Crafting Environmental Discourse in Iran:
The Uses of Mythological Narratives and the Popular Responses

By
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Abstract

With the escalation of environmental problems, there is also a rising demand for public understanding of environmental changes. Most people may understand the harmful impact of environmental destruction and the importance of preserving natural resources. But what tools could be used to persuade and remind people of their environmental responsibilities? Environmental discourse is a means of communication by which interactional and transactional meanings about the environment are transferred. Environmental discourse engages environmental knowledge with various views such as scientific, political, and economic. However, socio-cultural knowledge about the environment is important to connect abstract ideas to peoples' everyday experiences of the environment. I claim that the use of cultural tools in environmental discourse is a potentially powerful motivator for raising environmental awareness and encouraging personal responsibility.

This study examines the persuasive power of cultural tropes and perspectives in environmental discourse in present-day Iran. I focus on a landmark example of government-led public media programming to understand its impact on promoting pro-environmental attitudes and increasing environmental awareness. The 2013 Iranian television series, *Āb-pariā* [Water Fairy], serves as the foundational discourse text of my research. Inspired by and indexing Persian mythology and cultural practices, the *Āb-pariā* series addresses several recent environmental problems in Iran with a particular focus on water shortages and drought. The *Āb-pariā* series conveys its environmental message by indexing shared mythological and cultural signs to evoke viewers' individual and social memories in order to promote the series' pro-environmental message. I based my analysis of environmental, mythological, and cultural discourse primarily by using sociocognitive critical discourse analysis as a theoretical and a methodological

framework (Van Dijk 1993, 2001, 2008, 2016a, 2016b). My analysis of *Āb-pariā* discourse revealed cultural and ideological dimensions of environmental and social knowledge. I concluded that Iranian viewers perceive and understand environmentalism by recalling salient historical events and narratives attributed to a collective past. Viewers connected the mythological and cultural signs embedded in the *Āb-pariā* series to past values and knowledge, allowing them to interpret recent environmental events based on their own experiences. Based on Wertsch's narrative model (2008), research participants organized their personal experiences by interacting with the *Āb-pariā* series and its embedded signs. Participants connected their lived stories and environmental attitudes with the environmental theme of the series. My analysis of narratives showed two general patterns; both were associated with a particular pro-environmentalist mental model that served as the basis for discursive thoughts about the causes and effects of environmental problems.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Research and Theoretical Basis

1.1. Research Overview

Environmental discourse is a system of interactional and transactional meanings about the environment and its natural and social qualities. It is rooted in the language that we use, engages with environmental knowledge, and includes various social, political, economic, and scientific views of environmental problems. The term 'environment,' when it is proceeded by the article 'the' and unmodified, connotes interaction among all living species, climate, weather, and natural resources that affect human survival and economic activity (Johnson et al., 1997). Speaking of the term itself, 'the environment' took its "modern political, social, ecological, and global meaning during the 1960s and early 1970s," simultaneously with the rise of modern environmentalism in the U.S., "as public demands for clearer and safer living conditions became more vocal" (Dauvergne, 2009: xli). The concept of the environmental discourse, hence, refers to a shared way for people to understand a broad range of aspects about 'the environment' and the ways they interact about it. As a result, the environmental discourse revolves around a meaning-making process through the production of text/talk in which the areas of environmental destruction, environmental protection, environmental action, environmental policy, environmental judgment, environmental movements, environmental awareness, and environmentalism are shaped and discussed. Environmental discourse also contributes to the understanding of major human belief systems about nature and their interaction with nature. It emphasizes how the ideologies, attitudes, and behaviors around them are constructed, received, and responded to.

This dissertation examines the construction of environmental discourse in Iran with respect to socio-cultural competence by integrating mythological narratives, historical legends,

and cultural values. Culture as a societal construct is fundamental to people's perceived identity and attitude about any subject, including the environment. Culture is a mix of individuals' and groups' values, beliefs, standards, norms, behaviors, language, communication styles, and thinking patterns. Cultural competence, therefore, refers to understanding the social and cultural influence of these factors. This study examines the ways that Iranians understand environmental problems via cultural competence. It investigates how their environmental perceptions and attitudes are influenced by environmental values that have been derived from Persian mythology and culture. The research is situated within contemporary Iran and in relation to escalating environmental problems in that country, especially in recent decades. I evaluate environmental content and responses to a 2013 television series, *Āb-pariā* that draws on Persian mythology to illuminate contemporary environmental problems in Iran. The study explores the television series' use of Persian mythological, historical, and cultural concepts related to the environment and environmental values that have been passed through generations. Concepts such as mythological deities or environmental signs and symbols in Persian culture were repurposed in the series to foreground the current environmental problems. Therefore, this study concerns concepts from historicity and myth in the Persian realm that spans from antiquity to the 20th century when Iran was called Persia. For the purpose of this dissertation, to avoid ambiguity with the term 'Iran' in a historical context, I use *Persia* to refer to the pre-20th century lands and culture, evoking traditional and historical background in mythology, while I use *Iran* to refer to the current geopolitical boundaries of that country in the 21st century. I also use the term *Persian mythology*, rather than *Iranian mythology*, as the former expresses a wider cultural area both within and beyond the current geopolitical borders of modern Iran.

1.2. Research Significance and Questions

Increasing environmental communications promotes public awareness about the environment and this may lead to protecting the environment and motivating people to contribute to actions that revive nature more than before. The goal of this study is to contribute to the anthropological and social understanding of environmentalism in Iran. I aim to provide an analytic view toward public understanding of environmentalism via the connection of people to their cultural heritage and language and the persuasive power of combining environmental discourse with mythological discourse. This study seeks to provide a multi-layer understanding of the ideology of Iranian environmentalism by analyzing how media recount the past historical events and narratives, and via language use, attempt to address current environmental degradation.

Focusing on environmental discourse in Iran, I selected the 2013 Iranian television series, Āb-*pariā* 'Water-fairies.' The series reconstructs mythological and cultural values in relation to the environment to deliver a relevant contemporary environmental message to the audience, to motivate their pro-environmental attitudes, and to promote environmental awareness. Using the *Āb-pariā* series as the main discourse, I draw on scholarship based on Van Dijk's sociocognitive model (1993, 2001, 2008, 2016), and Barthes's semiology theory (1967, 1968, 1987) to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the culturally specific discourse strategies used in the *Āb-pariā* television series to raise environmental awareness?

2. What is the impact of pro-environmental messages in Iranian television?

1.3. The Dissertation Structure

In addition to providing a research overview, the current chapter of this dissertation serves as the theoretical basis of the research and outlines perspectives and literature on the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with an emphasis on the Sociocognitive approach (SCA). It describes notions of 'discourse, society, and cognition,' and explains their interrelationships in the critical analysis of the environmental discourse. The chapter also reviews semiotic theory and collective memory and its link to the study of narratives as a supplemental framework to CDA in this study.

Chapter 2 consists of literature related to the study of environmental discourse in the global context and based on social and anthropological perspectives. The chapter discusses the influential factors, such as media in shaping environmental discourse. It also provides a discussion of the emergence and development of environmentalism in Iran as a social movement and the factors that shaped it.

Chapter 3 examines the *Āb-pariā* television series. The chapter provides background about the aspects of Persian mythology and culture relevant to the *Āb-pariā* series. It includes a descriptive analysis of the series theme and content and a semiotic analysis of mythological and cultural signs embedded in the series with respect to the framework of CDA and SCA.

Chapter 4 describes the dissertation's research methodology and analyzes and discusses the findings. The chapter evaluates how the *Āb-pariā* series was received publicly and among the focus groups and discusses how the series reconstructed mythological and cultural concepts for the purpose of promoting pro-environmental attitudes. The Conclusion summarizes the results of the study.

The next section of this current chapter will provide details about three theoretical frameworks used in this study: critical discourse analysis with a particular focus on the sociocognitive approach as the main framework, semiology theory, and collective memory and narrative.

1.4. Theoretical Basis and Perspectives

Theories and theoretical perspectives are tools designed to break down the concepts and ideas into more conceivable parts. They provide logical reasons that facilitate one's understanding of the problem. They guide the development of hypotheses as the researcher examines the problem (Thyer, et al., 2012 and Turner, 2011). This study combines critical discourse analysis by employing the sociocognitive approach characterized by Van Dijk (1993, 2001, 2008, 2016a, 2016b), semiology theory in the tradition of Barthes (1968), and the theory of collective memory (Nora, 1996 and Wertsch, 2008) to explore the aspects of Iranian environmentalism in reference to mythological and cultural heritage and by the means of language (i.e., figurative language). In this section, I provide an overview of the theoretical frameworks and explain some of the major notions and approaches in each theory.

1.4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis:
1.4.1.1. Theoretical Origin

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) deals with the study of discourse, and it is "far from implying a homogenous method within discourse analysis" (Titscher et al., 2000: 144). It rather is a methodology, that "can only be presented with reference to particular approaches and with regard to their specific theoretical backgrounds" (ibid.). CDA is 'critical' not in a negative common-sense usage, but as it investigates a social phenomenon that tends "to be challenged and

not taken for granted" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 2). The idea of being 'critical' in CDA is rooted in Critical Theory and Critical Linguistics described below.

Critical Theory within the Frankfurt School (in particular the work of Jurgen Habermas (1970, 1971)) refers to the 'critical' perspective or "self-reflective" aspect of the research process, i.e., "it must reflect the interests on which it [the science issue] is based" (Titscher et al., 2000: 144). Critical Theory originally drew on the critical methods of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud in the 1930s and mainly was based on Max Horkheimer's idea in 1937. It stresses the critique of society and culture, and it may be defined as a self-conscious social critique that aims to change the society rather than orienting toward the understanding and explaining the society (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 6). Critical Theory also focuses on the critique of ideology and maintains that ideology is the principal obstacle to human liberation (Guess, 1981).

Critical Linguistics (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress and Hodge, 1979) refers to "the Hallidayan studies of the use of language in organizations," which asserts "a strong relationship between linguistic and social structure" that cannot exclude discourse from social meanings (Titscher et al., 2000: 144-145). The idea of being 'critical' within linguistics can be understood as a direction in linguistic pragmatics (Mey, 1985). Critical Linguistics aimed to "explore the value systems and sets of belief which reside in texts; to explore, in other words, ideology in language" (Simpson, 1993: 5). Fairclough (1989) took critical linguistics to a new paradigm, i.e., CDA where linguistic analysis became a part of the analysis along with "interpreting language as a response to a particular social situation and explaining this response in constraining context of social and institutional structures" (Alaghbary et al., 2015).

Both Critical Theory and Critical Linguistics, and their contribution to CDA, contain the notions of 'critical' and 'ideology' as key concepts. These concepts can be traced to the influence

of Critical Theory and Critical Linguistics "towards critiquing and changing society, in contrast to the traditional theory oriented solely to understanding or explaining it" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 6). This position distinguishes CDA from Discourse Analysis; and it shows how CDA arouses as a refinement of Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003: 2). Contrary to much of traditional linguistics, Discourse Analysis does not concern the mere linguistic units per se. It is rather interested in the study of language use beyond the sentence boundary and focuses on 'naturally occurring language use' on larger units among the language users (Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 2007; Wodak 2008a). Discourse Analysis is based on "the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life" (Fairclough, 2003: 2). What distinguishes Discourse Analysis from CDA is that CDA is mainly interested "in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical approach" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 2).

Having the notions of 'critical' and 'ideology' in essence turns the main concern of CDA (compared to Discourse Analysis) toward the continuity and change of social structuring of language as one element of structuring social practices at a more abstract, more structural level, as well as what happens in particular texts (Fairclough, 2003: 3). It is also crucial to understand the notion of 'discourse' and how it is applied in CDA.

1.4.1.2. The Notion of Discourse in Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a qualitative method to reach a better understanding of 'discourse'; it critically looks into social phenomena through an examination of discourse. The notion of 'discourse' may have a variety of definitions in different fields, but for CDA practitioners, it generally refers to the 'language as a social practice' in which the 'context of language use' is crucial (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, Wodak and Meyer, 2009). As a result, CDA makes a distinction between 'text'

and 'discourse,' and notes that texts are sometimes encoded with far more meaning beyond their form and grammatical representations. Texts may be representative of disguised attempts at control and dominance (Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2001; Van Dijk, 2008; Van Leeuwen, 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2001); and they are rather viewed as the "structured forms of knowledge" which goes beyond the "concrete oral utterances or written documents" and shape the discourse (Van Dijk, 1998 in Wodak and Meyer 2009: 6). CDA focuses on the critical analysis of social problems within discourse structures and explains them in terms of social interactions and social dominance.

Now, what is the discourse in CDA then? Understanding the notion of 'discourse' seems crucial to a better perception of work within CDA. Discourse may generally be defined as linguistic and textual units as well as narratives and conversations about a particular topic. However, the objects of discourse (in CDA) go beyond text and speech, and it can include visual images and buildings (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). In a more detailed view, discourse is defined as the "language use in speech and writing as a form of 'social practice' [which] implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258). In other words, discourse can be intertwined with situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. By that view, discourse can be persuasive as it may present a certain viewpoint as a fact, or it may be ideologically contested according to the social and cultural norms and particular situations. Thus, discourse in CDA can be regarded as a foundation that is socially and culturally conditioned and ideologically constructed; and its analysis is impossible in isolation. It requires knowledge and investigations around fundamental concepts, such as power, dominance, gender, and social order. It is also

important that the recipients of discourse understand not only talk or text but also the whole communicative situation in which the discourse has been created; therefore, it is possible that it is interpreted differently and even biasedly as they have different views.

The above description of discourse may well also remind the idea that discourse is considered as 'social action' and not merely as a form of representation. What is accomplished through discourse and discursive practices involves and contributes to various dimensions of society including ideology, power dynamics, and political and cultural relations. This focuses on the interactional, social, political, and cultural functions of text and talk and not only the forms and meanings of language. Therefore, discourse analysis contains ideological work that mediates the link between text, whether written or visual (i.e., images), and society, and demonstrates how social life is influenced and structured by discourse; how the language is deployed to represent particular attitudes, entities, individuals, ideals, and institutions; and who are the language users who either produce it or perceive it.

1.4.1.3. Objectives of Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA aims to offer a socio-political perspective of theorizing, analysis, and application throughout the field (Van Dijk, 2001: 352). CDA "want[s] to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 7). In every area of research, it may emphasize different social, cultural, economic, and political motives according to the theme of the research and promotes interdisciplinary work by drawing on various theories.
CDA investigates to understand the process of meaning-making and construction of social life and the roles and positions of various participants or organizations' entities in these processes (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is summarized as a school or paradigm in linguistics that is

characterized by principles in which the approaches are problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, ideological, and power-related in the critical investigation of semiotic data including written, spoken, or visual and as it is manifested in language. CDA, in a broad picture, does not attempt to be a single specific theory or methodology of research. In contrast, research in this area is "multifarious, derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards different data and methodologies" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 3-5), and, focuses on the notions of discourse, critical, ideology, power and so on which play a crucial role in understanding CDA.

1.4.1.4. An Overview of Approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA does not follow a single theoretical perspective in one field; it is rather eclectic in developing approaches which have been drawn widely and extensively from different disciplines in social science and humanities. As such, CDA employs different strategies and utilizes different data (Fairclough, 1989, 1995, 2001; Van Dijk, 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2001) based on the research theme. Nevertheless, what is evident in all approaches and strategies within CDA is that they all have several principles in essence. The main principles of CDA from the work of Fairclough and Wodak can be outlined as the followings:

- CDA deals with social problems.

- There is a mediated link between text and society and that shapes the discourse.

- Discourse has an ideological component, and it is historical.

- Discourse constitutes a form of social action, and its analysis serves to explain.

- Society and culture are composed by discourse; and

- Power relations are constituted by discourse.

Being closely related and sharing common perspectives, approaches in CDA are theoretically and analytically diverse (Van Dijk, 2001: 352-354). The approaches are

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interconnected with theoretical frameworks, such as critical theory, Karl Marx, and Michel

Foucault and are influenced by them (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak and Meyer, 2001, 2009).
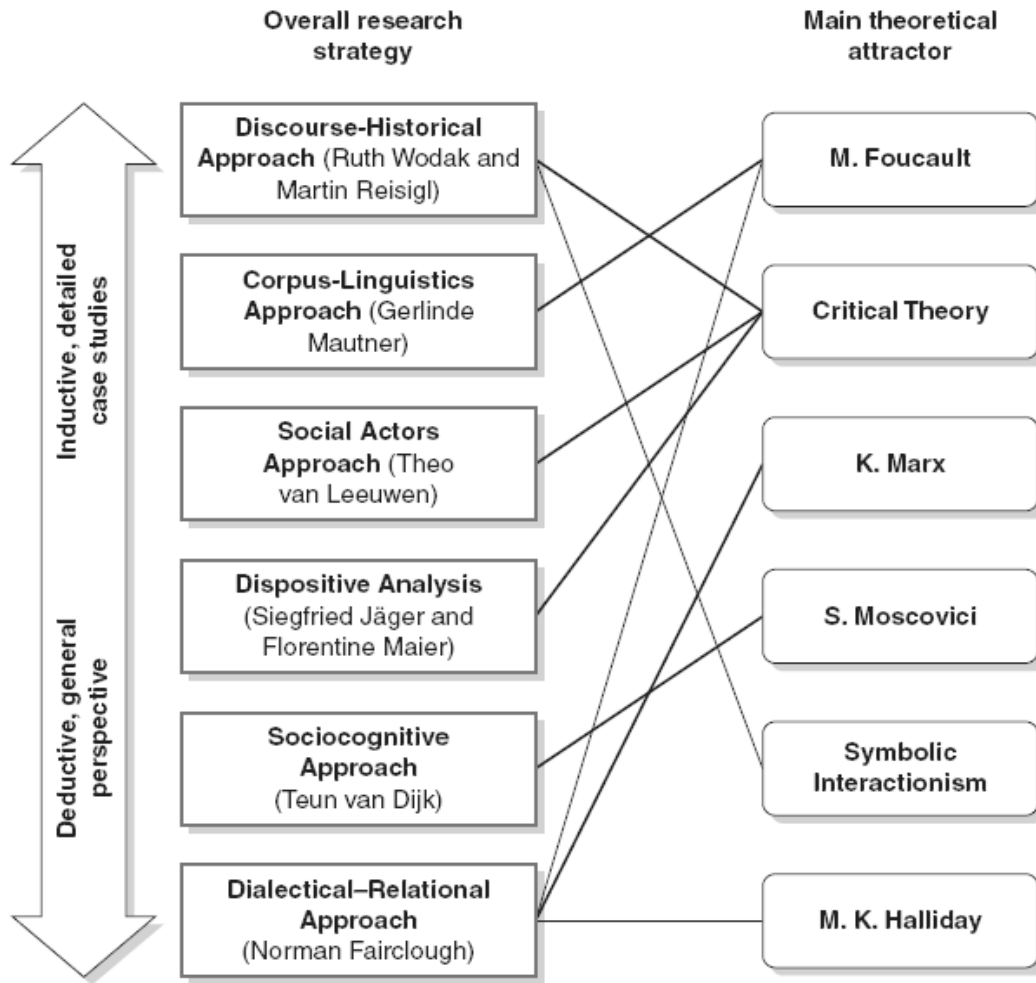
Figure 1. Overall research strategies and theoretical background (Wodak and Meyer 2009: 20)

Figure 1, adapted from Wodak and Meyer (2009) visually shows how CDA works

diversely in many aspects. It demonstrates that different strategies and methodologies have been

built on some major theoretical insights and they investigate different perspectives of more

inductive versus more deductive approaches according to the chosen topic, theme, and research

questions of CDA. For example, the methodologies proposed by Fairclough and Van Dijk follow

more deductive approaches in which the topic of the research is seen as a "macro-topic" that

aims to reveal social problems and their relationship with the various aspects while they are "relatively non-controversial." These approaches also designate to "illustrate [the research] assumptions with a few examples, which seem to fit [the] claims" by proposing closed theoretical frameworks (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 19). On the contrary, "meso topics" aim to "discover new insights through in-depth case studies and ample data collection" (id: 20). They are investigated in more inductive approaches, such as Discourse-Historical approach, proposed by Wodak and Reisigl (2009), and they work on the issues that are more controversial and usually belong to the national community of the researcher. Therefore, with this distinction, the choice of approach is heavily based on the theme of research and the purpose of the study.

Although some of the strategies within CDA seek shared interests in multiple theories to analyze discourse, all of them are framed based on both linguistic factors and extralinguistic factors, such as culture, social structures and ideology more or less, depending on the concepts of their context. This feature well addresses the principle of CDA that mediates between language and social structures to focus on discourse analysis. However, it is worth mentioning that CDA "does not necessarily include a broad range of linguistic categories in every single analysis," but it "distinguishes between linguistic surface and some kind of deep structure" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 21-22).

As figure 1 above shows, CDA has a variety of theories, ranging from theories on society (Grand Theories) to more linguistic theories; however, it does not constitute a clear methodology (which is a critique of CDA. Instead, several approaches have emerged and been defined based on those theories. Table 1 below summarizes these approaches (based on Wodak and Meyer, 2009):

Dispositive Analysis (Siegfried Jager & Florentine Maier)
    Theoretical position: the link between discourse and reality in the social acting subject
    Methodological objectives: discourse and dispositive analysis

Data: existing text	
Sociocognitive Approach (Teun Van Dijk) **Theoretical position:** the link between social systems and individual cognitive systems are socially shared perceptions **Methodological objectives:** development of context models/social representations of communicative situation **Data:** existing text	
Discourse-Historical Approach (Ruth Wodak & Martin Reisigl) **Theoretical position:** connections between fields of action, genres, discourse and texts **Methodological objectives:** development of conceptual tools relevant for specific social problems **Data:** existing text, fieldwork, ethnography	
Corpus Linguistic Approach (Gerlinde Mautner) **Theoretical position:** linguistic extension of CDA **Methodological objectives:** improved analysis through additional linguistic devices **Data:** large corpora of text	
Social Actors Approach (Theo van Leuuwen) **Theoretical position:** individual actors constitute and reproduce social structure **Methodological objectives:** detailed linguistic operationalization at the actor level **Data:** existing text	
Dialectical-Relational Approach (Norman Fairclough) **Theoretical position:** language is shaped by the social functions it has come to serve **Methodological objectives:** analyze dialectical relationships between functions of signs and other elements of social practices **Data:** existing text	

Table 1. Approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis (Table courtesy of Albert and Salam, 2013: 2-3)

The above summary of approaches reveals the flexibility of CDA and the foci of the approaches, which range from social actor to discourse structure, are necessary for determining the appropriate one to study a phenomenon. It is also important to understand the methods of operationalization and data type of each approach when choosing the appropriate one. Among all the above, the 'sociocognitive approach' developed by Van Dijk seems the best fit for this study, which is about environmentalism in Iran. Hereafter, I will discuss this approach in more detail.

1.4.1.5. Sociocognitive Approach

The sociocognitive approach mostly considers the socio-psychological aspect of CDA and is heavily influenced by Moscovici's social representation theory. This theory focuses on values, ideas, and practices that create a "vision of the relations between social and cognitive

phenomena, communication and thought" (Moscovici, 1988). Based on this view, Van Dijk looks at discourse as a communicative event which "understands linguistics in a broad 'structural-functional' sense" and he argues that "CDA should be based on a sound theory of context" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 25). Relying on three relevant forms of social representations, (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies in the context), Van Dijk introduces the concept of 'context models.' He defines context models as mental representations of the structures of communicative situations, which control the pragmatic part of discourse rather than the semantic part of the discourse (i.e., event models) (id: 26).

Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach focuses on ideology as a triangular model of 'discourse-cognition-society' in which discourse is a communicative event, either an oral conversation or a written text that may also include any semiotic signification. Individual or social cognition involves mental or memory models, representations, and processes in understanding or producing a discourse, such as beliefs, evaluations, and emotions. The component of society in this triangular model includes both micro-structures of interactions, as well as societal and political structures, such as group relations, institutions, and political systems (Van Dijk, 2001a). This approach, in contrast with other approaches in CDA, highlights the element of cognition. It claims that cognition mediates other relations of discourse and society in the triangle (Van Dijk, 2016: 64); and "the combined cognitive and social dimensions of the triangle" are defined as "the relevant (local and global) context of discourse" (Van Dijk, 2001a: 98). Social components "can only influence text and talk through people's interpretations of such social environments," while "discourse can only influence social interaction and social structures through the same cognitive interface of mental models, knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies" (Van Dijk, 2016: 64).

Van Dijk attempts to connect the micro-structure of language, (i.e., language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication), to the macro-structure of society, such as power, dominance, and inequality between social groups through actors and their minds (Kintsch and Van Dijk, 1978; Van Dijk, 2001b). Nonetheless, instead of discursive practices, he points out that the social cognition is the mediator between text and society, and explains it as "socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups, and relations, as well as mental operations, such as interpretation, thinking and arguing, inferencing and learning" (Van Dijk, 1993: 257).

Van Dijk's approach highlights the understanding of ideology and social relations of power involved in discourse. Ideologies may control the structures of text and talk, and they may be expressed explicitly or implicitly in the discourse (Van Dijk, 2000). Ideologies and attitudes feature forms of social beliefs about a concept among different groups in society, which may be evaluated positively or negatively based on norms and values among those groups (Van Dijk, 2016: 69). This idea may re-emphasize Van Dijk's 'ideological square,' by which he makes a distinction between US and THEM, and he contributes to the polarization of in-group values (favorable) versus out-group values (unfavorable) (Van Dijk, 2000: 44).

Social power, on the other hand, is considered a form of 'control' by which the groups can influence (or control) the acts and minds of other groups (Van Dijk, 2001b). In this manner, Van Dijk distinguishes between two types of power and labels them as "coercive power," based on force, and "persuasive power" which is based on knowledge, information, or authority (id: 355). As a result, the notion of power as a social component in CDA/CDS deals with "power abuse of dominant groups or the resistance of dominated groups, as well as with ... societal macrostructures." More specifically, CDA/CDS concerns how the groups and organizations

control public discourse directly or indirectly. Van Dijk argues that the form of power abuse or power resistance is "formulated in terms of social cognition, that is, as the specific knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies shared by the members of these societal organizations" (Van Dijk, 2016: 70). Furthermore, such discursive practices at the macro-structural level have been derived from the personal mental models or the experience of social members in the micro-level of everyday interactions.

