the only model for the stage. The stage should feel free to present any subject and to use any form or style” (Roose-Evans, 2002d: 14).

What is referred to as non-conventional or non-traditional theatre in fact contains a movement which avoids being a style, for the style is a more or less stabilized movement with philosophical structures and aesthetic substructures. Followers of non-conventional theatre have considered ‘style’ as a type of convention and tradition and

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<sup>113</sup> Eugenio Barba was born in 1936 in Brindisi, Italy. He is an author and theatre director based in Denmark. He is the founder of the Odin Theatre and the International School of Theatre Anthropology, both located in Holstebro, Denmark.

tried to refrain from this in order to reach their individual style (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 468). However, this does not mean that one should reject theatrical styles. By reviewing traditional and non-traditional styles we are able to understand their connection and relation in the works of theatrical artists. In the twentieth century, and especially the second half, there were numerous theatrical movements and currents which were mixed together with the ordinary and classic styles. At that time the geographical borders of theatre art were expanded and in some cases the dramatic techniques of India, China and Japan were mixed with the principles of western theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 302). In this context we can refer to the artists who have used both oriental art and modern forms in theatre. For instance, Brecht, influenced by Chinese theatre, created distancing effect (*verfremdungseffekt*)<sup>114</sup> and *narrative theatre* (Mamnoun, 1979: 157). On this basis, Brecht can be regarded as an eclecticist. His style was created from the eclectic mixture of dramatic stories and Chinese theatre with the principles of realism, which can be called Epic or Brecht Realism (Kernodle & Kernodle, 1971: 177).

Eugenio Barba's *Macbeth* also mentioned in the previous section, combined traditional Japanese theatre with western theatre. Similarly, Peter Brook in his production of *The Mahabharata* used Indian theatre. Brecht, Eugenio Barba and Peter Brook are eclecticists influenced by the methods and styles of oriental art who created a modern form in theatre. They are known as eclecticists and their works are referred to as Eclectic Theatre.

Based on what was said earlier, the current research has tried to make the reader more familiar with the individual styles of non-conventional theatre by defining

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<sup>114</sup> This is a German word which means to be strange to, to keep at a distance, to keep away. For more information refer to Freeman, No Boundaries Here: Brecht, Lauwers, and European Theatre after Postmodernism (2013: 230).

different styles. Traditional styles have been created and appeared with the passage of time for historical, philosophical, social and cultural differences and their interactions with others. Non-traditional styles appeared after the industrial revolution which created changes in social substructures, as an example of deep structural transformation in history and philosophy. Culture, art and theatre have been influenced by such transformations thus giving birth to different styles such as realism and symbolism. Theatrical styles may thus be divided into three: traditional, non-traditional or avant-garde and compound styles. The latter style is the one that will be discussed further here.

“To experiment is to make a foray into the unknown – it is something that can be charted only after the event. To be avant-garde is truly to be way out in front” (Roose-Evans, 2002a:1). Here it is necessary to refer to the movements that have similarities with eclecticism: avant-garde, experimental and alternative theatre. Avant-gardism appeared 1960 in the works of experimentalism artists such as Stanislavski and Brook. Since 1890, directors like Stanislavsky have tried to go further from ancient conventions and establish new theatre on the basis of their ideas. Experience has different meanings for any artist. For instance, Stanislavsky’s experiment was to give importance to actors, while Meyerhold<sup>115</sup> and Reinhardt<sup>116</sup> emphasized the importance of the director and for Brook it is more important to reach a global unity through cultural exchanges and a common language (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 197).

In experimental theatre, ‘form’ is more important than the ‘content’ of the drama. In avant-garde theatre, directors are looking for new experiences in performance in

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<sup>115</sup> Sevolod Emilevich Meyerhold (1874–1940) was a Russian and Soviet theatre director, actor and theatrical producer.

<sup>116</sup> Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) was an Austrian-born American stage and film actor and director.

order to use the factors which intrinsically existed in people, for life with all its diversity is the only pattern for the stage. Popular rituals and festivals can be a suitable element in experimental theatre. However, such avant-garde movements are referred to as alternative. Among them there are other movements which are subsets of avant-gardism, experimentalism and alternative theatre. As Christopher Innes, a well-known contemporary theatre specialist and professor at York University, Ontario, put it, they are: trance dance, shamanistic performances, subliminal theatre, new symbolism, non-religious ritual drama, drama of mythological procession and the theatre of mixed means (Innes, 1993: 85). Such movements are the reflection of rituals in contemporary theatrical styles.

### 3.9.1. Alternative Theatre

Alternative theatre, whether it is known as experimental, avant-garde or radical, is a theatre that challenges the traditional realism of the stage, and in doing so, offers a different approach to the dramatic experience. Alternative theatrical movements are the inspiration particularly for some plays performed in New York, especially in 1950s and 1960s. They had been made on the basis of non-conventional or non-traditional attitudes, known as alternative, for example in 'The Omaha Magic Theatre'<sup>117</sup> and 'Off Broadway Theatre' (Babnich, 2013: 163).

Here it is necessary to recall that any work staged in the name of avant-garde or experimental theatre should not be considered as avant-garde and experimental per se, in fact such movements have specific features which distinguish them from any easy-going work.

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<sup>117</sup> The Omaha Magic Theatre was a place 'open to everyone' and in its 29 year history, the theatre has provided acting, designing, and playwrighting opportunities to hundreds of artists who might not otherwise had the chance to create. For more information, refer to: Babnich (2013) pp.163.

### 3.9.2. Postmodern Theatre

It adds the prefix 'post' to the word 'modernism'. There are contradictory beliefs regarding postmodernism. An interesting idea of Ihab Hassan<sup>118</sup> could be a good starting point in defining postmodern theatre. Ihab Hassan stated that now that transformation is transformed more quickly than at any other time and the future agitates us now, would humans, more than at any other time resist the ends and starts? (Hassan, 2003: 401).

Modernism is a term used for the method and expression in the present time. In art and literature it means consciously to break off from the past and search for new forms of expression, especially for the pioneer movements in the first half of the twentieth century. The term 'postmodern' has sometimes been used to define post World War II movements in art while movements and attitudes before that are referred to as Premodern. Postmodernism is one of the most important manifestations of modernism (Pakbaz, 1999: 526).

In order to understand postmodernism we should first understand modernism. Babak Ahmadi stated that modernity is European culture and civilization since the Renaissance or we can name it as being contemporary or innovation and revival

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<sup>118</sup> Ihab Habib Hassan was born in Cairo and emigrated to the United States in 1946. Currently he is Emeritus Vilas Research Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His writings include *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (1961), *The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett* (1967), *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1971, 1982), *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* (1975), *The Right Promethean Fire: Imagination, Science, and Cultural Change* (1980), *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (1987), *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters* (1990), and *Rumors of Change: Essays of Five Decades* (1995), as well as two memoirs, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography* (1985) and *Between the Eagle and the Sun: Traces of Japan* (1996). Recently, he has published many short stories in various literary magazines and is completing a novel, *The Changeling*. His most recent work is *In Quest of Nothing: Selected Essays, 1998-2008* (2010). In addition, he has written more than 300 essays and reviews on literary and cultural subjects. Retrieved 19 July 2014, from,

[http://www.phoenixhollo.com/en/Ihab\\_Hassan\\_1.html](http://www.phoenixhollo.com/en/Ihab_Hassan_1.html).

(Ahmadi, 1998: 6). He adds, in *Structure of the Text*, that Postmodern is a new method in artistic creation; it is not a critical and theoretical term and opens no new way in artistic, philosophical and cultural areas. It is a type of margin to modernism. The modernist, at least with the creation of the work, considers his intention and mental process as more important than any other thing. The postmodern artist is but a marginal element from the beginning and considers the work more important than his intention. Each postmodern work finds its validity from its exchanges with other texts (Ahmadi, 1996: 477).

Ihab Hassan believes that transformation in modernism can be known as postmodernism, if we have a postmodern view to modernism (Hassan, 1975: 398). *Lyotard Postmodernism* is a step towards the restoration of modernism not a stage before or after (post) modernism. It is said that a work would be modern only when it is postmodern in the first place (Nozari, 2000: 49).

From the second half of the twentieth century, traditional and conventional styles, especially realism, have emerged in different forms. Many playwrights and directors have tried to give individual characteristics and effects to their artistic creations and express the art of theatre by their own words. Most movements and non-conventional or non-traditional processes have diverted to such attitudes. Among them, postmodern artists have been prominent in keeping away a certain style. One method in keeping away certain styles is to elect different styles and then mix and combine them, relying on aesthetic objectives and ideas of the artist (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 307-308).

*Specifications of Postmodern Drama* - The structure of postmodern performance, as specified in defining postmodern art cannot be defined and described. Usually each playwright has his own style of approaching this phenomenon. The characteristics of postmodern drama are; collage, avoiding major narration (master narratives),

eclecticism of precious and worthless art, and circular ending (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 467). 'Collage' means being layered in which layers are laid parallel and with no logical connection. 'Major narrations' are the master narratives bringing meaning to human life. Postmodern theatre attempts not to come close to such master narratives and uses collage. There are postmodern dramas with unclear and straight endings and the plays ending at the same point where they started, thus a circular ending with no complication, climax and dramatic denouement.

*Postmodern Theatre Compared with Modern Theatre* - Postmodern theatre has fundamental differences in terms of writing and performance style which returns to basic differences in the modern and postmodern periods. Thus, in order to distinguish the differences between modern and postmodern theatre, it will be useful to summarize them in tabular form. (See Table 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 page, 144, 145 & 146).



**Table 3.1:** Differences between Modern and Postmodern Theatre 1

Modern Theatre	Postmodern Theatre
Stage is fixed on the basis of text and manuscript, direction of players and determination of roles are practised. In modern theatre, hard to understand concepts of an intellectual unanimity make the work executed on the scene to be criticized and objected by the audience	A combination of several scenes can be performed at the same time. Making the audience excited is possible by placing them in front of different things. Inclination to move on the stage and changing characters as well as the inclination to neglect the theatre director are the main features of this type of theater
Having a centralized connecting unifies the subjectivities	Non-centralised subjectivity and sectional events
Is principle and power oriented	Full of anarchy, disunited and disjointed
Have integrated forms and purposeful individualism	Is formed from changing, anti-structural boldness and anarchy
Has certain and single roles	Has open and pervasive structures

**Table 3.2:** Differences between Modern and Postmodern Theatre 2

Modern Theatre	Postmodern Theatre
Has hierarchal etiologic roles	Has untrue and anti-structural events
Can have non-centralized and dispersed narration	Can intervene in complete creation of the story
Modern theatre is based on master narratives and audience is the only one who watches and play	Can give some narration of the same event at the same time and participate audience in improvisation
Can perform single or monologue texts which are finished in them and have single place, single time and single identity structures	Can present the flowing current of time, action and period and change the identity

**Table 3.3:** Differences between Modern and Postmodern Theatre 3

Modern Theatre	Postmodern Theatre
<p>It is interested to apply classic method.</p> <p>Modern theatre is serious.</p>	<p>Postmodern artist, contrary to modernist, is interested to use common cliché intentionally. Using this method and in addition to quip, the artist experiences and tests modern forms by mixing his viewpoint with common cliché and critic the seriousness of modern artist</p>
<p>Modern theatre is not point of view to emphasize on irony.</p>	<p>One of the most prominent features in postmodern theatres is the major emphasizes on irony. It is come from the fact that postmodern artist is searching for a type of liberating insouciance, some type of cheerful evasion and irony. ,thus, postmodern art looks at the calamities ironically and the artist start to create his work free from the constraint and take nothing serious</p>

It should not be expected that all postmodern theatre has the same specifications; however, most of them are far from the true world. Generally, it is not possible to find a theatre with all specifications and features of postmodern, for such attributes are mixed with other styles. However, postmodern dramas and plays have some specific properties. In postmodern art prominent, popular and low-quality elements are mixed in order to avoid the elitism of the modern period (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

It is noteworthy that although postmodern theatre has been in time considered as a branch of eclectic theatre it has its own characteristics. It can be said that eclectic theatre has an important feature in postmodern. In postmodern, eclectic theatre has emerged as a collage, while not much efforts has been made for unity or even the integrity of elections.

### 3.9.3. Eclectic Theatre

Adorno says that theatre should be separated from the Aristotelian, mythical and ritual background on which it has grown, and should find its internal evolution (Ahmadi, 1995: 226).

During the 1960s and '70s, in western countries, especially in America, non-conventional theatre movements were formed by some theatre specialists as alternative theatre. This type of theatre was trying to go away from the principles and conventions of traditional theatre. In this context and considering what was said earlier about non-conventional movement, it can be said that such artistic movement is type of eclectic theatre. For instance *The Serpent – A Ceremony*, directed by Joseph Chaikin for the 'Open Theater', was one of the best prototypes of eclectic theatre in 1960s in the United States. (See Figure 3.2, page 148).



**Figure 3.2:** The Serpent-A Ceremony has a ritual characteristic in its structure (Chaikin, 1960).

Eclectic theatre has not much background in theatre. The term has been used in performances and for the directors like Max Reinhardt, Vakhtangov<sup>119</sup> and Peter Brook. In general the eclectics have mixed different forms, genres and styles on the base of their objectives and ideas and gave them a new identity. Such attitude is abundantly seen in postmodern theatre.

*Reinhardt and Vakhtangov* - Eclectic theatre has its roots in the work of two directors, Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) and Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883-1922). As Wilson and Goldfarb (2010) have indicated, at the beginning of the twentieth century some artists tried to bridge between realism and postrealism theatre. They have argued

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<sup>119</sup> Yevgeny Bagrationovich Vakhtangov was born in 1883 in Vladikavkaz, Russia, and died in 1922. He was a Russian actor and theatre director who founded the Vakhtangov Theatre. He was a friend and mentor of Anton Chekhov.

that any drama and play should define its specific form. Such artists were called eclecticists. Reinhardt deserves to be remembered for his creative and innovative application of theatrical spaces. He changed a circus tent into a theatre for productions of *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles and *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes. As well in the court of Salzburg Cathedral he displayed *The Human*. As well he found experiences in the principles of eclectic theatre in the east and some historical period of drama art in the west. Vakhtangov, another eclecticist performed most of his works in Moscow Art Theatres. In 1921 and 1922 his four famous plays were staged: *The Miracle of St. Anthony* (1903) by Maurice Maeterlinck<sup>120</sup>, *Erik IV* by August Strindberg, *The Dybbuk* (1914) by S. Anski<sup>121</sup> and, *Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi<sup>122</sup>. Vakhtangov could combine the psychology, Stanislavski's realism and theatricalism<sup>123</sup> of Meyerhold (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

*Paradise Now, Conference of the Birds and Mahabharata* - Ritual, using professional players, may take the form of more important theatrical works like *The Mahabharata* or they may be in the form of any dramatic art which tries to return the human to visual arts (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 175).

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<sup>120</sup> Maurice Polydore Marie Bernard Maeterlinck (1862–1949) was a Belgian playwright, poet, and essayist who wrote in French. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1911. The main themes in his work are death and the meaning of life.

