Shah Nama’s Rare Manuscripts of Raza Library – A study

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Shah Nama of Firdausi (940-1020 AD) is the most popular and influential national epic in Iran and other Persian speaking nations. Nizami said:-

शाह नामा की चौथी दाताई देवो बन आरस्ट भ्रात उदय

Raza Library, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, is a world fame library established in 1774 AD, by Nawab Faizullah Khan of Rampur, is having very rare collection of manuscripts like Quran, ascribed to Hazrat Ali (d.661AD), Nahjul Balagha (copy dated 1158 AD), Diw-i-Hafiz (copy dated 1605 AD), Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi (copy dated 1608 AD), Diwan-i-Khushhal Khan (copy dated 1696 AD), Shah Nama (copy dated 1436 AD) and other manuscripts dealing with other subjects.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad (632 AD) Khilafat-i-Rashida, came into existence (632-661 AD). During the period of the Caliphate of Umar (634-644 AD), Iran was conquered in 641 AD and Sasanian period came to an end. Khan Amir Muawiya laid the
foundation of Umaiyad dynasty by changing the nature of Islamic State, from democracy to *mulukiyat* (hereditary monarchy). Umaiyads were over powered by Abbasids in 750 AD. When Abbasid power of Baghdad became weak so during 10th century may minor dynasties rose in Persia. The Tahirids (820-72 AD). The Saffavids (863-903 AD), the Samanids (874-999 AD). the Buwaiysds (945-1055 AD). They gave to Persia, what it needed most? Turk-Persian Empire of the Ghaznavids (999-1040 AD), Seljuqs (1037-1157 AD) and the Khwarizms (1157-1231 AD). The role and contribution of these dynasties can be appreciated only if the general socio-economic condition of Persia, is kept in mind.

Thomas William Beale writes about Firdausi that, “Abul Qasim Hasan-bin Sharif Shah, a famous Persian poet, sometimes called the Homer of Persia, whose epic poem, called *Shah Nama*, written by order of Sultan Mehmud of Ghazi in 421 AH/1030 AD, is justly celebrated. It contains the legendary annals of the ancient kings of Persia, from the reign of the first king, Kaimurs, to the death of Yazdijard III, the last monarch of the Sasanian race, who was deprived of his kingdom in AD 641, the invasion of Arabs during the Khilafat of Umar (634-44 AD), the second Khalif after Muhammed”. Richard N. Frye holds opinion that, “Firdausi grew up in Tus, a city under the control of one of these dynasties, the Samanids, who claimed descent from Sassanid general Behram Chobin.
The Samanid bureaucracy used the New Persian language rather than Arabic and the Samanid elite had a great interest in pre-Islamic Iran and its traditions and commissioned translations of Pehlavi texts into New Persian. There are few Arabic loan words in the *Shah Nama*. Abu Masur Abdur Razzaq a *dehqan* and governor of Tus, had asked several local scholars to compile a prose *Shah Nama* which was completed in 957 AD. (Although it no longer survive). Firdausi used it as a source of epic.” Cyrus Ghani comments that, “Firdausi has a unique place in Persian history because of the studies he made in reviving and regenerating the Persian language and cultural traditions. Firdausi in fact was a motivation behind may future Persian figures. One such not able figure was Raza Shah Pahlavi 1925-41 who established an ‘Academy of Culture in Iran, in order to attempt to remove Arabic and Turkish words from Persian language, replacing them with suitable Persian alternatives”. The tomb of Firdausi which had fallen into decay, was rebuilt between 1928-34, on the orders of Raza Shah which has become a national site. In 1934 Raza Shah Pehlavi organized a ceremony under the title “Firdausi Millenary Celebration” in Mashhad, celebrating thousand years of Persian literature since the time of Firdausi. Scholars from different parts of the world were invited to express their views on the theme. From India, Prof. S. Hadi Hasan, belonging to AMU, Aligarh, was invited. I have heard that Prof.
Hadi Hasan had remarked that, “Earlier poets were remembering the monarchs and here a monarch is remembering a poet.” In 1949, Danishgah-i-Firdausi, (Firdausi University) was established in Mashhad.