In brief, the sociocognitive approach does not deal with any of its components (i.e., cognition, discourse, and society) independently and in isolation. It rather integrates them into a cycle of causes and effects in which each component impacts the other and a full description of all underlying factors, such as socio-political circumstances, and cultural functions. is required for linking discourse with society. In the sociocognitive approach, as opposed to other approaches in CDA, the personal mental models of individual experiences and interpretations are not ignored. This approach, instead, characterizes the underlying ideologies based on socially shared knowledge and social attitudes influenced by personal and individual mental models and opinions.

After this survey of the application of critical theory and cognitive models to discourse analysis, I now turn my focus to the application of one of these models to environmental discourse, which is the subject of my dissertation.

1.4.1.6. A Sociocognitive Approach to Environmentalism

It is useful to understand the social and anthropological aspects of environmental problems since they can provide ideological views on such a challenging topic. In the broadest sense, CDA is able to provide multi-dimension views or attitudes toward environmental concerns through the analysis of the environmental discourse, which are produced in texts or talks. Among

all the approaches in CDA, I chose the sociocognitive approach proposed and developed mainly

by Van Dijk (1998, 2009, 2016). This approach advocates multidisciplinary analysis as well and

links the discourse with the society when encompassing personal and individual cognitions. It

seems pertinent to the concerns of environmental communications and awareness. This approach

also can reveal the ideological dimensions of beliefs, attitudes, ideas, and knowledge of

individuals in a society; and it can pursue the investigation of the environmental meaning via

public perceptions.

The relevance of a triangular sociocognitive approach in the critical study of

environmental discourse may be illustrated as follows:

The 'discourse component' of the analysis deals with the patterns and the structures of texts or

talks around the environment, such as topics about climate change, protecting the earth,

consumerism patterns and avoiding waste, and environmental activism. These types of texts and

talks, and the language used in them (such as grammatical, semantic, or pragmatic structures, the

structure of arguments, the use of metaphors, and idioms) usually describe how discourse may be

involved in the (re)production of power relations with environmentalism; and they explain how

negatively or positively the views toward environmentalism are produced within texts or talks.

Consequently, the discourse reflects the polarization of the ideological perspective between 'Us'

and 'Them': those who are pro-environmentalism, pro-climate change, and think or believe that

climate change is anthropogenic, and it is the consequence of human activities versus those who

deny it.

The 'social component' of environmental discourse reflects the ways by which

environmentalism is understood socially, culturally, and ideologically among different groups. It

is interpreted and explained in terms of underlying, socially shared values of the environment

that should be saved and protected, or the ideological prejudices against the deniers of climate change. The social aspect also looks at the ways each of these groups influences the mental models of individual language users while each of these social identities can be created, reinforced, or challenged in discourse as well. As a result, the analysis of such discourse can be instrumental in understanding the social identities or sociocognitive representations held about a particular group of social actors as they construct particular roles (e.g., warning voices and environmental advocates) within the environmental discourse. The social component pays attention to the much of public discourse about environmentalism in various aspects, such as politics, economy, education, and media. It also identifies how the public perceives it, reflects it in their interactions, and cares about it. It highlights the factors, which influence this public understanding of environmental discourse as well.

The 'cognitive component' of such discourses and their underlying cognitions are socially, politically, and culturally functional in the production (or reproduction) of dominated attitudes toward environmentalism. In other words, the personal mental models of experiencing environmental problems can construct the broader forms of socially shared cognition, which is based on the generic and abstract knowledge of climate change. It is heavily rooted in the shared attitudes about environmentalism and fundamental ideologies of social groups in this regard, and it is shared with other members of the same epistemic community. These features of cognitions allow cooperation, interaction, communication, and hence discourse. Furthermore, the patterns of language use, such as using particular words, phrases, metaphors, or idioms, are cognitively interpreted as expressing underlying concepts, which govern the environmental discourse. The cognitive effects that the recipients of the environmental discourse perceive may consequently

cause different reactions by which a particular form of environmental advocacy or denial attitude is created and developed.

The above discussion aimed to explain the relations between the three components of the sociocognitive approach (i.e., discourse, society, and cognition) in the critical analysis of environmental discourse. For the purpose of this research, a more detailed examination is required to see how, and via what stages and levels, such a complex system of environmentalism is discursively reproduced in the Iranian society, how it is understood based on the cognitive models, and reflected in the social actions of individuals and groups.

Revealing these models in my dissertation (by using the sociocognitive approach) will help to understand how environmental discourse in Iran, in general, is produced based on cognitive structures; and how mythological and cultural elements and figurative expressions within that discourse, in particular, are represented and controlled by the mental models, knowledge, and ideologies of particular social groups during discourse processing. Thus, I will explore two types of mental models in environmental discourse processing: 1) 'semantic models' represent the situation a discourse is about, explain the meaning or interpretation of discourse, and define its meaningfulness and coherence; 2) 'pragmatic models' represent the dynamically changing communicative situation in which language users are involved, define the appropriateness of discourse with respect to the communicative situation. The pragmatic models will control what information of the semantic model can or should be appropriately talked about, and how it should be done (Van Dijk, 2016). These parameters can also establish the role of the analysis of relevant sociopolitical structures in which environmentalism functions. Therefore, understanding the discourse involves a process in which the analysis and interpretation of all the units are meaningful.

Furthermore, in the analysis of environmental discourse within the framework of the sociocognitive approach, the notion of environmental 'knowledge' is a 'power resource' not only for the individual members of groups who deal with environmentalism, but also for the groups and organizations who manipulate and control the public discourse, and the actions of those individuals in this regard. "Knowledge is defined as beliefs that meet the epistemic criteria of each community, such as reliable perception, discourse or inference" (Van Dijk, 2016: 68); hence it can be applied in the construction of individuals' mental models to represent the way they experience, perceive, and interpret the environmental issues.

On the other side, the environmental shared knowledge among the members of a group is not sufficient in the analysis of environmental discourse because most people may know what environmentalism is about or what environmental issues exist in a society. But not all the people or groups have similar attitudes and ideologies toward that. Each specific individual or group may associate environmentalism with positive or negative evaluations based on their own norms and values. Therefore, more fundamental and dominant ideologies may control the attitudes of a particular group toward environmentalism or even change them. As a result, the idea of 'US' versus 'THEM' will affect the environmental discourse structure either negatively or positively.

Van Dijk (2016a) applies his own approach to the understanding of racist discourse in the racist propaganda in the European Parliament elections of 2014. He looks at a political billboard, which was used for the political parties to win votes in the parliament. He analyzes the discursive and semiotic structures on the billboard to explain the three components of SCA, i.e., discourse, cognition, and society in the European Parliament. Van Dijk (2016a) also exemplifies the use of SCA as a focus on the anti-racist discourse. He examines some of the discursive strategies of anti-racist contributions to a parliamentary hearing on the Bill for Racial Equality in Brazil.

Within the SCA framework, he analyzes the discourse of some of the participants in the debate by focusing on topics, topoi, arguments, lexicon, and metaphors to highlight the anti-racist discourse structures. He interprets and explains the discourse in terms of underlying mental models, sustaining attitudes, and ideologies. He finally evaluates the social conditions and functions of such discourse and cognition as a contribution to the system of anti-racism in Brazil.

Taking Van Dijk's examples of applying the SCA in the study of racist/anti-racist discourses as a model, I found it useful in studying the aspects of environmentalism in Iran. To the best of my knowledge, there are few studies that focus on the study of environmentalism in Iran. The major contribution to understanding this concept has been done by Fadaee (2011, 2012) (see details in chapter 2). She focuses on the social and political dimensions of environmental movements in Iran and provides the causes and effects that led to the environmental movement in the late 1990s. Afrasiabi (2003) also evaluates the evolution of the environmental movements in Iran, based on the perspectives "from below," i.e., the groups and organizations, which have emerged as part of Iran's nascent civil society, and "from above," i.e., government bureaucracies associated with the government. He examines the record of these perspectives in response to the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea. Jahangard (2017) evaluates the impact of the economy and sustainable developments on environmental degradation. Few studies such as Shobeir, et al. (2014), Arta, et al. (2012), Lahijanian (2011), Karimi (2003), and Bahreini and Mobarghei (1997) highlight the role of education in environmental awareness. As far as I know, there is no known research that focuses on the role of cultural concepts in understanding environmentalism and environmental awareness in Iran. Thus, this study could be considered significant in this field.

Furthermore, since CDA is not informed by a single theoretical perspective (Hart, 2010; Van Dijk, 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2009), it is also eclectic in its approach to draw wide and extensive perspectives from other disciplines as well. As such, to serve better the purpose of the study, I combined the method of CDA with two other theoretical models, semiotic and narrative analysis in response to collective memory and shared knowledge for a more comprehensive perspective on the study of environmental discourse in the context of this study. In the following sections, I will overview these two models.

1.4.2. Semiotics and Semiology

Along with the CDA and SCA, which are the main theoretical and methodological basis for my research, I should touch on the theory of semiotics as well. The semiotic theory is useful when my research addresses cultural, traditional, folkloric, and mythological images and symbols, both linguistically (i.e., idioms and metaphors) and non-linguistically (e.g., the image of fairies) in the TV series to promote environmentalism in Iran. Scholars refer to both "semiotic theory" and "semiology theory" depending on the original source. Ezzaher (2011) cites Barthes's "semiology theory" in which he "used linguistics as a model in the analysis of other social and cultural phenomena" while engaging "nonlinguistic languages" in order to "expose their ideological content" (Ezzaher, 2011: 428).

Ezzaher (2011) refers to both 'Semiotics' and 'semiology' for the study of 'signs' and 'signification' as a significant part of communication and meaning-making. They aim to "explore how signs, understood as social constructs are shaped by and through language" (Ezzaher, 2011: 425). Ferdinand de Saussure was the first scholar, who proposed the term 'semiology' to define the 'arbitrary' nature of the 'sign' as the result of a relationship between the 'signified' (the mental concept) and 'signifier' (the form of a word or a phrase). Saussure

points out that the sign does not exist independently of the language, but it is a link between a concept (as a signal) and a sound pattern (as the signification) (Saussure, 1983 [original 1916]: 66-67). In other words, words or phrases are not inherently meaningful. They rather work as signifiers, which represent something. The signifier is combined with the object or its mental concept as the signified in the brain to make a meaningful sign, which plays a role in social life.

Ezzaher (2011) also notes that 'semiotics' is often linked to Charles Sanders Peirce. Unlike Saussure's dualistic semiology (signified and signifier), he finds that Peirce examines the study of signs in a more complex way, proposing that semiosis (the process of signification) is "the cooperation of the sign, its object, and its interpretant" (Ezzaher, 2011: 426). In Peircean semiotics, signs are classified into the categories of symbols, icons, and indices, which stand for an object. The object conveys a meaning that determines or influences the sign in order to determine or influence the interpretant (Peirce, 1934-48: 484). The interpretant performs a completing function for the relationship between the sign and the object. Eco (1976) makes a distinction between the interpretant and interpreter and points out that the interpretant, "guarantees the validity of the sign, even in the absence of the interpreter" (Eco, 1976: 70), thus requires its own naming by using another sign as well. He adds that to theory and says it is "a process of unlimited semiosis" (ibid.)

Following Saussure and Peirce, semiotics and the concept of sign went beyond the mainstream of linguistic thought and developed into various disciplines from anthropology to psychoanalysis, and literary criticism, which all focused on the systematic operations of signs (Ezzaher, 2011: 427-428). Among many scholars, I depend on Barthes, "who used linguistics as a model in the analysis of other social and cultural phenomena" (id.: 428). As Robinson (2011) notes, for Barthes, not only signs but also actions are mediated by language. He even "views

non-linguistic signs as carrying linguistic meanings" (Robinson, 2011: para. 13). Weber (2011: 67) notes that Barthes sees the aspects of cultural objects and practices of everyday life (such as wine in French culture) as 'myths," and examines their signification in order to expose their ideological content (Ezzaher, 2011: 428). Barthes (1968: 27-28) frames four systematic binary categories of language and speech, signified and signifier, syntagm and paratagm, denotation and connotation as the characteristics of structuralist thought to analyze the signification of social and cultural objects and practices. In analyzing the social and cultural objects and practices, Barthes uses the myths to reveal that objects are structured in meaningful relationships via narratives to express collective cultural values.

Reference to Barthes's semiology theory is useful in my research in order to illustrate how figurative language works along the cultural and mythological and cultural images to study environmentalism. Speech or dialog concerning the environmental meanings is marked by a richness of speech figures in the poetic theme of the *Āb-pariā* television series. This functions as the linguistic signifier and is associated with the cultural and mythological signs of the fairies in the series as the non-linguistic signifiers to signify environmentalism (signified) in an Iranian context. The signification process of environmentalism and environmental messages is enriched with the visual description of the object (the environmental issues) in the series to signify the human impacts of the environmental issues. On the other side, the visual image of the fairies and the drought devil are directly attached to their roles as the guardians and the destroyer of nature and resources in the traditional literature. In this whole process, meanings are projected from the signs viewed by the audience (an act of signifying) to provide familiarity in the mind of the audience. Referencing Barthes's semiology theory, the images of fairies, devil, and figurative language are not only single signs to be viewed by the audience. The reason for their ubiquity in

the TV series is to provide an ideology by referring to the historical role of the fairies as the guardians of nature and by using cultural expressions. These signs and the process of signification help with the deconstruction of cultural and traditional images for new purposes in the mind of the audience. They then convince the audience to look for deeper meanings of the objects and ask questions about the (environmental) messages they perceive. Both Barthes's semiology theoretical tradition and more general semiotic theory are relevant to my research. I will refer to more recent and broader theories of semiotics as interpretative devices throughout the dissertation and only distinguish semiology theory from semiotic theory if it is important to do so.

1.4.3. Collective Memory and Narratives

The sociocognitive approach in the critical analysis of environmental discourse partially deals with cognition. Among socially shared cognitions shaping the discourse, collective memory and its link to narratives from the past can be also listed as a relevant piece to my research. Collective memory refers to the recollection of events shared by a social group with the aim of uniting its members who seek to construct and maintain a particular identity within the group (Britton, 2012). The size of the social group does not matter. It could be as small as a family, or larger in the scale of a community, a generation, or a nation. However, what matters is the "collective remembering" of the past shared by the members of a group, while narratives "serve as cultural tools for members of a collective as they recount the past" (Weretsch, 2008: 120).

Through studying traditional religious traditions, Durkheim (1995) highlights a sense of collective effervescence which is marked by shared rituals, traditional beliefs, values, and norms among a social group. They equip the individuals to remember the unity of that experience. He

notes that "collective thoughts" make the individuals connect together as a group to create a common experience. According to Misztal (2003: 123), Durkheim suggests that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and thus the social identity of individuals, and this is where the 'collective memory' may be seen in the notion of social memory and as "one of the elementary forms of social life."

Britton (2012) attributes the first use of the term 'collective memory' to Maurice Halbwachs, who focused on societal remembrance. For Halbwachs (1992), collective memory is constructed within the social group. The group constructs the memory and individual members of the group do the work of remembering. Later, Halbwachs also suggests that social constructions of memory are influenced by the present needs of social groups. The collective memory is constructed within the group by the understanding of those present needs. Hence, the group reconstructs the past memories to explain the present issues and establish social narratives within the group (Halbwachs, 1992).

Nora (1996) develops the idea of Halbwachs's collective memory and states that collective memory is used by the group to interpret past events while they are separated from the past. Nora argues that the members of a group select particular memories of the past as their collective memory and reconstruct it as a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of the group. For Nora, this process is done by those in power within the group and serves as a tool and object of power.

Considering these theories of collective memory, I find the work of Wertsch (2008) regarding the narrative organization of collective memory a useful model to evaluate the environmental attitudes of Iranians through analyzing their narratives. Wertsch (2008) notes that in a sociocultural and sociopolitical context, narratives serve as a capacity or as cultural tools for

the members of a group as they recount the past. He examines the power of such tools in shaping Russian collective memory during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In this process, he utilizes the distinction between 'specific narratives,' i.e., information about specific dates, places, events, and 'schematic narrative templates,' which are "abstract forms of narrative representation and typically shape specific narratives" (Wertsch, 2008: 120). He argues that the study of collective memory requires considering "a second level of narrative organization, one concerned with general patterns rather than specific events and actors" Wertsch (2008: 123). At this level, the schematic narrative templates can "produce replicas that vary in their details but reflect a single general storyline" and "do not deal with just one concrete episode from the past." These templates work as "a generalized schema" when talking about various episodes of the past (ibid.). Such a model can be useful in extracting the general patterns of specific narratives collected from a social group about a single shared topic.

According to Bietti (2014), Wertsch's model suggests that personal and collective memories are distributed between social actors and narratives in which social actors and cultural tools interact in a specific social context to shape narratives. The model examines how cultural tools construct discursive representations of the past rather than the way in which people perform the same action. In this process, the interaction between cultural tools and individuals indicates how important individuals are in carrying memories, how they project their mental model in remembering past salient events, and how the interactions build the content of schematic narrative templates in response to collective memory.

Applying Barthes's model of semiology and Wertsch's model in narrative constructions in this study will help to better understand the influential factors in shaping the environmental discourse of the *Āb-pariā* series and the way the discourse is understood by viewers of the series.

Semiotic analysis of signs and symbols (in the framework of SCA) also determines how the

mental model of the series viewers is influenced through the signification process of signs

embedded in the series. They also clarify how the viewers respond to those stimuli derived from

collective memory and narratives.

Chapter 2: Environmental Discourse

In this chapter, I focus on environmentalism as a recent concept in the global context and provide a general overview of that from social and anthropological perspectives. I then discuss the notion of environmental discourse and environmental ideology to see how environmental issues are addressed and what elements are involved to shape environmental content. I then examine the role of media, as one of the influential factors in the environmental coverage and provide some insights on how media outlets shape environmental discourse. Finally, I turn to the case of Iran and explore how modern Iranian environmentalism has emerged and developed historically and chronologically, and what other factors have influenced its emergence. I provide one theoretical perspective by which Iranian environmentalism can be understood as a social movement.

2.1. Environment, Environmentalism: Ideas, Definitions, History

Environmentalism, in a broad sense, entails the advocacy of the preservation, restoration, or improvement of the natural environment. As O'Riordan (1981: ix) states, "environmentalism is as much a state of being as a mode of conduct or a set of policies. Certainly, it can no longer be identified simply with the desire to protect ecosystems or conserve resources – these are merely superficial manifestations of much more deeply-rooted values."

In the sub-discipline of environmental anthropology, environmentalism is the exploration of the relationships between humans and their environment in the quest for a viable future across space and time and within cultural responsibilities. Milton (1993: 1-9) states that environmentalism is considered a social commitment that seeks priority on the survival of a diversity of life on earth with humankind and pursues public consciousness. Environmentalism looks at the analyses of environmental issues both conceptually and empirically. Environmental

problems are defined in the domain of human ecology, i.e., human interaction with the

environment through the medium of culture, and solutions to these issues are interpreted across

cultural boundaries and cultural variations. Thus, cultural barriers could affect political ecology,

and make the environmental policies more sensitive to the local needs of particular people in

particular places within a particular social unit. This framework of environmental anthropology

has roots in activism and may result in environmental advocacy and environmental protection.

The notions of environmentalism and environmental protection are often represented by

an action or a movement, which seeks to incorporate the impact of changes to the environment.

The ideas of environmentalism, infused with the knowledge of the causes and consequences of

the environmental problems, beliefs, and values, shaping arguments that the environmental

problems are real and that some action is necessary. The types of actions may be regarded as

movements and may vary according to the diversity within environmentalism and the

concentrations on the problems. Yet movements may include investment in a variety of actions.

Such actions may range from emphasizing the distribution of environmental resources, shifting

consciousness to alter lifestyles and decrease consumption, to eliminating inequalities or even

changing the national or international environmental laws. Elliott (2017) considers

environmentalism as a political and ethical movement that seeks to improve and protect the

natural environment through environmental governance and via regional or national agencies.

Hassaniyan (2020) states that environmentalism seeks the adoption of forms of political,

economic, and social organizations that are thought to be necessary for the protection of the

environment by humans, and a reassessment of humanity's relationship with nature.

Environmental movements are usually considered anthropocentric, or human-centered,

and focus on the negative effects that environmental degradation has on human beings and their

interests. It may also be considered biocentric, or life-centered, in which humans are morally bound to protect the environment for their own sake. With any of these classifications, environmentalism is centered on ecology, health, and human rights, and it covers diverse aspects of environmental issues in terms of scientific, social, and political. The environmental movement aims to create an ecologically sustainable society in which the natural resources should be managed properly using public policy and individual behaviors. A range of organizations, from large to grassroots, internationally represents environmental movements. They usually call for reform and alteration of the relationship between nature and humans, and between governments and citizens.

Bringing up the above perspectives, I aim to say that the global modern environmentalism (after the 1960s) has directed itself toward the understanding of the various aspects of environmentalism such as scientific, political, economic, social, and cultural, and how each aspect has been reformulated relevantly to address the root causes of environmental degradation. Our critical environmental vision sets to render a meaningful relationship between these aspects and the act of humans in nature and tries to understand the application of normative commitments in terms of environmental movements. Therefore, by using these relationships, environmental movements aim to offer a framework for inquiry and action toward the recent environmentalism. The framework stresses the visibility of environmental problems, beyond the biophysical limits, that are caused by humans and consequently affect human life. The movements also tend to show that there has been a profound shift in environmentalism as people recognize and understand the ecological, social, economic, and political effects of environmental issues, and as environmental values can be (re)produced as public values. In order to understand

the core of modern environmentalism, I will briefly recount the history of environmentalism in the West, and how the rise of modern environmentalism began.

The history of environmentalism and its emergence in the West, and particularly in the U.S., has influenced the understanding of people of different places around the world about environmentalism since the twentieth century; however, each place has generated and developed its own type of environmentalism. In the mid-twentieth century, a new understanding of environmentalism developed in the West, which was stressing the importance of human action in shaping the environment. This latter argument became the core of environmentalism as we know it today and shaped the rise of modern environmentalism in the 1950s and afterward.

Before the rise of modern environmentalism in the U.S. and spreading worldwide under the influence of the U.S environmentalism, environmental movements had first emerged as "progressive conservation movement[s]" and "in reaction to reckless exploitation of the United States' natural resources." It was later developed as an environmental agenda, which "focused on the creation of urban parks and the protection of public and industrial worker health and safety" (Mertig and Dunlap, 2001: 4687-4688). These two types of movements were not considered as cohesive social movements yet. However, the two events of the publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring in 1962, which brought attention to the use of chemicals in the environment, and celebrating April 22, 1970, as the Earth Day in the U.S. can be marked as the shift to modern environmentalism. These two events quickly achieved high levels of support from the public, activists, and even elites, especially because it was simultaneously during the era of widespread political activism and reform in the U.S. Nevertheless, the environmental movement, like any social movement, was still "far from monolithic" and required more mainstream movements locally and regionally (id.: 4688-4689). Although the modern environmentalism organizationally

and ideologically has taken roots in the U.S. and has spread across the globe, "the USA [environmentalism] is not unique in this regard, nor has environmentalism been confined to the richer countries of the world"; and, "activism on behalf of environmental protection has emerged in many nations, both industrialized and non-industrialized," and even in non-western countries around the globe (id.: 4689). The only difference might be that the activism on behalf of environmental issues may have not been labeled as environmentalism until relatively recently. Environmentalism in non-western, unindustrialized, or developing countries, instead, may be more motivated by a concern for environmental protection, not only at the local or national level but also at the international level. However, environmentalism under this label is still opposed by the forces of globalization and is affected by the growing global backlash against environmental movements.

The varieties of environmentalism from the beginning to today may not be plotted out historically and chronologically; however, it is possible to indicate the 1970s in the U.S. was "a major shift in the environmentalist movements, marking the passage from a focus on wilderness protection to a wider interest on urban and industrial problems" (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014:10). Therefore, the varieties of environmentalism may not be viewed as sequential or evolutionary models, but they have developed in a parallel and competing way to care for the environment. In this regard, one categorization of varieties of environmentalism suggested by Martinez-Alier and Guha (1997) provides three main branches as the most effective global accounts: 1) the cult of wilderness that embodies "the untouched nature and its protection through parks and environmental laws." It encourages the consideration of nature for its own value; 2) the eco-efficiency, on the other side, emphasizes on "using of nature in a rational or sustainable way" in which the environment is a space for wise human intervention and the human has the right to use

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the nature. The eco-efficiency variety offers better management of natural resources and wastes with the help of scientific and technological tools. It focuses on the concept of 'carrying capacity' which sets limits on using resources and producing wastes by including nature in the economy. In other words, eco-efficiency "focuses on the reproducing economic growth without damaging world's natural capital" (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014: 7-11); and, 3) the environmentalism of the poor, and the environmental justice movements that do not separate the daily life from the nature, and are against that type of environmentalism that only rich people care about nature. This type of environmentalism is included in the new social movements by which values, and cultural identities are more highlighted than class identities and economic interests. It mostly focuses on the connection between economic growth, economic production, public health, ecological problems, and geographical displacement of sources, and highlights that they are not distributed equally among classes, races, and genders. Environmentalism of the poor or environmental justice has "grown out of local, regional, national and global ecological distribution conflicts caused by economic growth and social inequalities." Hence, the poor, minorities, and women are affected more (Martinez-Alier, 2002: 18-21).

So far, almost all the concepts of environmentalism, environmental movements or activism, varieties of environmentalism, and environmental anthropology are used to focus on 'discourse.' They are used to interpret the sphere of thoughts within the environmentalism to build the environmental ideology across cultures. Below, the notions of environmental discourse and environmental ideology are briefly discussed.