<sup>121</sup> Shloyme Zanol Rappoport, known by his pseudonym S. Ansky, (1863–1920) was a Russian Jewish author, playwright, researcher of Jewish folklore, polemicist, and cultural and political activist.

<sup>122</sup> Carlo, Count Gozzi (1720–1806) was an Italian playwright. Gozzi was born and died in Venice; he came from an old Venetian family from the Republic of Ragusa.

<sup>123</sup> Theatricalism first appeared in Russia at the time when realistic theatre had reached its peak with the works of Chekhov and Stanislavski. Berthold Brecht inherited this theatricalism later and built his own style, as Brechtian theatre. Refer to *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama* (2007: 927) & Farber (2008: 35). *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1943–45/1948) is a well-known drama that introduces Brechtian theatre (narrative theatre).

Here I should refer three plays namely; *Paradise Now*, *The Conference of the Birds*<sup>124</sup> and *the Mahabharata*. Before giving a description about these plays they are among limited examples of eclectic theatre and are defined herein for better understanding of eclecticism.

*Paradise Now* - As said earlier, avant-gardism and experimentalism movements that are sometimes referred to as alternative and postmodernism were performed off Broadway and ‘off off’ Broadway, including *The Serpent – A Ceremony* which was staged by ‘Open Theater’, as discussed above. In fact, the theatre called eclectic is considered as a subspecies of non-conventional or non-traditional theatre. The play *Paradise Now* was first staged in Europe in 1968 in Living Theatre. It was based on the dramatic design and was started by Jerzy Godowsky<sup>125</sup> (1933–1999) and was inspired by the Cruelty Theatre of Anton Arthur (1896–1948)<sup>126</sup>. In such commingling, there are political thoughts, shamanistic rituals, and numerous cases of breaking the foundations (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 467). (See Figure 3.3, page 151).

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<sup>124</sup> Or *The Speech of the Birds* (Persian: *مناقب الطیر*, *Manṭiq-uṭ-Ṭayr*, also known as *مقامات الطیر* *Maqāmāt-uṭ-Ṭuyūr*; 1177), or *The Conference of the Birds*, is an epic of approximately 4500 lines written in Persian by the poet Farid ud-Din Attar.

<sup>125</sup> Jerzy Godowsky (1933–1999) was a Polish theatre director and innovator of experimental theatre, the ‘theatre laboratory’ and ‘poor theatre’ concepts.

<sup>126</sup> Arthur’s theatre is known as Cruelty Theatre (a type of theatre advocated that seeks to communicate to its audience a sense of pain, suffering, and evil, using gesture, movement, sound, and symbolism rather than language). Retrieved 19 July 2014, from,

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/theatre+of+cruelty>

The Theatre of Cruelty (French: *Théâtre de la Cruauté*) is a form of theatre developed by avant-garde playwright, actor, essayist, and theorist, Antonin Artaud, in *The Theatre and its Double*. Originally a member of the surrealist movement, Artaud eventually began to develop his own theatrical theories. The Theatre of Cruelty can be seen as break with traditional Western theatre, and a means by which artists assault the senses of the audience, and allow them to feel the unexpressed emotions of the subconscious. While Artaud was only able to produce one play in his lifetime that reflected the tenets of the Theatre of Cruelty, the works of many theatre artists reflect his theories. These artists include Jean Genet, Jerzy Grotowski, and Peter Brook. Retrieved 19 July 2014, from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonin\\_Artaud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonin_Artaud).



**Figure 3.3:** Paradise Now. It is a kind of Non- Conventional Movement that was Performed in Living Theatre in America that Gained by Ritual Elements in its Structure (Paradise Now, 2013).



**Figure 3.4:** A Frame of the Movie Paradise Now (Paradise Now, 2013)



Innes said to make an area that, *Paradise Now* is the first example of an avant-garde play in the 1960s. It is well known for the application of improvisation and participation of audiences. Disobedience and rebellion against the political system of United States and wonderful styles and methods in this play have been found and are reflected in alternative theatre (Innes, 2001: 443). (See Figure 3.4, page 151).



**Figure 3.5:** Conference of the Birds (Conference of the Birds, 2013)

*Conference of the Birds* - Peter Brook looked for a theatre that would be understandable to everyone. He believed that theatre should involve both seriousness and humour, and should include physical and intellectual issues supported by both the common people and the elite. For this reason, he selected *The Conference of The Birds* (*Manṭiq-uṭ-Ṭayr*), a masterpiece of the twelfth century (the sixth century AH) written by Farideddin Atar (Farid ud-Din) in Iran, which is understandable and accessible to

everyone. This poet tells how all the birds of the world, known and unknown, gathered together in order to discuss how to set out the pilgrimage to the court of the Simurgh, the city of the God. Eventually they set forth on their journey and reach the court of the Simurgh<sup>127</sup>, where they finally attain union with him (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 175). In fact, Brook attempted to develop his creation of a form of theatre that became known as ‘eclectic theatre’ based on the mystical elements of an Iranian poet. (See Figure 3.5, page 152).

Brook resorted to the study of spiritual values. His objective in *The Conference of the Birds* was to exchange cultural experience and reach multicultural methods in theatre in which language is of the utmost importance. For this reason, Brook was searching for a language consisting of the tune, tone and sounds which have no meaning. Godowsky and other avant-gardists paved the way to this point. Godowsky trained his players to be able to express the motives, using sounds and movements, which are placed in the border of dream and truth. In the same manner that a great poet creates his language using the words, a player should be able to make his psychological analysis language using sounds and movements (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 174-175). What is made clear in this work, is that eclectic theatre is primarily actor-centered. Brook as an eclecticist expresses and presents his aim by his players’ performance. If Brook was trying to reach a global language, his objective was to reach the soul, to combine some ideas and achieve a global unity.

Most alternative theatre is actor-centered. This emphasizes that the actors should play their roles using playing techniques such as movement and silence. In other words, they should act contrary to Stanislavski’s method, without relying on sensationalism.

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<sup>127</sup> The mythical Simurgh (a very large and wise bird which darkens the sky when flying, said to be related to the phoenix).

This method of focus on playing techniques is seen in movements such as eclectic theatre and alternative theatre (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 473).

It is noteworthy to say that in Stanislavski's system of playing and direction, player is served by the character while in movements depended to eclectic theatre and alternative theatre; this is the character that serves by player.

The *Conference of the Birds* is a subspecies of non-conventional theatre which is sometimes referred to as experimentalism. As said earlier, style has no place in this theatrical form, thus it allows the theatre producers to make their own style. Eclecticists have their individual and specific styles which have appeared in performance. Peter Brook, England director is an example of eclecticist (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2005: 307-308).



**Figure 3.6:** Mahabharata. It directed by Peter Brook in 1989 – Performed in Opening Scenes. Fly

*The Mahabharata* - Based on Peter Brook's aims, *Mahabharata* is a theatre which is able to talk with man from the community viewpoint. *Mahabharata* contains old

Sanskrit texts. From Brook's view, the play (*Mahabharata*) reflects publicly admired theatre, epic forms and Asian dances. *Mahabharata* was performed in 1970 (from the morning to the next evening). The central figure of The Mahabharata is the god-man figure of Krishna who encourages each person to go to the very end of their own Karma, to go beyond every form of limited mortality. (See Figure 3.6, page 154).



**Figure 3.7:** The 'Exile in the Forest' Scene from Peter Brook's Production of the Mahabharata (Evans, 2002e: 197)

The *Mahabharata* says, in effect, that there is in all mankind this inexplicable impulse to massacre but, also, there is always a profound interior voice speaking of self-understanding. Its heroes are forced to confront both the impulse to kill and the still, small inner voice. One of the most memorable passages in the *Mahabharata* is a catechism shared between the voice of an unseen questioner and Yudhishtira, the leader of one of the opposing factions (Roose-Evans, 2002e: 195). (See Figure 3.7, above).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

*The text of a play is a score waiting performance*

*(Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare)*

(Laan, 1970: 37)

#### 4.1. Introduction

After 1979 and especially with more universities reopening, the number of dramatic arts students increased in higher education institutes. Students started different dramatic activities and performed many works on the stage. In addition, establishment of dramatic institutes and art galleries have also increased dramatic activities. In this regard and for the young population of Iran and their experimental activities, various dramas were written and numerous plays performed. Historical background of the present research work is limited to 2000-2010. It is noteworthy that there are not any books or articles associated by the subject. It should be noted that in the analysis of a play, works performed on the stage have higher potential. A play is written to be performed, even in the form of narration. There are cases in which writing is made after workshop exercises.

It means, when the 'theme' of the play is specified, the play can be written even after workshop exercises and being performed.

What analysed in the current thesis is to identify Iranian theatres as a national theatre. Theatre is not limited to play. What is important to achieve a correct method in performance with Iranian features. Theatre is a cultural, national and native phenomenon. Therefore, according to *The Structure of Iranian Dramas* using traditional play in Iranian contemporary theatre is not something like using dressing and flavour while cooking (Yari, 2000: 207). Therefore, theatres which influenced by Ta'ziyeh analysed in this thesis focuses on method of performance and using Iranian dramatic conventions and traditions. Impressive thoughts have created a new view and opinion to theatre in the community. Many people including Eugenio Barba, a European director avoided common and ordinary forms of theatre as it is and gave it a new form. He relies on what he has learnt. He has come to believe in a theatre where audience would reach an understanding from theatre, based on their intuition and exploration. Audiences of this theatre participate in formation and progress of the play like those participating in Ta'ziyeh; both player and audience reread an experienced story.

In recent years, there have been endeavours to revive the method of performing Ta'ziyeh in Iran with limited success. It seems better to pay more attention to dramaturgic<sup>128</sup> aspects while preserving traditional plays, as seen in *Pole (The Bridge)*,

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<sup>128</sup> Dramaturgy is the art of dramatic composition and the representation of the main elements of drama on the stage. The word dramaturgy was coined by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Dramaturgy is a distinct practice separate from play writing and directing, although a single individual may perform any combination of the three. Some dramatists combine writing and dramaturgy when creating a drama. Others work with a specialist, called a dramaturg, to adapt a work for the stage.

Dramaturgy may also be defined, more broadly, as shaping a story into a form that may be acted. Dramaturgy gives the work or the performance a structure. From 1767-1770 Lessing wrote and published a series of criticisms entitled the Hamburg Dramaturgy (Hamburgische Dramaturgie). These works analyzed, criticized and theorized the German theatre, and made Lessing the father of modern Dramaturgy.

Another important work to the Western theatre tradition work is the Poetics by Aristotle (written around 335 BC). In this work Aristotle analyzes tragedy. He considers Oedipus Rex (c. 429 BC) as the quintessential dramatic work. He analyzes the relations among character, action, and speech, gives examples of what he considers to be good plots, and examines the reactions the plays provoke in the audience. Many of his "rules" are often associated with "Aristotelian drama", wherein deus ex machina is a weakness and the action is structured economically. In Poetics he discusses many key concepts of

*Majles Nameh (A Drama of Ta'ziyeh)*, *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran (Shahadat Nameh Ghadamshad Motyreb in Tehran)* by Mohammad Rahmanian, *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* by Rahmat Amini, *To observe the ceremonies of farewell (Veda-e Yaran)* by Seyed Azim Mousavi, the cinematographic work *Mosaferan (Passengers)* by Bahram Beyzaie and *The Tragedy of Siavush* by Sadegh Hatefi.

In order to implement the aforementioned objectives, the present thesis results in new findings in analysis by watching some chosen theatres which influenced by form and content of Ta'ziyeh.

It should be reminded that plays analysed in this thesis possess their own characteristics, such as elements of western play. This indicates that eclectic plays with traditional elements are written on the basis of western theatre standards.

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drama, such as anagnorisis and catharsis. In the last century Aristotle's analysis has formed the basis for numerous TV and film-writing guides.

The Poetics is the earliest surviving Western work of dramatic theory. Probably the earliest non-Western dramaturgic work is the Indian Sanskrit "Natayasatra" ('The Art of Theatre') written about AD 100, which describes the elements, forms and narrative elements of the ten major types of ancient Indian dramas.

Since dramaturgy is defined in a general way and the function of a dramaturg may vary from production to production, the copyright issues regarding it in the United States have very vague borders.

In 1996, there was debate based on the question of the extent to which a dramaturg can claim ownership of a production, such as the case of Jonathan Larson, the author of the musical Rent and Lynn Thomson, the dramaturg on the production. Thomson claimed that she was a co-author of the work and that she never assigned, licensed or otherwise transferred her rights. She asked that the court declare her a co-author of Rent and grant her 16% of the author's share of the royalties. Although she made her claim only after the show became a Broadway hit, the case is not without precedent. For instance, 15% of the royalties of Angels in America go to playwright Tony Kushner's dramaturg. On June 19, 1998 the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit affirmed the original court's ruling that Thompson was not entitled to be credited with co-authorship of Rent and that she was not entitled to royalties. The case was ultimately settled out of court with Thomson receiving an undisclosed sum after she threatened to remove her material from the production. Retrieved from 29 March 2014, from,

<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramaturgy>.



#### 4.2. Ashaghe (Story of Love)

Eclectic theater currently fulfills the theatrical requirements of the community. Analysing 'theatres which influenced by form and content of Ta'ziyeh' in the form specified in the current thesis is a window to study current theatrical theories.



**Figure 4.1:** Ashaghe (Story of Love) (Rahmanian, 2008)

No two writers and directors are always in agreement. Clear indication of this may be seen in *The Cherry Orchard* (*The Cherry Garden*) by Anton Chekov. The play was considered by Chekov as a comedy while director and actors who performed the work viewed it as a tragedy on stage. Thus, the playscript can be performed in different forms, such as traditional, based on the director's special aesthetic principle. For instance, *Macbeth* by Eugenio Barba was written based on influences from traditional styles in Chinese theatre.

*Ashaghe* (*Story of Love*) is a theater made considering some traditional Iranian theatrical elements, especially Ta'ziyeh which represents contemporary Iranian theatre



(see Figure 4.1, page 159). The fact is, the successful playing of Ta'ziyeh draws its energy from the mourning group. However, today, the behaviour of Ta'ziyeh participations have changed such responses are in huge contrast to that of yesteryears where theatre hold special memories in the heart of traditional culture. Unfortunately, such theatres have been reduced to a mere passerby performance and ranked among street theatres. Where passengers may stop for some moments to watch the play. They may possibly enjoy what they see there. Rings, movements, songs and music have much audio-visual attractions; however, no one may cry or be influenced by the dramatic ritual.

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is a contemporary story in which Iranian dramatic methods are seen. To portray a correct picture of the historical event of Khadijah life, different historical resources have been used, including *Târikh-e Yaghubi; The History Bihar al-Anwar, Seerah (Sirat) Ibn Hashim, Kifayat Al Talib, Managheb Ale Abi Talib*<sup>129</sup>, *Adab Al hiramain, Description to Nahjul Balagha* by Ibn Abi Al Hadid and *Early Muslim Women*.