It is a well established fact that Firdausi was a leading poet in the world of literature. One poet rightly placed the status of three leading poets of Iran.

In poetry there are three Prophets, though the Prophet hood is closed on Prophet Muhammed. These there are Firdausi, Anwari and Saadi.

(In the field of poetry there are three Prophets, through Prophetship is closed on Prophet Muhammed. In the branch of Qasida and Ghazal, they are Firdausi, Anwari and Saadi). Anwari the famous poet of Iran holds Firdausi in a high esteem and says that he was not a teacher and myself a student but really he was a God and myself his slave.
Ibnul Asir writes that though Arabic being such a rich language but failed to produce a work at per with Shah Nama. It is really a Quran of Ajam. Maulana Shibli Nomani writes that Firdausi wrote Shah Nama in the light of authentic sources of history of Iran. Shah Nama is itself an authentic history of ancient Iran. For Shah Nama’s impact on Iranian society and culture, Shibli holds opinion that, “The arches and the walls from Khurasan to Baghdad were reciting the Shah Nama. When people used to assemble in the evening, so a good reciter used to recite the verses of Shah Nama in a mellifluous and loud voice. People used to get lost and resulted in their sentimental attachment with their mother land. For generations Salatin (rulers) and Umara (nobles) were quoting the verses of Shah Nama in their correspondence with dignitaries and among themselves. The last monarch of the Seljuqi dynasty, Tughril Arsalan, when fallen from horse while fighting in the battle field was badly wounded and was near his end, was reciting the following verses of Shah Nama.

It reflects the deep impact of Shah Nama that Arsalan did not have the fear of death which was too near to him and was reciting the verses of Shah Nama.
Shibli writes that, “Mehmud Ghaznavi had assigned the project of writing Shah Nama but at the same time Mehmud directed his officials to accommodate Firdausi near Aiwan-i-Shahi. He should he provided a haveli (a house which is having all the facilities) which should be decorated with weapons and the portraits of Shahan-i-Ajam (Rulers of Iran), brave persons and wrestlers of Persia”. Dick Davis holds opinion that, “Firdausi belonged to the class of dehqans. These were the land owning Iranian aristocrats who had flourished under the Sassanid dynasty (224CE/651 CE) the last pre-Islamic dynastic rule of Iran, and whose power, though diminished, had survived into the Islamic era which followed the Arab conquests of the seventh century. The dehqans were intensely patriotic (so much so that dehqan is sometimes used as a synonym for “Iranian” in the Shah Nama) and saw it as their task to preserve the cultural traditions of Iran, including legendry tales about its kings. E.G. Browne writes that, “if there be any truth in these views to what does the Shah Nama owe its great and, indeed, unrivalled popularity, not only in Persia, but whenever the Persian language is cultivated? So far as Persia is concerned, national pride in such a movement to the national greatness – a greatness dating from a remote antiquity ……. The genius of Aryan at the expense of Semitic peoples; and the importance of the contents of the book from the point of view of Mythology and
Folk-lore. Yet, when all is said, the fact remains that amongst his own countrymen Firdausi has, on the strength of his *Shah Nama* alone enjoyed from the first till this present clay an unchanging and unrivalled popularity. Though Firdausi belonged to a feudal background and that background played an important role in writing the *Shah Nama* but at the same time Mehmud also providing royal environment so that he should have the same feeling also and in that environment he should compile the *Shah Nama*.

Raza Library is having ten copies of *Shah Nama*. The earliest copy is dated 840/1436 AD. Eight copies of *Shah Nama* are illustrated and beautifully decorated.

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Form No. 4  Call No/Sr No 3918

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 4757

S T No: 345

Old No. 292

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings) ------(Illustrated)

Title of Work in Urdu: شاہنامہ (مصوّر)
Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: An illustrated manuscript of Shāh Nāmah with ten miniature paintings, out of which two are larger on full page in the beginning, in preface, while other eight are smaller in size. The preface is upto folio 7a. The text of Shāh Nāmah starts from folio 8b written in four columns. Headings are written by red ink.