2.2. Environmental Discourse and Environmental Ideology

Environmental discourse is a system of interactional and transactional meanings about the environment and its natural and social qualities. It engages with environmental knowledge

and features various ways by which environmental issues are viewed. The concept of environmental discourse developed by Litfin (1994), Hajer (1995), and Dryzek (1997) emphasizes the notions of textual and spoken interactions about the environment, and its relationship with environmental ideology as a belief system toward the environment by using political, social, economic, and cultural structures of society (Novikau, 2016). This concept contributes to the understanding of major belief systems, our attitudes, and behavior about human interactions with nature and emphasizes how the ideologies around them are constructed.

As the world has witnessed increased environmental degradation, an increasing attention has been given to the impacts of human activities on such issues nationally and internationally. However, not all the countries in the world pay an equal amount of attention to every issue. Simultaneously, a focus of public attention and governmental policy regarding the environment is also shaped around the world by various groups of environmentalists, politicians, businesses or individuals. Similarly, approaches to solving environmental problems have also been emerging in the world. All of these create discourses in which various aspects may be discussed. But how is possible to understand such a discourse?

Ideology plays an important role in the understanding of the actors of environmental discourse because it shapes and organizes groups' attitudes and interests, and targets other groups' actions and attitudes (Sargent, 1990). Consequently, a relationship between discursive and ideological formations is developed by which the meaning of words, expressions, and statements are determined by the ideological positions of those who use them (Pecheux, 1982). Environmental ideology, in particular, takes a form of a coherent system of patterns that advocate for actions and change in society and individuals' attitudes against environmental degradation. It answers questions about what we should do about environment and

environmental issues, and why it matters. Environmental ideology not only interconnects the core environmental beliefs between humans and nature but also it deals with identifying the main environmental problems and prioritizing them (Novikau, 2016: 15-16). Thus, it raises the issue of interpretations of the environmental discourse. When people think, speak, and write about the environment, they interpret the concept of the environment through the lens of their belief system or ideology that results in a certain kind of environmental discourse.

The differences in interpretation of environmental issues by a particular individual or group can create a broad range of meanings for addressing environmental issues that may be defined as a 'myth,' 'concern,' 'problem,' 'threat' and so forth. Each of these non-neutral or emotionally-laden words may reflect a particular type of ideology, opinion, or attitude such as denial, skepticism, support, or advocacy toward the environmental issue, and it shows how various groups may see or interpret environmentalism, and build their ideology. These ideologies are shaped as the principal issues of public and political concern, and according to the cultural norms as well as political policies. In this regard, "the environment encompasses a huge range of political subjects requiring very different policy approaches and involving a wide variety of interest groups and institutions" (Jacobs, 1997: 1). Although the subject matters in environmental problems share the same concern in one way or another with the relationship between human society and the natural world, their diversity may provide different motivations in public concern and the political arena. Therefore, environmental issues are treated differently and are organized under political principles. It means that the political and cultural identification, which creates a social movement in its own right, builds the ideological structure that is environmentalism. As such, environmentalism could be perceived differently across the world and in different regions as it is heavily influenced by political processes which are unique in each place.

Generally speaking, the divergent ideologies about environmental issues has caused many debates about environmental issues among different groups and various sectors of the society including the government, public, media, economy, industry, education, and so forth while the environment is tied to all of these domains with a sharing core of politics. Some groups are seeking advocacy for the environment while some others deny the existing environmental issues. Therefore, it is important to understand the ideological framework under which environmentalism is advocated or denied.

Among various factors which affect the environmental discourses, media outlet plays an important role in making information available to the people toward environmental degradation as well as in shaping the public opinion about environmentalism. I hereby evaluate how media outlet, in general, works to be a platform for environmental coverage. I aim to focus on the role of media, namely public television, in Iranian environmentalism in my dissertation.

2.3. Role of Media in Shaping Environmental Discourse

Our globalized planet is highly dependent on media and communication networks. Media include traditional and new ones such as prints, broadcast media, the internet, and social media, and each one seeks its own audience. But what is the role of media in environmentalism? How are the ideas of environmentalism transmitted, shared, and developed in society through media?

The media, including press media, mass media, and social media, provide news and information for various publics. Even though it is almost impossible, they ideally aim to work as a platform for an open and transparent discourse between different sectors of the society, and follow their own professional norms to pursue the coverage of a wide variety of issues in society, and even across national boundaries. Numerous events that happen in society shape the primary media content, as do the owners and purveyors of the media. Until recently, at least, media

consumers used to assume media sources were reliable, official, and knowledgeable. Purveyors of media aim to gain the attention of an audience and provide chances for further communications and interpretations. Since media purveyors have their own ideologies, even in the supposedly objective process of compiling facts and events into messages, media outlets may act biasedly, and the validity of their content may be challenged.

Environmentalist discourse also, among many other controversial topics addressed in media, shapes emergent frames of news and knowledge. Environmentalist discourse can be blamed for emphasizing problems and causes of the environmental issues or the coverage of the interpretations, judgments, and remedies of those issues (Luedecke and Boykoff, 2017: 3). Media outlets function powerfully to shape the meanings of environmentalism and to influence the citizens' views on how they value the environment. In other words, they bridge knowledge about the environment and environmental issues, "mediat[ing] public perceptions, attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors related to environmental issues … as well as policymaker perceptions, understanding, and potential decision-making" (id.: 7).

Factors and dynamics behind media coverage may also affect public understanding of environmentalism. On the other side, many professional practices within the media context, reflexive actions, institutional logics, economic decisions, and political pressures influence media coverage of the environment; and media content is "infused with the resonance of history, culture, fear, and affection, of global sensibilities and local obsessions" (Lester, 2010: 2-3). Therefore, the complex and nonlinear interactions that shape the public perceptions of environmental issues through media are not "simply translations of the truth" and they may "polarize perception between different societal groups" (Luedecke and Boykoff, 2017: 3-4). Public perceptions of such media presentations may also cause conflicts between media and the

groups of environmentalists, the government, and various power groups on many levels to affect

social change. However, the media outlets do not always promote social change, as they

sometimes limit or prevent such change. Nonetheless, the media are frequently an agent of social

control toward environmentalism (Neuzil and Kovarik, 1996). Media outlets create ways by

which the local, national, and international communities can improve their environmental

understandings, and consequently connect it with environmental awareness.

Media, including both the traditional ones, such as mass media, and the new ones, such as

Internet-based media and social media, can focus on awareness based on the ways they inform,

educate, and entertain their audience (Khan, 2016). Thus, the media's key role, and the ideal one,

in promoting environmental awareness is: 1) to explain the environmental issues to the public,

and elaborate on the consequent concerns regarding them; 2) to explain and elaborate on

environmental policies, regulations, and plans to the public; and, on the other side, 3) to reflect

the concerns of the public regarding those environmental issues; and 4) to pressure the decision-

makers to solve the environmental issues. Following these steps properly and without bias,

media outlets are able to provide conditions in society to facilitate innovations, adaptations, and

advancements in environmental protection, environmental consciousness, and even

environmental movements (McQuail, 1994).

The level of involvement of media in addressing environmentalism and environmental

challenges depends on factors that are interrelated with different layers of society. The media's

primary agenda to focus on such a controversial issue and promote environmental awareness

depends on the dominant values and system norms in a society that shape the media content,

which in turn reinforces them (Gans, 1979). Media is structurally dependent on dominant power

groups, i.e., political, economic, and cultural centers of power, as sources of information, partly

because they offer a regular supply of news. In addition, bureaucratic agencies and procedures serve as legitimizing agents for media, especially for the various types of mass media and press media, which affect the content of media (Neuzil and Kovarik, 1996: xviii) based on the favor of a particular group of power. These factors may marginalize or even ignore environmental problems unless the media have more autonomy from different powerful groups. If an environmental controversy and the groups involved are in line with the standard values and institutional norms of that particular media service, as well as in line with the values of the social system, the environmental issue could be more quickly exposed in various public arenas. Hence, the media are able to "bring it into a common public forum where it can be discussed by a general audience" (Schudson, 1995: 19).

Conceptualizing media coverage of environmental concerns is based on three influential factors: individual (e.g., a journalist who is in charge of a story coverage), organizational (e.g., the media logical pattern for a story coverage), and external (e.g., social institutions and cultural norms) (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). These three factors may raise the idea of 'structuralism' as an approach to investigating the role of media in the environmental coverage, and they are principally concerned with the concept of ideology and social factors in the media coverage (Anderson, 2009: 171). The above three factors aim to make a relationship between media professionals, their sources, organizational or state norms as well as cultural values, and emphasize that they are intertwined with ideological biases and structural media logic in a wider cultural context. In such a situation, a media outlet constructs environmental messages, emphasizes particular meanings and discourses, and privileges some ideas over others.

Interpretations of the ideological stance of those involved with media coverage, and the media logic that produces a balance of ideas in media coverage, should create a "norm of

balance" as a powerful value that can grasp the audience's attention (Bruggemann and Engesser, 2017: 59). Media outlets should typically "emphasize the values of neutrality" or even cover both sides of a story, however, they mostly "express a great deal of personal interests" (Anderson, 2009: 172). They do not always demonstrate such a balance of ideas in their coverage especially when they cover controversial issues such as environmental concerns.

Environmental messages that the media outlets aim to transmit can either advocate environmentalism and promote environmental awareness, or they can deny the environmental problems and marginalize the public awareness. Within these two extremes, media outlets may structure a cultural, socio-economic, and political context by which the more radical or more moderate forms of communication are mobilized among the public audience; or, they may suggest that a balanced coverage may amplify uncertainty (Boykoff and Roberts, 2007). Media outlets may also be assessed based on a 'political economy' approach. This approach can raise the question of inequalities in power and resources (Anderson, 2009; Brevini, 2016), and may bring up the question of who controls the media coverage. This idea may be usually related to the economic factor by which, for example, the media are funded or raise money; or it may be related to how autonomous or dependent on the political parties or the state the media function. Looking through that lens may note how the government, powerful political groups, powerful industry groups, special lobbies, and companies may affect the media content, manipulate the scientific claims and exploit the media content by funding the media corporates or by investing in those media corporations. Therefore, there are factors behind the scenes, which create patterns for media content. They function as controlling forces over the media that have "the power to silence and suppress issues" or "publicize them" (Anderson, 2009: 173).

In contrast to the two above approaches of structuralism and political economy, 'culturalism,' another approach to evaluating media's coverage of environmental issues, emphasizes less on the economic, political, or structural factors, and is more concerned with the cultural norms by which the media content is treated (Anderson, 1997). This approach examines the media content in depth and qualitatively, and mostly focuses on the media's social effects and influence, and how the messages are interpreted for a particular group. Therefore, the selection, emphasis, and presentation of the media content are based on the meaningful categories that are linked to a wider socio-cultural context of specific events and particular cases that tends to semiotic and discourse analysis.

What I discussed above centered on how media outlets, including of all kinds, function to cover an issue such as environmentalism and environmental concepts. I highlighted how media coverage of environmental problems is heavily influenced by socio-political factors, and it is affected by cultural norms and values as well. In my dissertation, I am going to focus on one type of broadcast media, namely television broadcasts, to answer my questions about the media's impact on transmitting ideologies of environmentalism in Iran.

Based on all explained in the above sections, there is no doubt that an overview on the topic of environmentalism is not enough, and more ethnographic research is required to understand how environmental issues and environmental movements are addressed cross-culturally, and how different socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts in various countries shape the environmental content. As the focus of my dissertation, I will closely look at the case of Iran and examine how these relations are framed within the Iranian context. Meanwhile, I turn my focus to the background and history of Iranian environmentalism and look at how it has

emerged and developed. I will then recount how environmentalism in Iran can be considered as a part of social movements.

2.4. Environmentalism in Iran: Background, Emergence, Dynamics

Environmentalism in Iran historically has been primarily concerned about the conservation and protection of the environment, and it officially "began, as it so often does, with concern for wildlife" in 1956 when the first conservation law in the country was legislated and the 'Iran's hunting Center' (*Kānoon-e Shekār-e Iran*) was created (Firuz, 1998). The center was an official corporation, which initially aimed to protect the animal species in danger of extinction from hunting. Following the nationalization of all forests, rangelands, and water resources in the 1960s, the Iran hunting center developed into an organization called the 'Iran's Hunting and Fishing Organization' (*Sāzemān-e Shekār va Seid-e Iran*) in 1967. In addition to being responsible for wildlife, protected areas, inland fishing, and conservation, the newly developed organization was authorized to do research and studies about the life of species in wildlife, determining the areas of national parks in the country, and establishing the museums and institutes of zoology.

In 1971, Iran's Organization of Hunting and Fishing added a new responsibility regarding controlling environmental degradation to its agenda and developed into the Department of Environmental Conservation (*Sāzemān-e Hefāzat-e Mohit-e Zist*) (Firuz, 1998). The newly established department changed into a governmental organization in 1974 and was renamed 'The Department of Environment' (*Sāzeman-e Mohit-e Zist*) (Department of Environment, 2018). The governmental Department of Environment, attached to the office of the time prime minister, was established with a wider authority under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act in 1974, and its establishment and various categories of its administration can be considered as the

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beginning of environmentalism, as we know it today, in more systematic efforts (Firuz, 1998). Environmentalism, which primarily had begun with saving the wildlife, then continued to evolve to face up new environmental issues such as air pollution, water pollution, water shortage, and water management in contemporary Iran. During the first decade after the Islamic revolution of 1979, contemporary environmentalism was reaching its peak in response to the "explosive population growth, urbanization, industrial mismanagement, as well as the devastation brought in by eight years of war with Iraq" (Fadaee, 2011: 81).

The Department of Environment achieved a new level of importance with rising the environmental concerns that led it to perform a variety of functions such as: "environmental monitoring of the air, water, and soil in Iran; devising short and long-term environmental programs and priorities; promulgating regulations; public education to promote environmental values; organizing civic activities to protect and improve the environment; preparing environmental impact assessments of various economic and industrial projects; training of environmental experts; organization of an environmental monitoring laboratory; preparing environmental legislation…; the preservation, along with other relevant organizations, of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries; exploring renewable energy sources; organizing workshops and conferences; databank on pollution; and publishing the scientific quarterly, *The Environment* (*Mohit-e Zist*)" (Afrasiabi, 2003: 439).

The reform movement, which is mostly associated with the presidential election of Mohamad Khatami in 1997, provided the dynamics of the environmentalism rise in Iran. The reform movement itself was "the result of deep structural changes in Iranian society and culture" (Fadaee, 2012: 64). It provided a situation in which the intellectuals could begin to rethink all of the old notions to find a solution for the crises in the country and embrace the discourse of civil

society as a novel concept in Iranian society and politics (Khiabani and Sreberny, 2001). That movement brought many reforms in many aspects of Iranian society, including environmental actions and activities, which mostly led to some structural transformations and fundamental changes, and consequently accelerated the globalization process during the last decade of the twentieth century. Additionally, Iran's participation in the United Nations Conference on Global Environmental Issues (Rio Summit) in 1992, the restructuring of the Iran Department of Environment in 1997, the launch of the National Action Plan for Environmental protection, and the launch of the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Small Grants Program in 2001 promoted the environmental activism in Iran as a consequence of global concern (Fadaee, 2011: 81-84).

The launch of the National Action Plan for Environmental Protection in 1997 provided a bridge for the collaboration between official organizations and civil society, and public participation was included (Fadaee, 2011: 82). When the impulse of public participation in environmental activism was launched, raising awareness about environmental issues and encouraging people to be active citizens in the environmental sphere became the two goals of many environmentalists. Therefore, various strands of environmental groups were shaped mostly in urban areas, and each group concentrated on issues such as climate change, pollution, women and the environment, youth and the environment, and so forth (id.: 85-90). The environmental activists who were associated with the government worked in parallel with those activists who acted independently or voluntarily. However, the public participation was along with a progressive politics from the government since the Iranian environmentalism is seen as political "with caution by some government officials who view it as a cover for political and secular nationalism" (Afrasiabi, 2003: 433). This means that, for some people, being an environmental activist is a kind of "platform for political participation." This idea also proposes that the

participation of Iranians in environmentalism, either public participation or the activists', takes place in the political structure of the society, i.e., "a semi-authoritarian political system, where everything is under the direct control of the regime" (Fadaee, 2011: 89-90). As a result, it is not easy to engage large sectors of society and mobilize the public toward environmentalism. Consequently, the environmental movements have mostly been shaped on small scales and concentrated around local policies and those issues which have been politically less sensitive.

In addition to public participation, many environmental NGOs, most of which are based in Tehran, grew to bridge the gap between the government and people to promote environmental protection and sustainable developments and raise public awareness and environmental ethics ("Environmental Organizations and NGOs," n.d.). However, the environmental movement that each group sought was "principally at two fronts, i.e., grassroots level, and the state, and were "predominantly [the] movement of urban Iranians growing most rapidly among women, the youth, professionals, and people of middle and upper-income levels" (Afrasiabi, 2003: 433). Therefore, from that point in the late 1990s, the environmental movement could have been demonstrating that the dominant social model in response to the environment has been mostly based on the pro-environmental attitudes, at a grassroots level, that could support the enactment of environmental policies as well, and provide public participation locally and nationally (Salehi, 2010).

Along with the development of environmentalism in Iran from the 1970s to today, environmental education was also initiated with the establishment of the Office of Environmental Education within the Department of Environment, and it was a turning point to centralize environmental education. The office with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education began to include environmental concepts in the elementary and high school textbooks via the translation

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of the environmental concepts from other languages (Sadough, 2003). Then the sectors of translation, libraries, and audio-visual material were added to the framework of the Office of Environmental Education. Later in 1975, the Department of Environment began to cooperate with higher educational institutions and added educational programs about training in environmental protection to the curriculum (Bahreini and Mobarghei, 1997). However, before the Islamic revolution, due to the novelty of the Department of Environment and the newness of environmental education, there were no organized and regulated plans for the future, and all the environmental education was evolving around the "1) in-service training for staff, 2) implementing formal educational plans, and 3) enlightening public opinion" (Shobeiri, et al., 2014: 232). After the Islamic revolution, concern about environmental education was demonstrated by approving the Article 50 of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Constitution, which states:

> "In the Islamic Republic, preservation of the natural environment, in which the present and future generations must lead an ever-improving community life, is a public obligation. Therefore, all activities, economic or otherwise, which may cause irreversible damage to the environment, are forbidden" (Foltz, 2001: 159).

There was confusion about Article 50 that questioned what is meant by environmental preservation? How did it deal with environmental education? Some people thought that environmental education for the public meant a public call to learn and enhance the knowledge of the environment, and the Department of Environment was only responsible for that. Finally, the Environmental Preservation Council 1995 clearly stated that all social classes and businesses must address environmental education beyond the framework of a single agency or organization (Karimi, 2003). Therefore, an informal way of environmental education for the public was highlighted. Additionally, the Department of Environment required environmental training

programs on the public radio and television and published a quarterly scientific journal '*The Environment*' (Department of Environment, 2018). With the rise of the reform movement in the late 1990s and 2000s, the number of environmental NGOs which promoted environmental education increased and the educational sector of the Department of Environment was reformed and the Bureau of Environmental Education and Training, the Bureau of Public Participation, and the Bureau of Planning and Information were added. Provincial administrations were improved by the educational standards, and the number of environmental research and publications increased, and many environmental web pages and blogs were launched for all ages, intended for women, children, students, urban and rural societies (Shobeiri, et. al., 2014: 233-235). In 2008, the Environment and Sustainable Development Headquarters of Tehran Municipality, which used to manage the workgroups of water and wastewater, energy, solid waste, air pollution, and information system, added a new workgroup of environment and education to its agenda. The following tasks were defined and approved within this new workgroup:

> 1) preparation of the comprehensive plan of environmental education for the city of Tehran, 2) offering titles of study plans for recommendation to research centers to attain sustainable techniques of environmental education, 3) considering techniques to encourage public sharing, to raise the public's educational level, 4) drafting educational regulations and plans to present the environmental committee for study, and passing and suggesting the same to the Islamic Council of Tehran, and 5) studying and making comments on the plans and bills presented to the City Council and executing environmental education (Shobeiri, et. al., 2014: 238).

Despite all these efforts, there are still very few research and publications in Farsi that signify the social, anthropological, cultural, or political aspects of Iranian environmentalism. Most of the environmental research and literature "is allocated to the clarification of foreign scholars' opinions" on the global environmentalism (id.: 236), and the reason might be that all

these activities have been performed separately, and there has not been a unified plan that stresses the utilizing of the previous experiences as a guide for future activities. Therefore, there is a demand for more research and education in this field.

Overall, all the actions and activities described in the above sections paved the way toward the growth of the concept of environmentalism as we know it today, and it prepared the Iranian society to adhere to new values, such as new relations to nature during that period and afterward. In the following section, I will look at Iranian environmentalism as a part of a larger realm, which is the social movements, and provide some insights on that.

2.5. Environmentalism in Iran: A Part of Social Movements

Despite the limited literature about Iranian environmentalism, I here aim to bring attention to Iranian environmentalism as a part of a larger social realm, i.e., as a social movement. For this purpose, I first explain social movements and 'new social movement theory' based on Alain Touraine's (1995) and Alberto Melucci's (1996) model. Then I will provide an overview of the civil society of Iran and the sociopolitical conditions in which modern environmentalism emerged. By explaining the social circumstances that shifted the Iranian cultural, social, and political attitudes toward the social change, I will explain why environmentalism in Iran may be considered a part of the social movement.

Although there is no single definition of a social movement, most definitions share three criteria of "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani, 1992: 1). Social movements may be illustrated as "a system of collective action, by a group of people who are consciously aiming for or against a particular change in other people, structures, or relations" (Fadaee, 2012: 13). Within this frame, collective behaviors focus

on the emergent norms, processes of self-regulation, social creativity, and internal reforms in a society or among a community (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). As a result, the formation of social movements is conscious, organized, and goal-oriented; and individuals' or groups' participations are viewed as rational forces to make the movement happen (Fadaee, 2012: 16). Touraine (1995) and Melucci (1996) distinguish "new" social movements as reflecting fundamental shifts in social structure, and the emergence of a new society, which adheres to new values, identities, and symbols while challenging the old ones. New social movements emerge and are organized mostly in small-scale, anti-hierarchical and decentralized, and they usually address why and how the issues are raised, represented, and transformed within a society. By using the cultural norms and cultural patterns of the society, people mobilize themselves through social movements within the new context. They act in opposition to social domination to be able to (re)produce the 'self' freely and create new cultural models. Thus, all the actions are constituted based on rationalization and subjectivation (the two crucial elements of modernity) that aim for a change or reformation (Fadaee, 2012: 18-33).

In the case of Iran, as an example, modern social movements may be generally referred to as the movements after the Islamic revolution in 1979, and Iranian 'new social movements" are those so-called reform movements during the late 1990s and afterward. Flashbacks to the late 1990s and to the presidential election of Mohamad Khatami, Iran was experiencing a dynamic period of change. "A powerful movement for reform," and a new discourse of rights and civil society had emerged, which sought to create a more democratic Islamic state in Iran with a "new sense of activism, hope, and trust." The reform movement was the result of two decades of social, cultural, and political transformations since the 1979 revolution that had changed Iran into a theocratic state, which was opposed to any social Western values and non-Islamic social

behaviors. The growing movement was forming a collective identity outside the state's accepted behavior and code of conduct and was empowered by the youth, women, students, purveyors of media, and the ordinary people of various kinds as well as influential figures within the Islamic state. The reform movement was not only one movement, but also it appeared in the form of various movements, each of which mobilized around a free critical press, freedom of expression, the right to political participation, advocating of law and justice, women's rights, environmental protection. The series of these new reform movements were "penetrating the inner soul of Iranian society, becoming more institutionalized, changing the dominant political culture, and making a lasting imprint" (Yaghmaian, 2002: 7-25). They all aimed to create a more remarkable manifestation of resilience, creativity, and readiness to fight for change, i.e., a social change, and to give a rise to the 'new' social movements through people's everyday practices, thoughts, fears, and all their repertoires for change.

In such a changing atmosphere during Khatami's presidency, the country was encountering dramatic social and political openings. Those openings can be best illustrated by the increase in the number of independent newspapers and journals, and an unprecedented increase in the number of registered and unregistered NGOs including, but not limited to, the environmental NGOs, all of which actively promoted their missions in both rural and urban areas. As an example, the number of "youth and environmental organizations exceeded 2,500 after 2001" in addition to many other social and political associations, and professional and advocacy NGOs such as women's NGOs. (Monshipouri, 2016: 5-6).

The reformist era in Iran did not face a smooth pathway. The country was, on one hand struggling with the pressure from the conservative factions within the government. On the other hand, the government was encountering "the sluggish economic development and reform" due to

"a global recession and a sharp decline in oil prices," in addition to the persistent inflation in the economy, unemployment, and mismanagement in various sectors. As a result, President Khatami "failed to build and sustain a broader public support in the long term." It consequently made "the reformist camp vulnerable to a populist challenge, as the surprise 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad" (Monshipouri, 2016: 6). The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and 8 years of his presidency was a backlash against the reformist era and the social and 'soft' power which mobilized the peaceful methods of change. During his presidency, the state's power shifted back toward a much more conservative camp in which social and political change and reforms were challenging. The emerged social and political openings between the late 1990s and the mid-2000s, and the new generation of activists, intellectuals, journalists, writers, and lawyers, who were seeking transparency, accountability, integrity, and the fairness of the government, were suppressed as a form of "violent opposition to social change." Therefore, the undergoing situation "set off a new battle between the reformers and conservatives" and led to the victory of Hasan Rouhani in 2013 as a moderate's turn and "a clear protest vote against Ahmadinejad administration's mismanagement of the economy and ... the deterioration of Iran's relation's with the Western world" (Monshipouri and Zakerian, 2016: 157-168).

Providing a brief overview of the dramatic transformation of Iranian society in the past two decades, I tended to illustrate that Iran has been experiencing the long-term process of social change, which has been fostering various kinds of reactions and adjustments in the social realm and in the wide variety of social movements such as environmentalism.

