

## A Study of Lullabies in Bushehr Province

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### Abstract

*Folkloric or oral literature is a collection of songs, ballads, legends, proverbs, riddles, mourning poems and lullabies that are orally transferred from person to person and from generation to generation and at the same time they can be studied as independent literary items in a language. Unlike formal literature, this kind of literature doesn't have any specific poet and it is orally transferred from person to person. It has a simple language but not complicated and artificial and it is originated from the nature. Sometimes it has a regional or trans-regional origin which plays a prominent role in creating formal and written literature.*

*In folklore, lullaby is regarded as a womanly and functional poem which backs to years ago. Lexically, lullaby derived from "Lala" which means servant and slave in Persian dictionary, however, it means "asleep" and "sleeping" as well among Persian speakers. This type of poetry with a sad and relaxing rhythm is sung by mothers in order to make their children asleep. They are simple and sweet lyrics which placed a rainbow of diverse stories or themes, in particular, wishes, complaints and innocent prayers in their hearts.*

*This study investigated the lullabies of Bushehr Province regarding their forms, themes and content, along with their evidence and samples.*

**Keywords: folkloric literature, lullaby, mother, children, Bushehr.**

## **Introduction**

Folklore is an English term in which "folk" means people and "lore" means culture and knowledge, and in Persian language it was translated into folklore which means people culture, people knowledge, and in Persian "Toude-Shensi". The meaning of the term " Toude-Shensi " would be a more accurate and comprehensive term for folklore.

Folklore term was used by English Ambrose Merten for the first time in 1848 as the title of an article which discussed folkloric knowledge and traditional customs." (Rouholamini, 2006: 165)

Folklore is a branch of Anthropology which talks about science, customs, games, entertainments, stories, legends, proverbs, riddles, songs, ballad of joy and mourning of a race that is transferred orally from generation to generation." (Aryan Pour, 2004: 445)

Folklore is a door to know human and his past. It is a mirror absolutely perfect and brilliant which reflects morality and spirituality, traditions, love and romance, actions and livings of people. The human's aspirations, insights and attitudes that show their living conditions have been categorized in this branch of human knowledge and it can be effective to understand and identify artistic creatures and lifestyle of people in a society.

In Iran, folklore approach started with kind of modernization and innovation. In 1933 for the first time, Sadegh Hedayat in his book "Nirangistan" tried to collect folklore scientifically. Ali Akbar Dehkhoda wrote "Persian proverbs" and Muhammad Ali Jamal Zadeh wrote "Folkloric dictionary" in which they focused on the importance of folklore language in conveying thoughts and ideas, while both benefited from the language of the people in their writings and showed elegance and beauty of this writing style.

Other studies on folklore in Iran are; Ahmadsob Shamlou, Sobhi Mohtadi, Sadegh Homayouni, Anjavi Shirazi and others.

In Bushehr province, there are some works such as: Sangestan, Tangsir literature, Bushehr dictionary, Bushehr folk literature, mourning people and etc. which are the most important works that investigate a part of culture and literature of Bushehr province. This study aimed to evaluate and analyze one aspect of folkloric literature of this land; that is lullabies.

### **What is lullaby?**

Lullaby is a term derived from "Lala", which means "servant, slave, maid; menial and eunuchs, male coach of the child, in front of nurse and nurses". (Dehkhoda, dictionary, lullaby entry). The term "Lala" means "asleep" and lullaby means "sleeping" which have been used by Persian speakers, especially when parents advise their children to sleep.

Lyrically, lullaby is a simple and sweet poem full of emotions and feelings that a mother sings it for her child to make him asleep. Thus, mother is the first person who makes her child familiar

with poetry and rhythmic speech through this ear-pleasing and relaxing sound. Lullaby as a womanly poem which makes an opportunity for the mother to make her child asleep and in her solitude she talks about her sorrows, joys, aspirations, troubles, limitations, and other bitter and sweet facts of her life. Religious beliefs, social exclusion and narrow-mindedness, wishes and aspirations, enthusiasms and passions, difficulties, problems and etc. which are related to women's lives are reflected in lullabies.

In Bushehr province, lullabies have always been used by mothers. These simple and natural songs can be considered from different linguistic, thinking, belief, social, and psychological aspects. Here, first some common features of Bushehr lullabies have been taken into account.

### **Lullabies Features**

1. The lullabies' chanters are unknown. Lullabies came from the hearts of unknown and humble poets who were not bound to the rules and requirements of the formal literature. Their poems are the mirror of the soul and mind and they translated their clean and intimate emotions, and of course, it should be noted that "people's art has a public nature and it was born not as the thought of a single body." (Panahi Semnani, 2006: 20)

2. Language and speech of simple lullabies are not artificial and dummy. If classical literature satisfies the desires and tastes of the ruling class (Syk, 2006: 6) and it benefits from the fine and distinct language of ordinary people, folklore and lullabies as a manifestation of this literature focused on the needs and concerns of the disadvantaged classes and it uses the poor people language.

