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## **A Review of Recreational and Joyful Traditional Celebrations during the Safavid Era**

**Abdollah Motevali<sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Hassan Beigi<sup>2</sup>, Farhad Saboorifar<sup>3</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Traditional celebrations and recreational activities are considered part of the Iranian historical identity. Ancient and medieval Persian sources have documented various types of these celebrations, suggesting the social commitment to such rituals. Apart from social identity, these tendencies could also bring dynamism and refreshment into the society. With the passage of time, despite many adversities imposed on social foundations, some of these ceremonies were redefined and retrieved as the national heritage. Of course, other forms of joyful ceremonies that were matched with new religious thought were added to the national heritage, as well. On the other hand, Iranian governments and rulers of the time also supported and promoted some of these rituals in accordance with their personal morale as well as political and religious attitudes, thereby contributing to their survival and continuity. In the Safavid era, the Iranian society was not different as a relative political stability and security allowed the continuity of these traditions. The present study intends to introduce the patterns and types of these celebrations. Thus, the main question of this research is: what were the forms of joyful ceremonies during the Safavid? Research data show that despite the fact that the Safavid period, at one time and other, was engaged in some civil or external wars, the social texture had a deep link with promising and recreational approaches and hence; there were various types of celebrations and ceremonies based on social traditions.

**Keywords:** The Safavid; Celebration; National Heritage; Religion; Society.

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## 1. Introduction

The Safavid rule over Iran is important in many respects. After several centuries of political instability following the fall of the Sassanid, a dynasty had come to power who managed to maintain stability for a longer time by inculcating own power and the Shi'a as official religion. Although its political and religious stability was, sometimes, broken by internal problems or invasions of Uzbeks from the East and the Ottomans from the West, the strength Safavid had established through their political foundations could resist such conditions and save the geographical boundaries from collapse. One of the main results of this political stability and continuity was to maintain relative security, a phenomenon which led to an increase in trade and economic growth, and also at the same time, helped promote livelihood and social solidarity in other areas deemed important by the Safavid. Urban and welfare arenas also enjoyed this trend. The growth of arts and architecture during this period reflects the relatively favorable social conditions. One of the areas that showed the socially balanced atmosphere was the abundance of national and religious celebrations in various forms. The support and interest of most of the Safavid kings in organizing celebrations and the acceptance by all classes of the society made it possible for these to be held in innovative ways. The celebrations and recreational activities are optimal to release the positive and negative emotions accumulated in the community through joy, feasts, and dance.

Celebrations, pleasures and collective cheers having mythical and symbolic concepts that express the wishes, hopes and fears can be the language of the unsaid sayings of the people and their silent real demands and ideals. Therefore, the

implementation of these traditions and their presence will give people a certain kind of power, the soft power that in the near future will overcome the social-political systems and bring them together. Such an asset becomes unconsciously a shared affinity for preserving interests, protecting societies and renewing customs. The wise rulers and managers at any given era will be guided acknowledging the interests of the people and their attitudes toward the movement of society, ruling by revising the policies or completing and strengthening them with better and more promising quality. Iran, during the Safavid, was not far from this situation: a society with a religious framework, and sometimes a fanatic approach to religious rites. These religious approaches which included the entire executive mechanism of the society, also monitored the implementation of religious affairs in the form of various institutions and organizations, and in some cases, such as during Tahmasb's era, the proper implementation of the affairs of the Shari'a, they were stricter. Despite these restrictions, which were more in line with religious norms, it seems that the attention of the highest ranking people and groups was not limited just to the form of celebrations and religious entertainments, but without creating a contradiction between some types of religious and national festivities, they created a convergence between religious and national celebrations to actually demonstrate that many of them rooted in historical traditions were not in conflict with religious themes. Based on this approach, a combination of celebratory and jubilee types can be found in the society of the Safavid era, which enjoyed religious and historical traditions, and the officials and authorities

were not opposed to their conduct, rather facilitated their implementation. Historical sources of the Safavid era, especially the travelogues, have reported numerous accounts concerning how these rituals were held. The present study tries to introduce the patterns and types of those celebrations. Thus, the main question is what the forms of joyful ceremonies of the Safavid period were?

### **Literature Review**

Regarding the celebrations and ceremonies of the Safavid era, there are some studies available, but most of them are without a complete and analytic view, introducing some aspects based on a descriptive model. Among them are Eshraghi (1975), introducing some entertainments of the Safavid era as well as Darabi (2017) exploring Nowruz and some properties of the celebration with a descriptive analysis.