#### 4.2.1. Plot Summary

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is a feminine narration, where seven women and a child sitting on a turning scene welcome the audiences and present a general biography of the drama. They first define *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. In fact, the definition of *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is a plant with big leaves and thin stem, which twines round the tree and climbs. It is known as “Tendrils in Persian language, Amid Dictionary, Vol.2, p.1438, before the beginning Loving (*Ashaghe* or *Story of Love*)” (Rahmanian, 2007: 9).

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<sup>129</sup> Eulogy to Abi Talib's family

Following the scene introduces the director of the play and ‘asks forgiveness’<sup>130</sup>. In the end, everyone introduces themselves in their true name. A male player goes to the stage and distributes the playscript among female players (like the scripts in Ta’ziyeh). When the music plays, the choir sings, players hold their pages (texts) in hand and move them, like the players in the Ta’ziyeh. The various texts represent different historical characters appearing in the current play *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. By reading the playscript, players introduce those characters. For instance, Liver-eating Hind, known as Umm Salama daughter of bint Abi Ibrahim, bore 20 B.H, Nasibeh (Umm Amareh) and Safiyeh, daughter of Abdulmotalib (Rahmanian, 2007: 10).

The Choir announces the play episodes which are named using poems by Forugh Farrokhzad<sup>131</sup>. For instance; *Garden Conquer, One who is like no one, Another Birth, Meeting at Night*. The choir announces the first episode. They sing a song containing the meaning of love. In the concluding part, where only the music is heard, a player stands on the stage and reads the story of *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* in a rhythmic manner, same as a poem. For instance:

*Ashaghe (Story of Love) is an unsparing love*

*Ashaghe (Story of Love) means a deep feeling*

*Ashaghe (Story of Love) is a warm and loving hand*

*Ashaghe (Story of Love) means a limitless love*

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<sup>130</sup> ‘Asking forgiveness’ depends on Ta’ziyeh rules which is performed in the play.

<sup>131</sup> Forugh Farrokhzad was an Iranian poet and film director. Forugh Farrokhzad is arguably one of Iran's most influential female poets of the twentieth century. She was a controversial modernist poet and an iconoclast. She was born on January 5, 1935, Tehran, Iran and died on February 13, 1967, Darband, Tehran, Iran. She had made the movie *The House Is Black*. She also had written *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*. Retrieved 21 May 2014, from,

[http://www.poetrysoup.com/biography/forough\\_farrokhzad](http://www.poetrysoup.com/biography/forough_farrokhzad).

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is not a story, it is the truth by showing Khadijah's adolescence and the stage is changed with her first marriage. Women sing when clapping. Two persons enter the stage; one takes the white lace and the other put the black lace. This indicates that Khadijah would marry twice but both her husbands are killed when young. The wind sounds indicate changes in season and Khadijah in her forties. Khadijah proceeds to trade. Player of Khadijah role enters the stage with an abacus in hand. She tries to revitalize Mecca. She has many suitors like Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan, both of whom are well-known tradesmen in Mecca. Abu Sufyan is the husband of Liver-eating Hind. 'Grimalkin' is what Hind (Abu Sufyan's wife) calls Khadijah who wants to have Abu Sufyan's assets, thus, she does not reject his proposal of marriage. Male actor enters the stage and introduces Khadijah family to Hind by using a video projection. He says to the audiences that about 80 years later, the grandchild of the grimalkin (the name used by Hind for Khadijah) and the grandchild of Hind would fight under the flag of God. One of them refers to Imam (referring Imam Hussein) and another one is Caliph in Sham palace; one fighting for freedom and honour and the other hunting for material life.

When the stage turns, the character of Khadijah with a mole on her cheek is placed in front of the audiences. Someone says that Abu Talib and his grandchild, Mohammad (the Trustworthy), came to her (Khadijah) house. Abu Talib, with white dense beard and white cloak enters the stage. He is the leader of Khadijah's convoy. He recommends Mohammad (the Trustworthy) to Khadijah as a new responsible person for her convoy. Seeing Mohammad (the Trustworthy), Khadijah experiences a throbbing

heart, beats faster. The first sparks of love towards Mohammad is shown in this stage. The feeling and affection of Khadijah are shown more by a video projection.

One of the seven characters marks a mole on her cheek and comes to the stage. Khadijah is happy and has fallen in love. She says, love does not ask when to come, it comes without permission. It comes, suddenly, like an uninvited guest: you may wait for him at the door for a long time. When you are disappointed, he comes through the window (Rahmanian, 2008: 53). Other actresses around her take part in her happiness, singing and snapping. Noisy supernumeraries come to the stage with makeup devises, henna, collyrium, perfume and rosewater. When Mohammad (the Trustworthy) comes, Khadijah proposes to the Prophet, contrary to Arab custom. Following that another actresses enter the stage with musical instruments, play some music and Khadijah's marriage is done.

The next stage is related to Shoaib Abi Talib Bani Hashim tribe. He is deported from Mecca. Khadijah became old. She appears on the stage with a symbolic. Khadijah is a bounteous woman. She sells out all her properties to help Bani Hashim while never leaving the Prophet alone. Abi Talib dies in Shoaib from hunger.

The choir announces the last episode known as *the Bird Dies*. In Shoaib Abi Talib, Khadijah begs the Prophet for pardon before she dies. She confesses her love to him forever. Khadijah died 1430 years ago.

Rahmanian mentioned in his playscript in the concluding part, a player who plays Khadijah's role says to audiences, "If you see a woman in love, do not leave her alone, go closer, look at her, pat her and say, how you became so old".

The Choir and players sing:

*The song of sun and moon*

*The sun comes, the moon hides*

*But this is not*

*The end of the road*

(Rahmanian, 2008: 69)

#### 4.2.2. Eclecticism and the Ashaghe (Story of Love)

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is the story of Hazrat Khadijah life, from her childhood to death, and the story of both her and Prophet's Love. *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is a combination of modern theater with a postmodern view to Ta'ziyeh and Iranian feminine comedy play.

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* has used Ta'ziyeh conventions to a large extent which means that performance of *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* could establish an eclectic relationship between Iranian plays (Iranian element) and that from Western theatre in Brecht style. It can be expected that director of *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* believes that all such conventions and techniques can help to perform an event better.

How to use traditional drama's technique in making Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatre? What has made us combine and bring together the elements of Ta'ziyeh as a traditional play with Western theatre? Is the consideration of the play a new idea formed in postmodern theatre? Is the question rooted in a fundamental need or a false one? Most importantly, how can we preserve and publish the tradition of Ta'ziyeh and study it in the form of dramaturgy?

Those types of questions help us identify dramatic works made by applying eclectic method. To answer the above questions, we should review methods of using Ta'ziyeh in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*.

Using Ta'ziyeh tradition in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* fulfills two objectives:

- i. Preserving and publishing Ta'ziyeh Traditional-religious play.
- ii. Application of and inspiration of Ta'ziyeh traditional-religious play that is historical, religious stories and joyful Passion plays or comic episode.

It is noteworthy that Ta'ziyeh traditional play is a style of play, like that of Stanislavsky, Brecht, Godowsky and Peter Brook. To specify the performance method of Ta'ziyeh, some methods in Ta'ziyeh are given here. For instance, the idea of using several female players for the role of Khadijah was effective in forming Ta'ziyeh structure in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. In other words, players are repeatedly taking different roles. Thus, such sensitive discontinuation in playing a single role and quick changes in the roles played by a player through the performance makes the player's more popular.

The above idea (changing roles by players) is a dramatic attraction in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. Any actor can decide to play Khadijah's role. She just needs to take a mirror and mark a black mole on her left cheek. Also, when the player of Khadijah's role goes up to the stage, like displacement of the role in Ta'ziyeh, the former player of the role comes down the stage and clears her mole.

By introducing the whole group of the play, including director, players ask forgiveness for their producer and director, such as Ta'ziyeh where the Ta'ziyeh players ask forgiveness for the supporters and sponsors of play. The holding of script or text

during the performance, like the Ta'ziyeh performance, is another dramatic style used in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. (See Figure 4.2, below).



**Figure 4.2:** Reading Text by Characters (Rahmanian, 2008)

Concept of time and place, with their quick breakdown; using simple stage which was lowered to a round turning platform; using ten chandelier equivalent to the number of stages and hang over the stage for lighting; reduced stage equipment and symbolic devices like newspaper and baggage, all serve to remind the symbolic accessories in Ta'ziyeh. (See Figure 4.3, page 167).

In *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, the application of Iranian traditional performance methods, especially Ta'ziyeh traditional-religious play and Brecht techniques, means using dramaturgy in a contemporary play. Leon Katz believes that “the objective in dramaturgy is to resolve the contradiction between intellectualism and functional (practical) in theater and to combine the two in an organic manner” (Katz, 2005: 3). On this basis, director of *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* has tried to make his mind and thought operational. This means that the play could respect the Iranian elements of Ta'ziyeh.

Therefore, the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* play formed is based on the director's special aesthetic principle and it represents an eclectic theater.



**Figure 4.3:** Baggage, Symbol of Moving to Shoaib Abi Talib (Rahmanian, 2008)

#### 4.2.3. Ta'ziyeh Theatrical Conventions in Ashaghe (Story of Love)

There are some conventions of Ta'ziyeh that are compared to the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. They include:

- a) 'Play in play' and 'digression' (Guriz) are among the most important conventions in Ta'ziyeh.

An example for 'play in play': In the concluding part of the play, when the actress of Khadijah's role ends her act and distances herself from her role; she turns to the audiences and says "If you saw a woman in love, do not leave her alone, go closer, look at her, pat her" (Rahmanian, 2007: 117)

Digression (Guriz) has important effect, has important effect which is suspension. For instance, about the digression (Guriz): the third episode referred to the grandchild of



Khadijah (Imam Husain) and grandchild of liver-eating Hind and their fight in the event of Ashura. Undoubtedly, referring the event of Ashura is another image of loneliness of innocent people in history. (See Figure 4.4. below)

b) Utilizing prologue (*pish-vagheh*) in the beginning of the play:

For instance, in the beginning of the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* when players sit round a circular platform to welcome the audiences they mention about the director, his biography such as name, ID card number and place of issue, before the start of the play.

c) Historical dimension should be maintained and it should be reminded that the story is not a contemporary event. What we are watching are related to events from a long time ago.



**Figure 4.4:** Digression

For instance, Ta'ziyeh is written according to myths, events of Karbala and stories about Prophet and Imams' life. *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* was formed on the basis of the life of Khadijah, as the sacred Prophet's Wife. Historical language (expression) has also

been used in the play, where necessary. To make the language understanding clearer, it would be defined in more detail here and compared historical and contemporary languages.

#### 4.1.1.1. Language

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is formed on the basis of historical stories. Utilizing historical sources makes it possible to use a suitable 'language' in the narration of historical periods, depending on the event itself. Therefore, in addition to retelling the history and maintaining the distance between present and past time, audience would understand changes in time and place. In *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, the element of language comes with poem (like Ta'ziyeh) and is far from any complexity and ambiguity.

However, *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is made to rely on religious elements; it is far from the common prototypes in religious stories. Narrations in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* are totally poetic and amorous, where a delicate language is selected for performance to include all given frames that is historical and contemporary in language. In fact by using the two historical and contemporary languages in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* two different time periods are connected. In other words historical language is used where necessary. They depend on the story, in many other instances, characters speak in ordinary and contemporary Persian language. Poetry used in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* similar to Ta'ziyeh, are very smooth and straightforward. As cited in Elwell- Sutton<sup>132</sup>, Mehdi

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<sup>132</sup> Elwell-Sutton's interests and publications in Persian studies fall into five categories: Persian language; Persian literature; modern Persian history and politics; Persian folklore; and Islamic science. In the first of these, his *Colloquial Persian and Elementary Persian Grammar* have remained in print as standard works. Refer to the *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Retrieved 26 November 2013, from,

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elwell-sutton>.

Forugh wrote “the language of Persian passion plays, in contrast to the highly stylized Persian poetry in general, is very simple and direct. No attempt is made to include the artificial rhetorical devices and literary graces so abundant in most Persian poetry” (Elwell-Sutton, 1979: 175). He also mentions that, “it must be pointed out that a general knowledge of the Persian language and of the literary conventions of Persian literature would be necessary to understand all the allusions and fully appreciate the poetry of these plays” (Elwell-Sutton, 1979: 175).

In the historical language part, *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is totally relying on history books, but the language of the play is not affected of history. In fact, the director is trying to extract the language from written history and documented narrations. Therefore, many narrations in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* are taken form historical books and documents such as History of *Târikh-e Yaghubi: The History, Bihar al-Anwar*, Description to *Nahjul Balagha* by Ibn Abi Al Hadid and *Early Muslim Women*. Using such sources make it possible to use the narration according to the time it happened and ensure that the performance is in compliance with the true time.



**Figure 4.5:** Abu Sufyan (Rahmanian, 2008)

Contemporary language is identifiable in the current play. Where necessary, the space is broken and contemporary language is used. Irony is also used somewhere in the dialogue. It is manifested in depiction of Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan characters. Irony in such instances renders Persian language possibilities. In other words in many places, ordinary conversation governs the play which makes the ironical concepts to be easily expressed. Therefore characters like Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan are not portrayed as grim enemies and owners of power and money, but, as comic characters, considered as ignorant and butterfingers (see Figure 4.5, page 170).

#### 4.2.4. Stage Arrangement

An important feature in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is the round scene. The round scene in the play is a defined element taken from Ta'ziyeh, used for a dramatic performance. Turning the scene around is the same as turning the platform in Ta'ziyeh which signifies changes in time, place and entries and exits of the players. Utilizing round platform in this play indicates performance techniques in 'Ta'ziyeh confessional performance' (religious play).

The round scene turns and creates the space and indicates 'traversing of distance'. For instance, in the 9<sup>th</sup> episode titled: *we should believe in the Cold Season*, where an old Khadijah symbolically being driven from Mecca to Shoaib, she appears on the stage with a baggage. Khadijah is a bounteous woman. She sells all her properties to help Bani Hashim, never leaving the Prophet alone. Showing that she is leaving, she goes round the scene to go from Mecca to Shoaib (see Figure 4.6, page 172).



**Figure 4.6:** Traversing (Rahmanian, 2008)

In some scenes, for entry of the player of Khadijah's role, the turning scene is used. For example, when a woman playing her role is on the scene in front of audiences, the platform is rotated so that the player on the other side, her back to the audiences, comes in the opposite position facing the audiences. In this way, platform rotation is effective for the player coming to and leaving the stage, like the 5<sup>th</sup> episode: *Visiting at night*.

Stage setting and mise-en-scene are taken from Ta'ziyeh which means that the scene is circular and performance is in a single stage. As seen in the current play, no curtain is used for opening and closing. Entry and exit of players does not mean that they would go backstage, while only male character and in emergency cases players go backstage to change clothes and makeup to play various roles. All displacements are performed in front of audiences. When an actor ends her role on the stage, she comes down the stage and sits in front of turning scene for her next act. (See Figure 4.7 and 4.8 and 4.9, page 174, 175 & 176).