Beg: ﷲ بِس مُبِينَانَ وَ تَفَقَّدَنَى وَ أَنْجَعَانَ وَ أَنْجَعَانَ أَفْرَيْدَ

End: چو خوابشکری و نیازم نمود= برين بر بستم زبان بر کشود

Lines: 21

Size: 29.5x19

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: 1254AH/1838AD

Copier Name: Saiyid Amir Shah Rampuri

Place: Rampur

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 730
Condition: Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 8  Call No/Sr No 3917

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 490

S T No: 340

Old No. Nil

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)------ (Illustrated) compiled in 389AH.

Title of Work in Urdu: (شانبناہ (مصوّر)

Language: Persian
Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: A beautifully decorated copy of hand written Shāh Nāmah (manuscript) with 66 miniatures out of which two are bigger on folios 4b & 5a while others are smaller in size. Preface of the book is upto folio 7a then folios 7b and 8a are blank. The text of Shāh Nāmah is written in four columns separated with gold vertical lines within gold and coloured jidwal and black barika with gold and coloured lauh. Headings are written by red ink.

Beg: بسم الله-------- سبیل و آفرین و خدا را که اینجا را و آن جهان آفرد

End: لا ال الا الله-------- چو خوابشکری ونیازم نمود= بیرین به بستم زبان بر کشود

محمد رسول الله

Lines: 26

Size: 36.2x29.5

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: 1240AH/1824AD

Copier Name: Nūr Ahmad son of Mian Muhammad Saeed

Place: Lahore

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned
Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 593

Condition: Good, slightly worm eaten.

Seal if any: State library Rampur 1268AH.

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: Yes

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 10

Call No/Sr No 3919

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 12724

S T No: 2361

Old No. Nil

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings) vol. 1

Title of Work in Urdu: شاہ نامہ (جلد اول)

Language: Persian
Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: Rare manuscript of Shāh Nāmah. In the beginning some folios are missing last four folios of the preface are there. Text is written in two columns on a page, some where written on margins also. Headings are with red ink. Condition of the manuscript is not good and most of the folios sides are decayed.

Beg: مولانا ابوالقاسم طوسي كه سلطان محمود لقب او فردوسی کردن

End: نه زین شاد باشند نه زان مستمده= چنین است کردار جرخ بلند

Lines: Different

Size: 24.5x13

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: Not mentioned

Copier Name: Not mentioned

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 368

Condition: Very bad, worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting,
previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 10  Call No/Sr No 3916

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 494

S T No: 573

Old No. 289

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)----- (Illustrated) compiled in 384AH/994AD.

Title of Work in Urdu: شاہنامہ (اصور

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d.
416AH/1025AD.)

**About Book:** A beautifully decorated illustrated copy of handwritten Shāh Nāmah (manuscript) with 72 miniature paintings, out of which 3 in the beginning are big in size while others are smaller. The text is written in four columns on each page, separated with vertical reddish and blue designed lines. The writing is within gold and coloured jidwal with black barika and with excellently decorated floral lauhs. Headings are with gold on black background some portion is written in squares. First part of the manuscript ends on folio 169b and is copied in 1245AH/1829AD. Second part starts from folio 170b with a lauh which ends on 327, Third part starts with a lauh from folio 328b and ends on 475a, after two blank folios fourth part starts with lauh from 476 and ends on folio 557. This part was written in 1246AH/1830AD, with in jidwal and barika.

**Beg:** بنام خدا وند جان و خرد= کزیں بر تر اندیشہ برنگیرد

**End:** زیجرت س سد سال بفتاد دو چار= بنام جبال داور کرد گار

**Lines:** 25

**Size:** 29.5x18

**Script:** Nast'aliq

**Age:** Not mentioned
Copier Name: 1245/1246AH/1829/1830AD

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 557

Condition: Very good.