### **2. Hunting and its Amusing Aspects**

Historical studies indicate that animal hunting was practiced from the time immemorial, and cavemen were hunters who used the prey for having their food and cloths (Ashrafi, 2005; vol. 1: 504). The Elamite in Iran was accustomed to hunting as well. The youth who learnt military skills in early ages often went for hunting; even in royal families, women accompanied men for hunting excursion. The importance of hunting and its prominence for Iranians indicate a collective discipline and unison of collective power production (Vakili, 2008: 76, 78). Hunting, besides riding and archery, were among rulers' glories in ancient Iran, and in the Sassanid era it was believed that surviving heavenly power inside the king was clear from his victory in hunting (Pope, 2002: 67). Hunting in the Safavid era was

always important and highlighted both as a kings' favorite and usual recreation and as a source of many people's food and occupation, and it was accompanied by a huge and interesting ceremony; usually cavalry and with a falcon and therefore it was an aristocratic recreation and not a public one (Careri, 1970: 144; Tavernier, 1958: 374). On the other hand, hunting was a sign of getting rid of disasters for the kings, and bird hunting meant conquer of quick rebellious (Ghazvini, 1951: 13). "Ismail Nameh" includes many poems about hunting and the first Shah Ismail's skill in predation (Gonabadi, 2009: 125-126).

The skill and interest of the kings expanded to the extent that they used wild beasts to fall prey to animals. Shah Abbas II was a person who courageously tamed lions and ordered to allow lions and tigers and other beasts attack boar and deer (Mirfendereski, 2010: 135). According to the sources, some scholars believe that extensive hunting in the Safavid era is not comparable to any other historical dynasty (Olearius, 2007: 215). There is another report of Shah Ismail's winter hunting which is more similar to plundering and looting animals. He hunted twenty six thousands animals in about one or two hours in Qom hunting ground (Khandmir, 1992; vol. 4: 521-522). Additionally, forcing people to colony hunting, punishing those who didn't participated in the events, and in some cases, making minarets with animal heads were among the main features of hunting during the Safavid era (Hillenbrand, 2006: 411). It should be noted that in addition to the recreational dimension, hunting was also of particular importance in terms of military. It seems that chasing the animals and the types of shooting them were some forms of

military exercise and maneuver that could contribute to the king and military's readiness. Along with this practical aspect, hunting was sometimes taken to demonstrate the power and majesty of the king. In some cases, foreign ambassadors were invited to the hunting ground to see the king's abilities and powers. Hunting in one aspect, was also an instrument for the legitimacy of the kings. Because, as mentioned, hunting was one of the royal traditions and habits of the kings of ancient Iran, and the Safavid rulers also attempted to introduce themselves as successors of the ancient kings. The kings and princes had always tried to prove their ability to govern through hunting. Thus, the hunting habits were usually carried out with special rituals and high costs. Even in the worst political and military hardships they were trying to go to hunting for a few days each month. Today, a large number of art pieces of the Safavid era is devoted to hunting.

### **2.1. Hunting Ground and its Kinds**

Regarding large number of hunting and their evidences during the Safavid, one can name many hunting grounds; some of them are mentioned here: The "Miyan Kale" hunting ground which has all kinds of animal as well as "Ghezel Aghaj", "Daraj" and "Tazarv" which were famous (Ghazvini, 1951: 240). The Thousands Acre Garden was a hunting ground too and involved many animals in three different parts (Olearius, 2007: 213). The other hunting grounds were "Ghariehkandman" and "Fish pool" and "Shahriyar" hunting ground (Ghazvini, 1951: 194, 228, 297), and the "Lark" hunting ground with a large number of goats and ewes (Tavernierr, 1958: 244), the "Abbas Abad" hunting ground in "Karkas" mountain, between Natanz and

Kashan, for hunting deer and gazelle, and the "Lanjan" hunting ground of Isfahan which had water and birds. Shah Abbas had built an artificial lake and a two-floor building with beautiful rooms and porches (Falsafi, 1986; vol. 2:685), and finally the "Koome" hunting ground. These are some of the most famous hunting grounds of the Safavid era. The main kinds of prey in these grounds were: ram, deer, leopard, bear, wolf, hog, ewe, goat, fox, rabbit, falcon, pheasant, partridge, pig, francolin, widgeon, goose, and duck and... (Della Valle, 1992: 351). Hunting was done in various forms. Some of them like colony hunting, lasted several days and performed by rousing prey by the people (Ibid: 278). The "Ghahal" hunting, which was mostly bird hunting, was done by trained hawks (Ghazvini, 1992: 372). The "Zangool" hunting was also done by rousing prey to wooden houses which were planned before (Yazdi, 1988: 335).

Hunting ceremonies were often accompanied by procedures and arrangements to the extent that sometimes the word "celebration" had been used for these ceremonies (Isfahani, 2004: 211).