Seventh Episode titled: *Only sound would remain* is a narration from Hazrat Mohammad worship in Cave Hira. In the first episode: *Garden Conquer*, loneliness of Jesus and his worship of God near the olive tree has been narrated. This indicates two subjects: Using round platform rotation, and technical capabilities of this style in depicting two different places for two big characters

The scene is empty in Ta'ziyeh, same as 'poor theatre'<sup>133</sup> defined by Grotowski. However, this does not imply that Ta'ziyeh is influenced by 'poor theatre', or Grotowski driven by Ta'ziyeh. In Ta'ziyeh everything is formed in the hands of narrators and audiences. Stage setting is nonrealistic in Ta'ziyeh, where props and accessories are used symbolically, same as *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. The scene is empty and there are only some stools.

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<sup>133</sup> The concept of Poor Theatre started with the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski (1933 - 1999). Theatre in general became very elaborate and relied heavily on theatrical devices such as light, sound, costume and decor sets to add spectacle to the performance. The skills of the actors were overshadowed and became of less importance. Motion pictures added sound and colour to their repertoire and it was impossible for theatre to compete with this new genre. Grotowski argued that there was no point in trying to compete with film, but that theatre should rather convert back to its roots. In his own words, "If it [the stage] cannot be richer than the cinema, then let it be poor. "The actor's voice and body skills should be the primary spectacle on stage. In his quest, Grotowski did away with everything that could distract the audience from the actor. No more elaborate sets, lights and sound. The relationship between the audience and the actor became, once more, the emphasis of the production. Retrieved 26 November 2013, from,

<http://www.finearts360.com/index.php/what-is-poor-theatre-3490/>.



**Figure 4.7:** The Platform Rotated 1 (Rahmanian, 2008)





**Figure 4.8:** The Platform Rotated 2 (Rahmanian, 2008)





**Figure 4.9:** The Platform Rotated 3 (Rahmanian, 2008)

#### 4.2.5. Distancing and Brechtian Theatre

During early play, when players introduce them by age (from youngest to eldest), the only male player distributes play scripts among seven female players. They are surprised and believe that these papers are the biography of some characters rather than a play. Here, the connections between *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* and western theater is that Brechtian Theatre (Brecht narrative theater) appears to be separating from the character in order to be maintaining a distance from it. Separating the role in the beginning of the play, when players introduce themselves and call others in real name is the technique used by director to separate players from their character. For example:

“Man: A child and seven women, searching for the eight subject who is not me (saying his name, date and place of birth), and I brought the texts, totally fresh! (Rahmanian, 2007: 10)

Another player at the end of the play says, “Last night she dreamed Khadijah, telling her that one of us should play her death scene” (Rahmanian, 2007: 68)

Many concepts of narrative theatre have been there in western and eastern traditional theatre and even in Iranian Ta'ziyeh centuries ago. However, this style has inseparable connection with Brecht, the one who theorized it for the first time. Most important feature of the method is simple and clear information regarding characters and events which is given to audience through dialogue, choir songs or using projection. Brecht theatre, the choir and projection are used for separation in addition to presentation of simple information to audiences. Applying projection has seen in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, however, the technique has different application in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, for example:

The choir notify: *the play to be started*. (They sing).

(Rahmanian, 2007: 14)

The choir: *Ashaghe (Story of Love), Part I, Garden Conquer*

(Choir: they song with the players)

(Rahmanian, 2007: 16)

The choir: *Lady is marrying, cheerfully, she is greeting, cheerfully*

(Rahmanian, 2007: 21)

In the current play, projection technique has been used twice in a creative manner and has multiple applications each time. The first time was when Abu Sufyan introduces Khadijah family to Hind and the audiences. This technique gives quick and clear information and creates an ironic space in the play which is the main feature of Brecht theatre. Brecht uses irony to draw the audiences off from melodramatic feeling. In addition to this feature, projection with comic reminder of serious scenes has a postmodern function. Another example of using this technique is the first meeting of Lady Khadijah with Mohammad (the Trustworthy) where a close up image of the player, taken with closed circuit camera, is repeatedly displayed on the curtain. This technique, diverting the audience visual concentration would cause them to look intermittently to the curtain and stage, thus, achieving the object 'separation' goal.

Irony in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* helps the process of distancing. For example:

“Shaghayegh (a character): It is written here, she used to say poem, the prophet wedding night. She said a beautiful poem, at the age of 50.

Nastran (a character saying it in a comical manner): She (Khadijah) was amorous. Nastran: Then my mother. I tell her let's go to cinema and she replies that, that is not good for my age" (Rahmanian, 2007: 12). (See Figure 4.10, below).

Using Irony in the play is made possible by the usage of Persian language owing to its potentials. In other words in many parts of the play, ordinary conversation makes it possible to understand the irony easily. Thus, characters of Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan are not portrayed as enemies but as comical characters, considered to be ignorant and butterfingered.

Although, the Brechtian narrative theatre or Brechtian theatre manifests equally in acting and direction of the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, this method is in many cases referred to as Brecht-based acting. Acting in 'narrative theatre' requires actors who are able to make the character acceptable without convincing the audiences that they are true character.



**Figure 4.10:** Comedy and Tragedy Feature. Different Khadijah Characters (Rahmanian, 2008)

#### 4.2.6. Clothing

Iranian art has an abstract form. Iranian artist is trying to express their art using symbol. Although Ta'ziyeh is one of Iranian's prominent Passion plays the director does- not attempt to transfer all details and aspects in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. As seen in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, the clothing theme is taken from Ta'ziyeh which means that there are no more symbols of red and yellow colour. All players appear in a single form and white in colour. Clothing is designed on the basis of theatrical clothing in Ta'ziyeh. Players appear in different roles with certain signs or symbols. For instance: the character who plays the role of Khadijah enters the scene with a mole on her left cheek. In other words, clothing like other parts in the current play has been dramatically transformed. In fact, in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* no endeavor is made to keep the traditional style of Ta'ziyeh, however, its' dramaturgic potential has been considered. It is noteworthy that all conventions and methods taken from Ta'ziyeh are used in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* in order to create a modern performance which belongs to the postmodern world.

#### 4.2.7. Play Structure (Style, Theme, Message)

Episodes in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* are totally based on Khadijah's passion to the Prophet. Thus, theme and subject of the current play would be 'amorous'. Being a poet and in love are the symbolic signs in the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*. Poem and music both play a significant role in the symbolisms. In addition, principles of symbolism are seen in other parts of the play such as using the rotating scene, props with symbolic theatricalism aspects like baggage which connote taking a trip. In addition to symbolic conventions, theatricalism is also clearly demonstrated in this play. Some parts of the play are made relying on Brechtian theatre. In fact, non-realism is critical in Brechtian

theatre. Therefore, the current play may have been constructed on the basis of two styles: 'symbolism' and 'theatricalism'.

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, relying on 'tragedy' and 'comedy', expresses individual's life, marriages and children of Hazrat Khadijah. Showing her love to the Prophet, she accompanied him through his life, throughout all hard routes. Thus, 'loyalty' and 'stability in love' may be the message of this play.

#### 4.2.8. Play Construction (General Plan of the Play)

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* portrays to the life of Hazrat Khadijah which indicates part of the Prophet life. The pivotal scenes in this play are first meeting of Khadijah and Prophet, the trip, marriage, Prophet worship in Cave Hira, his prophetic mission, and their hard life in Shoaib Abi Talib. *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* has been dramatically performed in ten episodes where different Iranian theatrical techniques are used. Each episode is named according to poems of Forugh Farrokhzad. Usage of contemporary Persian language, colloquy, and pop music with performance styles from Iranian traditional plays and Brechtian techniques in narrative theatre have made *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* a different narration of the life of Khadijah. Undoubtedly, all performance factors, especially players, stage designer, clothing and composer have had a significant influence on this play. However, it seem that Iranian traditional plays (including tragic Ta'ziyeh, comic Ta'ziyeh, feminine comedy play), Brechtian narrative theatre and director's performance aesthetic principles (dramaturgic potential) to the three apexes of a triangle from which *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is grown.

Ta'ziyeh is usually identified with Karbala tragedy, while *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* does not seem to contain all rules, conventions and regulations in dramatic structure of

Ta'ziyeh. This is similar as Karbala events. *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is made using a postmodern shot from Ta'ziyeh. Ta'ziyeh contains the elements and method which can be used in contemporary plays without losing its theoretical framework. This work is a step toward combination of traditional style with modern theatre.

One of the most critical dialogue structures in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is the use of poem. This is partly due to Khadijah's poetical virtue used to versify in praise of the Prophet, and his personality. Some of the poems used in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* are those translated from Arabic to Persian and versified by Persian speakers, and are sung by the Choir accompanied with music. (See Figure 4.11, page 183).

What is important in Ta'ziyeh is the excellence of the saints (olya- protagonist). Such excellence is shown with the use of sacred numbers. Seven is a holy number in Iranian culture. The director has used the age of seven and seven female actresses the role of Khadijah as manifestation of the number seven. (See Figure 4.12, page 183).

Referring the Prophet's loneliness is focused in *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*, where it aesthetically portrays the loneliness of prophets. Thus, the image of Prophet loneliness in Cave Hira and that of Jesus when speaking to the Lord and finally his crucifixion and martyrdom of Imam Hussein in Karbala desert, express some type of contextual unification and similarity of the *olya* (approving actor) and innocent's life in the history of religious.

*Ashaghe (Story of Love)* narrates the life of Khadijah in her childhood, but with a focus on her 40s and her marriage to the Prophet. The work was written in January 2007 and was performed during the anniversary of the Prophet in the same year in Chaharsoo

Hall (Hall four sides), Theatre-e Shahr (City Theatre)<sup>134</sup>, directed by Mohammad Rahmanian. (See Figure 4.13, page 184).



**Figure 4.11:** Choir (Rahmanian, 2008)



**Figure 4.12:** Seven Khadijah's Characters (Rahmanian, 2008)

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<sup>134</sup> Theatre-e Shahr is a very famous theatre in Tehran in Tehran, Iran. There are some Halls in the theatre that Chaharsoo Hall or Hall four sides is one of them.





**Figure 4.13:** Khadijah and her Childhood (Rahmanian, 2008)

#### 4.3. A lonely Person's Story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)



**Figure 4.14:** A lonely Person's Story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee) (Amini, 2005)

*A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* has been written very simply, free from any ornamental element similar to the scripts (drama, copies) of Ta'ziyeh. The play has been written using modern theatre that is a dialogue with no poem, combined with the scripts of Ta'ziyeh (dialogue with poem). (See Figure 4.14, page 184).

Considering current transformations, changes in traditions along with the hastiness and impatience of the new generation different experiences have been considered on the basis of field and open area performances with the objective to benefit on the styles and methods of Iranian plays in closed area of theatre halls.

In the past there were places for performing Ta'ziyeh which were specifically limited to such performances. On the other hand, people were not familiar with Medias like radio and TV to the extent they are today. Therefore in certain months of the year, they were patiently watching a scene (a drama of Ta'ziyeh) for some hours for religious ceremonies like the 10-day of Muharram and other events of Martyrdom. Scripts (copies, drama of the Ta'ziyeh) were written depending on the Ta'ziyeh- khan's (players) intelligence and potentialities and were not valuable literary works.

When modern styles of western theatre made their way to Iran, Ta'ziyeh lost its traditional appeal. Places where Ta'ziyeh had been performed earlier changed into buildings, passages and place for modern life. In Iran there are few places for Ta'ziyeh in the city of Ghochan<sup>135</sup>, where Ta'ziyeh could maintain its traditional role. The city serves as a local function and may be useful for researchers who are interested in studying about Ta'ziyeh.

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<sup>135</sup> One of the big cities and ancient of the Province of Khorasan Razavi in Iran.

Here lies the question about how can we preserve the characteristics of today's theatre as admired by people in their traditional form? There have been endeavors by academics and non-academics to establish such a theatre. *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is in this regard the outcome of such endeavors.

*A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* has a modern text in which they are the symbols of Iranian scripts of Ta'ziyeh (copies, drama of the Ta'ziyeh) and the theatrical styles of Iranian performances. In this research in addition to interviews with the stylist persons, different scripts of Ta'ziyeh and various sources, including the book "History o Ashura" have been used, to give a true picture of the historical event of Ashura.

#### 4.3.1. Plot Summary

*A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is narrated by a person who after a short time being with Imam Husain left Imam before he was martyred:

In the darkness of the scene, where audiences are sitting, continuous sound of stepping and panting are heard with some other indistinct sounds. The light levels gradually increases. A man appears on the stage. He is frightened and remorseful for leaving Imam alone in the war. The Ta'ziyeh characteristic music is heard.

The story reads as follows: Imam Husain, contrary to what requested by Moavieh, does not swear allegiance to Yazid (Moavieh's son) and does not accept him as the prince. As there is no allegiance, Moavieh confronts Imam Husain and his companion. Then, followers of Imam Husain are killed for being the follower of Husain. For this reason Imam Husain leaves Medina to Mecca. From Medina, Imam and his companion goes to Kofa upon invitation by the people, not knowing that the people of Kofa would

breach their promise and leave him alone. In the end, Imam has to leave Kofa and goes to Karbala, a dry and barren lot. That is the place where Imam Husain and his family are prevented to drink and they are taken captive. Finally Imam is martyred by the sword stroke.

#### 4.3.2. Eclecticism and ‘A Lonely Person’s Story’

*A lonely Person’s Story* (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee) has been obtained according to the theatrical pattern from eclecticism of Ta’ziyeh, narration and western performance. It has used the methods and styles in Ta’ziyeh performance.

Various scripts of Imam Husain Ta’ziyeh have resulted in various theatrical works and despite few differences in the process of the stories, martyrdom of Imam Husain and the event of Karbala are the same in all copies. Such a vision is entirely seen in *A lonely person’s story* (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee). In fact, the play has directly used the Ta’ziyeh theatrical pattern in a manner that the tragic performance of Karbala event has been included in the text and in the performance itself with no changes. It is noteworthy that features such as ritual performance have played a role in its formation.

Scripts of Ta’ziyeh are the official copies in Iranian dramatic literature which reflect the events related to sacred Imams, especially the events of Karbala and problems of the prophets. After Islam, part of Iranian literature has been referred to as ritual performance which is in itself considered as a traditional performance and as Peter Chelkowski put it “Indigenous avant-garde theatre of Iran” (Chelkowski, 1979: 1).

In social traditions, Ta’ziyeh is not used for the mourning of ordinary people’s death, but it is for the mourning ceremony on the martyrdom of Imam Husain and his

family. Such mourning ceremonies have found a new concept when the event of Karbala is changed into a dramatic performance.