Focusing on the complexity and interconnected patterns of change, contemporary environmentalism in Iran may be generally considered as an aspect of contemporary Iranian civil society and a social movement (Fadaee, 2011 & 2012). The newly emerged environmental

movement since the 1990s (which was described in more detail in the previous section of this writing) is "presenting insights on Iranian social movements as a form of social life" in which the signal transformation process of the society is seen (Fadaee, 2012: 3). Exploring the most remarkable forms of social movements of the modern era (late twentieth century and afterward) in Iran, Fadaee (2012) argues that Iranian environmentalism is a 'new' and contemporary form of 'social movement' and is the consequence of the modernization process and societal change in Iran as a non-Western context. She proposes that Iranian environmentalism is a type of social movement under the paradigm of the 'new social movement theory' (Fadaee, 2012). In other words, environmentalism (after the 1990s) is regarded as a 'new' movement, not in reference to the industrial and post-industrial society that is argued in Touraine and Melucci's new social movement theory, but also it is 'new' compared with the previous modern social movements of Iran after the Islamic revolution.

Interpreted through the lens of Touraine and Melucci's model, modern Iranian environmentalism, since the 2000s, can be considered a new social movement as it "represents a new set of issues, going beyond the previous social movements of Iran" (Fadaee, 2011: 80), and provides an analytical view toward one of the most essential current problems of Iranian society such as environmental problems. In addition to environmental degradation, Iranian environmentalism emerged in the early 1990s as a change in Iranians' perception of the relationship between humans and nature and its link to the role of the state (Fadaee, 2012: 93). It emerged differently from the emergence of environmentalism in the West, which began with industrialization (Pickvance, 1998: 73). Environmentalism in Iran was in fact a response to the demand for a deep change and transformation in the cultural and social structure of the society (Fadaee, 2012: 81).

Considering the brief history of the emergence of environmental awareness in Iran, I may conclude that modern Iranian environmentalism is not an exception in terms of its basic theme, i.e., environmental protection, preservation of natural resources, and advocacy for nature. Like environmentalism in many countries around the world, it seeks a shared goal for revitalizing nature and mobilizing people and groups to protect nature. However, it may be perceived differently in a non-Western context while it is usually regarded as a 'Western phenomenon' (Fadaee, 2011: 80). The Iranian environmental movement also can be categorized as a new social movement that connects the state and political views with the public understanding of environmentalism in a particular way. The characteristics of this movement highlight that environmentalism in Iran is not only for reform and for alteration of the relationship between nature and humans but also between the government and citizens that proposes collective actions around environmental concerns with clear objectives (Fadaee, 2012: 90). Therefore, it is considered 'new' compared to previous social movements in Iran. As a part of the reform movements, it represents a new layer, which promotes new discourses, narratives, counter-narratives, and new forms of resistance (Fadaee, 2011: 93). Furthermore, Iranian environmentalism since the 1990s, again as a part of the reform movement and as a reflection to other social concerns, cannot be seen as an independent trend as it is connected with the fundamental shifts in the social and political structures of the society as well. It has to deal with the traditional state-citizen relationship in a theocratic state when the whole country is passing through modernity and trying to reach a higher level of democracy. At the same time, environmentalism has to raise a new criticism itself to be able to deal with internal reforms that seek new values while challenging the old ones. In other words, environmentalism usually involves why and how environmental issues are raised and addressed in a society and what

would be consequences and the solutions. Therefore, it may be along with criticizing the state. I mean thinking about environmental issues, their causes, and consequences, and doing actions to solve them is not possible without criticizing the political structure and criticizing the authorities' (i.e., the state's) ways of management, and it requires fundamental shifts not only in the social structure but also in the political structure. Hence, Iranian environmentalism faces many challenges if it intends to criticize the role of the state in environmental degradation and activists face repression in a state that is not a democratic system. Citizens and activists should demand either a political and structural change or they should look for safer alternatives such as searching for innovative ways of civil participation, influencing the public opinion by raising cultural and traditional values, changing the patterns of lifestyle, and promoting the culture against consumerism.

Chapter 3: The *Āb-pariā* Series: Mythological Background, Description, and Analysis

The *Āb-pariā* Iranian television series draws on a large reserve of Persian mythology and cultural themes that have been passed through generations. I argue the series deploys mythology and culture to influence environmental attitudes in the viewers and promote environmental awareness. Combining the methods of critical discourse analysis, specifically the sociocognitive model, and semiotic theory, I will show that the *Āb-pariā* series reflects the continuity of Persian mythological deities in its central characters, adapted to fit better in the current Iranian society. The series also recounts the dualistic cosmology of good and evil which predicts the ultimate conquest of evils by the good forces. The *Āb-pariā* series integrates the mythological and cultural signs and symbols (linguistic and non-linguistic) related to the environment, to stimulate the viewers' perception and interpretation of the new environmental messages embedded in the series through their senses and emotions. Each of the mythological and cultural concepts used in the series evokes specific meanings and values in the audience's collective memory and in accordance with the historical and cultural values of the past. The cultural and historical elements function to communicate the accretion of the past meanings and values in the present context. They refer to the shared knowledge and narratives about the deities of Persian mythology and cultural practices that have been passed down through oral practices and maintained in the national collective memory. Conceptualizing the shared information and narratives of the past (such as worshipping the natural forces of Persian mythology), the audience develops environmental ideologies by which they are stimulated to reassess their attitude toward the anthropogenic harms to the environment, and perhaps seek to protect it.

This chapter is concerned with the above argument about the influence of mythological and cultural tools in understanding past environmental values and repurposing them to promote

environmental awareness. I strive to first provide some background information about the aspects of Persian mythology relevant to the *Āb-pariā* series. I will briefly explain what Persian mythology refers to, and what its deriving forces and content are. I will also provide an overview about oral practices as they have been a significant method of preserving and transferring the narratives of Persian mythology and legendary stories over the course of history. That section will function as a supportive background that shows how we do know that the *Āb-pariā* series has reconstructed some aspects of Persian mythology. I will then provide a summary of the series, its characters, and its theme and analyze it in the framework of sociocognitive critical discourse analysis, semiotic theory, and in response to the conceptualized mythological and cultural values embedded in it.

3.1. Historicity and Myth in the Persian Realm

Persian mythology consists of the Persian legends, mythological and traditional narratives, tales, and stories told in the Iranian plateau and the surrounding areas. It pictures the origin of the universe, the nature of the world, and the myths of creation, as well as religious practices and rituals of practices such as Mithraism and Zoroastrianism. The rituals, history, and courts of the Persian *shāhs* have been intertwined with the personal faith of believers. Persian mythology involves extraordinary and supernatural beings. It describes deities, godly heroes, demons, and mythical creatures, their divinity, their actions, and the ritual practices toward them. Persian mythology originally pre-dated Zoroastrianism (prior to the 2nd-1st millennium BCE). It is attributed to the Persian polytheistic belief system that has been mostly characterized to the worship of or belief in multiple deities that well-knowingly includes the worship of *Mithra* (also known as *Mitra* or *Mihr)*, the god of sun, justice, and war as well as the worships of water and

fire or even the sacrifice by means of a sacred liquor from the plant *Hoama* (Duchesne-Guillemin, 1970).

Persian mythology also became closely linked to the monotheistic faith of Zoroastrianism after its emergence in 1400-1200 BCE. It was significantly influenced by Zoroastrian beliefs and the ethical teaching of Zoroastrianism was profoundly interpreted into the traditional mythology for centuries as it was the state dominant religion during three Persian dynasties of the Achaemenid (550-330 BCE), Parthian (247 BCE-224 CE) and Sassanid (224-651 CE) (Hinnells, 1975: 11-12). But because all the sources for Persian mythology are post-Zoroastrian, and mostly appeared in the written history in the 5th century BCE, it is difficult to distinguish between the elements that were inherited from the pre-Zoroastrians and those that have been innovated by Zoroastrians (Malandra, 1983). Zoroastrianism (also called *Mazdaism*) is based by the faith in Ahurā Mazdā 'Lord of Wisdom', one wise deity who is the eternal, just and compassionate God, and is the creator of the universe and perfect goodness. He accomplishes all subsequent creation through his seven emanations known as *Amesha Spenta* 'immortal [which is] holy'. They are divinities that represent the beneficent aspects of personality including Holy Mentality, Good Purpose, Truth, Dominion, Devotion, Wholeness, and Immortality. Zoroastrianism's theology, philosophy, and mythology are centered by cosmic and moral dualism. It means that there are two opposing forces such as good and evil, truth and lie, order and disorder in the universe and in the mind (that cannot co-exist), and there is an ongoing conflict between divine gods and demonic forces. Life is a mixture of all these two opposing forces, and human has the capacity to choose to follow the path of evil or righteousness. Therefore, the beliefs are summed up and practiced by the maxim 'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deed' to feature the human's life

and destiny in which the concepts of free will in life and the existence of judgment after death are realized (Hinnells, 1975: 49-70).

Persian mythology is primarily derived from the religious texts of the Zoroastrians, as well as in the *Shāhnāmeh* 'Book of Kings', an eleventh-century rhymed epic attributed to the Persian poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi (Curtis, 1993: 8-29). In addition to these primary sources, much of what we know of this mythology comes from inscriptions of Persian kings throughout history, reports of foreign authors, as well as art, coins, and archeological records (Curtis, 1993: 8-29).

As for primary sources, *Avestā*, the collection of religious texts of Zoroastrians (originally written in *Avestān*, an Eastern old Iranian language spoken in the second and first millennium BCE) is the primary source about Persian mythology. *Yasht*, a section in *Avestā*, is among the oldest existing sections, much of which contains from the great antiquity (i.e., pre-Zoroastrian era) and is rich in myths. Although the content of *Yasht* has been touched up with Zoroastrian terminology and early Zoroastrian ideas, it least incorporates the core Zoroastrian beliefs (Malandra, 1983). The *Yasht* consists of twenty-one hymns, each of which is dedicated to one of the gods, goddesses, and deities of pre-Zoroastrian origin (some of which are reconstructed in the *Āb-pariā* television series). The *Yasht* "describes the heroic deeds performed by gods, kings and warriors against both supernatural and human enemies" (Curtis, 1993: 10).

In addition to the *Yasht*, *Bundahishn* 'Primal Creation' is another primary Zoroastrian resource about Persian mythology. *Bundahishn*, which is in Middle Persian, presents a concise view of cosmology, cosmography, and a detailed myth of creation based on the Zoroastrian scriptures; yet it reflects both Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian beliefs. It includes the stories of heroes and their opponents, such as demons and evil powers as well (MacKenzie, 1989).

Shāhnāmeh by Ferdowsi is a valuable source of information about the narratives of Persian

mythology and epics of the pre-Islamic Persia that also played a crucial role in reviving,

preserving and passing them down to the present. *Shāhnāmeh* is a long epic poem of 50,000

couplets (nine volumes), composed in the early Modern Persian language. Ferdowsi's

composition took many years, between 977 and 1010 CE. *Shāhnāmeh* is considered as the

national epic of Persia, as it tells the mythological and historical past of Persia from the creation

of the world up until the Islamic conquest in Persia in the 7th century CE. It includes myths of

heroes, deities, and demons, as well as the historically attested pre-Islamic past of Persian

empires (Ashraf, 2006). Ferdowsi based many of the myths in the *Shāhnāmeh* on the 10th-

century poet Daqiqi's version of the *Shāhnāmeh.*[1] Ferdowsi accessed to *Khudāynāmeh*[2] (also

Khudāynāmag) 'Book of Lords' and other written resources as well as he made use of oral

narratives passed along to revive the legends of Persia (Curtis, 1993: 29). *Shāhnāmeh* is still

counted as a reference to the historical past of Persia, as well as being used as a widespread

source for the narratives of Persian mythology. These were used in oral practices from the

centuries after its creation to the present day. The *Shāhnāmeh* is a remarkable source through

which the Iranians have constructed and conceptualized their cultural memory about the Persian

mythology. The historical and mythological figures who appear as the central characters of the

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[1] The 10th century poet Abu Mansur Daqiqi was the first known person who compiled myths and epics of Persia. He began to create the first Book of Kings - the *Shāhnāmeh-ye Abu Mansuri* - in prose but was only able to finish about 1000 verses before he was murdered. Therefore, Ferdowsi continued a poetic version of Daqiqi's work, and created the national epic of Persia with the same name in the 11th century. Abu Mansuri's *Shāhnāmeh* no longer exists. However, Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* has been preserved, and is regarded as a literary masterpiece, and of central importance in Persian heritage, culture, and language (Ashraf, 2006).
[2] *Khudāynāmeh* was an epic about the mythological past and early history of Persia including the myth of creation as well as the stories and historical events of the rulers and kings of Persia. It had been officially compiled and recorded in Middle Persian in late Sassanid Empire based on the existing reports and annals in the royal archives of the rulers of various periods (Zarinkub, 2020). Although the original scripture in Middle Persian no longer existed, the Arabic translation of *Khudāynāmeh* from the 8th century CE (and perhaps its back-translations to the early Modern Persian) were available to Ferdowsi as a reference (Curtis, 1993: 29).

Āb-pariā series are also referred in the narratives of *Shāhnāmeh*. The series also points to some cultural and mythological signs and events that occur in the *Shāhnāmeh.*

3.2. Content and Deriving Forces of Persian Mythology

In terms of content and mythological figures, Persian mythology, in contrast to Islam and other Abrahamic religions, is polytheistic and reflects polytheistic ideologies. In the latter monotheistic religions, Allah or God is described as the unique, omnipotent, and the only deity and the creator of the universe that humans must worship. Persian mythology, on the other hand, is dedicated to multiple divine figures: a creator, an ultimate god, and a wise lord, Ahurā Mazdā, who is the highest divinity, along with other divine powers and heroes of absolute goodness, wisdom, and knowledge. Those deities are not considered as remote beings that only appear in mythical stories. They rather are powers encountered directly in the rituals and verged on legendary stories. They are described in anthropomorphic terms, or they may take mythical imagery. For example, the god Mithra is pictured as a god with thousand eyes to symbolize the idea that no human "can conceal their wrongdoing from the god and evade the consequences" (Hinnells, 1975: 31). The good deities are also personified as the gods of morality such as truth, health, and good mind, or the gods of natural resources such as water, rain, or wind. They oppose all evil powers and demons and suffer from evil actions. They all uniquely characterize the absolute goodness and promote human beings must choose between good and bad (Curtis, 1993: 11-28).

In opposition to the forces of good in Persian mythology, there are evil deities who are the destruction opponents of all the absolute goodness. Persian mythology classifies evil beings as those who "assault [hu]man's physical being or change the material world around him," and those who "lay siege to his [human's] moral nature" (Boyce, 1975: 87). They are personified as

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gods, demons or evil spirits that constantly attempt to destroy the world of truth and goodness. Some evil beings represent completely abstract ideas such as hunger, thirst, sickness, drought, envy, and wrath. No matter what forms they take, they all aim to harm humans and all other beings either by attacking their bodies or by moving around them and waiting for an opportunity to harm them. They always struggle with anything good. Therefore, they are basically characterized by ignorance, falsehood, harmfulness, and disorder. Despite all their efforts, the evil gods and demons are usually the ones who will be defeated temporarily or permanently at the end of the stories. The evil spirits of Persian mythology could be pictured as gods with ultimate and godly powers of disguise and destruction such as *Angra Maniyu* (also known as *Ahriman* 'evil spirit' in the Zoroastrian texts). He is the leader of all demonic spirits, and is absolutely against Ahurā Mazdā, the wise lord of the creation, truth, and goodness. Evil spirits could be referred to as *div* (from *Avestān deava*) 'demon' with more limited powers of destruction (Curtis, 1993: 11-28). Demons are usually, especially in later Zoroastrianism, described as creatures with claws, hooves, or horns who howl and perish (Hinnells, 1975: 49), or sometimes they are described in human terms. They may disguise themselves as rats, lizards, spiders, or dragons or take the form of monsters with unusual body shapes. For example, *Azhi Dahāka* in *Avestā* (*Azhdahā* 'dragon' in Modern Persian) is the most significant monster in Persian mythology. He is the son of *Ahriman* 'evil spirit', has three heads, and eats humans. Zahāk, who seems to be the same demon as *Azhi Dahāka* of *Avestā*, appears in later oral practices (later Zoroastrian and Post-Islamic narratives) as well as in Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*. He is the son of a ruler, and he receives the throne after his father's death. He is described as an evil human with two black snakes grown out of his shoulders. The snakes are fed human brains (Curtis, 1993: 23).

Other than the mostly male *div* 'demons' of Persian mythology, there are also female evil spirits called *pari* (from Middle Persian *parik < Avestān pairaka*, cf. English *fairy*), who originally had a witch-like personality. They are mostly powerful during the night when they can indeed harm other beings, wither crops and bring bad harvests. In contrast, they are also persecuted and imprisoned in cages by *divs* as they have a lower rank. The fairies in Persian mythology cannot only take unpleasant forms such as rats but also, they can appear in the form of beautiful humans who lure others into acting falsely (Boyce, 1975: 85-86). Fairies, however, have been transformed from evil beings into compassionate graceful beings throughout history, from Persian mythology and the Zoroastrian era to Middle and Modern Persian folktales (Mahmoodpoor, 2017). With the spread of Islam through Persia in the 7th century CE, *pari* was more integrated into Quranic concept of *jinn* 'genie' in Persian Islamic folklore. In contrast to mischievous *jinns*, *pari* is often regarded as good, kind, and generous *jinns* created by God (Boyce, 1975: 213-214). In Persian folklore, thereafter, *pari* usually denotes graceful women-like winged spirits, renowned for their beauty, while *divs* were usually identified as male evil *jinns or* spirits. *Pari* is created by God after the vicious *div*. Although they have less power than *div*, the evil *pari* may be still categorized as *div* (Bonnefoy, 1993: 322). *Pari* has been often contemplated as benevolent to humans in Persian folklore, and they have exceptional powers or skills. They appear to humans and push them to do good deeds; or they punish the humans for being disrespectful or wasting resources (Claus, Diamond, and Mills, 2003: 463).

These basic characters and their opposing forces suggest that Persian mythology has been constructed on a dualism that pairs opposites: e.g., divine powers with demons, good with evil, truth with lie or falsehood, light with darkness, and life with death (Hinnells, 1975: 49). Dualism originally developed within Zoroastrianism (also the basis for Zurvanism (3rd-4th century BCE-

7th century CE) and Manichaeism (3rd century CE)) in a way that highlighted these opposing

forces were real aspects of a character that could not co-exist in one mythical creature at the

same time. The confrontation between opposites ends with the destruction of the evil one; the

positive forces of physical life rehabilitate positive moralities to overcome negative forces. The

battles between the opposing forces of dualism in Persian mythology are not limited to the

battles between abstract ideas such as good and evil or the battles of players such as gods and

demons. Persian mythology is also centered on dualistic battles seen in or reflected by nature,

such as the drought and the rains, and the thunderstorms and the heat of the sun personified as

gods and demons. The dualism of Persian mythology is initially rooted in the cosmic battle in the

very early stages of the creation myth; from when the universe was considered to be a flat,

peaceful and harmonious place but it was shattered by the entry of evil, the mountains (which

were said to be home of evils) grew and the state of tranquility afflicted (Hinnells, 1975: 46-47).

The personification of natural forces in the forms of gods and demons in creating dualism does

not simply suggest that Persian mythology is a form of nature worship. It in fact emphasizes that

the universe with all the natural forces is not a distant reality far removed from human life and

experiences. It rather is a direct and immediate contact with human's everyday life and an

important factor in constructing the beliefs and rituals.

The *Āb-pariā* series derives its central characters from the opposing mythological deities

while it also features dualistic characteristics of good and evil. The concept of dualism can be

also observed in the nature and actions of the human characters of the series as well as the theme

of some stories.

3.3. The Role of Oral Practices in Transmitting Persian Mythology

Oral practices have been constantly a core cultural axis in Persia to present-day Iran by which the cultural values and identities have been sustained. (The above introductory section only shows the origins of Persian mythology and how polytheistic and Zoroastrian thoughts have initially shaped the contents of Persian mythology.) However, it does not tell how such old stories have been transmitted. Not every person in the old Persia, and even in the premodern and modern Iran (when literacy rates have been higher), has been a Zoroastrian or had access to textual scriptures in the Old and Middle Iranian languages to know such details about the narratives of Persian mythology. Knowledge about the distant historical and mythological past has been passed down orally, via both primary orality (when the literacy was not widespread) and secondary orality (when it was influenced and developed by written texts such as *Ferdowsi*'s *Shāhnāmeh*). Oral practices became a way to keep the culture alive, teach important lessons about the past, and retain and reinforce social and cultural values through narrating stories. The role of orality and oral practices is significant not only in transmitting stories but also in shaping and developing the cultural memory and cultural identity of peoples through centuries. Many Iranians today also use this cultural identity to share memories and knowledge about that cultural heritage; they connect these cultural memories to themselves as a core part of their own cultural identity. It is worth surveying the history of oral practices in Persia to the present to understand the transmission of social and cultural values to the present day.

Oral practices play an important role in transmitting old stories and passing them down through generations. Although major legends of Persia were compiled in or ascribed to the Sassanid era (224-651 CE), many of them actually date from earlier oral practices. Zoroastrian priests, for example, had to learn the sacred words of the prophet Zoroaster by heart and repeat

them verbatim, to keep the teachings of Zoroastrians alive (Curtis, 1993: 60). Besides, there were

minstrels, originally called *gusān* (often spelled as *gōsān*) in Parthian (a state language from 248

BCE to 224 CE, and a branch of Middle Iranian) and رامشگر [*rāmishgar*] or خُنیاگر [*khoniyāgar*]

in Middle and Modern Persian. They performed as poets, storytellers, and musicians in the court

of rulers and kings of Persia. *Gōsān* in particular was "the first piece of direct evidence for

telling of tales relating to the past by Parthian minstrels, thus providing support for the indirect

evidence that the Parthians played an important part in preserving the Iranian national tradition."

It is also presumed that the old legends were collected through the oral practices from the same

Parthian minstrels, passed through, and written down for the first time during the Sassanid era

(Boyce, 1957: 12).

Minstrels usually inherited their profession by transferring their family's education and

knowledge of the past legends and stories and were trained to memorize them. Minstrels usually

learned a quantity of familiar and well-loved themes and stories and composed them with the

traditional vocabulary and images to the best of their talents and abilities. Therefore, their

narrating profession included the craft of poetry along with rhythms, lyrics, songs, and music to

please listeners and increase their earnings from the rulers' courts or noble families. As a result,

each noble family or royal court had its own talented minstrels who were the most familiar with

the family practices and the taste of the listeners (Boyce, 2002).

References to such minstrels are numerous in *Ferdowsi*'s *Shāhnāmeh* and in the works of

Nizāmi (1141-1209 CE), the great romantic epic poet who brought a colloquial and realistic style

to Persian poetry. For instance, *Bārbad*, the highly praised minstrel (also known as the king of

minstrels) in the *Khosrow Parviz*'s king court (590-628 CE), and *Azādeh*, a girl who sang the

stories and played the harp in *Bahrām Gur*'s royal court (420-438 CE) can be called among

privileged minstrels (Curtis, 1993: 60-69). They mostly combined their poetic skill of narration with their musical talent to tell the stories of past (mostly pre-Islamic) legendary heroes, the bravery of kings, and the role of supernatural creatures. It was possible, however, that the retold tales of the past included elements of the narrator's time, exaggerated gradually, changed or adapted based on the audience's demands. The legends and heroic stories of the past continued passing along from one region to another, from one generation to the next through verbal instructions and demonstrations even though many written records have been destroyed.

Storytelling is often ascribed to the Sassanid era, as it was developed and mostly transcribed during that period. Storytelling of course continued after the advent of Islam to the present day. The oral practices known as داستان سرایی [*dāstān sorāī*] 'story telling', which were once unique performances in the royal courts or a method of transmitting religious teachings, transformed slightly and gradually. Storytelling spread through non-royal families (non-élites), in various genres, and in different contexts with various themes. Oral practices became a part of popular culture as well as an élite literary culture. In private gatherings, older family members recited traditional folktales, fairytales, or legends of the past as a form of family entertainment. In the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722 CE) and with the spread of coffeehouses[3] everywhere across the country as the centers of gathering and entertainment, storytelling took a form of popular entertainment in public that also included performance genres. Storytellers acted more like previous royal minstrels but in public and to entertain the non-elites, and they specialized in particular genres. Since they had a more stable audience in the coffeehouses, they could meet

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[3] The *Qahveh Khāneh* 'coffee house' was a café-like place that became popular during Safavid era (1501-1722 CE) in Persia. It was initially a place where coffee was prepared and served. With the rising popularity of tea as the national beverage beginning in the later 18th century, tea was more commonly served in coffeehouses along with popular waterpipes, *qalyān*. However, the term *Qahveh Khāneh* continues to be used until today. *Qahveh Khāneh* was also the center of gatherings where (usually) men, including intellectuals, officials, poets, artists as well regular people gathered to drink coffee or tea, and talk, listen to music, or play games such as chess (Al-e Dawud, 1992).

regularly and tell one episode of longer tales in each setting (Hanaway, 1994). The most prominent type of storytelling was نقالی [*naqqālī*] 'narrating', also known as شاهنامه خوانی [*Shāhnāmeh khānī*] 'reading *Shāhnāmeh*', in which the storyteller (called a *naqqāl*) recited the heroic and legendary stories of *Shāhnāmeh*, the Book of Kings. The *naqqāl* often played all roles, recreating the battle scenes and heroic actions of the characters of the stories through gesticulation, mimicry, poetry recitation and singing. The *naqqāl* usually decided whether to recount the poetic verses or tell the story in a musical tone, whether to move on with the descriptions or interrupt at a crucial point, whether to interpret the myth in a meaningful way to their audience or retell it as it was (Curtis, 1993: 77). As a result, the dramatic performance of a *naqqāl*, along with the exciting nature of the epics of *Shāhnāmeh* made storytelling so much popular that it grew rapidly in other settings such as the tents of nomads, the historical venues, bazaars, and even in neighborhoods or on street plazas. The themes of storytelling were no longer specific to the legendary stories of *Shāhnāmeh*. They also included glorification of the Islamic faith such as روضه خوانی [*Rozeh khānī*], which is a religious lamentation in commemorating the death of *Imam Husayn* (prophet *Mohammad*'s grandson) and his followers, and the suffering of his family during the battle of *Karbala*. Storytelling also developed in new forms of dramatic plays such as پرده خوانی [*Pardeh khānī*], a kind of illustrated storytelling in which the narrator recited the stories using a large moveable painting known as *Pardeh*, and تعزیه [*Ta'zieh*], a passion play that recreated the condolence, suffering, and death of prominent mythological or religious figures (Hanaway, 1994).