After arrival to Dar-al-Saltaneh in Farrokh Abad in 1069 A.H., Shah AbbasII started a hunting celebration in Miyan Kale (Ibid, 2004). Inviting to hunting was one of the entertainments which the court had provided for foreign guests (Tavernier, 1958: 463).

One of royal women's entertainment and recreations was going to the protected hunting grounds. When the king went for hunting with his women, before departing, a herald blared in alleys and the king's route that nobody was allowed to come out until the king's caravan passed the place, because it was a tradition in Iran that when the king and his women went out, nobody had the

permission of being in alleys and roads (Olearius, 2007: 217). For women's amusement during hunting ceremonies, special place belonged to them to watch men's hunting. The place was a long corridor over one of the mountain overlooking the hunting ground which was protected by scaffolding and mat curtains. Besides watching the ceremony, the women who had some skills in gunfire, went for hunting too, but when they were only with the king, they sat on horses, and hunted with sword, bow and arrow (Ibid: 180).

### **3. Touring and Caring for the Nature**

Touring in the nature and resorts was a joyful recreation which not only the kings and nobles, but even common people did it in every situation.

People, like the kings, enjoyed beauties of the nature in spring and spent some times in the suburbs (Chardin, 1994, vol. 3: 1294-1295). Tavernier states that in Iran, when they go for a walk several times and each time two to three hours and walk from the beginning to the end of the garden, Iranians put a carpet in the best place of the garden and sit on it and look at green grass, flowers, and nightingales (Tavernier, 1958: 620). Elsewhere, he says also people's recreation and touring of Bandar Abbas and their sitting under the trees and eating snacks (Ibid: 690). Careri pointed out people's sitting by the rivers and listening to soft sound of water as a public recreation (Careri, 1970: 143).

Based on Chardin's reports, court picnics were full of formalities and providing of all life equipment's in the camp place. Therefore, a week before the king's departure, some tents had been pitched in places which were identified by the experts in advance, and even an artificial small river

had been installed by lead plates for make the place more beautiful. The process needed one thousands camels train in which every seven camels with one director had formed a train (Chardin, 1994; vol. 3: 1294-1295). The authorities use a rug as a mat and put some food in an icebox and their servants bring them to the destination (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 818). Mattress holders were responsible for carrying carpets and pillows, and ice makers were responsible for the box in which ice, bread, and sugar were kept, and in front, road openers had axe in hands to remove barriers (Kaempfer, 1972: 233, 239), and also touring in city alleys and squares were interesting for the king (Figueroa, 1985: 323). He often went for trips on horseback (Sanson, 1968:94).

The kings' resort were luxurious with gardens and places which were indescribably beautiful, some named by travelogues and historians such as Kahak, Friends Garden, Jannat Abad Garden, Ghol Shah Garden, Sa'adat Abad Garden, ChalAragh Garden, and Thousands Acre Garden as the most famous gardens of the Safavid era to which the kings went for recreation (Sistani, 2005: 523). Shah Abbas made some perfect and luxurious resorts in Isfahan (Sanson, 1968: 94). "Si-e-seh pol", a bridge on River "Zayande Rood" was a very scenic resort and people ran away from sunshine heat in the summer and went there which was like a shelter (Ibid: 102, 104). The summer resort at "Takht e Soleiman" near the "Thousand Acre Garden", had a beautiful scene and Kaempfer believes that its appellation is "Shah Soleiman" who was the builder of the place (Kaempfer, 1972: 218). The women also took part in these touring, so that Chardin talks about diversity of the royal picnics with the women, and evaluates the

women's influence on the king's will, and their bargaining in slander and intercessions of characters (Chardin, 1994; vol. 5: 1671).

#### **4. Game, Entertainment and Joy**

In the Safavid era, various games were common which can be called royal, common, and sport games. Chardin says that Iranians consider sport as an honorable game and their sports are skillful ones which are done and performed for exercising and strengthening body and weapon usage, but since it is necessary to be prepared and strong for these activities before, they started to do sport only at the age of eighteen or twenty and before this age, the youth are being taught by science and knowledge professors and eunuchs (Chardin, 1994; vol. 1: 178)

##### **4.1. Archery**

Chardin and Tavernier have had close explanation about archery: a sport which is played after reaching the age of eighteen to twenty, and in stages from elementary to advanced, and training happens suddenly and immediately in steps such as placing arrow in bow, powerful archery, training of shooting to the sky, and archery (Tavernier, 1958: 593). Archery was often accompanied by horse riding matches which was necessary for sports which nobles and aristocrats' children did. The king had also some gifts for the skillful rider who won the competition and gained the golden plate, for example he went to his house and ate food with him (Sanson, 1968: 63, 66).