The tragic performances such as *The Lamentation of Siavush* (*Passion of Siavush*), *Yadegar-e Zar-iran*<sup>136</sup> and *passion of Mitra*<sup>137</sup> in Iran are the main samples of rituals making the ground for performance of Imam Hussein's problems and the events of Karbala. They play a role in formation of Ta'ziyeh. However this does not mean that performance of Imam Hussein Martyrdom and the likes can be a reason for the recreation of Iranian ancient stories. Further details of the *Yadegar-e Zar-iran* story may be found in Appendix J.

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<sup>136</sup> The Yādegār-e Zarīrān [jɒːde'gɒːre zæriːrˈn] (Persian: یادگار زهران or Ayādgār ī Zarērān (English: "Memorial of Zarēr"), is a short Middle Persian (Pahlavi) text of ancient Iranian epic poetry. The story is preserved in a unique manuscript written in AD 1322. The Avesta mentions the struggle of Vištāspa and Zairivairi (whose name became later known as "Zarēr") against the "wicked Arəjat.aspa" (Yašt 5.108, 112, 117, cf. Yašt 19.87) and establish the antiquity of this story of "Wištāsp's battle". According to the Iranologist Mary Boyce the Ayādgār ī Zarērān retains the conventions of heroic epic, with rich hyperbole, fixed epithets, and an abundance of similes and formal repetitions. It thus attests, in both subject-matter and treatment, the long cultivation of Iranian minstrel poetry. Retrieved 28 November 2013, from,

<http://rasplibra.com/uncategorized/yadegar-e-zariran-download-pdf>.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yadegar-e\\_Zariran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yadegar-e_Zariran).

<sup>137</sup> Mithra, also spelled Mithras, Sanskrit Mitra, in ancient Indo-Iranian mythology, the god of light, whose cult spread from India in the east to as far west as Spain, Great Britain, and Germany. (See Mithraism.) The first written mention of the Vedic Mitra dates to 1400 bc. His worship spread to Persia and, after the defeat of the Persians by Alexander the Great, throughout the Hellenic world. Retrieved 24 December 2013, from,

<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/386025/Mithra>.

MITHRAISM, the cult of Mithra as it developed in the West, its origins, its features, and its probable connection with Mithra worship in Iran. For most of the twentieth century the major problem addressed by scholarship on both Roman Mithraism and the Iranian god Mithra was the question of continuity. Did Mithra-worship migrate from Iran to the Roman Empire in some institutional form or was Mithraism invented in the West (with a few Iranian trappings) as a new institution altogether? At the start of the twenty first century, this issue appears to be less central to the concerns of scholarship on Western Mithraism, but it remains important nevertheless, and obviously it must be the lens through which Mithraism is examined in this article. The first task, though, is to describe the Mithras cult as it did in fact develop in the West, and in so far as we can reconstruct it objectively from its material remains. Reconstruction is not easy, since no ancient literary works about Mithraism and no substantial sacred texts from Mithraism have survived. Retrieved 24 December 2013, from,

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithraism>.

Many ethical characteristics and wishes of Iranian nation have been manifested in characters of Ta'ziyeh the same as which were formed in mythical characters and stories of Iran. In this way, Ta'ziyeh contains a narration of the prophets' history and event of Karbala. As people are interested to find meanings beyond the history of historical events, they see their historical characters as myths.

In Imam Hussein's martyrdom Ta'ziyeh, people do not consider his martyrdom as an ordinary man; they pass the border of time and space and consider the performance as resurrection and another death of the martyrs.

#### 4.3.3. Methods of Performance

To what extent have the Brecht theatrical styles or that of Ta'ziyeh been used in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)*? In this performance, the traditional style of Iranian performance has been used more than Brecht style. In Iranian traditional performance, in Ta'ziyeh, the *naqqali* (narration) or *Pardeh-khani* (storytelling tableau description), player is the 'narrator' as well. Player is not transformed or steeped, as Stanislavski<sup>138</sup> puts it; player is not overwhelmed, and in some way goes closer to the style of Brecht. But the difference between the style of Brecht performance and Ta'ziyeh is that in the first style, the player would in some instance or other enter the role and has the power to leave the role as well. While in Ta'ziyeh, the player would never be steeped into the role. In fact, the expressive method of Ta'ziyeh is that of 'marking'. For instance it says the *olya* (approving actor or Imam-khan, protagonist) should read the dialogues in a song while *ashghya* (disapproving actors, *mokhalef-khan*, antagonist) does not need to have powerful song as that of *olya*-

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<sup>138</sup> For more information: refer to the current Thesis Chapter 2 & 3.

*khan* (protagonist, approving actor). If we look at the subject realistically, both should perform their act in the same language, whether singing or not. This means that when we plan a vocal expression for the *olya* (protagonist, approving actor) and a non-vocal for *Ashghya* (antagonist, disapproving actors), it would be mixed with symbolism. (See Figure 4.15, below).



**Figure 4.15:** Symbol of Olya or Approving Actor (Amini, 2005)

For instance we can refer *Galileo theatre*<sup>139</sup>, performed in Brecht style, in which the character should be first taking Galileo character; following should put the role aside and judge. This is contrary to the method of playing in Ta'ziyeh where throughout the performance, *Ta'ziyeh-khan* (player) emphasizes repeatedly that characters are imitated

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<sup>139</sup> Life of Galileo, also known as Galileo, is a play by the twentieth-century German dramatist Berthold Brecht with incidental music by Hanns Eisler. First performance: September 9, 1943. Playwright: Berthold Brecht. Retrieved 24 July 2013 from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt\\_Brecht](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht).

and are not the true characters. *Ta'ziyeh-khan* (player) holding a copy of *Ta'ziyeh* in his hand does not mean that he has not memorized the text but is an indication that he is similar to the character, but is not the character himself. But in Brecht style, the player accepts his role. As the actor would play all the characters in *A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*), it comes closer to Brecht theatre. In fact, in this single character play, the actor is an expert in the field of performance.

In addition, the actor in Brecht style would play his role according to the theatrical rules and principles but in *Ta'ziyeh* there are no such rules and principles. What is important is the "Belief". One playing *Shemr* role is not interested to wear *Shemr* clothing and one playing *Imam Hussein* role does not consider him to have the place of *Imam*, but he only narrates the *Imam* words or *Shemr* words.

*A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) emphasizes the presence of "one" narrator which means that he would be relying on the foundations of traditional narration or *naqqali*, quoting all events and characters. It also emphasizes on traditional performance of *Ta'ziyeh*, which means that player would involve with different characters and play different roles.

#### 4.3.4. Theatrical Conventions

Considering the studies in this field, here, is enumerated theatrical conventions representing *Ta'ziyeh* conventions in performing *A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*).



#### 4.3.4.1. Using Rhythmical Speech

Some features of Ta'ziyeh seen in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* are the usage of rhythmical and musical speech. The language in Ta'ziyeh is a living language understood by every person close to the public and general language. Experiences by other playwrights including Bahram Beyzaie have been used in this performance. Bahram Beyzaie has 'single character' performances such as *Azhdahac* (Beyzaie, 2004) and *Arash* (Beyzaie, 2004) which are referred to as "Declamation" (*bar-khani*). However, despite Beyzaie language in his play which posed a challenge to be understood by general, a simple language from Ta'ziyeh script has been used in the present play which can be easily understood by all people. It is noteworthy that parts of dialogues in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* are exactly the speech of characters in the original copy of Ta'ziyeh which are spoken by the narrator with few changes and adjustments. In some other parts the versified speech of Ta'ziyeh has been used with no changes. Section one (Moavieh letter to Imam and Imam's reply to Moavieh) is written using the Ta'ziyeh poetry style by the playwright while sections two and three (Hurr martyrdom and Imam Testaments) have been exactly borrowed from the copies of Imam Husain Ta'ziyeh. Examples of first, second and third sections are as follows:

Moavieh letter to Imam:

*I hereby address you, the messenger of the Lord*

*Be frighten for you are making uproar between the Moslems*

*You plan to excite a disturbance*

*Between the Moslems, believers and Christians*

*You have been called to make mischief*

*Don't you remember that Kofians*  
*Your father Ali martyred the way of our God*  
*If you try to deny me*  
*This is me who would disgrace you*  
*And in case you may have a plot against me*  
*I also plot to overthrow you*

(Amini, 2004: 62-63)

Addressed to Moavieh, Imam says:

*You, go to your master now*  
*And tell him that Husain said you the Oppressor,*  
*Stop telling such things by deceit*  
*You are the murderer of the Messenger*  
*You are the one who does not keep his promise*  
*Taking your sword out to kill our friends*  
*There is no worst sedition than you in the world*  
*The religion was degraded and destroyed for your style of governance*

(Amini, 2004:70)

Hurr testimonial:

*To you the antecedent of Ahmad Mokhtar*  
*The guiding light, the star in the dark night*

*You are the sun and I have hurried to you*

*Searching for the light and the sun*

*My tongue is cut, as I came to fight*

*But I am wearied of this life*

*I have been charged by Obeid to do this*

(Amini, 2004: 62-63)

#### 4.3.4.2. Being Tragic

Another specification which is clearly found in this play is its tragic and sad nature. Most cases of Ta'ziyeh, especially those on the passions of Karbala and expression of Karbala martyrdom have tragic background.

#### 4.3.4.3. Stage Design and Costume Conventions

- Stage design and decoration in the current theatre is taken from Ta'ziyeh and similar Ta'ziyeh everything is performed in a single stage. The scene is empty in Ta'ziyeh, same as the "poor theatre"<sup>140</sup> invented by Grotowski<sup>141</sup> and everything is formed by the actor and attains perfection. Stage design in Ta'ziyeh is nonrealistic. Objects and props are used in a symbolic manner, as seen in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)*.

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<sup>140</sup> Empty stage in Ta'ziyeh, same as "poor theatre", but this does not mean that they have been influenced by the other or have used the other.

<sup>141</sup> Jerzy Grotowski was born on August 11, 1933 in Rzeszów, Poland and died on January 14, 1999, Pontedera, Italy. He was a Polish theatre director and innovator of experimental theatre, the "theatre laboratory" and "poor theatre" concepts. Retrieved 23 May 2014 from,

[https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Jerzy\\_Grotowski.html](https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Jerzy_Grotowski.html).

- Ta'ziyeh is performed on the basis of symbolism. Performance, stage design, costume, and music are used as symbols. Costume in Ta'ziyeh teaches us that even in the historical plays; the contemporary costume may be used. Because, there is the reflection in Ta'ziyeh that, all days are Ashura, all places are Karbala and all months are Muharram. In some Ta'ziyeh plays, shabih-khan (player) is wearing European cloth or local and native ones from different Iranian tribes. Such a style is seen in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* as well as in a manner that the actors cloth is a combination of historical and current symbols, like long and colour sash in green for Imam and his followers, yellow for Hurr, white for Imam and red for antagonist; green cloak for protagonist and red cloak for the antagonist.

#### 4.3.4.4. Time Convention in Ta'ziyeh

The time in which *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is performed, connects with the mourning rituals for martyrs of Karbala sometimes during the Muharram month which is another prominent feature in following the symbol in the present theatre.

#### 4.3.4.5. Performers' Conventions in Ta'ziyeh

All performers of Ta'ziyeh are merely impersonated the characters; they involve the impersonation of the role of Imam Husain, Yazid and Hurr. When player dramatize songs<sup>142</sup> the role of protagonist, all audiences know the fact that the person imitating the protagonist is different from them, for the audience believe that protagonist are among the saint (olya) and sacred people. This applies to the antagonist as well, with the difference that antagonist are the direct opposite of the olya (protagonist) and are

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<sup>142</sup> The actors of protagonists who play positive roles (perform as prophets), sing their poem in an Iranian genuine singing styles and music always remind them the pitch and melody. For more information refer to Chapter One under the title of 1.9.7: Tragedy, Comedy, Character, Dialogue, and Monologue.

deemed as enemies. In fact, from the viewpoint of Ta'ziyeh, the antagonist and protagonist are different players, with one being of the highest and the other the lowest human value. Audience of Ta'ziyeh having the knowledge of all events and using their imagination, consider the imitation as true manifestation for the space of the scene is the reflection of a fact which has happened in the past.

Manuchehr Yari writes that "Ta'ziyeh players try to impersonate the *olyas*' (protagonists') character when performing their role in order to have something common with the *olyas* and this makes them respected by the audience" (Yari, 2007: 214).

In the present paly, there is an 'expert player'. Normal players or actors in most Iranian traditional plays are not a theatre expert player. This means that each player is skilled in playing a certain role which is referred to as a Type. For instance, actors in Ta'ziyeh are *olya khan* (protagonist, approving actor) or *ashghya khan* (antagonist, disapproving actors and mokhalef-khan). In fact the one with the powerful song is elected as *olya khan* (protagonist, approving actor) and another having no powerful song is *ashghya-khan* (antagonist, disapproving actors). The difference between expert and skilled player is that the expert player is able to play different roles but a skilled player is able to play one designated role only. For instance player of the black man in *Takht Hози* can only appear in the role of a 'black man' (*siah*) and is skilled in such form of play, for he has learnt this through imitation.

As player (actor) in this play is a theatrical expert, he can play both roles *olya* (approving actor, protagonist) and *ashghya* (disapproving actor, antagonist) as well, which is possible as this has been influenced by the traditional play of 'story telling'. In Iranian storytelling, the story teller (one single person) plays different roles. So, it can

be said that the theatrical structure of *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is a combination of Ta'ziyeh, storytelling and theatre elements.

#### 4.3.4.6. Musical Conventions

Speech and music are inseparable elements in most traditional cultures, forming a single unit. Music has such a function in traditional Iranian plays: In tragic plays it helps create a sorrowful atmosphere while in comedy it is used to create a joyful space. In addition it is used to fill in the theatrical gaps. Music is far from reality in Iranian play and emphasizes on soul and meaning, while attempting to steal the audience away from the real world. Study of such conventions indicate an important section of the music application in Iranian plays. Music plays its role in Ta'ziyeh as a live performance in combination with melody, rhythm and special harmony in the space. In *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* music changes depending on the events in the play. Trumpet (a wind instrument) and percussions like drum, timpani and cymbal are used in order to bring more success in reinforcement and creation of the moods and space in different stages. For instance in the beginning of the play, the musical band is placed in the corner of the scene playing the introductory music using cymbal, trumpet and drum as the signs of defeat in the war which is accompanied with lamentation.

#### 4.3.5. Play Structure (Theme, Style, Message)

In the history of Ta'ziyeh, there have been scripts (copies) in the name of *A Lonely person's story* which were not well known for their performances. The play name seems to be taken from such script which have been performed by true-hearted *Ta'ziyeh-khan* (players, actors).

On the other hand, the play has emphasized on using a single player, since “one” player can convey sense of solitude there. The traditional play of *pardeh-khani* and *naqqali* (storytelling) which were known before Ta’ziyeh, were based on a single player where a single storyteller or player would individually play and narrate all stages.

In addition, selection of this name is based on the concept, because a single person is describing the event. In fact, that person is the man who before the event of Ashura and happenings of the Karbala has left Imam Husain and his followers and family. Therefore his narration is related to the instance when he was still accompanying Imam Husain and his followers. With such descriptions, it can be said that ‘solitude’ is the theme and content of the present play the name of which is the same as its theme, like classic plays.