The long tradition of storytelling continued during the Qajar era (1785-1925 CE) until the mid-20th century (Marzolph, 2015). The craft of storytelling is marked in its "golden age" in the 19th century as it reached its widespread development and popularity not only among the non-

elites in the coffeehouses or public spaces but also it appeared back in the royal courts of the Qajar kings, as well as among the women of the royal family in the اندرونی [*Andaruni*], the private spaces of the royal palaces. Various forms of storytelling, religious or non-religious were popular, and the themes ranged from the oral anecdotes of heroic and epic tales to the themes of romance and chivalry (Omidsalar and Omidsalar, 1999). Some of the most well-known tales and narrations that were previously told orally were carried over to the written realm. For example, the popular heroic legend of *Amir Arsalān*, which was skillfully composed and narrated by *Nāser al-Din shāh*'s special storyteller, *Naqib al-Mamālek*, was enchantedly transcribed by the Shah's daughter while she was listening to it from behind the curtains of the royal *Andaruni*. Since then, the transcription was passed into the literary text and has been preserved as a popular literary story since then (Page, 1977). In Iran, the oral practices continued to be a living practice, but gradually declining, until after the mid-20th century. With the advent of modernity and the efforts of secularizing the Iranian society during the *Pahlavi* era (1925-1979), *Shāhnāmeh khānī* was more encouraged than other forms of religious storytelling as it had deeply rooted in the Persian legacy and legends of the Persian empires (Omidsalar and Omidsalar, 1999: 332). In present-day Iran, storytelling in all its forms is still performed and considered as the national cultural heritage. However, with the growth of modern means of entertainment, such as mass and social media, its popularity is decreasing among the younger generation. But it is still a part of cultural practices that is performed in private or public gatherings before or during *Nowruz*, the Iranian New Year holiday; It is still the traditional custom at *Yaldā* night when families get together to celebrate the winter solstice. Religious forms of storytelling that were discussed above are still an important part of the Islamic faith, and they are still performed faithfully and popularly among Shia Muslims of Iran in numerous religious ceremonies and lamentations.

Oral practices in Persia have been transmitted in parallel to the written language. Written texts also served to transmit past cultural heritage to present generations. Until recently, orality has been the dominant mode of recalling, storing, evolving, and transmitting the beliefs, rituals, and practices of the past through the generations. Orality and oral practices in Persia have not necessarily aimed for the illiterate and uneducated audience, nor for those who are unaware of the textual material. Oral practices are instead central modes of communication between the members of the social group. Storytelling in Persia has not been only a means of entertainment, but it has also carried a social function from the past to the present, by which interconnected identities, reputations, and conversations have been shaped and shared. The common patterns of stories help us discover certain shared characteristics, which have been meaningful for the people of Persia across time and space. Not only stories, but such patterns in myths, poems, songs, and the arts were learned by heart and transmitted. The stories passed along generations were not only limited to the people of the past, but they also constitute the roots of contemporary culture. Thus, storytelling in Persia, either as a type of entertainment or as a way of transferring cultural knowledge and practices, has been a part of everyday culture for centuries. Like elsewhere, the transmission of the oral arts and narratives in Persia has been shaped by the styling of individual tellers, and by changing societal ideologies over time. And in modern Iran, the cultural practices follow and maintain similar patterns that were once invented in the past but they are adapted based on contemporary changing ideologies and in response to modern sociocultural values.

Relying on the formulaic patterns of stories passed through oral practices, and tangible to the audience, the *Āb-pariā* series highlights the values and ideologies within the Iranian society. It recreates new tales that incorporate past mythological elements, themes, and patterns, yet focusing on environmental concerns in modern settings. This juxtaposition encourages the

audience to reevaluate cultural identity, and recall and rebuild cultural memories and popular knowledge in the environmental context. The re-use of mythological characters and their values is familiar and new at the same time. To untangle these relations, I will summarize the *Āb-pariā* series in the next section to give an overview of its characters, its theme, and its overall message. I will then provide evidence that the *Āb-pariā*'s characters were reconstructed based on methodological figures and will analyze the series theme based on approaches in the critical discourse analysis and semiotics.

3.4. *Āb-pariā* Series: Broadcast Context and Plot Summary

آب پریا [*Ab-pariā*] 'Water-fairies' (hereafter referred to as 'The Fairies') is an Iranian TV series produced in 2012-2013 by Marzieh Boroumand, who is known for directing and producing [numerous memorable] television shows and movies for children and adults. The water fairies of the series title (*Ab-pari-a* water-fairy-PL) are a synecdoche, denoting water, and three other related fairies in the story. *Āb-pariā* aired in March 2013 over *Nowruz*, the New Year holiday, when the spring equinox and rejuvenation of nature is celebrated in Iran and elsewhere. The series was shown in 17 episodes of 45 minutes, broadcast nightly on the public television during the *Nowruz* holiday. The genre of the series is fantasy combined with reality while it also includes science education. Imaginary characters of fairies (all in human-like bodies played by actresses and actors) possess magical elements inspired by Persian mythology and culture, and they play roles along with fictional human characters in a mixed real-fictional framework that depict the recent society of Iran in the 21st century. The series is partly musical enriched with songs that are interwoven with the characters and their roles. The theme of the series is mostly tragic however, in some parts it touches light humor to stimulate the viewer. The series concerns the current anthropogenic environmental issues, escalating since the 1990s, in Iran with a

particular focus on the water shortage and drought. It combines real environmental issues, plotted in real places across Iran, with fictional stories that address real environmental concerns. The series was initially intended to produce for children and adolescents according to the series director, Boroumand (Jam-e-Jam, 2010). But due to the late evening broadcast time, which was not the best time for younger viewers, its actual audience switched to adults and attracted their attention. Soon after the first broadcasts, and due to the theme of the series that was incorporated the environmental reality to the stories of fairies and evils, it became a popular series over the *Nowruz* holiday [when many people have more free time] and reached a higher number of viewers in all ages (Shayegan, 2013). Although no official viewer estimate exists, the director claims that the estimated number based on the public surveys was significant, and she believes the original broadcasts were welcomed by many viewers due to the influential theme and unique form of the series that was also understandable for all ages (Tasnim News Agency, 2013).

The *Āb-pariā* series indexes Persian mythology and cultural practices that have been redeployed to highlight recent environmental problems in Iran. It is the story of four sister fairies, who are responsible for guarding four natural resources: water, snow, clouds, and plant and animal life. The series consists of a central theme and several marginal stories, each of which takes place in a different geographical location in present-day Iran. In the central story, Water-fairy is trapped by the ugly drought demon, a *div* called Aposh. To rescue their sister, the other three fairies have to come to earth in the human-like body and fashion from their white ice castle in the fairy land (located all above the sky) to find their great-grandmother's testament in a historical site located in present-day Iran. They need to know why their sister was trapped by the drought demon, and what they have to do to rescue her. In their journey to earth, they meet humans (non-fairy characters) and seek their help to navigate their path to rescue their sister. To

uncover the script of the testament tablet, which is in a fictional language called *Nowruzi*[4] (neither Old Persian nor Middle Persian), the fairies need a philologist, called *Ostād Bahār* 'Professor Spring', to be able to decipher the writing. Reading the testament by Ostād Bahār's help, the fairies realize that their sister, Water-fairy was imprisoned by the drought demon as the consequence of humans' unfair and unjustified actions toward the environment. The fairies understand that the drought demon and their great-grandmother had a battle (perhaps centuries ago), in which the demon was defeated by the great-grandmother. He has been imprisoned somewhere between the high mountains and dense forests of northern Iran since then. Nevertheless, the demon has recently reacquired his strength from the anthropogenic environmental problems, including the deforestation of the area in which his prison was located. Therefore, he has recently escaped from his prison and has been more able to destroy the natural environment. The first scene of the first episode shows that Water-fairy, who has fainted due to purifying of a polluted river, is confined and fettered in a frightful cave by the demon. Therefore, to destroy the drought demon's power and rescue Water-fairy, the sister fairies have to solve seven current environmental issues listed in their great-grandmother's testament. In their mission, the three sister fairies need the human help to accomplish each task. Therefore, the philologist, Ostād Bahār, volunteers to guide them in traveling to various locations in Iran, navigating the causes of the issues, and assisting in solving them.

With imaginary characters such as fairies, the main theme of addressing environmental problems and rescuing the Water-fairy runs through all the episodes. The first two episodes build a foundation of the series' concept of fantasy. The main personages - fairies, a demon, and other characters - undergo a mystical experience. The initial episodes build a bridge between the

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[4] The *Nowruzi* script in the *Āb-pariā* series is attributed to Uncle Nowruz, an absent character of the series, who is the snow fairy's husband. (For more information about Uncle Nowruz, see section 3.6.6.)

environmental reality and the imagination by switching the scenes between the fairyland and the real world. They also link the central realistic theme of the story (environmental problems set in the present time) to the plots and characters that have been invented to seemingly belong to the historical and cultural past. The scenes related to the introduction of the fairies and the demon that are set at *Nowruz*, the New Year holiday, look familiar to viewers as they recall mythological and cultural stories. Therefore, viewers realize after the early episodes that the fantasy elements are meant to be understood on a symbolic level.

The next three episodes manifest the journey of the three fairies to the human land. They demonstrate how the fairies navigate to earth to rescue their sister fairy. However, earth is the human world, and the fairies still need human assistance for that mission. But the human characters challenge the fantasy elements with science: Thus, humans question the fantasy elements (primarily fairies as guardians of nature, and a demon as the personification of the drought) by raising scientific, logical, and anthropogenic aspects of the environmental issues. To avoid being rejected or disbelieved by these overly rational humans, the fairies have to hide their fairy identities and their role as the guardians of nature. But they also have to prove themselves to some human characters including the philologist, Ostād Bahār, so that they can receive help from these humans. As a result, the fairies struggle with an ambiguous dualism in revealing and hiding their identity, and they have to be cautious in showing their supernatural powers. Moreover, the fairies' strange visual appearance, their uncommon old-fashioned language, their naive behavior, and their accommodations of humans are all shown with a sense of humor. Yet, the main theme of the series is still a tragedy. The contrast between humor and tragedy leads viewers to perceive the fairies' roles more openly, in contrast to the hyper-rationality of the humans. The humorous acts of the fairies in the human land help viewers summon their shared

cultural knowledge about the fairies, and process that knowledge in the new setting. Hence the series makes the viewer's perception of the fairies more appealing and more memorable.

Along with the central story running throughout the series, each one or two episodes present a story that addresses one of the seven environmental problems mentioned in the great-grandmother's testament. Each problem needs to be resolved one by one to the end of the series. The environmental problems are presented in real contexts and based on real issues that have been arising in the past two to three decades in various geographical locations in Iran. They are combined with fictional elements. The environmental issue addressed in each task gets more difficult to be managed or solved as the series moves forward to the next task. Those seven environmental problems that are said to have been listed by the great-grandmother are briefly as follows: excessive water consumption patterns, industrial hazardous waste disposed in rivers, land pollution due to the municipal solid waste, desiccated *kāriz* (traditional water supply system) due to digging deep wells, environmental problems in the *Parishān* lake and wetland, deforestation, and air pollution. Each of the above will be described and analyzed in detail in section 3.8.

The three fairies collaborate with humans and use their abilities to accomplish each task and get one step closer to the rescue of Water-fairy. Although all the three fairies appear together throughout the series, each episode highlights the extraordinary or unique feature of one fairy at a time to facilitate problem-solving. In contrast, the humans in the series use logic, knowledge, and science on the environment to manage the problems and provide reasonable solutions. The problems are solved either realistically or symbolically (like Tehran air pollution being solved through a children's performance at a concert). After the fairies and humans collaborate to solve all the above problems, the drought devil finally loses much of his power and becomes weak,

delicate, and fragile. Therefore, the Water-fairy can escape. She goes back to the fairyland and

revisits her fairy sisters. The fairies happily celebrate Earth day (the 13th day of the *Nowruz*

holiday) and promise each other not to let the drought demon return. The story ends happily ever

after.

With the above summary of the *Āb-pariā* series, I can now provide a comprehensive

description of the characters. I will show that the *Āb-pariā* series is adapted from Persian

mythology. But before digging into historical memory and the themes of *Āb-pariā*, below I

present a brief overview of my theoretical framework and approaches that I have applied.

3.5. Methodological Procedures: Critical Discourse Analysis and Semiotics in the *Āb-pariā* Series

This section applies the sociocognitive approach within the framework of Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a basis for analyzing the environmental, historical, and cultural

discourse of the *Āb-pariā* series. It also uses aspects of semiotic theory to add socio-cultural

perspectives in analyzing the *Āb-pariā* discourse and link it to the cognition and perceptions of

the audience. The discourse of the *Āb-pariā* series requires a multimodal analysis as it integrates

the social, cultural, mythological, environmental, and ideological values and meanings together

in shaping the audiovisual content of the medium (a public television series) to communicate its

environmental message. As such, the sociocognitive model, among the various approaches

within the framework of CDA (discussed in chapter 1), is pertinent, as it focuses on ideology as a

triangle that interrelates the three components of society, discourse, and cognition rather than

studying the discourse in isolation. The approach links the socio-cultural system and the

audience's cognitive processes to achieve and develop a socio-culturally shared perception of

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environmental discourse via a context model. According to this model, the *Āb-pariā* discourse is a communicative event in which environmental knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies shape the context of environmental communication and awareness. This context is based on the historical and cultural values embedded in the individual and collective perceptions and memory of the audience. The context is also the mental representation of the communication that controls the pragmatic aspect of the discourse. The mental representation contrasts with the discourse semantics and reveals the ideological dimensions of beliefs, attitudes, ideas, and knowledge of individuals in the society. Therefore, the sociocognitive approach in this context employs the triangular components (society, cognition, and ideology) into a cycle of causes and effects, each of which influences the other in developing the environmental meanings.

In addition to the sociocognitive approach, applying the semiotic model is also useful in the analysis of the *Āb-pariā*, as the series invokes images and symbols to provoke environmental meanings in the discourse. In the semiotic model, both linguistic and non-linguistic signs engaged in sociocultural discourse can be analyzed through a signification process in which the meanings are made and communicated. The signs are understood as sociocultural constructs that encompass ideological contents in association with them. The binary categories of language and speech, signified and signifier, syntagm and paradigm, and denotation and connotation are characterized by analyzing the signification of social and cultural objects, actions and practices to structure meaningful relationships via narratives and express collective socio-cultural values. Applying a semiotic model here reemphasizes the ideological effect on discourse in the sociocognitive model. The mythological and cultural signs and symbols in the *Āb-pariā* series provoke ideologies and attitudes from socio-cultural values that have been passed down through

generations and create an effect in the *Āb-pariā* discourse by which environmental meanings are extracted.

Using a sociocognitive approach and a semiotic model, the following sections involve taking a deeper qualitative look at the aspects of the *Āb-pariā* discourse that are connected to the mythological and sociocultural structures in response to the environmental meanings. I will identify all the central characters and apparent and imagery motives that have been derived from the Persian mythology and culture. I will then describe them based on their visual characteristics or specific features and attitudes they intend to convey. I also portray the explicit or implicit assumptions that they may carry to stimulate the audience. I will next interpret the implications of those elements in accordance with the audience's perceptions, cognition, and engagement with the messages they transfer.

3.6. Deploying Mythological Deities in the *Āb-pariā* Characters

The *Āb-pariā* plot summary (section 3.4 above) indicates that the series uses the icons of *pari* 'fairy' and *div* 'demon' in an environmental context to communicate its message. But what is the origin of those fairies and the demon and what is their social and historical power? Relying on the historical background and the narratives passed through generations via oral practices (discussed in section 3.3 above), the fairies and the demon of the series index mythological and legendary characters of Persian mythology. The series adapts some of the deities and demons of Persian mythology that are associated with nature. They bridge the historical past, cultural understandings of the environment, and current environmental concerns. The fairies and the demon in the series are not only used as symbolic devices for shaping the *Āb-pariā* discourse. But also, they are stimuli to commemorate their origins and sacred values from the past and to provoke the moral attitudes toward the protection of nature (specifically, their godly nature offers

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protection). These characters communicate shared information, memories, and experiences of the historical past and express a cultural view, in which the audience imagines the human role in protecting the environment. Galvanizing viewers to protect the environment is the rationale for repurposing past cultural values and ideological perspectives.

The following detailed description of relevant pre-historical characters of Persian mythology will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the series and its characters have been drawn from the legendary past to convey the environmental message of the present. Understanding their interrelations will help to understand the theme of the series, the role of characters, and the relevance of mythological symbols that have been used in addressing the environmental problems (and will be analyzed in section 3.7 of this chapter). For this purpose, I will identify some of the most important mythological and legendary characters of Persian mythology upon which the characters of the *Āb-pariā* series have been reconstructed. Under each figure, I will provide a comprehensive description of the mythological figures, their originality, and reference in the Persian mythology and culture based on the archival evidence as well as the descriptive characteristics, visual appearance, extraordinary features, and the roles of their counterparts in the series. I will then discuss how they have been adapted in the series. The table below outlines the prominent characters of Persian mythology that are represented in the *Āb-pariā* series.

Name	Role	Name of the character in *Āb-pariā* Series
Ardvi Surā Ānāhitā	The water goddess	*Bibi-Āb-pari* 'Grandmother-Water-fairy'
Tishtrya	The god of rain	*Āb-pari* 'Cloud-fairy'
Haoma	God and a sacred plant	*Sabz-pari* 'Green-fairy'
Vāyu-Vāta	The god of wind	(Conceptualized in 2 characters): *Abr-Pari* 'Cloud-fairy' & *Sabā* (name of wind in Persian literature)
Apaosha (Aposh)	The demon of drought	Aposh
Nanneh Sarmā	The winter legend	*Barf-pari* 'Snow-fairy'
Amu Nowruz	The spring legend	*Amu Nowruz* 'Uncle Nowruz' (He is referred to but not appeared.)

3.6.1. *Ardvi Surā Ānāhitā*, The Water Goddess

اَردوی سورَه آناهیتا [*Ardvi Surā Ānāhitā*] is the goddess of all waters upon earth and the source of the cosmic ocean. She is the source of life and is associated with fertility, healing, and wisdom. Thus, she is seen as pure, swift in motion, and powerful. She is usually given a special reverence as the daughter of Ahurā Mazdā, the creator god. She is vividly described as a strong, bright, tall, and beautiful woman, who was born of a glorious race. She wears a golden crown, and a golden belt on her long circle pleated skirt with shiny shoes. She drives a chariot that is pulled by four horse-shaped forces of wind, rain, cloud, and sleet. Ānāhitā, as described in section 5 of *Yasht*, comes down from the stars to earth to purify "the seeds of all males and the wombs of all females" and the milk in all females' breasts. Ānāhitā 's character in Persian mythology is also connoted as the struggle between good and evil. She is symbolized as survival and victory for all the warriors in battle (Curtis, 1993: 12-13 and Hinnells,1975: 32-33). Since Ānāhitā is the source of life, she is worshiped with deep gratitude and is offered sacrifices like other divine deities in Persian mythology. Archeological records identify temples that are believed to be dedicated to worshipping Ānāhitā. Two of these archeological sites still exist in present-day Iran under the same name as Ānāhitā temple: one in Kangavar, Kermanshah province, in the west of present-day Iran, whose architectural style probably belongs to the Parthian period (247 BCE-224 CE), that was renovated in the Sassanid period (224-651 CE) (Pirnia, 2004: 105); The other temple is located in the ancient city of Istakhr (also Estakhr), Bishāpur in present-day Fars province, southwest of Iran. The latter probably belongs to Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BCE), which was also repaired during the Sassanid Empire (Boyce, Bier, and Chaumont, 2012). Ānāhitā also appeared in scriptures, arts, coins, statues, and

reliefs of Persia, and this may reflect her popularity as well as her significant role as a divine character in Persian mythology. The reliefs of Ānāhitā in investitures of Persian kings in the historical sites such as Tāq-e Bostān and Naqsh-e Rostam[5] (showing her handing a symbol of kingship such as a crown or a ring to the king) indicate her enormous significance and the degree of her divinity in beliefs, rituals and characterize her as a symbol of power, glory, and goodness.

3.6.1.a. The Series Character: *BiBi-Āb-pari*, The Great-grandmother Water-fairy

بی بی آب پری [Bibi Āb-pari] 'grandmother Water-fairy' is the great-grandmother of the fairies in the *Āb-pariā* series (it is not clear how many preceding generations she is) who seems to be reconstructed based on the mythological water goddess, Ānāhitā. She does not physically appear in the series, except for one scene, but her wise testament has passed through generations, and it is now the clue to the rescue of Water-fairy from the demon of the drought and solving the environmental problems. She only appears physically in one scene in which she declaims her testament. However, she is always referred to as a strong wise person throughout the series, and following her testament is a guarantee for solving the environmental problems. In that only one scene, she appears as a middle-aged-looking woman wearing a silver crown on her long silver hair. She has an elegant blue gown with silver accessories and a silver belt. Her appearance, her clothes and accessories, her height, the strong tone of her voice, and the scripture of her testament all remind us that she resembles the mythological water goddess, Ānāhitā very likely.

In the scripture of her testament, she first introduces herself as the guardian of the sky, earth, and all included in them. This indirectly indicates she possesses a higher reverence and

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[5] Two significant archeological sites in present-day Iran, *Taq-e Bostan* and *Naqsh-e Rostam*, have two well-known high reliefs that show images of a female figure next to the kings in their investitures. She is highly assumed to be Ānāhitā in those reliefs. *Taq-e Bostan* 'Arch of the Garden' is located in the present-day Kermanshah, Iran and it is dated to the Sassanid Empire. *Naqsh-e Rostam* is located in the northside of Persepolis in the present-day Fars, Iran and it belongs to the *Achaemenid* period.

rank than her descendants (who are appearing as four fairies of the series). Next, she associates

herself with the water and significantly advises her descendants and all humans that the source of

life is water, therefore, it needs to be protected. In continue, she rehearses the story of her battle

with the demon of the drought mostly like the way that the Persian mythology describes the

battle between the water goddess, Ānāhitā, and the demon of the drought, Aposh. She declares

that she is the one who defeated the drought demon and imprisoned him in the *Alborz* Mountain

in the north of present-day Iran for a long time. She has then appointed her descendant daughters

and granddaughters as the guardians of water, earth, cloud, and snow. This reminds the four

sources that pull the water goddess's chariot (see above). She also emphasizes that these all have

been the key to the long life of the universe and the protection of natural resources. She also

specifies that she has scripted and carved all the wise advice for confronting the drought demon

on a tablet in a historical place for forthcoming guardians as well as the generations of humans.

In the following episodes of the series, the site that she mentions in her testament appears to be

the historical site of Tāq-e Bostān in the western present-day Iran, where the high relief of

mythological Ānāhitā has been carved around 4th century CE (see above).

All the above description from the only scene in which the great-grandmother Water-

fairy appears clearly shows and validates that the water goddess of Persian mythology has been

re-conceptualized in the character of the *BiBi-Āb-pari*, the Great-grandmother Water-fairy.

However, all of the evidence, quotes, and appearance are not referred to the mythological water

goddess directly.

3.6.2. *Tishtrya*, The God of Rain

تیشتَریَه [*Tishtrya*], also تیشتَر [*Tishtar*] in Modern Persian, is the god of rain and the

primary producer of water in seas and lakes in Persian mythology. He is personified as the bright

and glorious star (Sirius or Canis Major), the first star, the source of rain and fertility. *Tishtrya* is responsible to distribute water among all the regions. His function is to pour down the water (rain) upon all fields, to vaporize water from the seas and move forward in the form of clouds and push them by the wind. In the Zoroastrian myth of creation, *Bundahishn, Tishtrya* was the source of all water, as he was the one who produced water at the beginning of creation. All the water on the earth and in the oceans (to the height of a human) were from each drop of rain he produced. According to section 8 of *Yasht* in the Zoroastrian book, *Avestā, Tishtrya* is emphasized as the continual source of water in the annual cycle of nature. Like other deities of Persian mythology, he also suffers from his opponents such as the drought evil, *Apusha*, and the witch of bad harvest, *Duzhyāirya*. He is always in cosmic battles against them to liberate the water contained in the cosmic oceans and be the protector of *Aryan* lands. In his battle with the drought devil, *Tishtrya* is described as a beautiful white horse with golden ears and a golden caparison. He also takes two other forms, such as a young male human and a bull, each for ten days in a month (Curtis, 1993: 16-17 and Hinnells, 1975: 31-32). *Tishtrya*'s three transformations could be due to his astral theme that he is also identified as the star Sirius. Therefore, his transformations "probably should astronomically cover the period beginning with the heliacal rising of the star Sirius in July and lasting till the first appearance of the meteor showers between August and September" (Panaino, 2005).

In rituals, *Tishtrya* is strengthened by the human worship, and he is fortified by a sacrifice offered to him. When humans fail to worship him properly or fail to offer a sacrifice to him, he loses his strength, and he may be defeated by the drought devil. Consequently, the outcome of the battle with his opponents "depends on [hu]man's faithful observance of his ritual obligations" (Hinnells, 1975: 32). To maintain *Tishtrya*'s rituals and worship him, Persians

dedicated the rain festival, *Tirgān* to the god of rain since the Zoroastrian era. They have been

traditionally celebrating *Tirgān* to honor *Tishtrya* for overcoming the drought evil and flowing

water to the fields, rising rain clouds, and enhancing the harvest. The month *Tir* (21 June-22

July) in the Persian calendar is the fourth month of the year and the first month of summer. The

word *Tir*[6] in Middle and Modern Persian comes from the name of the same month in the

Zoroastrian calendar. It refers to the fourth astrological sign in the zodiac, originating from the

constellation of Cancer. The name of the month *Tir* has been originally derived from *Tishtrya*

(which is an *Avestān* word) and perhaps it is also relevant to his astrological essence as a star

(Mokhtarian, 2011). Zoroastrians also name the thirteenth day of each month, *Tir*. Therefore, the

tradition of the rain festival, *Tirgān* has been celebrated on the thirteenth day of the month *Tir* for

centuries and is associated with worshiping *Tishtrya* in such a warm/hot and dry month for

receiving rain. *Tirgān* is still celebrated among Iranians by splashing water, reciting poetry,

serving traditional food, wearing rainbow-colored wristbands for ten days, and then throwing it

into rivers or streams (Curtis, 1993: 17).