##### **4.2. Swordsmanship**

The sword was a conquest tool and a courage sign for Iranians who defended their country. No weapon is as honorable as it, and its manufacture is attributed to

Jamshid (Khayyam, 1965: 25). This sport game was important mostly in war preparation. So, people used weights and turned the swords for strengthening their arms and wrist, and sword dancing was common at the begging of the ceremonies and swordsmen went to the field after kissing the sword and rubbing their head on it. When they were in the battle field, they bowed and then started the war. Each competitor should rebuff the other's sword and it was the empires' duty to watch out violence (Chardin, 1994, vol. 2: 783-785). Exercises and performance of the competition were carried out with real swords and shields. During the training, the swordsmen fastened some horseshoes in order to protect their shoulders in addition to strengthening their arms (Ibid. 181-4). The organizers of the competition did their best to make the novices familiar with the real environment of the battles, and even some of them were wounded.

##### **4.3. The Polo**

The polo is one the ancient Iranian sports which is now an international event. The game was common among the kings, authorities, nobles, princess and their children and considered as a military skill (Sanson, 1968: 63). About the way of the polo game in the Safavid era, Della Valle stated that: the Polo is somehow like the game Florence people played on foot and call it "calcio". About the differences of Iranian polo and calico, he wrote that the Florentines play it on foot and many players hit each other in a small field, while in the Iranian game, the numbers of players are five to six and all of them ride horses and play soberly and don't shove or punch each other, and the main factor of a person victory in the game is his skill and the horse



and rider's speed (Della Valle, 1992:295). It was the Safavid kings' favorite sport to the extent that the polo field had been made in most famous cities. In a party which was arranged because of the king's arrival to Qazvin and hosting foreign guests, all guests were invited to watch the polo. It was a wide field which was level and flat. The king went there and when he sat on horse, the drums and trumpets were played and the game started. Shirley believes that polo in Iran is like Cawale game in England (Shirley, 2009: 62). Once, Shah Abbas II played polo with a group of nobles, everybody was amazed by his skill (Ghazvini, 1951: 240). For Safavid kings, Chogan was an area to demonstrate their skills and ability to troops, people and foreign ambassadors. The princes and the emirs, by playing Chogan, tried to show off. The rivals to the throne, by showing their agility in this game, did their best to show themselves as the suitable person to be the crown prince.

#### **4.4. Chess**

It is believed that chess was sent to Iranian King Khosrau I, by a king of India to test Iranian wisdom and knowledge, and in some sources, it was the time of Shapur, son of Ardashir (Zokaiy, 2006: 15-16). Chardin stated that the game is for grandees and privileged classes, and it is called "Sad Ran (thousands pains)" because of huge attention and patience it needs, and it is narrated that whoever has skill in this game, deserves becoming a king. The games sometimes lasted for three hours until one of the players won. However sometimes it was a kind of gambling (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 790-791). Olearius also acknowledges that Iranians played chess more skillful than Russians (Olearius, 2007: 241). Chess, sometimes, was a king's treatment and was

played when he was not well (Chardin, 1994; vol. 3:1089). There was a traditional belief that an expert in playing chess deserves ruling the world (Ibid: 790). Tavernier talks about Iranian high tendencies toward backgammon and chess (Tavernier, 1958: 619). Tavernier reports that Iranian population of the Safavid era was interested in the gambling, and writes that "among the gamble forms, gaming, chess, and backgammon are more common among Iranians" (Ibid: 916). Of course, due to religious restrictions, it was carried out covertly and secretly.

#### **4.5. Throwing Ghopagh**

"Ghopagh" was a long wooden stick which was set up at city squares. There was a golden globe or bowl (or sometimes melon or apple for exercise) and in the king's presence, a bowl of coins, over the stick head (Eshraghi, 1975: 30). Ghopagh throwers were horse riders who targeted it. A valuable award was given to a person who could make the bowl fall while riding. If the bowl was full of golden coins, then it was divided between the footmen and servants. The winner had to invite all the commanders, grandees, and even the king to his house (Hosseini, 1380: 241).

Shah Abbas was also interested in this game and enjoyed watching it. He went for watching the game whenever, by his order, they were throwing ghopagh in the city square. The shooter horse riders have to make the goal fall from the ghopagh while riding horses, and it is clear that it could not be possible without high skill and dexterity. If the fallen goal was a bowl full of golden coin, it was distributed among the king's servants, and the horse rider who had won the big award, had to host all the commanders and grandees who participated

in the bet and even the king in his house (Figueroa, 1985: 205).