3. The origin of lullabies cannot be attributed and limited to a certain geographical region in Bushehr province and some of these lullabies are shared with other common lullabies in Iran.

4. Because of the dominance of patriarchal spirit among the people, many of the lullabies were written about the boys and less ones for girls.

5. Regarding the number of lines and forms, some lullabies have two verses, and some of them have Masnavi form in case of rhyme form, and sometimes they have up to six lines.

6. Due to constant communication and contact of the lullabies' chanters with the nature, many of the lullabies have been inspired by nature.

7. Mothers sing lullabies with a desolate and sad tune and so it is mostly similar to "Reading Sherveh". Harsh nature of the south, individual and social constraints, difficulties and bitterness of life, psychological troubles and emotional deficiencies have been influential in choosing this type of sad songs.

8. In addition to the element of rhyme and other figurative speeches, the musical lullabies have been influenced by the mother's compelling voice. When children hear the mothers' lullabies, they enjoy from their voices and sounds not the meaning and concepts of lullabies. Children

basically don't understand the meaning of the lullabies, but the voice and tune of lullabies affect them "(Panahi Semnani, 1997: 177)

### **Rhyme of lullabies**

All lullabies have prosodic rhymes. Those lullabies in two-verses form have "Mafaylin, Mafaylin, Feolin"rhyme.

On top of a high mountain and chest of the hill,  
Ali's pathway with Doldol horseshoes  
Sweat dripped on its clear chest  
Flowers grow on the earth

Lullabies that have Masnavi rhyme have double-Mafaelyn rhyme in each line.

Lala Lala pistachio flower  
I'm tired of your cries  
Lala Lala Nazi flower  
Your father went to the Military service

Due to "having a pleasant and relaxing rhyme", it is used in most of lullabies (Vahidiyan Kamyar, 1968: 28).

Rhyme also in lullabies has free rules that sometimes necessarily comply with the rules of the rhyme in formal poetry. The composers of these poetries didn't pay attention to similarity of the letters or identical final rhyming words and harmony of the songs and sound at the end of the rhyming words.

The following points should be noted about lullabies' rhymes:

A) Each line has separate rhyme in some two-verse poems.

Mohammed doesn't have any hatred,  
Everybody respects him and puts his hand on his chest for him,  
Bilal came to the mosque and prayed for the religion,  
Mohammad leant on the heavens up,  
Dey<sup>i</sup> Lalla, Dey Lalla

B) Sometimes the rhyme of the fourth line is different with the rhyme of first and second lines.

Oh God night is dark, show the moon,

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<sup>i</sup> Mama.

I am lost in the desert, show me the way,  
For the sake of Ahmad, Mahmoud and Mokhtar,  
Make my sad heart happy,

C) In some cases, only the second and fourth lines have the same rhyme: for example Ghetto<sup>i</sup> and Char parreh<sup>ii</sup>.

God and child are sweethearts,  
If the promises and commitment are fulfilled by a woman  
if a mother is not the mother of brave lions,  
It is not worth to have many of it.  
Dey Lalla, Dey Lalla

D) Some rhymes of lullabies only have harmony in sound and tunes  
Lala, Lala you want to sleep, You want to drink cow milk,  
Lala, Lala be my flower,  
Stay and be in my arms,  
For the sake of Quran, God let him live,  
Let him to go to pilgrim travel.

E) Rhyme of some lullabies is different in their last letters which is called "Akfa". Akfa is not used in formal poetry, but on the contrary it is very common in ordinary folklore poetry, even in the letters that are not so close to each other (Vahidiyan Kamyar, 1968: 152)

Lala, Lala, Amaryllis flower,  
Never be disturbed,  
Lala, Lala, go to the school,  
Go to take a pilgrim in Hazrat shrine,  
Lala, Lala, lilium flower,  
Let me kiss your lips.

### **A review of lullabies content**

Regarding the content of lullabies, they are diverse and reflect the religious and moral teachings and beliefs, social realities and the demands and aspirations of their mothers. In lullabies the thoughts, sorrows and joys, obsessions, successes and failures, criticism, and other women's

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<sup>i</sup> Stanza.

<sup>ii</sup> Castanets

desire can be seen and "real situation of the family and worldview and perception of women of life "(Sypk, 2005: 123) can be considered.

Lullabies contents in Bushehr Province have been similar to lullabies of other areas in Iran due to the same social and religious conditions, so the most important commonalities are mentioned in the following section.

### **1. Religion and Ethics**

A wide range of lullabies include religious and moral issues. Religious education and moral and cognitive beliefs are among the fundamental tasks of the families from the distant past. These tasks have been thought as lullabies to the children. Moral and religious subjects in the lullabies are presented in the following forms.

#### **A) Learning Koran**

Wish to learn the Koran in Maktabkhaneh has been a dream of all Muslim mothers to their children.

I make you asleep, but you don't sleep,  
I grow up you, you can't remember,  
I make you asleep, and I hope you keep alive,  
I hope you go to Maktabkhane and learn to read Koran.