3.6.2.a. The Series Character: *Āb-pari*, Water-fairy

The god of rain, *Tishtrya*, is re-conceived as آب پری [*Āb-pari*] 'Water-fairy' in the series.

However, the re-conceptualization entails changes in her gender, character, appearance, and role.

While the mythological water spirit, *Tishtrya* is a male god who takes the form of humans and

animals (mostly as a white horse), the TV series' *Āb-pari* is a female fairy in a human body

(without any wing as a typical feature of a fairy). She appears in elegant blue silk clothes, blue

eye makeup, and blue long braids: blue evokes the color of water. Her responsibilities are not as

broad as those of *Tishtrya,* the god of rain. Water-fairy of the series is not a part of the creation

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[6] *Tir* is also the Persian name for the planet Mercury.

myth, and she does not create the water resources, but she only guards them. She cleans, purifies, and sanitizes water. She does not have supernatural powers, but she has the exceptional ability to clean or purify waters with one touch of magic. She is not worshipped like the god of rain. However, she needs human sacrifice to get the strength to protect water resources. However, sacrifice here is not a part of ritual or worshipping practices. In a more modern sense appropriate to the modern theme of the series, sacrifice toward Water-fairy means the human's action and responsibility in protecting the water resources. As a result, Water-fairy's strength is vulnerable: the less the human cares about the environment and particularly water resources, the more fragile her strength is. Therefore, she becomes feeble in the battle with the demon of the drought. And this is a notable point that makes her more comparable to the mythological god of rain, *Tishtrya* than other water deities such as the water goddess, Ānāhitā. Because, in my opinion, and from what we know about the water goddess, Ānāhitā, she belongs to a higher rank and glory with more unlimited power, strength, and wisdom compared to the god of rain, *Tishtrya*. And such a unique feature has already resembled the character of the great-grandmother-water-fairy, *Bibi-Āb-pari*. However, the character of Water-fairy in the series could inherit some of the unique characteristics from the great-grandmother-water-fairy and be a combination of both the mythological god of rain and the water goddess.

3.6.3. *Haoma*, God and Sacred Plant

هَومَه [*Haoma*], also هَوم [*Haom*] (*Hom* in Modern Persian) is both a sacred plant (a variety of Ephedra) and a conceptual god (rather than a physically described one) in Persian mythology. According to Zoroastrian religious texts, *Haoma* is a celestial plant found in the mountains. The plant is pressed, and the extracted juice is mixed with water and milk. The drink, which is yellow in color, had the medicinal power to strengthen, heal and cure illnesses, and enhance fertility.

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The ritual pressing of the plant itself and the drink offer a sacrifice because of which the earth and the sky are remained in order: the sun shines, the rain pours, the plants grow, and the fertility continues. Both the plant and the process of pressing are considered the god of *Hoama* (also known as *Hom Izad* 'Hom God' in later Zoroastrianism). The *Haoma*, as a whole celestial phenomenon is attributed to Ahurā Mazdā's divine entity and is referred to as his son and a deity in Persian mythology. He also gives strength to other gods and acts as a priest or a leader among them. He also is a warrior against any evil being, and he receives his [supernatural] power from the *Haoma* plant extract. He both receives sacrifice and offers oblations so that the divine essence may be manifested in human life and faithfulness (Curtis, 1993: 18 and Hinnells, 1975: 38).

Haoma is a plant, a god, a healer, and a priest at once and this makes him a conceptually complex divinity. This god is symbolically consecrated in daily rituals but has been rarely described in a physical form like other deities. According to the Zoroastrian religious texts, *Avestā*, the most physical descriptions of *Haoma* are attributed to the plant and its properties as a tall fragrant plant in golden-green color (Moradi Ghiasabadi, 2008). In the 19th century, the *Haoma* plant was presumably identified and matched with one of the species of Ephedra based on the descriptions in *Avestā*. The assumption was established when the Zoroastrians of Yazd province in present-day Iran were found using the twigs of an Ephedra variant for their ritual practices, which was also locally known as *Hum* or *Homa* in Modern Persian (Falk, 1989). The only anthropomorphic reference to *Haoma*, though, is referred to the section 10.90 of *Yasht* in the hymns of Zoroastrians, in which *Haoma* is personified in the form of *Dūraosha* 'a beautiful man' (Kellens, 2011). He is described as a "golden green-eyed" *Haoma*, who is the guardian of mountain plants upon the highest mountain peaks, and he is also associated with the guardian of

all animal creations, *Amesha Spenta* 'immortal [which is] holy'. *Haoma* is worshiped as the protector of all animals, and he aids the god of rain, *Tishtrya*, in bringing rain so that plants and animals may thrive (Boyce, 2003). In Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, *Haoma* appears as a hermit who lives in solitude in mountains. He helps the legendary king of Persia, Kay Khosrow, to defeat Afrāsiāb (another mythical king), who is the archenemy of Persia, and is considered the agent of Ahriman 'the evil'. It is assumed that the *Haoma* in In Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh* is associated with the plant and the god *Haoma*, however, it has been transformed and transfigured through time and oral practices (Moradi Ghiasabadi, 2008). Today, the Ephedra plant is known by various local names such as *Hum*, *Humuk*, *Koshak*, and *Ormak* in different parts of Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. Its extract is still used for nourishing and medicinal purposes, and it is still a part of cultural practices and beliefs. For example, in villages of Khorasan province in Iran, it is believed that the extract of the plant improves fertility in women and helps them to have smarter and healthier children (Moradi Ghiasabadi, 2008).

3.6.3.a. The Series Character: *Sabz-pari*, Green-fairy

According to the above description, it seems that *Haoma* has been conceptualized in the form of *Sabz-pari* in the *Āb-pariā* series. سبزپری [*Sabz-pari*] 'Green-fairy' is another fairy who is responsible for guarding the earth and all the living beings on it. *Sabz-pari* appears as a beautiful woman in green and floral clothes with a floral chaplet on her green braids. Her name literally denotes the green color, but it actually connotes the earth, plants, and animals' life and fertility. In addition, all the green color clothes and her floral accessories demonstrate her relationship with the plants and nature. She is wearing a golden-green eye shadow around her eyes that reminds the description of *Haoma* in Zoroastrian scriptures (see above). She is aware of all plant and animal species around the world and is able to travel around, and hike in mountainous areas

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to collect the rare plant species. She can communicate with living beings. She can call on plants and animals in times of crisis or problems and seek their help. Like the *Haoma* god of Persian mythology who gives strength to other gods, and acts as their leader, *Sabz-pari* also, in her individual role, acts as a leader, a guide, and motivation for other sister fairies. She is a knowledgeable, wise, and hopeful role model in the series. She is the one who navigates the fairies' journey to the earth as she is the most familiar one with the earth and living beings. She often makes the right decision in times of crisis and has recommendations, advice, and solutions for others.

3.6.4. *Vāyu-Vāta*, The God of Wind

وایو-واتَه [*Vāyu-Vāta*] or واتَه-وایو [*Vāta-Vāyu*] in *Avetān* language, and وای [*Vāy*] or [*Wāy*] واى in Middle Persian is often known and used as *Vāyu*. He is characterized as the dual-natured divinity of the wind (*Vāyu*) and atmosphere (*Vāta*) in Persian mythology. He rides in a chariot that is pulled by hundreds of horses. And it is arguably thought that he is one among four forces that move the water goddess's chariot. He represents both time and space as he rules in the intermediate space/air between the sky and the earth; somewhere between the light (where the creator Ahurā Mazdā rules, i.e., in the sky) and darkness (where *Ahriman* 'evil spirit' belongs to, i.e., on the ground). He is considered a neutral figure, independent from the creator god, Ahurā Mazdā, and the evil spirit, *Ahriman*. He has an enigmatic character as he carries a dual aspect of a beneficent yet sinister at once. He acts both as a lifegiving god who is worshipped and is offered sacrifice for bringing the rain clouds together, and as a destructive evil who belongs to the category of *divs* 'demons' and brings death in the storms. He is described as strong, fierce, fast, smart, brave, and a protector; yet he is dreadful, covetous, cruel, and lethal.

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Later Zoroastrianism divided the wind god into two figures of 'good *Vāyu*' versus 'bad *Vāyu*' to distinguish between his two aspects (Hinnells, 1975: 31 and Vakili, 2016: 68-96). In the mythology of heroic kings in later Zoroastrianism, humans usually pray to the good Vāyu as a warrior to protect them in the war, in the difficulties, and against the evil spirits. Good Vāyu is symbolized as the god who facilitates the marriage between girls and boys. He helps young women find their appropriate, fertile, honored, and venerable husbands if they worship him (Vakili 2016:81-82).

Today, the mythical figure of the wind god, Vāyu seems less known as opposed to other Persian deities such as the water goddess, Ānāhitā, or the creator god, Ahurā Mazdā. From a linguistic perspective, the term باد [*bād*] 'wind' in Modern Persian has been preserved from the name of the god. It is the continuation of the term Middle Persian *Vāt/Vād, from Vāta* in Old Persian with the least meaning changes in the three periods of the Persian language. Other than denoting the natural phenomenon of wind, the term *bād* 'wind' in Modern Persian still idiomatically connotes being 'inevitable' and 'overcoming.' This reminds the dual characteristic of the wind god, Vāyu that also symbolizes the wind as both a natural force and a natural disaster. The remarkable use of interjections such as *ei Vāy*, *Vāy bar to,* or *Vāy bar man* in Modern Persian is probably originated in the beliefs and thoughts around the god of wind and are associated with his character. The expression ای وای [*ei Vāy*] literally 'oh *Vāy*' (may be translated as 'oh my god'), for example, is now an exclamation phrase that expresses a spontaneous feeling or reaction in response to something unpleasant. But based on the evidence in old Zoroastrian inscriptions, it was initially used as a call for the god of wind, Vāyu, to help with a warning incident, an unpleasant situation, or a regret, as he was also characterized for being the agent of sudden and fast incidences. Or the interjections وای بر تو/من [*Vāy bar to/man*] literally '*Vāy* on

you/me' (may be translated as 'shame on you/me'), has been initially originated in an expression

used by the demon in time of being defeated by their opponents. In Zoroastrian texts, the phrase

has been also used in reference to those who were either unfaithful to Zoroastrian beliefs or were

closely related to evil spirits (Vakili, 2016: 70-73). While *Vāy bar to/ Vāy bar man* in Modern

Persian is mostly applied to emotive concepts that show disgust, aversion, admonish, or

reproach. They are now commonly used without any clear or direct reference to the god of wind.

3.6.4.a. The Series Character: *Abr-pari*, Cloud-fairy and *Sabā*, The Wind

ابر پری [*Abr-pari*] 'Cloud-fairy' is the other fairy in the story of *Āb-pariā* whose character

seems to be adapted from the mythological god of wind, *Vāy*. However, it seems the original

characteristics of the wind god have been symbolized in two characters of the series: 1) *Abr-pari*

'Cloud-fairy' that is one of the main characters of the series, and 2) صبا [*Sabā*], a marginal

character who acts as the wind. The two characters are accompanied in a number of scenes, but

Sabā's role is more facilitating rather than being significant to influence the main theme. *Abr-*

pari guards the clouds and gathers the rain clouds together for producing precipitation. She is the

most knowledgeable character who knows about the type and function of the clouds and their

relation to the direction of the wind. Like other sister fairies of the story, *Abr-pari* has some

special talents. She can fly, and she can call out the clouds to get together and produce the rain.

However, her ability is limited, and she is not able to increase precipitation in the clouds. She

appears as a human-like fairy. She wears a loose gray dress detailed with a white robe that

sometimes functions as a wing. A gray bluish makeup has been applied to her face. Her hair is

gray and black, and she wears a gray-silver crown. She always carries a very small piece of

cloud, called ابرک [*Abrak*] 'little cloud' to represent her character. Cloud-fairy does not show a

strong personality and acts more neutral to the events; however, she is flexible. She easily adapts to any changing situation and can adjust herself to new conditions in contrast to her other sister fairies. This may reflect the intermediate feature of the wind god that can rule between air and space and sky and earth. Cloud-fairy is kind and cares compassionately about others and events, but she is also self-willed. She is not shown as an innocent character, but her benevolent characteristics are highlighted. Her character and her manner evoke the dual characteristic of the mythological god of wind that is both lifegiving and sinister but in a modified way.

Sabā, as a side character, is the wind. He is personified as a handsome kind and gentle man who is riding in a white chariot across the sky and among clouds. He wears a golden headband on his long black hair. He wears a long satin white gown. His presence is not in coordination with Cloud-fairy for gathering the clouds or nature-related tasks. Instead, he assists in tasks, accelerates the transportation for Cloud-fairy and other fairies as well as he acts as a messenger who carries messages for the fairies. In the marginal story, *Abr-pari* and Sabā are in love and plan to marry, and that is one reason that they both appear together. The description of Sabā reminds a symbolic wind element in Persian poetry and literature with the same name that is also familiar to the viewer of the series. Sabā of Persian literature is the name of a cool gentle breeze that blows at sunrise from the east. It is a breeze to which lovers confide their secrets. Therefore, it is an informed source and a part of the communication process between the lover and the beloved (Kia and Saghe'i, 2011). As a result, the character of Sabā in the series, his gentle manner, his role as a messenger and communication assistant, and his own love story can be a resemblance to the actual Sabā wind in the literature. It can be also argued that the theme has been mixed (or even rooted) with the mythological god of wind in relevance to the nature of the wind god who facilitates the marriage between girls and boys. In addition, the scenes that

feature *Abr-pari* riding in Sabā's chariot again remind the god of wind's chariot and his intermediate presence in space and time. The image of the chariot along with Sabā and *Abr-pari* who are riding in it could also arguably symbolize the chariot of the water goddess, Ānāhitā, that is pulled by four natural forces, two of which are cloud and wind.

I conclude that the figure of the mythological wind god, and his dual nature has mixed with the literary character of Sabā wind. The symbolic elements of cloud, wind, chariot, love story, and marriage have been adapted from both characters and then have been conceptualized in the two characters of Cloud-fairy and Sabā in the series to make the story more tangible and attractive to the viewer.

3.6.5. *Apaosha*, The Demon of Drought

اَپَئوش [*Apaosha*] in *Avestān* or اپوش [*Aposh*] 'not thriving' in Middle and Modern Persian is known as the demon of drought in Persian mythology. He is a completely negative figure, referred to as a *div* 'demon' who is the opponent of the rain god, *Tishtrya,* and the water goddess, Ānāhitā. He prevents rainfall and spreads drought, illnesses, and infertility. He has been a constant threat to human, nature, and all in it. He aims to ruin and destroy the world by reducing precipitation and drying out the water resources. Aposh has been in various battles with lifegiving deities, water providers, and water warriors such as the god of rain and the water goddess since the establishment of creation in Persian mythology. One of the battles between him and the god of rain, *Tishtrya* has been vividly depicted in section 8 of *Yasht in* Zoroastrian sacred texts. In that battle, both mythical figures are personified as two horses who fight hoof against hoof for three days. Aposh is described as a terrifying black horse with black ears and black tail while the god of rain, *Tishtrya* appears as a beautiful white horse with golden ears and golden caparison. Aposh gets his strength from human's insufficient or improper prayers and

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sacrifices to the god of rain, *Tishtrya*. This consequently means that the power oscillates between the god and the demon. When Aposh gets stronger from humans' actions, *Tishtrya* gets weaker and is defeated in their battle over controlling the water resources and annual cycle of rain in the nature; and, when humans offer adequate sacrifice and pray properly, *Tishtrya* is infused with the strength of ten horses, ten camels, ten bulls, ten mountains, and ten rivers. He is exaggeratedly fortified to overcome the drought demon; then, he is able to flow down the restrained water to the fields, rise the rain clouds from oceans and fall the rain over regions (Curtis, 1993: 16-17 and Hinnells, 1975: 32). It is obvious that the outcome of battles between these two figures depends on human prayer and sacrifice.

3.6.5.a. The Series Character*: Aposh*, The Demon of Drought

In the series, Aposh appears as a demon of the drought with his original name. He looks like an ugly, unpleasant, and dreadful human. He is 3330 years old in the series, and this validly matches the history of Aposh in Persian mythology and the narratives about his battle with the water goddess, Ānāhitā. He appears in dark ragged clothes with monstrous face makeup and frizzy untidy hair. He lives in a dingy squalid cave where the light can barely come in. The place is too dusty to be able to see through. Aposh is an evil and the opposite character of the fairies. Instead of forgetting to offer a sacrifice to the gods, the transgression in the series is humans' disrespectfulness to nature and being irresponsible in front of environmental issues. That is all the strength that Aposh can achieve to imprison Water-fairy and cause more environmental problems. He is the cause of all the environmental problems in the series and behind all the scenes. He manipulates humans to misbehave toward the environment. The series does not show exactly how Aposh misleads people in destroying the environment and does not show whether he has any special power or extraordinary ability.

3.6.6. *Nane Sarmā and Amu Nowruz,* **The Seasonal Legend**

In many old Persian narratives passing through generations, there is a well-known character as ننه سرما [*Nane Sarmā*] 'grandma frost' or 'grandma cold'. She is a calendar-related legend who personifies the winter season. She is an old woman who is symbolized to enrich the winter with reasonable coldness and snow and make the earth ready for the blooming spring. Her appearance in Persian tales is associated with one of the two transitory periods in the winter: either the coldest days in the middle of winter (late January-early February) that last for 8 days and called چار-چار [*Chār-Chār*] 'four-four' or a period of 7-10 days of severe coldness in late February that is referred to as سرما پیرزن [*sarmā pīre-zan*] 'the old woman's cold' (Omidsalar and Algar, 1990). Her character and stories about her are probably originated from two sources: 1) popular beliefs and oral practices of Persia that is rooted in local nature worships in Persia and might be associated with Zoroastrianism and paganism practices; and 2) the Arabic legend about the tribe *Ād*, who were all destroyed by a severe cold as a God's punishment, and only an old woman survived (The latter seemingly supports the term *sarmā pīre-zan* 'the old woman's cold'). However, a similar but modified legendary character and theme sounds widespread all over Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Southern Europe and Balkans, Turkey, the Near East, and North Africa, and this all might be traced to a same origin (Krasnowolska, 2010).

Nane Sarmā's story in Persian stories mostly concerns the seasonal shift from winter to spring or, in some narratives, it is characterized by a sudden shift in the cold weather during the winter. But her story is also intertwined with the arrival of spring which results in mild spring weather. Therefore, the narratives about her are also attached to another calendar-related legend, called عمو نوروز [*Amu Nowruz*] 'Uncle *Nowruz*'. Amu Nowruz is a seasonal motif that has been

traced back to pre-Islamic *Nowruz* traditions (Gaffary, 1984: 363). Perhaps, it is associated with the spirit of noon, رَپیثوین [*Rapithwin*], in Zoroastrian rituals that retreats during winter and returns with the coming of spring (Epinette, 2014). He is mostly described as an old man having white hair and a long white beard in red clothes. He is a joyous herald who symbolizes rejuvenating nature and announces that the spring and *Nowruz* holiday are forthcoming after a long cold winter. Amu Nowruz is also responsible for giving *Nowruz* gifts to children, much like Santa Claus. He makes their wishes come true and ensures that they are happy and healthy for many years to come. According to the old narratives, Nane Sarmā has been always in love with Amu Nowruz. However, they have never had a chance to meet each other in person due to the seasonal shift. Nane Sarmā is described as an old woman with long white hair, probably wearing a scarf. Every year after a long winter of hard work, she makes her house that is located all above in the sky clean; she sets a table with flowers, delicious food, and tea; she dresses up in red clothes, wears makeup and pleasant perfume, and gets ready to meet Amu Nowruz. But she falls asleep due to excessive tiredness, and she does not wake up when Amu Nowruz arrives. Amu Nowruz is kind and empathetic, therefore, he does not wake her up. He drinks his tea, gives Nane Sarmā a warm kiss on her cheek, and leaves. Thus, they never meet each other, and their story repeats every year (Arvin, 2016).

The story of Nane Sarmā and Amu Nowruz traditionally symbolizes the transition from the cold to mild weather, and from the old year to the new year in the Persian calendar. It signifies the changes and transitions in both nature and human life while it also motivates hope for a continuing life (Arvin, 2016). Besides the oral practices, their narratives appear in Persian literature, and children hear their story from early childhood. Each year, the legend of Amu Nowruz and Nane Sarmā comes along during the Persian New year celebration. Players act their

characters and stories with traditional songs, music, and humor in the street arts and performances in the days preceding the *Nowruz* holiday to represent happiness for the New Year and entertain people with joy. Therefore, their legend has been preserved through generations until today.

3.6.6.a. The Series Character: *Barf-pari*, Snow-fairy

In the story of *Āb-pariā*, Nane Sarmā has been conceptualized as برف پری [*Barf-pari*] 'Snow-fairy'. She appears as a human-like fairy who guards the winter season. She is responsible for the snow falling, and she roles to prepare nature for an on-time blooming spring. *Barf-pari* does not have an extraordinary power but she is able to make ice and frost or blow a cold wind with her mouth as needed. She is 1559 years old and the oldest fairy in the series. Therefore, in contrast to her other sister fairies, she is more knowledgeable about the past and is the narrator of many past stories to her sister fairies. For example, she is aware of the battle between the great-grandmother fairy and the drought demon that had happened a long time ago. Due to her age and her long-life memory, she can predict the re-presence of the drought demon after a long time; and she can correlate it to the consequences of human action toward the environment. She is kind and supportive to those who are vulnerable to environmental problems, but harsh and aggressive to those who cause problems. Her character is not strong and powerful enough to solve the problems, but she is persuasive in fulfilling her mission and finding the solutions. She is also fragile and worried about confronting environmental issues. This characterizes her mostly as a human (like Nane Sarmā, who is a human) who experiences various feelings and emotions rather than conceptualizes her as a mythological god or spirit.

Snow-fairy appears in a light blue satin outfit with a blue velvet vest that is detailed with white fuzzy accessories while wearing a white scarf on her white hair. Her appearance reminds

the winter season and snow. Her age, her physical appearance, and her outfit all look like the description of Nane Sarmā in the old narratives (see above), except that Nane Sarmā's outfit is usually described as red. At the beginning of the story, *Barf-pari* appears dressed up and prepared to meet with Amu Nowruz and the other sister fairies. She has made the traditional food, drinks, and treats, and has set the table to celebrate the New Year while she is also drowsy. However, it also does not happen this time that she meets *Amu Nowruz*; Not because she fell asleep, but also because Water-fairy has not arrived yet and the sister fairies are worried about her. The scene and the dialogs conceptually warn the viewer that something is wrong, and the spring may be delayed. All the visual images about *Barf-pari's* character, her preparedness for the spring, and her wait for Amu Nowruz all evoke the story of Nane Sarmā.

3.7. The Adaptation of the *Āb-pariā* Characters on the Filmmaking Process

Many of the *Āb-pariā* characters are reconstructed from Persian mythology and past legends despite slight modifications. The above description reveals the detailed origins of the fairies and the drought demon based on Persian mythology and cultural legends. Additionally, Boroumand, the director of the *Āb-pariā*, had confirmed in her interviews that "the characters of the fairies and the drought demon in the *Āb-pariā* have been reconstructed based on the legends to break the boundaries of myth and reality, and consider the anthropogenic problems in nature and be a hint toward the responsibility of human beings for saving the natural resources" (Aziz Mohamadi, 2013). However, the nature of the *Āb-pariā* characters has been obviously altered from the sacred deities of Persian mythology to a broader cultural category of fairies and demons. The transformation of the characters may first seem like a radical simplification of the supernatural world. The fairies appear as visible human-like creatures to deliver a conceivable

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figment of imagination instead of being supernatural and divine gods and goddesses who represent dominant authorities. In addition, representing the exact form of the mythological image of such godly entities requires more accuracy to conform their true nature to the precise values and beliefs about them and match authentically with the historical records and beliefs. While a simplified version of the deities in the form of fairies could easily adjust to the theme and their continued appearance in the series without bolding their historical effect and raising the sensitivity and critiques about their true nature.

In order to meet the realistic aspects of the series in creating the environmental message, the series cannot preserve the exact structure of the mythological deities with supernatural powers and cannot remain passive in essence. The series addresses real environmental concerns and seeks active solutions for them in a realistic frame to raise awareness about the anthropogenic impacts on the environment. Therefore, the pure supernaturality of the characters, like the mythological deities, may disrupt the real effect that the series intends to depict. The series requires at least a physical transformation, in which the mythological deities with extraordinary powers are reconstructed into the forms of fairies with modified and reduced abilities, while it still regulates itself in the intrinsic features of those mythological characters. This reduces the influence of unrealistic extraordinariness and makes the expectations more realistic. This modification process in the form and the ability of the characters seems necessary to justify the human's attempt in addressing and fixing environmental problems. Otherwise, if the characters are godly heroes and have supernatural powers, it diminishes the role of humans to a passive way in which they do not feel any obligation for detecting and solving the problems. It could imply that the supernatural powers could fix the problems. Therefore, the *Āb-pariā* characters do not appear as mythological gods with supernatural powers. They are instead fairy

guardians of nature, who do not have supernatural powers to immediately and easily fix the problems, but they are able to facilitate and accelerate the events. This also implies that the ordinary endeavor is adequate to reverse the environmental damage and find solutions, not a supernatural power. Besides, the ability of the fairies is not a key in the dynamic process of involving the viewers in responding to the ideological meanings of the characters and the theme of the series. It adds aesthetic capacity and attractions to the series so that it can enthusiastically invite the audience to respond to its message.