#### **4.6. Wrestling**

In the Safavid era, wrestling exercises were done in “Zookhaneh” (gymnasium) and with the help and observation of masters and champions of the sport. Every city had a group of famous wrestlers and sometimes shows were played by this group. Unlike other sports such as horse riding and archery which were royal, this sport belonged to low and middle social classes (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 784). Actually, the wrestlers were called “pahlavan (gladiator)” and when the wrestling show started, a drum was played to stimulate the wrestlers. The wrestlers wore tight leather trousers and sometimes rubbed oil on their body so that the competitor’s hand did not stick on their body. The game ended when one of the competitors could press the other’s back to the ground. The bravest and strongest wrestlers participated in the capital city show (Esharaghi, 1975: 30). Also the wrestling was a training exercise for military preparations, especially for infantry. While the upper classes did not have much desire to enter this sport, the physical fitness of the community for was very important to the ruling system.

#### **4.7. Wolf Game**

In wolf game, which was played in the Safavid era a lot, a live wolf was unleashed among people and the people made him angry and rebellious by screaming. Some people followed him and the others escaped from him. But nobody touched him and they just screamed to frighten the wolf, and the wolf could not hurt them, even if he scratched or bite a person the crowd would save that person. The game is not interesting

by itself, but thousands people screaming and their behavior around the wild wolf is fun and entertaining (Della Valle, 1992: 298). In spite of apparent animal abuse, the approach which indicates the symbolic aspect of the game, honors people’s nostalgic feelings by understanding real intention of the players. Human being, who once was defenseless against wrath of the nature and vulnerable in protecting himself, was equipped by some skills by which he could make fun of animals of whom he frightened a lifetime, without life and property loss. There were other games in which animals beat each other. Lions, tigers and leopards were thrown into each other, and the people bet on them. The bets were so wide-ranging that some major religious groups, including Nematis and Heidaris, entered it. Unfortunately, this nasty tradition is still widespread in some parts of Iran, with people playing with animals, such as cocks or dogs.

#### **4.8. Badbadak (Kite) Flying**

“Badbadak” is a simple form of today’s kite, and in the Far East, it was the symbol of its owner’s soul beyond his body which was connected to a thin and fine paper frame like a miracle – actually by a rope – and moved in the wind (Kiowa, 1990: 67). Carrery stated that: “The youth and children’s common entertainment is flying badbadak, and it is a cardboard tube to which they fasten a long tail and let it go to the sky by a thin rope. The flying badbadak has a sound like that of church organ” (Carery, 1970: 143).

### **5. Watching (*Tamasha*), Relaxing and Attractiveness**

Watching was a word which includes all the folks’ joyful entertainments, but after using

it by them, lost its original meaning and gradually changed to the concept of touring and entertainment and watching every spectacular thing in general, and every fun joyful game in particular, and it was based on the latter concept that concepts like theater (Tamasha-khaneh) and audience (Tamasha-chi) were built (Beyzayi, 2001: 157). The aim of this chapter is to explain and interpret those kinds of recreations whose understanding needs an aesthetic approach.

### **5.1. Illumination and Fireworks**

The celebrations and joyful events of Iran in different ages were being boomed by fireworks and illumination, and people used to beautify spaces with different kinds of illumination and firework. Many artists and people showed their innovations in this field and created wonderful scenes. Affected by good lucks and victories, this ceremony was greatly expanded and it was gloriously revived. Innovatively and exceptionally, the industry of decorating and illumination became prevalent in this era. It was common usually on a king's arrival to a city and also during other national and religious ceremonies, and even without any reason (Eshraghi, 1975: 28).

Figueroa considers illumination in Iran as a sign of happiness and commuting freedom at night and continues that in these night people are free to be immoral and drink a lot, but safely come back to home and sleep in peace (Figueroa, 1985: 324). Olearius knows illumination in Iran as a sign of people's happiness (Olearius, 2007: 60). It has been narrated that Iranians' skill in providing firework tools was so high that they preceded from all masters of the world (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 888).

A sample of illumination in the Safavid era was illumination of the house roofs with mostly clay light which was famous as roof lights and common in Kashan, Isfahan, and Qazvin (Yazdi, 1988: 234). Moreover, Shah Abbas ordered to illuminate widely in different occasions. Some of these illuminations were illumination of Qazvin in 1003 AH (Torkman, 2004; vol. 1: 500) and in Isfahan in year 1020 on Mohammad Vali Khan Ozbak's arrival (Ibid, Vol. 2: 838). Once Shah Abbas ordered the illumination of Qazvin square, grandees and commanders went there. This illumination was done on people's expense and their intention was a show of happiness for discharging Soltan Mostafa Osmani, so they gave a gift even to the man who imparted the illumination order. All walls, roofs, and porches which were around the city's big square were used for illumination and people put small clay lights full of oil without covering. Della Valle believes that a disorganizing collection of light mess and very big doors and walls around the square create an interesting and shining scene. Some nights, the king and other diplomats like Indian ambassador drank under this light (Della Valle, 1994: 423-424). For making the illumination more spectacular, color, patterned, and adorned glasses were used in front of the lights and candles so that color light formed and the patterns got visible (Ghazvini, 1951: 225). The beauty and order of illumination was so important to the king that once reprehended his minister (vizier), Mirza Abu Taleb, for disorganizing illumination of Kashan in Rabi-al-Akhar 1018, the fourth month on lunar calendar (Yazdi, 1988: 364).