Seal if any: State library Rampur 1268AH.

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 6 Call No/Sr No 3915

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 7341

S T No: 621

Old No. 995
Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)---- (Illustrated) compiled in 384AH/994AD.

Title of Work in Urdu: ﷴﷵﺎ (Incomplete)

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: A beautiful decorated and rare manuscript of Shāh Nāmah (part ivth) with 32 miniature paintings, is written in four columns on each page and four excellently decorated lauhs on folios 1b, 144b, 259b and 411b. After folio 1,3 folios are blank and after folio 410 two folios are blank. On folio 411b after lauh nothing is written folios 258b and 259a are also blank.

Beg: ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ب ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴд 

End: ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد ﷴد 

Lines: 23

Size: 31x19

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: Not mentioned
Copier Name: 1245/1246AH/1829/1830AD

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 500

Condition: Very bad, worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: A note shows that the manuscript became the asset Raza library on 21 October 1935AD.

Decorative Ornaments: Yes

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 5  Call No/Sr No 3914

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 4756
S T No: 2360

Old No. 294

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)----- (Illustrated) compiled in 384AH/994AD.

Title of Work in Urdu: ﷻہنامہ (مصورہ)

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: Rare manuscript of Shāh Nāmah which consists of its 3rd and 4th parts. The third part contains the description about the war between the king of Iran and china the Chāsps shah and Gashtāsp Shah which is upto folio 193a. Then two folios are blank and in between there is a miniature paintings. From folios 197 to 256 the description about famous king Nausherwan-i-'Aadil is written.

Beg: بسم الله------ ناز گشتن فردوسی از سخن دقیقی به سخن خویش کنون این

End: مبیمن و آسمان روز بود کم کلکم بدن- دینارم نمود برين

Lines: 12

Size: 31x17.5
Script: Nast'aliq

Age: 1108AH/1696AD.

Copier Name: Not mentioned

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 256

Condition: Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guardning.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No

Form No. 4 Call No/Sr No 3913

Subject: Poetry Rare
Account No.: 492
S T No: 620
Old No. Nil

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)----- (Illustrated) compiled in 384AH/994AD.

Title of Work in Urdu: شاہ نامہ (مصوّر)

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: Other beautifully decorated manuscript of Shāh Nāmah illustrated with fine 34 miniature paintings in between the folios. Preface is upto folio 5a within gold and coloured jidwal and border with gold and coloured lauh. The text of Shāh Nāmah also begins with excellent gold coloured lauh, jidwal and border. On two beginning folios heading is with white colour on golden background. The text is written in coloumner form separated with floral decorated verticle lines, headings with red and gold out line. At many places couplets are written in squares. The folios are charred at various places.

Beg: سیاس و آقبرئین خدائی را کہ چہل و آن چہل را افزوئہ بندگان را اندر چہل بدن

End: پزاران تجیب و مدح و ثنا= زمانہ بتن باد بر مصطفی
Lines: 25

Size: 35.5x20.5

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: Not mentioned

Copier Name: Not mentioned

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Not mentioned

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 638

Condition: Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No
Form No. 3    Call No/Sr No 3912

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 6682

S T No: 2429

Old No. Nil

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings)

Title of Work in Urdu: شاشنامہ

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: Another rare decorated manuscript of Shāh Nāmah written in four columns on each page within gold and black jidwal with gold and coloured lauh. Headings are with red ink. On last two folios the couplets are written diagonally in squars drawn. Manuscript is laminated by National Archives of India on 14/11/1960. Paper has decayed on the sides.

Beg: بناً نام خدا وند جان و خرد= کزین برتار انديش برونگذر

End: بزازان درود و بزازان سلام= زمزا بر موحد علي السلام

Lines: 23
Size: 36.5x20.5

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: 1032AH/1622AD

Copier Name: Not mentioned

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: For Sultān Muhammad Qutub Shah, ruler of Golkunda (1020-35AH/1611-25AD).