Furthermore, the physical and ideological transformation seems necessary to should fit in the current Islamic society of Iran. Following the Arab conquest of Persia in 634 CE that led to the fall of the Sassanid empire in 651 CE and the decline of Zoroastrianism, Islam has been almost the continuous state religion of Persia for centuries to present-day Iran which the Islamic revolution of 1979 has transformed the country to a strict Islamic society. The culture of Persia has been therefore integrated into Islamic monotheistic beliefs while it has also maintained certain pre-Islamic culture. As a result, the series' use of fairies who do not act as divine deities and lack godly powers seems to be a deliberate accommodation of the socio-cultural and religious norms to drive its environmental message home. In accommodating the current socio-political norms and religious beliefs, if the fairies had taken the form of gods or goddesses, that would have been contrary to Islam's monotheism in which just one God, *Allah* controls everything. It would have been consequently opposed to the ideology of a religious state, i.e., the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the Islamic law and beliefs have been fundamentally constituted in all aspects of the society including politics, economy, culture, art, literature, and media. In such a country where all other religious minorities are widely discouraged by the Islamic state, direct references to the concepts of polytheism and Zoroastrianism are not allowed to be

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advertised in the public media (which is fully controlled by the state). Therefore, the *Āb-pariā*

producing cast must have been very cautious in producing the content and visual effects of the

series to avoid struggles that might have been caused due to the power dominance of the Islamic

state. The cast must have moved vigilantly through such obstacles to get the state permission for

producing and broadcasting the series on the public television, and at the same time produce

something that suits the tastes of its viewers and can relate them to the cultural values and

memory, communicate with them and transfer its message. As a result, transfiguration to the

neutral (and less controversial) icons of fairies, instead of other forms of gods, goddesses, genies,

or angels (for their religious connotations) does not evoke religious concerns and

controversialities. It instead can easily fit into the cultural beliefs of the society and instill the

ideological messages that meet the normative expectations of the mainstream culture in the

minds of viewers.

Introducing and explaining the *Āb-pariā* characters above, I aim to analyze the content of

the series and analyze how its discourse has been shaped to derive its environmental message.

Relying on the plot summary of the series above (Section 3.4), I will continue with the details of

each episode. I will explain the environmental issue that is addressed in each episode and how it

is detected and solved through the story. I also identify the mythological and cultural signs and

elements upon which the theme and message have been built. I will then analyze how each sign

is signified by combining using the sociocognitive approach and semiotic model.

3.8. *Āb-pariā* series: Description and Analysis

Seven crucial environmental problems are identified and at least partially resolved in the

Āb-pariā series (cf. the plot summary in Section 3.4 above). These problems are occurring in

various geographical locations of present-day Iran. In the series, they are detected and resolved

in a fictional context, by deploying mythological and cultural elements. Below, I identify the

underlying factors in shaping the discourse of each story in each episode, integrating the three

components of the sociocognitive model: society, discourse, and ideology. I also interpret the

shared knowledge and social attitudes towards the mythological and cultural signs used in the

series, to draw out the cultural meanings and predict the possible mental models in the viewers as

well as in the characters of the stories. In this semiotic analysis process, I also focus on the

denotative and connotative meanings of the mythological and cultural signs (mostly non-

linguistic ones) used in the *Āb-pariā* discourse (and in each episode), to interpret how they

explicitly or implicitly stimulate the viewers and evoke a socially or culturally shared

knowledge, attitudes, beliefs or experiences from the past. I also explain the roles of the fairies in

resolving the environmental problems in each episode and address how their action is signified in

each episode in response to their mythological origins. Sections 3.8.1 to 3.8.7 below have been

structured by the environmental problems that have been addressed in each episode of the series,

beginning from episode 6 of the series throughout the end.

3.8.1. Water waste in a small household

In this episode, overuse of fresh water in a household setting is addressed. The members

of a family are shown in many scenes in which they are wasting water carelessly, or they are

using the fresh tap water excessively for non-essential purposes such as car washing or yard

cleaning. The human characters, the philologist Ostād Bahār and his family, first try to educate

the head of the household about the limited availability and distribution of fresh water and the

impact of its overconsumption on everyone in the community. Next, they mention the economic

incentive of saving utility bill costs to encourage the household to conserve water. Once rational negotiations become ineffective, it becomes up to the fairies and their superhuman abilities to persuade the water-wasting human family. Green-fairy, who is responsible for guarding the earth and all its beings, uses her unique gift of communicating with animals to summon a large number of frogs to help. All the frogs come from a pond in a place (possibly a village) called *Bārāngard* 'containing rain.' At the request of Green-fairy, the frogs haunt the family's house, causing a disgusting feeling in all family members and visitors, who are also frightened by the fact that the frogs speak to them. The head of the offending household, therefore, finally understands the presence of so many frogs in his house is the consequence of wasting water and turning their home into a wet and humid place. Therefore, he reduces their water usage and seeks help from Ostād Bahār and the fairies to remove the frogs.

The frogs here may represent animals referred to as خْرَفْسْتَر [*khrafstra*] (an *Avestān* term) in Zoroastrian texts. They were evil animals created by *Ahriman*, the evil spirit, to threaten humans (Curtis, 1993: 23). In Middle Persian, *khrafstra* was specifically used for reptiles and amphibians such as frogs, scorpions, lizards, snakes, and insects. Their physical existence was repulsive and considered harmful to humans, and their malevolent spirit is an evil sign that must be killed or avoided (Moazami, 2015). Furthermore, according to Zoroastrian mythology, frogs are among those evil animals that try to gnaw the roots of the mythical *Tree of All Seeds*[7] (Curtis, 1993: 22). In addition, the green frogs in the story remind us of the tree frogs that live in areas with a great amount of rainfall or in places with high moisture and humidity. As a result, due to

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[7] The *Tree of All Seeds* or the *Tree of Saēna* is a mythical tree grew in the middle of *Vourukasha Sea*, a heavenly sea formed by the creator, *Ahura Mazda*. The tree had sprung from the seeds of all the plants brought forth by the emergence of the first plant, and the tree is protected from the evil spirit by the mythical bird of *Saēna* and other animals. Each year the bird *Saēna* mixes the tree seeds with water, and the god of rain *Tishtrya* distributes them over the earth (Curtis 1993:22).

their excessive use of water, the household in the *Ab-pariā* story has been interpreted as a symbolic pond-like place where the frogs can easily live and grow. In addition, the frogs are in communication with Green-fairy and get instructions from her. These exchanges highlight the role of Green-fairy as the guardian of animals on earth, as the one who knows their language.

Fictional events in the series also reference real-life environmental events in Iran. The idea of invading frogs in a residence likely refers to an actual environmental issue that had happened in *Malekān* town in northwest Iran in 2004. According to news reports, *Malekān* residents complained that a large number of frogs had invaded the residential areas which had caused discomfort and difficulties for them. They claimed that a huge rainfall and the overflow of domestic sewage due to an inefficient sewer system had created too many ponds and puddles suitable for frog spawning. The residents were dissatisfied with the officials of the city and relevant organizations for not addressing the issue and not removing the frogs (IRNA, 2004). Although this report is not directly referred to in the series, such real evidence of frogs could still index both excess water and excessive discomfort, which should encourage viewers to restrict their water usage.

3.8.2. Hazardous factory waste endangers a rare species of golden fish

In this episode, the fairies have to save a rare species of golden fish that originally lived in the Jājrud river (in the north of Iran passing through Mazandarān and Tehrān provinces). Investigating clues, the fairies and Ostād Bahār realize that a regional cosmetic factory was dumping its hazardous waste into the Jājrud river. This effluent caused a common skin problem in area residents and endangered a rare golden fish species. Ironically, the manufacturer produced its cosmetic and cleaning products under the brand name ماهی طلایی [*Māhi talāei*] 'Golden fish'. The factory name apparently derives from its owner whose name, ماه طلا [*Māh*

talā] 'Gold moon', is homophonous with the name of the factory. The fate of the owner Māh talā and the factory were tied together decades ago: Separating from her true love, Māh talā was forced to accept an arranged marriage with a person whom she did not love. Grieving for being separated from her true love, she was considered insane. She had gradually become isolated from others so that no one knew if she was alive. She lost control over her properties including the factory, which was thereafter managed by Māh talā's grandson. He is portrayed as a selfish avaricious person whose goal is profit over the environment. He does not pay any attention to the polluted river and the extinction of the golden fish, nor to the damages that the hazardous waste has caused to residents.

The fairies need to solve the problem. In this episode, Cloud-fairy discovers Māh Talā's loss of the factory and its relation to the extinction of the golden fish. Cloud-fairy flies around and excitedly finds two golden fish in a small pool in a large house. She meets Māh Talā next to the pool. Unlike the usual approach where the fairies hide their actual identity in the human land, this time Cloud-fairy introduces herself as the fairy of the clouds. Being very enthusiastic about fairytales, and recalling the fairies' detailed pictures including Water-fairy's, Māh talā symbolically narrates her own story. She does not describe herself as a human. She instead uses elements such as animal images to describe how she (both her symbolic physical appearance and her emotional being) has been symbolically transforming over time. Māh talā ends her imaginary narrative with the proposal that the two golden fish in the pool are herself and her true love swimming together and hoping for their liberation. Recalling her experience, Māh talā is convinced the freedom of Water-fairy is only possible if she can free the two golden fish in the purified river. Therefore, she must reclaim her factory from her grandson. Māh talā must recompense all the damages and save the golden fish species.

The image of a golden fish in this story may well be related to the celestial and mythical image of a fish called *Kara* in Persian mythology. The *Kara* fish is among those animal species of good spirits that swim around the *Tree of All Seeds* (a.k.a. the immortal *Haoma* plant that is also conceptualized as the *Haoma* god, see section 3.6.3). The *Kara* protects the *Tree of All Seeds* from sea demons, especially from the frogs that try to gnaw the roots of the tree (Amouzgar 2009:33, Foltz 2010:376). In addition, water is vital to every being and is one of the four sacrosanct elements of creation (along with fire, wind, and earth) in Persian mythology. Fish and water go together. Fish are seen as a symbol of the existence of water and are connected to the water goddess *Anahitā*. The image of fish is conceptualized as a sign of fertility, life-bearing, blessings, and livelihood (Nikoui, et al., 2020). As a part of the *Nowruz* tradition, Iranians set a fishbowl of live fish on the *Haft-sin*[8] table, next to other traditional symbolic items, to wish for fertility and liveliness in the new year.

Considering the above cultural and mythological significance of fish, the story of Māh talā contextualizes the signs of fish, water, survival, and freedom together in one frame and connects them to the goal of the series theme, which is saving and maintaining water resources and species. The viewer's mind is stimulated by the familiar cultural and mythological concept of the fish. The golden color of the fish indexes their value and rareness. The fish here is a valuable element, because they are one precondition to the rescue of Water-fairy, yet they are rare due to environmental hazards. The blended mythological and contemporary story flow

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[8] Iranians celebrate *Nowruz*, the Persian New Year, with the tradition of arranging a table called هفت سین [*Haft-sin*] 'Seven S'. Seven items whose names start with the Persian letter *s* سین [*sin*], in addition to several other items, are set on the table, each of which has a symbolic meaning. The seven primary items are: *sabzeh* «سبزه» 'grass', (usually, wheatgrass grown in a dish), سمنو [*samanu*], a kind of wheat germ pudding, سنجد [*senjed*] 'oleaster', سرکه [*serekh*] 'vinegar', سیب [*sib*] 'apple', سیر [*sir*] 'garlic', and سماق [*somāq*] 'sumac'. The additional symbolic items are usually a mirror, candles, goldfish, *Qorān* or a holy book, and dyed eggs. The table is also designed with fruits, sweets, and flowers.

enchants with the fairy-like abilities of Māh talā. Māh talā is not a fairy herself but has the ability to perceive them. That may be the reason that Cloud-fairy reveals her identity to Māh talā. The latter character possesses the fairy's ability to transform herself and is conceptualized as a fish. However, her transformation is not understood physically but rather interpreted cognitively. Māh talā has a dualistic nature: a human (a referential sign) and a fish (a non-referential sign). She has been the protector of the fish species in her home pool for years. On the other hand, she also understands herself as zoomorphic, imagining herself as the fish imprisoned in the pool. She also acts as a savior freeing the fish from the river, and consequently the savior of Water-fairy, while she herself needs to be liberated from years of being isolated to achieve freedom. Māh talā recounts her own being and experience in a symbolically constructed narrative to engage the viewer in solving the environmental problems by purifying the river and saving the fish.

3.8.3. Municipal solid waste in the northern forests made violets disappear

This story of this episode pays attention to several underlying conditions that led to terrestrial pollution in the northern provinces of Iran. The issues addressed include excessive municipal solid waste, poor methods of disposal, uncollected urban and suburb waste, open overflowing dumps near the forest, improper recycling, and the substantial amount of waste and pollution produced by tourism. These issues also have caused changes in the environmental cycles, leading to the extinction of plants and other species. The rudimentary waste management infrastructure and inadequate budgets to implement modern sanitary landfills have been the primary cause of pollution in forest areas near human settlements and recreational areas. Solving the waste problem in the northern provinces requires the participation of the private sector and the public. The story indirectly delegates agency to the people, with no emphasis on the role of the government. For example, the story mentions that the northern provinces are the major tourist

destinations and recreational attractions, especially during the *Nowruz* holiday. Tourism produces substantial waste (that is visible in several scenes of the series) and puts an incredible strain on the local waste management systems. Tourism requires the commitment of the public not to litter in recreational areas and forests.

The story begins with a marriage, where it is unclear (to both series characters and the viewer), what its relation to environmentalism is. The fairies have to find a carpenter in Kelārdasht, Mazandarān province, to ask why his daughter, Zahrā, is not getting married. Untangling the clues, and finding the carpenter, the fairies understand that Zahrā is engaged but she refuses to get married. Being unaware of the complexity of human marriage practices and traditions, the fairies first perceive their task as simple. But they soon comprehend that the dowry, known as *mahr* or *mahriyeh*[9], is a complex cultural concept. They realize that Zahrā has requested a basketful of wild violets from her fiancé as her dowry: as an advance promise of marriage. This contractual exchange must now occur so that the couple can get married. Since this variety of violet usually blooms in the northern forests in the spring, the fairies assume they will be able to pick the wild violets then. But dumping solid waste in the northern forests has left no space for the wild violets to grow, and the flowers have become extinct.

As the story develops, the fact that Zahrā's father-in-law seems to be the mayor of Kelārdasht untangles our remaining question about why Zahrā's marriage might be related to environmental pollution. Zahrā had intentionally drawn attention to terrestrial pollution and expected her father-in-law to address the problem. The mayor is a frivolous person, however, who distracts us from his responsibilities, instead of listing all the approaches that the city has

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[9] In Iranian wedding practices, the dowry is a substantive commitment by the groom to the bride, and it can be claimed by the bride at any time. The dowry is usually monetary, and is paid by cash, gold and/or real estate. However, it can be also in other forms of objects or conditions. The dowry is mandatory by law if the bride claims it, and the groom must pay the promised amount or fulfill the condition (Saroukhani, 1979).

attempted, however inadequate. In this story, his character emphasizes that overcoming the problem requires public education and awareness. That is, we all have a joint responsibility to solve it. The story rushes to the end, and does not show how the problem is resolved, nor whether the public or the city takes action to clear the forests of waste.

The story, instead of directly focusing on the presenting environmental problem, evokes viewers' collective memory of mythology. Seemingly tangentially, the story challenges the role of Green-fairy. She seems she has failed to do her duties as the guardian of all plants, and she has forgotten to maintain the well-being of the plants. But at the same time, the narrative endows Zahrā with some Green-fairy-like abilities on human earth. While Green-fairy can hear the violets' sound (probably from underground) and desperately looks for them, Zahrā knows that the violets will not grow unless all the waste is removed from the forests. Green-fairy blames herself for her failure to protect the wild violets, while Zahrā blames human carelessness for the violets' suffering. She dreams the violets are her childhood friends calling for her help. In her childhood imaginative play, Zahrā used to speak with the violets, wear prayer beads made with them, and pretend to be a bride. These behaviors all index the mythological Green-fairy. Thus, the viewer perceives that Zahrā is reconstructed as a quasi-realistic version of Green-fairy. Zahrā acts as a savior who tries to save the violets from extinction by addressing the waste disposal problem. Green-fairy acts as a parallel imagined savior who implores the violets to sprout, as she now knows that they have been oppressed by human destruction of their habitat. Green-fairy entreats the violets to grow so that Water-fairy can finally be freed from the drought demon. So, the violets symbolically begin to flourish one by one in the form of small fairy-like girls in their violet outfits.

The violet itself connects an actual familiar and beloved plant of the contemporary world to the literary and mythological signposts in the story; the violet is thus an appropriate choice for the story's environmental message of bringing flora and fauna back from the brink of extinction. A variety of violet, known as *banafshe* in Modern Persian, grows wild and abundantly in the forests and woods of the northern provinces of Gilān and Mazandarān at the beginning of the spring. This variety is well-known for its sweet scent, because of which it is also called *banafshe-ye moatar* 'fragrant violet' or *banafsh-ye Irani* 'Iranian violet'. *Banafshe* is among the flowers and plants mentioned in the *Bundahishn*, the myth of creation in Middle Persian, and it belongs to the God of Rain, *Tishtrya* (Aʿlam, 1988). While there is comparatively little evidence of *banafshe* in Persian mythology, in Persian classical literature the violet frequent represents friendship, love, and the brevity of life, and is also personified to converse with a lover (Rangchi 1994:38). Being a low-growing plant that slightly bends on its stalk, *banfshe* is sometimes personified as either a humble pensive person or a sad suffering person. In addition, in classical Persian poetry *banafshe* has been frequently used as a metaphor for the beautiful hair of the beloved (Matin, 2019). In local Mazandarāni poems, *banafshe* often symbolizes the rebirth of nature at the beginning of the spring and the resumption of human activities. In their sun-seeking rituals after a long damp winter, Mazandarāni people look for the *banfshe* in fields and woods. Once they find these violets, they celebrate the *banfshe* by singing songs about them (Saravi, 2021: 260-261). In the sad or hopeless themes of Mazandarāni social poetry, the image of *banafshe* connotes hope and the anticipation of improvements in society (id.: 263-264).

The story of Zahrā in the series thus indexes the sign *banafshe*, the violet, in classical poetry and literature. The viewer correlates the literary connotations of the flower to the current environmental degradation resulting in the violet's apparent extinction. The story is set in

Mazandarān province at the beginning of the spring, i.e. in the exact place and time where viewers expect this variety of violet to exist. The violet symbolically suffers from environmental degradation and is portrayed as oppressed. Both Zahrā and Green-fairy act as if they were the violet's lovers, who are passionately and devotedly searching for their beloved. Both lovers are able to communicate with the flower. The close bond between Zahrā and the violet parallels mental images of the violet that viewers are culturally familiar with. These literary tropes first stimulate the viewer's emotions, then redirects their attention to the present problem of careless littering and dumping. Viewers thus better understand why they no longer see the wild violet or other varieties of plants in nature.

3.8.4. The desiccation of traditional *kārīz* water systems and village abandonment

This episode of the series draws attention to the *kārīz* of Yazd province in central Iran that have dried up or were abandoned, due to the lowering of the water table with the advent of power-pumped wells. The mission of this story is to restore a *kārīz* located in Aliābād village, Yazd province. *Kārīz* (also known as *qanāt*) has been a traditional and sustainable system of extracting a water supply from an underground aqueduct connected to the surface via vertical shafts in arid regions. *Kārīz* has been utilized for thousands of years (probably from the early first millennium BCE) for irrigation and domestic uses (Goldsmith and Hildyard, 1984). They have not been only a unique technique of water conservation, management, and distribution, but also are considered cultural heritage reflecting the history of civilization. Maintaining *kārīz* requires a robust social organization. They are also part of the social and cultural identity of their builders and users, whose lives relied on them (Abudu et al., 2019). The shortage of groundwater due to the limited precipitation, and the development of deep-well pumping technology for farming and irrigation are the main reasons that inhabitants have abandoned their villages and

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migrated to urban areas. While the story itself focuses on Aliābād *kārīz*, this pattern of aridity and deep-well pumping has resulted in village abandonment in many Eurasian locations (id.).

According to the story, to fulfill the task listed in the great-grandmother's testament, the fairies, and Ostād Bahār have to travel to the rural area of Aliābād in Yazd province, find an elderly lady named *Bibi Malmal*, and help her to fill her jug with water from the village *Kārīz*. Untangling the clues and finding the lady, they realize that Bibi Malmal's father founded Aliābād village and hired experts to construct the *kārīz*. Bibi Malmal had grown up playing near the surface outlet of the *kārīz* and fetching water in her jug for her household use. Having had many memories and family and emotional ties to the *kārīz*, Bibi Malmal was now among the very few inhabitants who did not abandon the village even after the *kārīz* dried out. For all the years that the Aliābād *kārīz* had been abandoned, Bibi Malmal has been hoping that the water would come back to the *kārīz*. Investigating, Ostād Bahār finds a group of skilled local experts to assess the possibility of *kārīz* restoration. The experts state that the Aliābād *kārīz* did not receive enough attention over the years. Despite the costs, they voluntarily agreed to restore the *kārīz*, so that the life comes back to the village and Bibi Malmal becomes happy.

The story of the restoration of the Aliābād *kārīz* mostly indexes cultural values about water in Yazd province. In contrast to previous episodes, the fairies learn from the historical city of Yazd how to conserve precious water resources using *kārīz*. They are portrayed almost as environmental engineering researchers instead of as all-knowing guardians of nature. The fairies eagerly engage in the rich material culture of Yazd, nationally known as 'the bride of the desert' for its historical, architectural, and cultural beauties. As they visit historical attractions, the fairies link their discoveries to their mission of saving their sister, Water-fairy. For example, the fairies visit the Yazd water museum, whose building, unlike many other museums, is a historic

mansion that uniquely has access to the surface outlets of two *kārīz* that run beneath it (one of which is still active). The tangible presence of the *kārīz* in the water museum, the display of *kārīz* models and building tools all highlight the importance of *kārīz* as a sustainable water supply system. The fairies observe the rituals and ceremonies around the restoration of the Aliābād *kārīz* by the builders, which reminds viewers of the social processes and sacredness of the *kārīz* for the inhabitants of that region. Viewers of this episode are invited to adopt the perspective of interested outsiders (the fairies) and conceptualize *kārīz* as signifiers for not only water but also the cooperative society required in a desert region. The concept of *kārīz* as freshly observed by the fairies, together with all the cultural values around that work becomes linked with the viewers' own knowledge and experience. The resonance between the fictional story and the viewer's own understandings of desertification and modernization then creates a context for reflecting on the importance of water resources and the need for preserving and restoring of *kārīz* not only as of the water supply systems but also as a cultural heritage.

The central figure of Bibi Malmal in this episode is also connected to a cultural practice related to the *kārīz* known as عروسی قنات [*Arusi-ye qanat*] '*qanāt*'s wedding' (i.e., the *kārīz*'s wedding). This rite not only highlights the cultural values of *kārīz*, but it also has a socio-economic function, contributing substantially toward *kārīz* restoration and maintenance costs. In some central villages of Iran, *kārīz* are viewed as male or female, depending on the amount or hardness of the water. According to the beliefs of villagers, the *kārīz*'s wedding entails a woman, usually, an elderly widow is nominated by local people to symbolically marry a male dying *kārīz*, with the hope of increasing the water supply and keeping the *kārīz* running. An elaborate wedding ceremony is held at the outlet of the *kārīz*, and the woman is treated the same way as a bride. She receives gifts, dowry, and allowances from the villagers on behalf of her husband the

kārīz; these allowances are then used to repair the *kārīz*. The new bride is also required to "sleep with" the *kārīz*, by periodically washing her body in the *kārīz* water forever, or until the *kārīz*'s water supply increases (Labbaf Khaneiki, 2020: 135-140, Hesami, 2020). In the TV series, Bibi Malmal is presented as the bride of the Aliābād *kārīz*, although the symbolic wedding is not directly depicted in the story. She is shown as an old lonely woman who has compassionately devoted herself to the Aliābād *kārīz* while the rest of the villagers evacuated the village. The local people admire and respect her for her loyalty to the *kārīz*. The *kārīz* builders contribute the costs of the restoration to show their appreciation for her devotion. In the end, a celebration of the restored Aliābād *kārīz* is held at its outlet, including elements of a traditional wedding; thus, the cultural theme of the *kārīz*'s wedding is present in the series. For example, the outlet entrance has been decorated; local people, fairies, and water department officials are present; words of welcome are offered by the officials; and Bibi Malmal (wearing a white scarf, outfit, and *chādor,* the Iranian style of hijab) makes her entrance toward the outlet, escorted by Green-fairy in her floral dress (similar to that of a wedding's flower girl), followed by two other fairies. At the end of a unity ritual, Bibi Malmal fills her jug with *kārīz* water as a final blessing.

3.8.5. The desiccation of Parishān lake and the wetlands of southwest Iran

The story of this episode pays attention to Parishān lake and wetlands in the eastern part of Kāzerun, Fars province. The story is primarily concerned with raising environmental awareness rather than reversing aridification. Parishān had been the largest freshwater lake in the country, and the wetland ecosystem had rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, especially aquatic species and migratory birds. However, both the lake and the wetland ecosystem have desiccated in recent decades, endangering species diversity. While natural causes (low precipitation, evaporation, and cyclical drought) were partially to blame, the episode emphasizes that the

severe changes were mostly anthropogenic. Specifically, through numerous legal and illegal deep agricultural wells, humans drained groundwater. Humans also over-farmed and used inappropriate farming methods on the lands surrounding the lake. To clear land for roads, they set fire to the reeds surrounding Parishān lake, which killed caused thousands of animals, birds, and plants. In addition to addressing the root causes of this environmental crisis in the Parishān wetlands, the series shows scenes in which environmental activists, local environmental NGOs, and local people are campaigning, investigating problems, and identifying those responsible for the destruction. However, other local people often objected and obstructed their activism; those people were the ones who had benefitted from the inappropriate farming methods, well-digging, and road construction. Such work provided the only means of subsistence and survival for them in the drought years.

In the episode, the fifth task of the great-grandmother's testament is to find a young wetland specialist, Alireza Mehrān, who is a part of a wetland conservation project for the Department of Environment. He has been working to protect the Parishān wetland, and he has been educating and training the locals about the importance of the wetland, and methods of protecting it. While some locals truly respect him and advocate for protecting the Parishān wetland, many others actively resisted his advocacy, even with physical violence and abuse. As a result, Mr. Mehrān is portrayed as having left his job a few months ago. Investigating Mr. Mehrān's role in the story of Parishān, the fairies realize that their mission is to find and return Mr. Mehrān to the site so that he will lead his environmental advocacy and activism for protecting Parishān lake and wetland once again.