The combination of light and water was used to increase the beauty of illumination, and maybe one of its biggest examples is

illumination of Homayoon Tepe lake by the order of Shah Abbas II in which the picture of candle and light in the water and crossing waves reminds a dream of heaven (Ghazvini, 2005: 669).

The main material of fireworks was kerosene. In a firework arranged by Ardebil Khan, different types of entertainments such as castle, tower, fire globe, suspended stars, lantern, frog, different animals, and raising missiles were used. They had fixed a big globe on the earth with nails and chains. A shaft was installed on it which produced fire and sparks. This stage of firework had been called "Koombara" (Olearius, 2007: 116-117).

### **5.2. Animal Show**

Animals, which were kept in the royal gardens, were used in decoration and also for the shows after taming, and it was an imperial sign. They were covered in the best materials and exposed to watch on celebration days. These animals include wild animals such as elephant, lion, tiger, and leopard, and horses which were decorated with a variety of jewelries (Sanson, 1968: 82). In the year 1005 AH, two types of bear were brought from a far place to show in front of Shah Abbas I (Yazdi, 1970: 150). They fastened a huge hippo by a chain to show, and put him beside other animals, separately and on a woolen cloth which was usually red (Kaempfer, 1972: 249-250). The high expenses of taming the beasts, beside feeding and taking care of, needed a big number of educated people which in the period of Soltan Hossein was like an army with the soldiers. Soltan Hossein ended up the situation and employed these trained instructors in the army and factories (Mirfenderesky, 2010: 139).

### **5.3. Animal Fight**

Watching animal fight and dusting-up of animals such as lion, cow, leopard, ram, wolf, and even wild rooster was one of the common entertainments of the Safavid era, and one of the most interesting shows for the Iranian people, which continued till one animal defeated and sometimes the audiences bet on the victory of one animal (Figueroa, 1985: 240). Tavernier also witnessed buffalo fights in Qom and while pointing out about the Qom ruler's presence with hundreds of riders, says they used red broad cloth to make the animal angry (Tavernier, 1958: 46-85). To stimulate a wolf to fight, they fastened his legs with a long and strong rope and showed him a child or youth so that the wolf attacked him for lacerating and devouring. But they dragged the rope before he reached the child. The wolf showed its readiness to fight by roaring (Chardin, 2004; vol. 2: 797).

### **5.4. Coffee House**

Coffee house was always a place to spend leisure time, and it has a big share in the Iranian cultural heritage. In the Safavid era, it was a place for drinking coffee and other drinks as well as a literary center for writers, poets, and Dervishes and also story tellers and Shah Nameh tellers (Jafariyan, 2001; vol. 2: 768).

The coffee maker's duty was to prepare coffee and bring rosewater and so on for the king. He also supervised the coffee houses. Shah Abbas I sometimes went to the coffee house and spoke to poets and artists and also sometimes invited ambassadors and foreign guests and he drank wine and coffee. For example, inviting Noor al Din Mohammad Jahangir, Indian king, and Figueroa, the ambassador of the Spanish king, and the Ottoman and Russian

ambassador can be mentioned. The players and dancers performed a show for the audience too. In coffee houses, every person talked about every field and sometimes the discussions extended so that they criticized the government. When Shah Abbas understood that this situation can damage the government, he put some limitations to it (Tavernier, 1988: 390). The most famous coffee houses of Safavid era were "Baba Shams Tishi" coffee house and "Toofan" coffee house (Ravandi, 2004; vol. 7: 202). The religious rule of Iran forbade using alcoholic drinks because of its intoxication quality, and most people avoided gambling because they did not want to break the religious rules (Carery, 1970:143-144). Usually the coffee houses were the place of such unrighteous activities, and in a short period, Shah Abbas II knew them as a center of corruption and prohibited them (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 845). Apart from coffee houses, there were other places for drinking tea called teahouses, and often, prominent people gathered there, drinking tea and playing chess and backgammon. The expansion of these places during the Safavid era led to the prevalence of tea drinking and the use of some drugs, such as opium, tobacco and hookah (ghaliyun) in the community.