*A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* contains the musical and lyric aspects. Poem and music have significant roles in the symbolists’ works. The rules of symbolism are clearly seen in all spaces of the play as well. The music of Ta’ziyeh has been used in performance of *A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)*. meanwhile, the round scene, clothes, colour symbolism of green, yellow, white, and red, changes in place and location in the same time (turning round the scene which signifies turning from one place to another or ‘traversing the distance’, for instance from Medina to Karbala) are taken from Ta’ziyeh. In addition to, player states that he is playing as similar or *shabih* of that character, all of which indicate using the symbolism style. *A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* contains secrets of the understanding and conception of which require the knowledge of symbolism in Ta’ziyeh. For instance, observance of the principle of distancing between the role and actor and between the play and audience means considering the sacredness of the

dramatic event and characters in binding. Therefore, the play style is that of ‘Symbolism’.

*A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* has been made on the basis of ‘tragedy’, events of Karbala and happenings thereafter. Imam Husain and his friends are killed (martyred) for their search to find the truth. By his action, Imam Husain guides people to discover and understand the truth in their individual life and such guidance to truth, which is to protect and preserve the prophet religion. This may be the ‘message’ of this play.

#### 4.3.6. Structure of ‘A Lonely Person’s Story’

This present play, same as Ta’ziyeh, consists to some totally distinct sections: Music, lamentation, dialogue. In other words, *A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* accompanies with music and lamentation which are performed in praise of Imam Husain.

This work which has been written according to the script (copy) of Ta’ziyeh on Imam Husain martyrdom is in fact totally similar to Ta’ziyeh. Versified words (poem) and prose both seen in this dramatic work. Usually the poems in Ta’ziyeh consist of 600 verses but in a theatrical work there are fewer verses and the dramatic and theatrical aspect are more emphasized. *A lonely person’s story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* has more than 100 verses with its specific story. Instead of gathering *shabih-khan* (actors) and the choir in a play, ‘a person’ appears in all roles and plays for all the characters one by one. He sometimes impersonates the olya (approving actor, protagonist, *Imam-khan*) like Imam Husain and his followers and in another time he appears in the role of the ashghya (disapproving actors or *mokhalef-khan*) like Yazid and Moavieh.



Imam Husain dreams that the Prophet charges him to do something and Imam goes to perform his duty. He says: “I would not talk about this dream with anybody until I meet the God (Amini, 2004: 62-63).

Imam prepares to visit his ancestors. He knows that he would be killed in a certain place elected for him. He would then say goodbye to his family. Here, they are part of Imam’s Words to his followers:

Imam asks his companions and friend to leave him and not to follow him:

*You who are following me in this world*

*You are all threatened to be killed*

*You can change your way and leave me*

*I accept you to cancel your allegiance*

*In this night it is easier for you to go and leave*

*And there is no one to fight you at the moment*

*So, you stop coming with me and no more be my follower*

*Not to be killed like me, with parched lips*

(Amini, 2004: 62-63)

And here Imam Husain is seen as lonely. However, the angels came to help Imam Husain. He appreciates them, for he believes that they are angels and are hidden from the men eyes so their battle with the enemy is not generous. So, Imam does not accept assistance by the angels and goes to his destiny. He performs this to keep the religion of his ancestor (the Prophet) alive. He says, “If the religion of my ancestor is protected and

preserved, shedding the blood of me and my family, so you the swords hit me” (Amini, 2004:70). And enemies rush him and martyr him.

*A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)*, contrary to the original script containing the secondary Ta'ziyeh , is written simply and does not include secondary stories including the episode of *Imam's valediction with his family, descent of Gabriel*, the episode on *descent of Petrus angel to help Imam; the martyrdom of the children of Ziyneb, sister of Imam Husain*, the *Wondering Dervish and Moses (Darvish-e Biyabani va Mosa)*, *Imam and Ziyneb*, the *martyrdom of Ali Askar the youngest son of Imam Husain*, and the episode on *returning to Karbala*. It is noteworthy that in numerous scripts, Imam Collections (scripts, Majles) are a few different, having interconnected and episodic structure and parallel in some. But in the current play, a single story is performed from the beginning to the end.

The structure of the *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is summarized in two patterns:

- a) Election: It means that Imam is elected to be martyred. For instance I can refer the speech of the man (player): “He knew from the beginning that he started to go a way which ends with blood (death) and it happened as it had to be (Amini, 2004: 63).
- b) Second: it is the traversing and selection of the companion (from Mecca to Medina) and martyrdom (it terms of witnesses).

In such traversing, Imam Husain elects his companion for death and to meet the divine. On the other hand, those of lose belief escape to save their life. Yari writes that “it is said that of hundreds of men there [ in the Karbala] only remain 72 persons, [similar to]the story of *the Conference of the Birds* in Mantegh-O Teir, Attar's

allegorical-mystical work in which of thousands of birds there remained only 30 birds” (Yari, 2000: 215).

#### 4.3.7. Play Construction (General Plan of the Play)

Ethical and behavioral characteristics of the heroes in *the Lamentation of Siavush* (*the Tragedy of Siavush*), *Yadegar Zar-Iran* and *the passion of Mitra* are seen in Ta'ziyeh characters; characteristics such as innocence, sanctity, warfare and fighting with the enemies of the God along with the religious and mystical features. The work of Forms of Iranian traditional theatre reveals that such heroes have supernatural and spiritual aspects the characters of which are not seen among ordinary people. They are from the heaven, from the other world; they have nothing to do with the earthy world (Saghayan, 2000: 11). However Imam Husain is not a myth but a leader and guide.

Non-realistic contemporary of *A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) displays an event; Imam Husain starts a way which ends with blood and death. He accepts his fate, destiny and the plot of his life. The cognition is similarly seen in the epics like *The Lamentation of Siavush* and *The passion of Mitra*. They indicate that there is determinism in formation of events and happening with which the characters are involved. So, the *olya* (approving actor or *Imam-khan*, protagonists) talks about determinism and destiny against offence and consider the origin and source of happening are deterministic and beyond their will. For instance, in this presents play Imam Husain dreams his martyrdom and believes that in case his ancestor religion is preserve and protected by his and his family blood then he should obey the order of the God.

The actor in *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* accompanies Imam Husain family. However, he does not follow Imam to the end, but accompany him before going to Karbala desert. However, the actor (the man) is satisfied by playing the whole events in Karbala to other people. Therefore, he could send Imam's message to other. And in doing this, he dramatizes, impersonate and appears in the role of Imam *olya* (protagonist, approving actor), Moavieh (antagonist), Hurr and the Man (narrator).

*A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is a combination of the script of Imam Husain Ta'ziyeh and contemporary theatre which display the summarized martyrdom of Imam Husain in 30 minutes. *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)* is a step toward transformation of Iranian theatre to stage theatre and it is calls 'Ta'ziyeh Influenced Theatre A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)'.

#### 4.4. Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran



**Figure 4.16:** Ghadamshad Group (Rahmanian, 2007)

Is there the possibility that religious and historical subject of Ta'ziyeh be evolved and reshaped into non-religious tragedy and comedy with the passing of time? Such transformation may probably appear by combining Ta'ziyeh elements with Western theatre. Although, the religious form of Ta'ziyeh or its traditional framework cannot be changed, it preserves the ritualistic and religious performance, while being performed in a modern style.

Iranian artists who usually use the elements of Ta'ziyeh to make their performance, do so by directly using the event of Karbala (such as *A Lonely Person's Story*<sup>143</sup>) or specifically taking the audiences closer to the event of Karbala and Imam Husain martyrdom. In *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* the playwright has tried to reach a new method of performance in Iranian theatre by combining the method of Ta'ziyeh and elements of Western theatre. (See Figure 4.16, page 203).

#### 4.4.1. Plot Summary

The Gramophone is switched on and Ta'ziyeh music is played. Alam-Taj complains that Ta'ziyeh is played by men where women should only cry. Constitutionalists are fighting with the liberals in Tehran. Alam-Taj, disregarding such struggles has strictly decided to hold 'feminine Ta'ziyeh' in her house in Muharram month. Some women resort to seeking refuge in Alam-Taj's house to escape from the struggle in the street. They form a group of musician leads by Ghadamshad who performs ironic and comic plays. Alam-Taj recommends them to have a Ta'ziyeh

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<sup>143</sup> For more information, refer to the current Thesis, Chapter 4, *A Lonely Person's Story (Majles-s Gharib-e Tanhayee)*.

ceremony and to start with, she recommends *Kasim wedding Ceremony*<sup>144</sup>. They know nothing about *Kasim wedding Ceremony* and martyrdom-playing. Thus, they perform *Wedding party of Naneh Ghulam Hussein (Ghulam Hussein's Mother Wedding Party)*<sup>145</sup>). Alam-Taj expects to see mourning and martyrdom play; she passes out by watching the Joyful (ironic) and comedy play of *Wedding party of Naneh Ghulam Hussein (Ghulam Hussein's Mother Wedding Party)*.

Mirpanjeh and Khooli, Alam-Taj servants, describe Ghadamshad that the women may stay in Alam-Taj's house on the condition that there is Ta'zیه martyrdom (Ta'zیه tragedy) not ironic Ta'zیه (comic Ta'zیه). Ghadamshad does not accept to perform mourning Ta'zیه. She only plays Joyful Ta'zیه (ironic Ta'zیه) and even when Mahlagha, one of her group member performs the martyrdom *Ta'zیه of BiBi Roghayeh (Madam Roghayeh)*<sup>146</sup>, she tries to stop the performance.

Conditions are quite bad out of the house. Battery and cannon sounds loomed closer. At the moment, Ghadamshad changes her mind singing the mourning *Ta'zیه Wife of Vahab Nasrani*<sup>147</sup> (a woman who was martyred after being converted to Islam) and *BiBi Shahrbanoo*<sup>148</sup> *Ta'zیه (Madam Shahrbanoo)*<sup>149</sup>. While the women are

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<sup>144</sup> Contrary to its name, *Kasim wedding Ceremony* has a condolence ceremony in it.

<sup>145</sup> *Ghulam Hussein's Mother Wedding* regards a funny name in Persian language

<sup>146</sup> In the Arab world, *BiBi Roghayeh (Ms Roghayeh)* is the youngest daughter of Imam al Hussein.

<sup>147</sup> Vahab Nasrani and his wife converted to Islam after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

<sup>148</sup> Also calls Shahrbanu.

<sup>149</sup> Shahrbanoo daughter of Yazdgerd III, last Sassanid King was Imam Hussein wife. Yazdgerd III or Yazdgerd III, was the thirty-eighth and last king of the Sasanian Empire of Iran. His father was Shahriyar and his grandfather was Khosrau II. Born: 590 AD, Iran Died: 651 AD, Merv, Turkmenistan. Children: Shahrbanu, Peroz III, Bahram VII, Adrag, Mardawand. Retrieved 14 May 2014 from,

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdgerd\\_III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yazdgerd_III).

playing and singing, the sound of cannon and shooting drew closer and closer, until are killed as martyr for performing Ta'ziyeh mourning in Muharram month.

#### 4.4.2. Eclecticism and 'Ghadamshad the Minstrel Martyrdom-playing in Tehran'

Utilizing Iranian ritualistic play elements in the contemporary Iranian theatre, in addition to preserving historical and religious stories, they have influences over the making of modern theatre. To make use of Iranian ritualistic play techniques and conventions is a critical factor in making the current Iranian theatre. *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* utilizes conventions and techniques of Joyful Ta'ziyeh (ironic Ta'ziyeh or comic) and tragedy in the form of an eclecticism between Iranian and western theatre dramatic elements. Therefore, Iranian traditional plays have been used in *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* in the two following manners:

- i. Preserving and dissemination of Iranian ritualistic and traditional plays (such as: Joyful Ta'ziyeh (joyful Ta'ziyeh), feminine farcical plays that deal with feminine.)
- ii. To make use of traditional and ritualistic plays in Iranian Contemporary Theatre

In Iranian plays, actors are known by the audience and repeatedly appear in each play with fixed characters that calls 'type'. In the current performance, audience are directed to a new view by using new heroes<sup>150</sup> (such as Ghadamshad and Alam-Taj) in a well-known story of Ta'ziyeh. (See Figure 4.17, page 207). It implies that, female

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<sup>150</sup> In Iranian plays, actors are divided in two Stock Characters (such as Haji, the Black) and Type Characters (like the types taken from the history and myths such as Rostam, Siavush and those taken from the daily life such as Mazandarani, Kashi, Bazari). For more information, see Saghayan (2008), page (54-55).

minstrel at the time of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896), as new dramatic characters holding the tragedy and joyful Ta'ziyeh which indicates a new method of these forms' of Ta'ziyeh performance. Thus, audience would remember Karbala event and Imam Husain story.



**Figure 4.17:** Alam-Taj (Rahmanian, 2007)



#### 4.4.3. Structure

The current play is quite a feminine play contrasted with a male movement. Before the Constitutional revolution<sup>151</sup>, women had less presence in the community. The constitution for its political and historical attitudes was a passage for women to enter the community. However this does not mean that women had no role in the community before the Constitution; the Constitution paved the way for further events. On one hand, besides the Constitutional revolution, innovation and creation in Iranian ritualistic and traditional play was another symbol of change since Qajar period. The innovation was in Ta'ziyeh. Since Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar<sup>152</sup> (1772 –1834), groups of feminine minstrel played Private Ta'ziyeh in the princes of nobles' house. For this purpose, even mourning ceremonies and collections (Majles or a part of Ta'ziyeh story) were written for women plays. Confrontation of the two aspects, innovative plays for women to enter the feminine performance and political changes for women to enter the community as a living element, resulted in formation of *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran*. As a matter of fact, *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's*

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<sup>151</sup> The Constitutional Revolution Development of Iran and Europe relations in 19<sup>th</sup> century (13 A.H) and Iran defeat in Iran-Russia war have created broad transformations in economic and cultural structures and resulted in reformation in Qajar period, Continuation of reformation movements in the later periods prepared the required elements for appearance of new civilization institutes and modern school of thoughts including establishment of Darolfonoon High School, publication of international governmental and non-governmental newspapers, translation and compilation of new books, construction of new schools during Naseredin Shah and Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar periods. In the same line the two main school of thought in the community, the Intellectuals and Modernist Religious Scientists proceeded to create coordination and combination between traditional thinking basis in Iran with the new thoughts, considering the knowledge about political and social crisis in Iran and the necessity to transform the political and cultural structure of the country. The important consequence of such preparation was intellectual basis for Constitutional Revolution. Retrieved 13 May 2012, from,

[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/constitutional\\_revolution/constitutional\\_revolution.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/constitutional_revolution/constitutional_revolution.php)

<sup>152</sup> Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar are also known Fathalishah, Fathali Shah, or Fath Ali Shah. Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar was the second Qajar Emperor/Shah of Persia. He reigned from 17 June 1797 until his death. He was born September 5, 1772 in Damghan, Iran, and died October 23, 1834, Isfahan, Iran. Retrieved 14 May 2014, from,

<http://www.cyclopaedia.info/wiki/Fath-Ali-Shah-Qajar>.

*Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* as a feminine Ta'ziyeh performance, performs joyful and tragic play based on historical background of ritual and traditional play of Iran. It is better to express the theory of 'joyful Ta'ziyeh' and 'feminine Ta'ziyeh' for better understanding of the subject.

#### 4.4.4. Feminine Ta'ziyeh

Following feminine *rawza-khani* (narrative recitation<sup>153</sup>), it was first played every year during the first ten days of Muharram in the nobles' house. For religious impediments, men were playing the women role in the play while women had no role. Finally, performances of Ta'ziyeh with all-women players and audiences was a reaction to the common beliefs and impediments and to obtain the right of which women had long been deprived from. Feminine Ta'ziyeh was unable to be publicly performed and developed. Because it had to be played in the nobles' house with the support of rich people who were able to prepare the equipments and play stage, there was no public audience to this play and had remained as a fancy recreation. According to *A Study on Iranian Theatre* feminine Ta'ziyeh was played in open area of the house or halls. Players were skilled *naqqali* (storytelling or narration) and *rawza-khani* (narrative recitation or preacher). Ta'ziyehs in which women played the main role, such as *BiBi Shahrbanoo (Madam Shahrbanoo)*, or *Ghureish Daughter Marriage (aroosiye dokhtar-e- Ghureish)* and the likes were more desired for such gathering. They played Ta'ziyeh fully dressed with all ceremonies, armour, horse and other equipments. Actors playing the men roles required makeup for their role to be distinguished from the men by facial makeup and throaty voice. Women used no mask playing the men role. Feminine

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<sup>153</sup> Rowza-khani is known professional narrator from tragedy of Karbala preacher.

Ta'ziyeh was intermittently played in the noble's house up to mid Ahmad Shah Qajar<sup>154</sup> (1898 –1930) and gradually disappeared thereafter (Beyzaie, 2000: 140).

#### 4.4.5. Joyful Ta'ziyeh (Comic Ta'ziyeh)

Joyful Ta'ziyeh has been formed through development of droll *shabih-khans* (actors), prelude (fore-event) and possibly events. Comic shabih-khans (funny actors) were an exception in Ta'ziyeh. On the other hand, there was a successful black narrator *Ghanbar*- Hazrat Amir slave- with *Habashe* accent and certain comical manners that opened a new way in martyrdom plays. Bantering the religious antagonists become an allegation for this type of play to progress. Joyful Ta'ziyeh has direct root in the plays which were finally evolved in *Omar Koshan* or *Omar Sozan*<sup>155</sup> (Beyzaie, 2000: 169). The content of the play is usually focused on celebration of a ridiculed religious offender who converts to Islam at the end of the play by being a witness to a miracle. Usually the event of Karbala and *Kasim wedding Ceremony* is played immediately after joyful Ta'ziyeh. The play causes people to cry much, however, proficient actors could make the audience cry and laugh in a couple of hours.

Comic verse is the elements of joyful Ta'ziyeh. Music in ironic Ta'ziyeh is both epic and irony in that it makes the audience laugh. Joyful Ta'ziyeh is played in religious

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<sup>154</sup> Ahmad Shāh Qājār was Shah of Persia from 16 July 1909, to 31 October 1925, and the last ruling member of the Qajar dynasty. Retrieved 14 May 2014, from,

<http://www.cyclopaedia.info/wiki/Ahmad-Shah-Qajar-of-Persia>.

<sup>155</sup> Omar Koshan is a comic festival which is now obsolete in Iran

festivals, on Fridays, Muharram and Safar months (with the exception of five days before and after Ashura)<sup>156</sup>. Actors are usually minstrel and imitators.

#### 4.4.6. Theatrical Conventions

According to George and Kernodle Theatre is a whole convention that is to pretend and accept the imagination instead of truth (Kernodle & Kernodle, 1978: 11).

Orley Holtan believes that, if the artist may use conventions understandable by people, they can express their messages in the easiest possible way, however, they may have to give new sets of conventions in order to define their message. Changes in theatre are likely to be sudden and drastic. Types of drastic changes can be seen in the works of composers in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They sometimes add the sound of whistle or factory siren to their melodies in order to express reactions to industrialized period. Same as other types of art, theatre has its own language consisting from different elements composed and combined in different methods according to certain rules, with the objectives of inducing something specific. Same as other conventions of art, theatrical conventions are subjected to alterations and transformations in time and with familiarity of theatre artists' with truths and in the current time there are sets of theatrical conventions (Holtan, 1976: 26-27).

Theatrical conventions specifying Ta'ziyeh conventions in *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* are explained here:

- i. The possibility to Perform with Different Scenes and Change of Scene by Players with no Limitation<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> These days joyful Ta'ziyeh is not common. This comic play merely is being performed on festival during Muharram month.

In Iranian plays, audiences and actors have agreed on different places to be performed on a single stage. Therefore, actors go from one place to another on a single stage. In the current play, there are some scenes having new space and location successively. It implies that all these locations are displayed on a single stage with a short interval after the other. For instance, in this play the stories of *Alam-Taj's house*, *Ta'ziyeh of Shemr and Khooli*, *BiBi Shahrbanoo tragic Ta'ziyeh* and *Wife of Vahab Nasrani* are played in a single stage. As a matter of fact, audiences have accepted the conventions by a playing group and the group uses all facilities for their play. Thus, the scene can be easily changed without replacing the décor. The changes are made with no suspension of the play or it replaces at the same time when actors are playing their roles. Changes are made without the curtains opening or closing, changes in light and other common techniques seem in western theatre. This kind of exchanges and replacements have no unfavourable effect on the play's progress but are used as skills by players as common techniques in Iranian plays.

Simplicity of scenes, using no complicated technique and audiences agreement with this kind of conventions on changing the scene has made *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* a play with potential capabilities to create suitable space and play.

ii. To Establish the Harmonic Language of Ta'ziyeh

*Ghadamshad* uses a harmonic language playing the role of *BiBi Shahrbanoo* (*Madam Shahrbanoo*) and *Wife of Vahab Nasrani*. Ta'ziyeh language creates the time

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<sup>157</sup> Heading from: Saghayan (2000:33).

dimension but is so expressive and clear that it communicates with the contemporary audience. By watching *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* we find that in addition to harmonic language, declaimed challenges (*rajaz- khani*, declaim)<sup>158</sup> has been used for the player of antagonist Shemr and Khooli roles. Exaggerated language of Shemr and Khooli characters with specific gesture and mannerism creates derisible.

The language of this current play returns the period of Constitution Revolution in Iran, however, it has been completely written for contemporary audience based on their requirements and need. Constitutionalists' slogans, folk poems and songs and traditional plays common in Qajar period are combined with two types of languages in Qajar period, the official and literary language of Qajar nobles beside the folk and vulgar language of common. Story of *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* is written on the basis of Ta'ziyeh poem, feminine Ta'ziyeh and feminine farcical plays. As Manuchehr Yari said, 'Ta'ziyeh is an open and creative system in script and performance. Therefore, there is an open system and innovations is possible in the framework of the play (Yari, 2000b). Ta'ziyeh is highly flexible and when writing contemporary playscript, its lingual techniques can be of much use.

### iii. Imagination of Place and Stage Decoration by Players Speech in Iranian Plays

Iranian traditional play scenes is poor and empty of any decoration and induces no certain history and geographic location. Indeed, place is everywhere and time is eternal. Place and time are used as a symbolic element in Iranian drama. For instance, in the current play, dialogues and to some extent players' cloth and surrounding environment's sound are used to indicate the historical space of the play and audiences find out the

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<sup>158</sup> Declaimed challenges (*rajaz-khani*) calls also 'Oshtolom-khani'.

time and place the players are performing. Verbal space is created by dialogue and empty space are acceptable theatrical conventions. In this play, actors use historical language and symbols with limited objects to rebuild the historical place and time. As an example, Alam-Taj with her complicated and literary language, Ghadamshad group with their common language from former decades and the players' cloth (including Ghadamshad group) characterizing women of Qajar period, help the audiences rebuild and imagine the space easily.

As another example, the common and folk language used by Ghadamshad group in a lyrical and ironic manner:

*Shemr Shemr [keep calling]*

*Why you do wrong?*

*Why you close the lovers' road*

*Why wrong, why close*

*Khooli, Khooli, thou the Khooli dad*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 54)

iv. Play characters have exaggerated personalities <sup>159</sup>

Exaggeration and overstatement is common in Iranian traditional plays in a manner that there is exaggeration and over emphasis in the face, appearance, expression

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<sup>159</sup> Heading from: Saghayan (2000: 33)

of inner states, thoughts and feelings of players. Such exaggeration in characters is manifested in all aspects and influences the visual aspects of the play. Movements and behavior of people, their facial makeup and all making the appearance of the role come with exaggeration.

In Ta'ziyeh, grouping people to good (*olya*) and evil (*ashghya*), hero and antihero and absolute forms are all part of such exaggeration. Evil doers are in the depth of ill-being and *olyas* (approving actor) are in the top of goodness. Characters of *BiBi Shahrbanoo* (*Madam Shahrbanoo*) and *Wife of Vahab Nasrani* are in the *olya* group. Changing their clothing (appearance) and showing the *olya* personality with innocence, sigh, mourning, pain, affliction and emphasizing on loneliness, they are extravagant in influencing the audience. Such exaggeration in clothing, emphasized on colors, movements, behaviors and appearance in evil doers is seen in Shemr and Khooli character.

v. Playing is un-reality and conventional<sup>160</sup>.

Methods and techniques of playing in *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* indicate the play to be 'un- reality':

- Performances and playing come with types of exaggeration, emphasizes on expression, movement and feeling.
- Décor and light imagines mental image through play, speech and music. For instance, the sound of shooting and players action indicate stressful environment in the play.

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<sup>160</sup> Heading from: Saghayan (2000: 70)



- Alienation of performance and playing are distinguished by acting, music and changes the scene.
  - playing have historical background among the players.
  - Music and vocal used in the process of performing is based on conventions between players and actors.
- vi. Using simple and empty scene with no décor does not indicate special time and place.

Such as Iranian traditional drama (especially Ta'ziyeh) there is no décor in this play. Stage props are symbols and players identify the place to the audience using symbolic objects and even certain dialogues.

- vii. Characters' cloth establish based on certain and especial conventions depending on their role <sup>161</sup>

Clothing has a significant role in Ta'ziyeh visual element. Iranian traditional plays including Ta'ziyeh, has a conventional cloth for each role with certain form. For instance, Shemr cloth is made of red cloak, armor, red helmet and other props cover with decorative elements, in this current play.

- viii. Music and vocal are integral parts to Iranian traditional plays <sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Heading from: Saghayan (2000:103).

<sup>162</sup> Heading from: Saghayan (2000:141).

In key and especial scenes prerecorded or live music being played accompanied with vocal, such as Ta'ziyeh. Presence of musical instrument players beside the actors is a theatrical convention in Ta'ziyeh which is also seen very simply in this play. Indeed, presence of singers and musical instrument players is absolutely necessary in Iranian traditional plays. Firstly for the nature of Ta'ziyeh and composition of the scene (which is not complete without musical instrument players) and secondly for covering performance.

As an example, part of the play is given here:

One of Ghadamshad group women, named Mahlagha wants to perform the tragic Ta'ziyeh of BiBi Roghayeh (Ms. Roghayeh), contrary to Ghadamshad idea. The martyrdom-playing starts with playing Ta'ziyeh monody horn and one of the girls sing:

*Me, Roghayeh, feeble daughter of Hussein*

*Oh, Lord I am alone and feeble*

*I have no adduction*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 83- 84)

Mahlagha song accompanied with the singing girl:

*Me, Roghayeh, feeble daughter of Hussein*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 83)

Musical instruments players settle in a suitable place near the stage. They clearly see the stage, player's movement and cues and can be easily seen by audiences. It is

natural, in addition to reemphasizing the dramatic aspect of performances, they create certain and specific space in the play and strengthen the general sense of the stage depending on the situations.

#### 4.4.7. Drama Structure (Style, Theme, Message)

A method to analysing the style, theme and message in the current play is to study its content and language. Language means linguistic patterns used by characters. Each character is identified based on expressive features of the play structure. In this play dialogues are written using simple and modern poem and prose. For deeper examination it is better to refer to the play story: Alam-Taj is a serious woman. She decides to perform Ta'ziyeh ceremony in her house in Muharram month, despite the fact that such performance is forbidden. She plans to perform a play which is dominated by men to protest against on all men team of theatre players. Having this in mind, she asks Ghadamshad the minstrel to perform the tragedy of Ta'ziyeh. Ghadamshad sings in parties and gathering. She has a life time experiences singing ironic poems with her group. For instance, when she sees one of her group member Mahlagha, crying, she attempts to stop her. Thus she says, "No, no cry in the group of Ghadamshad, the Minstrel" (Rahmanian, 2006: 83).

Ghadamshad has no knowledge that are the good (*olya*) and Evil (*ashghya*) and what characters they may have; group members have to do martyrdom-playing. She only knows comedy. However, when she sees herself in a certain condition and finds out she would be killed, she performs tragic Ta'ziyeh to consulate herself and others, and sympathetic with Karbala events. For instance:

To the audience,

*If your life is not good, then sing you goodness, if you are anguished about love, then I sing you love songs, but as we are to be killed, martyred, let me sing you martyrdom in this last hours (she turns to Ali-khan, slave of Alam-Taj and call him), Ali-khan.*

*Ali-khan throw her the knife. Ghadamshad draws a big, very big door in the space, takes a deep breath and starts her martyrdom-playing. In the middle of the play women join her one by one.*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 57)

In *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran*, the theme indicates a 'historical-political event' manifesting women power against the men. In the current play, the message says, 'Limitations would never prevent women to surpass the obstacles and common practice'. They can control them in the community. According to the content of the Play, its style is considered on un-realistic basis, that it has a 'symbolic'.

#### 4.4.8. Play Construction (General Plan of the Play)

Historical trend of *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* is related to the Constitution Revolution during which Iran passed the steps of modernity. Constitutional Movement was an incomplete movement formed in Tehran after Nasser al-din Shah Qajar (16 July 1831 – 1 May 1896), during Mozafar al-Din Qajar period (23 March 1853 – 3 January 1907). During the Constitution, the government prohibited

performance of any form of Ta'ziyeh and the current play is formed on the basis of such social condition.

The sound of shooting, chaos, nicker and people screaming in Tehran streets are similar to Karbala desert.

Alam-Taj:

*I knew from the beginning that men play [demonstration of outside] would leave our play incomplete. There is not much distance from the house of common to our house. It was like the day of Constitution Party and we were crying for Hussein in Takyeh Dowlat*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 83)

Since Ghadamshad does not agree with mourning and lamenting, when the women in her group cry, she tries not to let them performing dirge. Nevertheless, she changes her decision to paly martyrdom-playing.