#### **B) Respecting the family or Ahl al-bayt of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)**

Love and devotion of Iranian people and all Muslims to Ahl al-Bayt (AS) has caused that mothers wish to grow seedlings of love to Ahl al-Bayt in their children's hearts. High frequency of Imam Ali (AS)'s name in Bushehr Province lullabies shows the great love of peoples of this place and of course all Iran, to this historical and religious character.

I saw Ali, I saw Ali in my dreams,  
I saw Ali in mosque and altar  
I saw Ali riding his horse,  
I run next to him like Ghanbar,

#### **C) Taking pilgrimage to the holy places**

Shrines of holy people including Prophet Muhammad shrine (PBUH), Karbala, Imam Reza shrine (AS) and other Imams tombs have been the mothers' aspirations for themselves and their children.

I cried on top of a high mountain,  
I remembered Imam Ali,

Imam Ali heal my pains,  
Give me pilgrimage to Karbala,

D) Remembering Karbala

Another topic in the lullabies of Bushehr province is to remember Karbala and refer to this sad event.

First, Hussein set foot on Zoljanah,  
Second, he made a tent in Karbala,  
Third, he asked about the prisoners,  
Fourth, he run toward the typhoon of troubles,  
Dey lala, Dey lala

E) Relying on God

Muslim mothers always know God as their only resort in their lives and disasters as well as troubles;

If God be with me, I'm not worried,  
If I have thousands of enemies, I'm not worried,  
If sword comes to my head,  
But God be with me, I'm not worried,  
Dey la-la, Dey la-la

2. Wish for health and wellness

Growing and bringing the children up in health and wellbeing and being away from any calamity and suffering and disease.

I read lullaby to you and I hope you like it,  
I hope calamity be far from your nice body,  
I hope God keep you day and night,  
I read lullaby to you and hope calamity be far from you,  
Dey Lalla, Dey Lalla

3. Complaining about unrest of children

Sometimes a mother complain about her child's unrest and that she lost her prayer and fasting due to her child.

Lala, Lala, pistachio flower  
I'm tired of your crying,  
Lala, Lala, oregano flowers,

Go to sleep my honey, don't cry

4. Wish for their child's marriage

Lala, Lala, I read lullaby to you,  
I like you marry,  
I like to see your children,  
I like to see your children growing up,

5. Complaining about the absence of men at home

In past, men worked at farm and groves or they went away for business trips and sometimes they were involved with the family feuds and clan which caused men stayed less at home and this is the reason to complain about a man under the guise of lullabies.

Lala, Lala, carpet flower,  
Your father is gone and he is not here,  
Lala, Lala, Walnut flower,  
Your father has gone in front of the camp

Lala, Lala, Poppy flower,  
Your father has gone, God take care of him,  
I hope God support him,  
Imam Ali supports him as well,

6. Occupation

Some lullabies contents show exactly the type of occupation.

Lala, Lala, tulip flower,  
One year old apple tree  
your father has gone for irrigation,  
I hope his shovel changes to gold  
your father has gone for harvesting cardamom,  
I hope he brings sugar and cinnamon too.

7. Admiring the child's beauty

describing the beauty of the children has been a common theme in the lullabies.

Lala, Lala, you are like a moon,  
you are like ruby and gold,  
Lala, Lala, my turquoise flower,



Lala, Lala, you have a small mouth and turquoise tongue,  
Lala, Lala, my dear cashmere cloth,  
you lost the key of my mind and thinking.

#### 8. Mother's grief

Lullabies have been used to express the pain and suffering of mothers.

Lala, Lala, my God  
listen to my voice truly,  
Hear me and answer me,  
save me from all the sufferings,

Lala, Lala, tulip flower,  
you went to your aunt' house,  
Go to sleep that I'm sad,  
I have many sufferings,

Sometimes mother's grief is due to the second wife of her husband, so she talks with her baby and she has no choice but to accept the pain;

Lala, Lala, cumin flower,  
Your dad has gone to remarry,  
I do not calm down,  
Your mother will die by this grief,

#### 9. Naturalism

The presence of elements of nature in lullabies shows their chanters' ecosystem. Environmental and climatic conditions of south of Iran made the elements of the nature clear in this place in lullabies.

Lala, Lala, you want to sleep,  
you like to drink cow milk,  
Lala, Lala, Nigella,  
your father is in the desert,  
Lala, Lala, cornflower,  
you cry I laugh,

#### 10. Fatalism

In some lullabies, the shadow of unequal fortune and fate play with people's lives can be seen.

I was a young pigeon when my mother died,  
They gave me to a nursemaid she died too,  
they made me used to cow milk,  
But I had such a bad fate that the calf died too.

The idea of fatalism on language and mind of many famous poets of Persian poetry has caused that classical and folkloric literature get close to each other in respect of content. Therefore, it is effective to reflect and study on this issue and all scholars step toward literature and folkloric culture.

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