### ***5.5. Story-telling and Street Show***

In the early Safavid era, there were some narrators whose job was narrating ancient stories in grandees' meeting. These people were called story tellers or book readers sometimes. The story tellers' main and constant place was coffee houses and they caused more people come to the place (Falsafi, 1955: 5). The story tellers' occupation in the Safavid era was considered unimportant by Chardin, and even like

dishonorable and worthless jobs (Chardin, 1994, Vol. 3: 1227). There were many story tellers narrating stories at kings and princesses' courts or in front of common people. However, virtue tellers like Kamal al Din Mohammad ibn Ghiyas al Din Mohammad Hakim Shirazi, who told Imam Ali's virtues in the court of Shah Tahmasb Safavid, can be classified in this group too (Jafariyan, 2001; vol. 2: 858-859). Since story telling skill belonged to Dervish, this situation was criticized by some scholars who wanted to revise the literature and culture which told unreliable stories about Safavid Kings' conquests and news. One of them was Sheikh al Eslam Shah Tahmasb who wrote a book against story tellers (Ibid: 860-861). Olearius also talks about coffee houses and narrators who stood on a high chair and read different fables, stories, and poems (Olearius, 2007: 241). Careri talks about Mullahs without their special cloths and turban in the coffee house who talked about the great Shah Abbas and Shah Safi's virtues and conquests and exaggerated about them a lot. As he did not know the reason behind, analogize them to screaming mad and a hollering animal and continues that whenever he was talking about military conquest, the audiences clapped a lot, and the epic story telling lasted for two hours, then each of the audience gave him money and the virtue teller came home with two Abbasi (coins) (Careri, 1970: 111). Beside storytelling, a group was active in street show as well, who told stories beside their performance. One of the other Safavid era entertainments which was held by showmen, was magic which means showing something fake instead of truth, and has other names like juggling or legerdemain, and the magician was called "AbolAjab" (father of surprise) (Ravandi, 2004; vol. 6:

581-582). People were very excited for their show; jumping over the blades of dagger without encounter, smithery on the body which needed too much preparation, and also converting crushed eggs to the chicken were among their famous magic which could caught everyone's eye. The show usually lasted three hours, however some jokes were told before to warm up (Chardin, 1994; vol. 2: 786). Some people invited the magicians to their house and the show was played there (Ibid: 786). The magicians and street showmen whom Careri saw in the late Safavid era were so dirty and lousy that people didn't like to watch their show (Careri, 2006: 143). Tavernier believes that Iranian magicians are faster and more nimble than foreign magicians. They ask money for the show, but people don't have to pay, and just those who like pay an amount (Tavernier, 1958: 62). Mirfenderesky believes that magic is good for people as an entertainment and when it is holiday and people don't go to work, otherwise it has disadvantages (Lakzaiy, 2008: 171). Based on Soltan Hossein's order, the street show was indecency, foolish, and disgraces (Nasiri, 1995: 43).

Ropewalking was another show which was performed by street showmen and some special groups. Iranians were more skillful than foreigners in this show. In show time, they tied one head of a rope to a tower and the other head to a place in the center of the square. One of the ropewalkers holds a stick in his hand and goes from the square to the tower on the rope and comes back. While walking, he holds the rope between his toes and moves on (Tavernierr, 1958: 62).

### **5.6. Dance and Happiness**

The reports indicate that group dancing was common then, and it had permanent

members who were not usually more than twenty. They came to an appointed place; weather a folk party or an excellent meeting. Their activities were organized and even new researches assumed that they had a planned organization and there was a professional dancers' organization (Eshraghi, 1975: 34). A formula was written for dancing and each dancer was being taught several hours to be a chamber entertainer (Beyzayi, 2001: 63). The girls' dancing was a part of Shah Ismail I period too (Dalsandry, 1971: 451). Sometimes in formal welcoming, a group of adorned women and young boys danced and even got some gifts from guests. For instance, Figueroa sent an amount of money to these women who were ornate with jewelry, expensive dresses, and many pearls dangled around their faces and forehead (Figueroa, 1985: 240-246). Chardin also talks about dancing women in fifteen or twenty member groups who were wearing new and beautiful cloths, and all were whores who were invited to celebration (Chardin, 1994; vol. 3: 1173). It is worth mentioning that even during Soltan Hossein Safavid, there was a type of dance and music which was just for wedding ceremonies and family parties. Under some circumstances such as women's prohibiting entry to men's parties and men's prohibition entry to women's parties, and also by maintaining the honors it did not have any problem, and this situation did not stop with a hope that "if the needless successful friend helps and confirms, it removes from believers' life gradually, and all Muslims and youths will repent" (Nasiri, 1995: 43-44).