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 588

Condition: Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: No

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: No

Decorative Ornaments: No

Source of Receiving: No

Date of Receiving: No
Form No. 2    Call No/Sr No 3911

Subject: Poetry Rare

Account No.: 491

S T No: 580

Old No. 286

Title of Work: Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings) -----Illustrated

Title of Work in Urdu: ـش البلـ( مصوّر)

Language: Persian

Name of Author: Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

About Book: Another rare decorated manuscript of Shāh Nāmah illustrated with fine 32 paintings out of which seven are larger in size in the beginning on both sides of folios 1a to 4a. While 25 paintings which are smaller in size on other folios. Preface starts from folio 4b written in gold, within gold and coloured jidwal and floral border with beautiful lauh. The text is written in four columns on each folios and some where on margins also with in gold and coloured jidwal. Headings are written by red ink. Manuscript is laminated by National Archives of India on 14/11/1960 as its clear from the by seal. Some folios are charred and some are decayed on the sides.
Beg: افتتاح سخن آن بـ كـ کند امال کمال---- بـ ثنای ملك العرش خدائی متعال

End: بزاران درود و بزاران صلات= زما باد بر خواجه کاننات

Lines: 24

Size: 43x25

Script: Nast'aliq

Age: 1011AH/1602AD

Copier Name: Ghiyāsuddin bin Abdul Qādir bin Abi Ishāq

Place: Not mentioned

From whom the MS is written: Ashraf Ali

Quality of Paper: Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

No. of Folios: 431

Condition: Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous restoration work with new guarding.

Seal if any: Reads as Badarud Daulah Shujaul Mulk Muhammed S'aādat Mand Khan Bahādur Asad Jang 1239AH.

Marginal Notes: No

Memory Memorandum Notes if any: The manuscript was also the part of the library of Farrukhabad.
**Decorative Ornaments:** Beautifully decorated

**Source of Receiving:** No

**Date of Receiving:** No

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**Form No. 1**

**Call No/Sr No:** 3909

**Subject:** Poetry Rare

**Account No.:** 493

**S T No:** 533

**Old No.** 290

**Title of Work:** Shāh Nāmah (The book of kings) ------Illustrated

**Title of Work in Urdu:** شاہنامہ (مصوّر)

**Language:** Persian

**Name of Author:** Hakīm Abul Qāsim Firdausī Tūsī (d. 416AH/1025AD.)

**About Book:** A rare beautifully decorated manuscript of celebrated Epic poem "Shāh Nāmah" by Firdausi illustrated with fine fifty two minatures, written in four columns on each page within gold and coloured jidwal with excellent lauhs at the start of every chapter. Two folios in the beginning have broad decorated borders. Shāh Nāmah consists
of 60,000 couplets narrating special events from the history of battles fought by fifteen ancient rulers of Persia (Iran) from Keomars to Yazdgerd and the deeds of brave heroes of their time. This masterpiece epic completed in 35 years in 384AH/994AD and is regarded as unique & earlier specimen of modern Persian which filled pride and national spirit in Iranian people.

**Beg:** بنام خدا وند جان و خرد= کریز بر تر اندیش، برنگرد

**End:** ------------پرزران درود و بزراران ثنا = زما و آفرین باد

**Lines:** 25

**Size:** 43x25

**Script:** Nast'aliq

**Age:** 840AH/1436AD

**Copier Name:** Mahmūd bin Muhammad bin Yūsuf A'l Tustarī popularly known as Muhammad Kāghazī

**Place:** Not mentioned

**From whom the MS is written:** Not Mentioned

**Quality of Paper:** Hand made paper. Colour changed to yellow

**No. of Folios:** 539

**Condition:** Worm eaten, water stained, paper pasting, previous
restoration work with new guarding.

**Seal if any:** Erased and not readable.

**Marginal Notes:** No

**Memory Memorandum Notes if any:** On title page it is recorded that Baqar Ali khan Bareillvi had seen it, in 1870AD. **Decorative Ornaments:** Beautifully decorated

**Source of Receiving:** Bought in 1193AH/1779AD against Rs.1.....