*It seems to be our turn*

*Now that we are to be martyred, let me sing the martyrdom*

*Ghadamshad group sings until their sound is faded out by the sound of shooting and all are martyred.*

(Rahmanian, 2006: 83-84).

The play, including *Kasim wedding Ceremony*, *BiBi Shahrbanoo*, *her marriage with Imam Hussein* and *Wife of Vahab Nasrani*, is adapted from the events of Karbala, after Imam Hussein martyrdom.

*Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* is not a mere narration of history. It is combination of mourning of Ta'zیه and comic plays. Iranian traditional play in new and modern format and contemporary history are combined with Ta'zیه in this play. It is the narration of two parts of the history; story of Imam Husain, his Family and contemporary History.

It was staged twice in 20<sup>th</sup> International Fajr Festival in 2011, in Chaharsoo Hall, City Theatre.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

#### FOR FUTURE WORK

##### 5.1. Introduction

This Chapter begins with a summary of the research finding, followed by developing conclusion from the findings and recommendations for improving acceptance of eclectic theatre according to ritual plays and western theatre as well as recommendations for further research as a possible extension.

Dynamic art is one that changes and transforms all the time. That is the difference between an artist and a historian. A historian makes accounts of the events that have occurred but the artist writes about events that may happen. There is therefore a chance for change. Any change can occur. The artist by considering the religious foundations meaning ‘Every day is Ashura, Every place is Karbala’<sup>163</sup>, expressing historical backgrounds and creating a drama employs the dramatic elements of Ta’ziyeh. He reshuffles history and enters a new story that has been created according to his own aesthetic principles. For example, the *Ashaghe (Story of Love)* is a modern play that is contained in the life of the Prophet Mohammad and his wife Khadija. Change and transformation in theatre mean creating a special style for the audience to watch. In other words, it is an outlook of giving value to the social status of theatre.

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<sup>163</sup> ‘Every day is Ashura, Every place is Karbala’ is famous sentence which regards to Karbala event and the mourning Ta’ziyeh.

In order to correctly understand the meaning of eclecticism in Iranian theatre we must study and recognize Iranian plays that have been based on traditions and ancient customs. Hence, while recognizing the evolutionary process of rituals to becoming theatre in Iran, the style of combining ritual and traditional plays in the performed plays also need to be reviewed.

In the purpose of this study, in the first place it is aimed to focus on the eclectic plays in recent years (2000 on) and analyse the form and contents. In order to do that, selected works have been chosen for study to investigate the concepts of eclectic theatre in Iranian theatre. In fact, what has prompted the research on eclectic theatre has been based on the foundation of formal and contextual elements in the taxonomy of eclectic theatre. In order to achieve the aim of this study, the researcher designed a conceptual framework based on review of the literature (Chapter 2). Describing the category of Iranian theatre, modern theatre, eclectic theatre and postmodern (Chapter 3). Investigating three Ta'ziyeh influenced theatres based on eclectic theory (Chapter 4). A summary of finding, limitations of the study, conclusions, implications of study and recommendations were made (Chapter 5).

## 5.2. Summary of Finding

There are several stories as to when the observation of mourning ceremonies and Ta'ziyeh performances began in Iran. According to existing history, it is understood that by the order of Moez al-Doleh Deylami<sup>164</sup> in the fourth century the mourning

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<sup>164</sup> Moez al-Doleh Deylami also calls Moezz-al-Dawla. MO' EZZ-AL-DAWLA, ABU'L-HOSAYN, Aḥmad ibn Abi Šojā' (d. 356/967), 4th/10th century Buyid prince, the youngest of the three brothers who conquered western, southern, and central Persia (see BUYIDS). For more information refer to: Retrieved 21 May 2014 from,



ceremonies and the Karbala event were officially recognized. Gradually, these rituals and traditions took a dramatic turn and after centuries became Ta'ziyeh which portrays people's worldly wisdom. The theme of Ta'ziyeh is all about confrontation of good and evil, goodness and badness, light and dark and for that reason, as a fixed narrative model similar to religious arts.

Ta'ziyeh should not be regarded as an art found in museums but loyalty to the essence of Ta'ziyeh should be maintained. Ta'ziyeh is an art that may be repeated in every era and period and its message does not involve a particular period in time. Ta'ziyeh with all its grandeur is a dramatic ritual, not a kind of theatre in the modern sense. Ta'ziyeh is dramatization and not a realistic representation. Theatre is a free creativity not bound by ritualistic conventions. In other words, the dramatist's scope of thoughts is not limited by ritualistic requirements and even if he has to produce an adaptation of the rituals, he is not bound to confirm and endorse them. Rather, it is possible that he may delve into them and question the whole cultural heritage and traditions.

Modern theatre in Iran has been inspired by and used some of the attributes of Ta'ziyeh naming:

- Close relationship between the spectator and Ta'ziyeh:

The spectator is both present in *tekyeh* and in Karbala. He lives both in the present and in the past .

- Lack of a buffer between spectators and actors:

Most modern theatre halls in Iran remove this barrier such as the Chaharsoo Hall in Tehran and the Black Box auditorium in Iranshahr Theatre in Tehran . In other words, these kind of theatre halls do not influenced by proscenium or classic theatre style.

Ta'ziyeh like any other ritual contains qualities and conventions that introduce the ritual. For example, the oral and behavioral aesthetics, expression of human emotions and feelings and most important of all, it accommodates religious beliefs in such an orderly and logical fashion that today it is worthy of analysis as the essence of drama. Some of these attributes are as follows :

- *Olya* (approving actor, protagonist, the Prophet's family): It includes all the protagonists including the shahadat-khan (the narrator of Ta'ziyeh). Like the protagonists always utter the dialogues in a pleasant voice .
- *Ashghya* (disapproving actor, antagonists) such as Shemr, Yazid and generally all opponents or braggers who are present at the scene of Ta'ziyeh with a coarse and rugged voice .
- Colour symbolism: such as red for the actors of *ashghya* together with boots, armors, helmets, daggers, and shields and against it the colour green and white for the attire of the *olya*.
- Use of Ta'ziyeh music: Ta'ziyeh starts with blowing the horns and drumbeats. The declaimed challenge (*rajaz- khani*, declaim) of ashghya and flaunting of their horses begin with music. The battlefield and war scene are played with drums and cymbals. The steps and movements of the actors find rhythm with music. Scenes change beautifully to the tune of drums. In Ta'ziyeh gathering the chant of the elegists and the simultaneous tune of drums, horns and cymbals display mourning moments and battling scenes .

- Observing the principle of distance between the actor and the spectator: The actor who plays the role of Imam Hussein regards himself smaller than being able to be in his place. Also, the actor who plays Shemr does not see himself in the place of a villain. For that reason the actors use third person pronoun in the dialogues just like in the traditional Japanese “Noh” drama. The person acting as Hoichi says: “Hoichi gets up.” Then the actor of Hoichi gets up. Or he says: “Hoichi looks to his left” and then the actor looks to his left .

Ta’ziyeh is performed at a special time in Muharram and Safar every year. Although, Ta’ziyeh changed a little during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar and comic and joyful Ta’ziyehs mocking the enemies of the Imam became fashionable, historical Ta’ziyehs (such as *Exit of Mokhtar* or *khoroj-e Mokhtar*), love Ta’ziyehs (such as *Joseph and Zuleikha* or *Yousef and Zuleikha*) emerged but without growing that much. Ta’ziyeh did not fall apart from its essence in the sense that at the end of the comic Ta’ziyeh performances, mourning and lamentation ceremonies on the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and the suffering of his family were still performed.

Basically, the objective of performing Ta’ziyeh has been none but invigoration of people’s faith. What is important in performing Ta’ziyeh is the epic poems that reveal the story of Imam Hussein’s martyrdom and the life of the Prophet and his family. For that reason, the Ta’ziyeh writers refrained from signing their names at the end of the script because, they wished to have their reward reserved with God as they wrote and sang for the Divine blessing. On the same token, the spectators in Ta’ziyeh ceremonies help in any way they can so they will be blessed too. These esoteric signs indicate unity and association between the Ta’ziyeh performers and the spectators. From a religious standpoint, the spectators by participating in Ta’ziyeh reach a level of catharsis and

purification. For example, the Ta'ziyeh spectators believe that by watching Ta'ziyeh and lamenting, their sorrows will decline a little.

With all that said, in order to employ and use the conventions and attributes of Ta'ziyeh in Iran's modern day theatre, the structural form of Ta'ziyeh must be maintained just like what has happened in the play *A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*), otherwise the conventions and qualities of Ta'ziyeh potentially take a new form according to the aesthetic perception of the director and the creator of the play, form which is completely far from the original Ta'ziyeh.

In performing Ta'ziyeh, reaching salvation and absolving of sins is important for Muslims but in Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatres, Ta'ziyeh is the model for theatrical motivation to reach a new form of theatre. In this case, salvation and becoming free of sins have no basis. Nowadays, in performance of traditional Ta'ziyehs, there is a nostalgic feeling about traditional Ta'ziyeh, religion and a certain longing to return to the original Ta'ziyeh, which stems from the Iranian culture. This longing however, cannot remain unchanged like in the past and fail to become materialize. Ta'ziyeh in new theatrical forms is seen in plays such as *the Sun of the Caravan* (*Khorshid-e Karevan*), *the Drama of Amir Kabir* (*Majles Nameh Amir Kabir*), *Examination of Siavush* (*Azmoon-e Siavush*), *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-playing in Tehran* (*shahadat-khani-e Ghadamshad-e Motyreb dar Tehran*), *A lonely person's story* (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*), *Ashaghe* (*Story of Love*) and *Pol* (*the Bridge*). In fact, the traditional Iranian Ta'ziyeh has laid the conceptual foundation for the writers and directors of Ta'ziyeh-influenced Theatre.

### 5.3. Conclusion

The taxonomy of Iranian theatre is one of the fundamental discussions in theatrical research, activities and phenomena of every geographical and cultural domain. Since the 2000's saw an increase in tendency towards experiment and innovation, the desire to combine elements of various Iranian theatre taxonomy has also increased and a number of plays and theatrical performances of recent times have been carried out with regards to these variety of styles and combinations. Also, research on eclectic theatre that is a combination of Iranian plays with elements of western theatre is underway by students of theatre and artists in both methods of theoretical (script) and practical (performance). In the current thesis by considering the taxonomic theory of Iranian theatre that has been mentioned by Farhad Nazerzadeh-Kermani in the Fine Arts magazine (Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2003: 93-102) and also, more extensively in the book *An Introduction to Drama*, taxonomy number nine: "Eclectic Theatre" from Iranian plays has been identified and reviewed.

An Analysis of Eclectic Theatre in Iran based on Ta'ziyeh, desires to study, assess and introduce plays that have resulted from selecting and combining national theatre elements with western theatre. National elements in Iranian theatrical taxonomy are as follows: ritual performances (*animal dancing* or *mourning ceremonies*), processional performances such as *Ghali Shooyan* (rug-washing ceremonies in Ardehal of Kashan), Dramatic storytelling (i.e. *naqqali-Shahnameh* reciting), street and outdoor performances (i.e. *juggling*), puppet shows: (*Kheymeh Shab Baazi*), quasitheatrical play or Persian shows (*Siah bazi*, *Takht-e Hoz*), Passion play (i.e. Ta'ziyeh), western influenced theatre (i.e. Persian translation of Berthold Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and its performance based on techniques and methods of epic theatre) and eclectic theatre.

The plays studied in this thesis are those classified as eclectic theatre in six dramatic structure meaning the plot summery, theme, message, style, type and dramatic conventions have been reviewed based on the theatrical taxonomy number nine. These plays include *Ashaghe* (story of love), *A lonely person's story* (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee) based on tragedy and *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran* (*shahadat-khani-e Ghadamshad-e Motyreb dar Tehran*) based on comedy. All these works have been created on the basis of symbolism.

Results of the investigation in current thesis indicates that after theatre reached Iran from the west, the artists of ritualistic theatre in both Tragedy (such as Ta'ziyeh) and comic (such as *Siah Baazi* or traditional comic folk show) could not remain indifferent towards this new phenomena. The audience of Iranian theatre gradually developed a taste for watching new dramas by watching new theatrical experiments of the western world. Actors were needed to employ new theatrical methods while keeping their traditional theatre audience. As a result several groups of artists emerged.

The conservative and traditionalists continue their work in the prevalent performance styles in Iran. Others break away from traditional and ritualistic theatre performance and strive to learn the imported theatre and produced works as such. Eventually, some hold the middle ground employ some elements and techniques of the traditional ritualistic styles of Iranian theatre while also paying attention to western theatre. The third group is also the very same artists who stepped into the realm of eclectic theatre and continue to produce various works.

With regards to the studies undertaken in previous chapters, in the opinion of the researcher, what constitutes eclectic theatre in Iran consists of three groups:

- i. Some eclecticists that have not parted from traditional theatre performance and have observed many of the principles of traditional performance. Their activities is also included in traditional theatres and regarded as one. For example, the Ta'ziyeh of *the Sun of the Caravan (Khorshid-e Karevan)* by Mahmoud Farhang is capable of being performed in theatre halls and in *tekyehs* which is more of a real place of Ta'ziyeh.
- ii. Eclectic theatres that according to the researcher's opinion are Ta'ziyeh-influenced theatres. These types are the result of a little change from the traditional style which merges with western elements of theatre. They are only performed in theatre auditoriums by academic and professional actors like the play *A lonely person's story (Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee)*.
- iii. Another type of eclecticists that have relinquished the principles of traditional theatre and turned to avant-gardism and experimentalism. Such eclecticists that include many of the post-modernists are indeed a kind of non-conventional theatrical form. Examples include: *Ghadamshad the Minstrel's Martyrdom-Playing in Tehran (shahadat-khani-e Ghadamshad-e Motyreb dar Tehran)* and *Ashaghe (Story of Love)*.

With this classification it can probably be said that what is referred to as 'eclectic theatre' in Iran is experimented by the two groups of tradition and non-convention. Of course, the attention of most theatre directors and playwrights in Iran is focused on rituals. Ritual is the same conventional cliché structure that covers the works of the eclecticists. Although, those works contain rituals that form the performance style, they do bear their own individual plot. The works of such artists therefore, is called non-conventional and apart from conventions.

#### 5.4. Recommendation

In postmodern era, no art has stable rules. Suspension is an attribute of postmodern. The current research has been conducted on eclectic theatre in the age of postmodern which is one of the first steps in this regard and a preliminary and fundamental work. It is suggested that other scholars in the next research on the subject of eclectic theatre in Iran pay special attention to the issues below:

- Classification of various eclectic styles in Iranian theatre with regards to modern performance approaches in world theatre.
- Review of eclectic theatre performances in Iranian theatre from a textual (script) and structural aspect of playwriting based on eclecticism and
- Classification of eclectic theatre in dramatic arts especially in the Iranian theatre.

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