Besides artists' dancing, the available documents talks about music and musicians during Safavi kings' parties (Della Valle, 1992: 219), and it can be mentioned that Safavi kings had fun by having happy

ceremonies and musical instruments, and singers and players performed for entertaining the king. "Setar", "Dayere", "Ney", and some other instruments were played for the king in the ceremonies (Chardin, 1994; vol. 3: 1109).

### Conclusion

Celebration and joyful ceremonies have historically been present in human life. Sometime, ignorance and urgency called for joyful occasions and rituals, and at times, social life, ethnic memorials, religious beliefs, and relief from daily routine caused people to hold them so they are not isolated, revealing the important and most prominent components of politics, culture, and society in the course of civilizations. Iranians, like some other nations of the world, perhaps paid more attention to celebrations, and had a culture of joyfulness in dealing with dangers and crises, and in principle, enjoyed the positive functions of social practices.

The Safavid dynasty came to power at a time Iranian society was going through a tough time. Now, with the consolidation of Safavid power, the situation became relatively calm

and that's make the situation conducive for holding some ceremonies and rituals. The government apparently was not reluctant to hold such celebrations and general recreation and often, pioneered such programs. Thus, in the Safavid era, there is a great deal of these rituals recognizable in various areas such as national, religious, royal, family and recreational celebrations, and each one is also split into other types. National celebrations with a background of thousands of years inculcated a sense of discretion, dynamism and development. Religious celebrations based on the faith and a symbol of prejudice and persistence were strengthening the foundations of political power and ideology of the Safavid. Royal celebrations with the message of the authority of state inside and outside the country contributed to the increase in political status, military capability and popular support. In any case, as mentioned before, there was a lot of diversity regarding the joyful rituals and fun activities both in the elements of power and in the society. These rituals and programs reflected to a considerable extent the political stability and social security of the Safavid era.

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## نگرشی بر نظامات تفریحی و شادی آفرین در ایران عصر صفویه

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### چکیده

جشن‌ها و مراسم شادی آفرین بخشی از هویت تاریخی ایران محسوب می‌شدند. برگزاری گونه‌های متعددی از این جشن‌ها در منابع مربوط به دوره باستانی ایران نقل شده است که نشان از پابندی جامعه به برگزاری این گونه از آیین‌ها داشت. این تمایلات ضمن آنکه وجه هویت‌بخش داشت می‌توانست پویایی و شادابی را نیز به بدنه اجتماع تزریق کند. با گذر از دوره باستان و ورود به عصر اسلامی با وجود ناملايمات متعددی که بر بنیادهای اجتماعی وارد شد، برخی از این آیین‌ها به‌عنوان میراث ملی مورد بازخوانی و بازیابی قرار گرفت. البته گونه‌های دیگری از آیین شادمانی نیز که با تفکر جدید دینی همخوانی داشتند به میراث ملی افزوده شدند. از طرف دیگر حکومت‌های برآمده در جامعه ایران نیز فارغ از این دلمشغولی نبودند و متناسب با روحیات شخصی و نگرش‌های سیاسی و مذهبی، برخی از این آیین‌ها را مورد حمایت و تشویق قرار دادند و از این طریق به ماندگاری و تداوم آنها کمک کردند. جامعه ایران در عصر صفویه منفک از این شرایط نبودند. ثبات سیاسی و امنیت نسبی موجود در جامعه به تداوم این سنت‌ها کمک کرد. نوشتار حاضر در نظر دارد گونه‌ها و قالب‌های برگزاری چنین جشن‌ها و سرگرمی‌ها را در معرض معرفی و بررسی قرار دهد. بر این مبنا سؤال عمده پژوهش این گونه مطرح می‌شود که جشن‌ها و آیین‌های شادی آفرین دوره صفویه در چه قالب‌ها و شکل‌هایی تجلی می‌یافتند؟ داده‌های پژوهش نشان می‌دهد با وجود آنکه ایران دوره صفویه در ادوار مختلف خود به‌صورت مستمر و با متناوب گرفتار برخی منازعات داخلی و یا درگیر جنگ‌های خارجی بود اما بستر اجتماع پیوند عمیقی با رویکردهای امیدبخش و نشاط‌آفرین داشت. گونه‌های مختلفی از جشن‌ها و شادمانه‌ها مبتنی بر سنت‌های اجتماعی در جریان بود. به‌لحاظ همراهی حکومت با تعداد زیادی از این برنامه‌های شادی آفرین گستره و تنوع آنها به شکل مشهودی در جامعه دوره صفویه خودنمایی می‌کرد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: صفویه، جشن، تفریح، شکار، سرگرمی

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