The story of Parishān is viewed from three perspectives: that of the drought demon, the fairies, and the humans. In his dreadful cave, the drought demon Aposh discusses the desiccation

of several currently endangered lakes in Iran, including Parishān, through his various lenses. Reviewing each lake, Aposh proudly narrates in figurative poetic language how he has dried out all the lakes and destroyed their ecosystems. Using both historical and legendary lake names mostly derived from the *Shāhnāmeh*, Aposh alludes to similar past environmental events. He leaves it to the viewers to make a connection between their shared knowledge about those mythical and historical lakes and the present issue of Parishān. Therefore, using their collective memory, the viewers condemn Aposh's actions, remember the value of water and species diversity, and develop resolve.

The fairies, in contrast, recall the beauty of Parishān and its pleasant memories and are agitated at its current desiccation. They grieve as they suffer from nature's pain. The fairies are disappointed in human beings for not supporting them as guardians of nature; the humans seem to agree with Aposh's will to destroy the environment. By reminding the viewer of the degradation of the Parishān ecosystem, the fairies persuade the viewer that what Aposh represents – desiccation and destruction – is not at all mythological, even if his character is. Aposh must be taken seriously to avoid further degradation. The story radically contrasts the opposing attitudes of the demon and the fairies toward the environment, as harmful versus protective. This imagined dualism is deliberately mirrored in the human activities toward the environment portrayed in the episode, as both harmful and protective. They are either environmentalists, activists, and supporters of Parishān, who choose the righteous path to rise and protect the ecosystem, or they are humans who benefit from the destruction and lead a path to the death of the ecosystem. Those who support the environment recall the beauties of Parishān suffer from the inequalities they observe and develop awareness. The opponents do not concern themselves with the ecosystem, and they deny the human impact on nature. Citing the economic

advantages of the Parishān degradation, they justify their imposition of desiccation and extinction on human society; they constitute a counter-movement against the environmentalists, including Mr. Mehrān.

Convincing Mr. Mehrān to return to his job to advocate for the Parishān lake and wetland is the goal of the fairies. The environmental problems of Parishān are not easy to resolve. Mitigation requires infrastructure and the social, political, and economic attention of the authorities in power, which is beyond the fairies' abilities. Yet the series does not aim to rely on magical solutions for such a significant problem. It instead aims to raise viewer awareness about this example of environmental degradation, so that the viewer can think critically and analytically about the issue and make an appropriate evaluation. As a result, the story focuses on the many ways of convincing Mr. Mehrān to continue his advocacy, despite opposition from some community members. Mr. Mehrān worked hard to meaningfully involve the community, challenge inequalities, and promote environmental justice for all. Nevertheless, his advocacy was not recognized and understood by the community. He faced unfairly abusive and violent responses expressing the frustrations and disappointments from some in the community. None of the fairies' strategies assures him of renewed support. The fairies' last suggestion to him was to reveal their identities and use their abilities, assuming that humans would be awed by their powers. However, Mr. Mehrān opposed this approach, rationally arguing that fairies merely belong to mythology, not to the real world.

But Green-fairy reminded Mr. Mehrān of the fires in the reeds of the Parishān wetland: that no one knew them about except Mr. Mehrān. (She heard of his good deeds by communicating with animals.) Mr. Mehrān had saved a gray female swan from being burnt, looked after her, and treated her for the injuries until she had healed. Green-fairy assures Mr.

Mehrān of her identity and magical abilities by recollecting the details of the process and even recalling the name *Bānu-ye Khākestari* 'Gray lady' that Mr. Mehrān had chosen for the bird. That exchange with Green-fairy was the turning point in the narrative that invigorated Mr. Mehrān to pause and reflect on his role in protecting the wetland and awakening the public. Consequently, the entire narrative was one step closer to the rescue of Water-fairy.

3.8.6. Deforestation caused flooding and loss of life in northern Iran

This episode briefly addresses illegal logging in the northern forests of Gilān province as the main reason for regional deforestation. Clear-cutting led to flooding and loss of life and property for the residents of that region. The story mostly focuses on redressing these losses, rather than discovering the root causes of deforestation. However, the episode indirectly illustrates how a lack of forest supervision and maintenance may lead to offenders cutting down trees. Implicitly, corruption and power imbalances are underlying factors causing environmental inequalities, at least for the residents of this region. Flooding caused socio-economic hardships for the victims who also lost their family members, belongings, and their properties. The episode spotlights the protection of trees, forest maintenance, and tree planting as remediation for clear-cut areas.

The story presents a logging smuggler Mr. Kohansāl, who secretly cut down trees to increase his wealth by building hotels and recreational centers; the area is a prime tourist destination. His personality is shown as selfish and avaricious; if criticized, he attacks others (and especially the local community) scurrilously and foul-mouthedly. Mr. Kohansāl is iconic for his environmental skepticism, as he scoffs at the severity of the forest loss that he causes. He does not take the responsibility for his illegal actions, and he is not responsive to the NGOs' warnings. The local community dishonors him and regards him as the agent responsible for the

flood and loss of life and property. Once the fairies and Ostād Bahār approach him to negotiate

planting one thousand trees in the clear-cut areas of the forest (per the testament of the fairies'

great-grandmother), he evicts them with aggressive vilifications. He refers to the fairies as عجوزه

[*ajuzeh*] 'witch' and to their actions as وروره جادو [*ververeh Jādu*] 'witchcraft, mischievous

spell'. Although these labels ironically denote the mythological fairy beings as witches, they are

used here by Mr. Kohansāl to insult the fairies based on their gender identity and for their

engagement in environmentalism. This vitriol intensifies the fairies' arguments. The fairies warn

Mr. Kohansāl of the curse that will be put on him by the spirit of the trees. Using elements from

the magical realm such as 'witch', 'witchcraft', and the 'spirit of the trees' indexes an imaginary

or magical outcome. The viewing audience may not immediately grasp the intended indexicality

of these signs; however, they can cognitively connect the superhuman environmental purpose

(carried out with some magical help) of the current episode to the magical assistance in the

previous episodes. The fairies' emphasis on the existence of the spirit of the forest and Mr.

Kohansāl's denial of this notion require the fairies to invoke a supernatural power to inflict

punishment.

At the end of the episode, Mr. Kohansāl is intimidated by the spirit of the forest on his

way to home in the dark. He flees from frightful images and shadows of the trees in the darkness

of the forest. This terrifying experience changes his mind about the existence of the spirit of the

forest. He correlates the experience with the arguments he had with the fairies earlier that day,

and a cognitive shift prepares him for change. The development of emotions through the story

also allows the viewers to viscerally bond with the characters, and to be compelled by the

environmentalist message. Afterward, in the last scene, switching from emotions to actions, Mr.

Kohansāl is shown planting trees with the help of the local community, while the fairies are

happily observing, and rain is falling. The dense green forest in the background, the image of Mr. Kohansāl enthusiastically holding a sapling, rain dropping, the cooperation of the villagers, and the delighted faces of the fairies all create a scene of hope. Overcoming Mr. Kohansāl's initial skepticism, these signs are deliberately juxtaposed to evoke environmental optimism. The episode underscores the agency of individuals, and the collective capacity of the groups, as seen in the last scene, can be powerful and motivational in implementing change.

3.8.7. Severe air pollution in Tehrān has caused biodiversity reduction

In this episode, the story surveys the serious problem of air pollution in Tehrān, the capital, which is not straightforward to solve. Rapid population growth, industrial development, urbanization, and increasing fuel consumption as well as the topography and the climate of the city are mentioned as underlying causes. The problem has been also worsened in recent years by a lack of wind and rain. Traffic fumes, industrial greenhouse gas emissions, and smog have impacted public health and have reduced biodiversity in and around Tehrān. To exemplify air pollution's effect on biodiversity, this episode focuses on the disruption of the habitats for both native and migratory birds. Air pollution has severely reduced the birds populations seen flying in the Tehrān sky. Therefore, the goal of the last task ordered by the fairies' great-grandmother is to fill the sky of Tehrān with the chirping and singing of birds. That task requires the air in Tehrān to be purified so that the birds can again soar and sing in the clean air.

To effectively manage Tehrān air pollution, it is important to diagnose the problem, determine its sources, and identify affordable and sustainable solutions. Fundamental infrastructure is required for the efficient management of air quality by interrelated systems and services, whether public or private (such as the government, industry, enterprises and other institutional and organizational units). Improving air quality also requires enforceable

implementation plans partnered with enforcement, guidance, and technical assistance by the environmental protection agencies. The problem is too complex to be solved simply and merely by individuals. In this last episode (and task), the fairies and their human partner Ostād Bahār, the philologist, are fully aware that creating and enforcing such infrastructure is beyond their capacities. They discuss their deficiencies preventing them from finding a solution. The fairies admit that even their extraordinary powers are not enough to magically fix the problem. Air pollution is too extreme, even if Cloud-fairy can summon the wind to move the clouds for the air flow. Particulate matter is too dense and toxic, even if Green-fairy can call birds to fly in the sky and sing a song together. In desperation and grief, the fairies first assume that they have to abandon their efforts. They decide to leave the human lands and hope that destiny will bring an opportunity. Although the fairies themselves are extraordinary creatures, they trust in the even greater power of destiny to change that which they cannot. Such a stance shows there is still hope, which promotes optimism. However, belief in destiny could also imply abdicating responsibility for the very actions that were assigned to the fairies and their human assistant. Therefore, a strategic question to viewers underpins the plot: Will the abstract concept of destiny prevails after the efforts to fulfill the previous six tasks? Or should a rational solution based on science and human knowledge (combined with the fairies' abilities) be offered? At this point, the viewing audience is prompted to make the same choice.

As the episode continues, the air pollution in Tehrān still exists, but since the fairies got birds to fly through the sky over Tehrān, their last task was symbolically accomplished. As the fairies are reluctantly preparing to depart, they are invited to a concert performed by children and youth-promoting environmental protection. The theme of the lyrics, songs, and poems is a clean sky and clean earth. The last song in the program, named پرواز آبی [*Parvāz-e Ābi*] 'Blue Flight',

is performed by a choral group of children who act like birds, flapping their arms while singing. The lyrics include the names of native and migratory birds in Tehrān, asking them to fly over the sky so that their passage will remove the fumes, toxic gases, and smog and make the sky blue again. In the episode, the children's performance is also computer-animated, so that in the background various colorful birds are flying over the polluted gray city of Tehrān. As they fly and chirp through tall buildings and heavy traffic, bright colors gradually spread across the city; plants and trees begin to sprout; flowers bloom; the sky becomes blue, and people especially children are cherished. The song, animation, and the children's performance are all in accordance with the last task that the great-grandmother had requested in her testament. The fairies observe with satisfaction that their last task is being symbolically fulfilled. They are content and hopeful for the rescue of their sister Water-fairy. The images of both actual and animated children watching the flight of the birds in the clean blue sky send the message that a brighter future is only achievable with their help. Children are the next generation who take the responsibility for change. Children, birds, blue sky, color, song, and sound effects are all signs that can evoke intense and lasting emotional responses in the audience. These signs index hope despite all the challenges.

On the other hand, as the fairies have been fulfilling their tasks, the drought demon Aposh loses much of his power and strength and becomes weak, delicate, and fragile. In a scene immediately after the above 'Blue Flight' song, Aposh is shown in his weakest posture, suffering from serious pain and losing his balance. After loud rumbling sounds, his cave is demolished and its former space is full of dust. The blue bright sky and chirping birds appear from the bottom of his dark dusty cave. Aposh hates the light and does not want to watch the birds' liveliness, but he is too weak to move or even save himself. Then suddenly, Water-fairy is seen escaping out of the

cave. Aposh is fully aware that his demise and Water-fairy's escape are the results of a cooperation between fairies and humans, to mitigate the environmental problems he had caused. In this scene, the contrasting elements in the performance of the characters, the dialogues, and the visual and sound effects are juxtaposed, in order to again remind the viewers of the theme that conflict is based on dualism: fairies vs. demon and good vs. evil. The dualistic view is reinforced through visual design: the sinister image of the demon trapped under the ruins of his dark cave, versus the euphoric image of Water-fairy escaping from the darkness toward the brightness and freedom outside.

The rescue of Water-fairy was rather predictable for the audience, insofar as in each of the previous episodes, the sister fairies were able to accomplish each task. The audience also anticipates such a favorable outcome due to their shared mythological knowledge: they know that the mythical Persian water goddess Ānāhitā vanquishes the drought demon and that it is usual in most cultural narratives for good to triumph over evil. More centrally, the series emphasizes the perseverance of the fairies. They are the guardians of the environment, regardless of their results. Their perseverance reminds the viewer that the ultimate victory is achieved not only by choosing the right path but also by never losing sight of their goal. The persistence of the fairies in overcoming each environmental problem is wholly in line with their origins in the nature deities of Persian mythology. Indexing historical memory in the form of the narratives transmitted through generations encourages the audience to take a long view of the past, and thus also of the present. Viewers connect the mythological deities of the past to the fairies of the present series; they re-evaluate the ancient lessons as the spirit of protecting and preserving the environment. Such indexical resonance inspires the audience emotionally and cognitively to align their values and actions toward the environment with those of the series.

The *Āb-pariā* series serves as a fine illustration of the use of semiotics to enhance a contemporary environmental message. *Āb-pariā* discourse is marked by a richness of mythological and cultural signs, such as frogs, violet, fish, *kārīz,* and many others, which function as nonlinguistic signifiers indexing environmental attitudes or values (signified) in the Iranian context. Through the signification process, environmental meanings are derived from the visual description of objects, from the visual effects of real environmental problems, as well as from the fairy and drought demon images. The projected meanings from all these signs are viewed by the audience (in an act of signifying); these meanings are familiar to the audience, allowing the environmental values to be understood. All of the above are not single signs to be viewed individually by the audience. Their ubiquity in the *Āb-pariā* series provides a coherent picture of a cultural identity that has its roots in past values repurposed for the present context. The set of signs provokes recollection of an ideology of agency and responsibility (in protecting the environment), to convince the audience to look for deeper meanings of ordinary objects and phenomena and to re-evaluate their perceptions and attitudes.

According to the sociocognitive model of discourse, this set of signs guides the social cognition of the viewers, mediating between the *Āb-pariā* discourse and the world outside the television series. Viewers try to remember, interpret, reflect on, argue with, and learn the environmental meanings they are exposed to. This set of signs is also a way to predict their emotional response or cognitive behavior and that of others (including the series characters and those who alike watch the series). Therefore, based on what their mental model suggests, they evaluate their own thoughts and ideas in accordance with what they have watched in the series, and what their reality is outside of society. Or, they examine thoughts opposed to the series' theme. This stimulus may polarize the audience ideologically into in-group versus out-group

status, us vs. them. The viewers may evaluate the series' environmental message positively or negatively; they may support the fairies' aim to protect the environment in the actual world, or they may doubt the fairies' actions and count themselves among those who exploit and degrade natural resources and environment. Therefore, the viewing audience learns which group they belong to: either they are part of us, or they are outsiders, part of them. As such, the historical, mythological, and cultural use of the material not only shapes the discourse and affects its message, but it also influences viewers' social cognition and emotional responses, by which the shared values of the group or even the nation are recalled and linked to social ideologies.

The discourse of *Āb-pariā* is also enriched with linguistic signs, i.e., figurative language such as metaphors, idioms, and similes that address environmental meanings. In the next section, I will analyze how those signs affect the discourse and what environmental messages they communicate. Section 3.9 below will move beyond episode-by episode descriptive analysis and only focuses on the figurative language of the series throughout the series.

3.9. Figurative Language and Critical Discourse Analysis in the *Āb-pariā* Series

Āb-pariā discourse also has rich indexical language coded with environmental themes. These semiotics are similar to the mythological and cultural signs discussed above. They conceptualize abstract ideas through a signification process. Their connotations summon images in viewers' minds, addressing environmental meanings. These indexed connotations represent semantic and cultural dimensions of the environmental argument that are also interwoven in the three interrelated and interdependent components of discourse, society, and cognition in the sociocognitive model. Figurative (or indexical) language here refers to those words, phrases, and expressions in the *Āb-pariā* discourse that point to environmental themes, beyond their

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denotative and literal meanings. They serve as rhetorical devices to add extra layers of signification to summon prior discourse in the minds of viewers, thus subtly shifting their attitudes toward the environment. Similes, metaphors, idioms, proverbs, personifications, hyperbole, and illusions are the most common types of figurative language used in the *Āb-pariā* series. These also contribute to the aesthetic perception of the *Āb-pariā* discourse, while they seek to persuade by expressing ideas and emotions. They act as salient linguistic stimuli to evoke an emotional engagement of viewers in response to the environmental message of the series. They harmonize the *Āb-pariā* discourse and its message with the environmental-themed figures of speech used in dialogues to delight the viewers and spark their imaginations with a persuasive effect. Therefore, the figures of speech are not only stylistic ornamentations of the *Āb-pariā* discourse to create a poetic or literary dialogue. They are mediators that cognitively encourage the audience to interpret the environmental meanings based on the culture. Figurative language of *Āb-pariā* involves variables of beauty and familiarity in producing the environmental content; it is a discursive construction of environmental realities in Iranian society.

To understand the sociocultural structure of the figurative and indexical language as a vehicle of environmental communications in the *Āb-pariā* series, we first explore their semantic domains and semantic relations by which the sets of meanings are shared with the audience. Dominant patterns of shared knowledge and cultural innovations are signified by figures of speech in the series, evoking the environmental message. Investigating semantic domains also clarifies the specific areas of cultural emphasis in the figurative language and helps explain how cultural forms are described and interpreted. Therefore, this semantic approach to the *Āb-pariā* series ultimately concerns the interaction of figurative language, cultural models, and individual

thoughts. It reveals how cultural features and knowledge are indexed and perceived by viewers, and how these in turn point to the environmental message of the series.

For this purpose, I used a sample list of one hundred figurative expressions drawn from the *Āb-pariā* series to identify their semantic domains and relations. The expressions include metaphor, simile, hyperbole, metonymy or synecdoche, and personification. They were selected based on a qualitative analysis of the content in the *Āb-pariā* corpus, starting with a preliminary coded list of the Farsi equivalent of environmental terms such as *water, air, soil, heat, cold, sun, pollution, drought, tree, flower*. Watching all seventeen 45-minute episodes of the series, I manually compiled environmental expressions that were used in figurative ways throughout the series. I then categorized them based on semantic domains and the environmental themes promoted through the series and analyzed them using the sociocognitive critical discourse analysis and semiotics.

Considering the environmental themes of the sample list of 100 figures of speech, four prominent semantic domains about the environment were projected through the entire series: They were mostly related to water (23 examples), heat (15 examples), drought (19 examples) and thriving (19 examples). The examples were usually framed within expressions of empathy, irony, polarization, and/or growth, in order to connect with the audience's emotions and feelings. In most cases, the broader discourse context emphasized the environment as a victim of human action, and therefore in need of protection. In addition, the figures of speech have been used in both traditional, and culturally expected ways that are similar to other discourses, and also in innovative ways as they index new meanings (or have modified meanings) for the purpose of the environmental messaging of the series. Below, I will provide some examples of each category to show how the figures of speech have been used to convey the environmental meanings. The

examples are notated in interlinear glossing, with the first line being a romanization of the Persian expression, the second line showing a basic morphological analysis, and the third line providing a free English translation. (Abbreviations are provided in Appendix E of this dissertation.)

3.9.1. Water-related Figures of Speech in the *Āb-pariā* Series

This category includes any tropes that are directly or indirectly related to water and include the Farsi equivalent of terms such as *water, sea, river, spring, ice, rain*, and *cloud*. Water is the primary essence of life, and vital to every being. Water also indexes creation, as one of the four sacrosanct elements of creation (along with fire, wind, and earth) in Persian mythology. It also is embodied and animated in the series characters of the Water-fairy and the Great-grandmother Water-fairy; they in turn are based on the water deities of Persian mythology and their role as the guardians of water resources (see example 1).

Example (1):
>   *Gouhar-e hasti   āb   ast.*
>   pearl-EZ   universe   water be.PRS
>   The pearl of life is water. [Water is vital.]

Yet the majority of figurative expressions among the 23 examples personifying water refers to water pollution. They innovatively signify the anthropogenic aspect of the water shortage. Water is portrayed as the victim of a lack of human responsibility to protect water resources. Such figures of speech also relate directly to the central story of the series, that the Water-fairy is trapped (as a victim) and needs to be rescued. These tropes are used to emotionally communicate with viewers and stimulate their personal feelings so that they can imagine how water suffers from pollution. This approach elicits audience empathy to recognize and understand the loss of water and suggests caring for them and having a desire or compassion to save them as a course of action (examples 2 and 3).

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Example (2):

       daryā-(y)e[10] bimār
       sea-EZ   sick
       the sick sea [polluted sea]

Example (3):

       rudkhāne-(y)e yatim   mānd-e
       river-EZ   orphaned   leave-PP
       The river [is] left orphaned. [polluted]

3.9.2. Heat-related Figures of Speech in the *Āb-pariā* Series

Figures of speech in this category include expressions with heat, fire, warmth, hot weather, or any feeling and concept that is associated with the heat. The examples mostly signify the shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, whether natural or as a consequence of the global climate change, in different geographical regions of Iran. They relate the physical perception of the heat to the discomfort that individuals may experience from the heat, such as being burnt, parched, dehydrated, or suffocated (example 4). The frequent use, repetitive patterning, and exaggerated effects ('suffocation') of such expressions are aimed at alarming the viewers about increasing global warming in the environment. The series uses a combination of figurative language, visual imagery, and character gestures when exposed to hot climatic conditions to create viewer discomfort.

Example (4):

       Az   garmā   khafe   shod.
       from   heat   suffocate   become.PAST
       [S/He] became suffocated from heat. [had a heatstroke]

Some other expressions in this category frequently index the element of fire to signify a destructive or negative force. Typically, one main aspect of fire is perceived positively in Persian literature and usually symbolizes love. The warm feeling associated with fire is often signified as

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[10] In Persian, when a word-final vowel is followed by another vowel, the bridging consonant *y* is added to facilitate pronunciation. Here, it precedes the ezāfe *e* (*e~ye*), which marks a genitive construction between two nouns.

the passion and desire the lovers feel for one another. However, in Persian mythology and Zoroastrianism, the other aspect of fire is its duality: fire is both sacred and is among four sacrosanct elements of creation (fire, water, wind, and earth), and also is destructive, being the element by which the world will end (Vaheddoost, 2005). In the first aspect, fire is revered sacredly for worshipping or ritual practices. It must be eternal and should never be extinguished. However, the latter aspect indexes the death of the world and should be avoided. Therefore, using fire as a symbol in the series indexes these two meanings, particularly the second. The *Āb-pariā* series mostly indexes the destructive aspect of this motif to symbolize the degradation of nature and provoke a response to these environmental assaults. Fire is symbolically used to alert viewers about the environmental consequences of global warming and remind the audience they are passive if not active participants in the destruction of the earth by fire (example 5). Fire is also used metaphorically to increase viewers feelings of anger, hostility, and aggression either in response to environmental degradation or toward those who caused environmental damage (example 6).

Example (5):
        Ātash   be   kharman   oftād.
        fire   in   harvest   fall.PAST
        Fire fell in harvest. [Everything (the harvest) was destroyed.]

Example (6):
        Ātash   az   cheshm-hā-(y)ash   mi-bārad.
        fire   from   eye-PL-3POSS   PROG-rain
        Fire is raining [falling] from his eyes. [He is angry.]

3.9.3. Drought-related Figures of Speech in the *Āb-pariā* Series

Figures of speech in this category draw attention to the lack of precipitation and the subsequent desiccation of the landscape: the destructive impact of the water shortage on the environment. Such expressions include the Farsi equivalent of terms such as *drought, dryness,*

dry, arid, and *thirst*. They either characterize the damages to the environment from water

shortages or point out the consequences of drought such as *famine, scarcity, dearth,* and *ruin*.

The majority of such terms are innovatively used as paradoxes, juxtaposing two contradictory

concepts with opposite meanings with contrastive effects. The paradoxes here are used

deliberately non-traditional, to therefore both reference prior discourses about water, and create

new ones. They engage the audience to understand the underlying logic in statements that appear

contradictory on the surface. The viewer is stimulated to resolve the conflict between the

contradictory elements of the paradox and to decipher a deeper meaning via further thought,

reflection, and consideration of logical premises. Using paradoxes is also in harmony with (and

indexes) the concept of dualism (from Persian mythology and Zoroastrianism). Dualistic

premises are found throughout the series, pairing opposites and characterizing battles seen in or

reflected by nature as dualistic. In most examples in this drought category, a desirable image of

the environment such as a meadow or a flower garden is immediately contrasted with an

opposite image such as a barren area (examples 7 and 8). An ideal, desired environment is

juxtaposed with the current reality. The images also imply the underlying causes of such

environmental change. In the viewers' minds, all such oral and visual imagery is perceived and

interpreted contrastively, related to water scarcity.

Example (7):
  Cheshme nist, sarāb-e biābān ast.
  spring be.NEG mirage-EZ desert be.PRS
  It is not [a] spring, it is a mirage in the desert.

Example (8):
  Shekufe nist   ruy-e derakht, kise-(y)e nailon ast.
  blossom be.NEG on-EZ tree   bag-EZ   nylon be.PRS
  It is not a blossom on tree, but a plastic bag.

The majority of figures of speech in this category are personified in the character of Aposh in the series, who himself represents drought. Aposh usually uses a passive voice in his environmental dialogues throughout the series. In multiple uses of figurative language, he uses utterances that show a change of state without emphasizing the actor that causes the change (examples 9 and 10).

Example (9):
        Gol-estān   *khār-estān*   *shod.*
        flower-place   thorn-place   become.PAST
        The meadow (flower garden) became (a dry) thorny place.

Example (10):
        Khorram-sarā   *mātam-estān*   *shod.*
        happy-house   mourning-place   become.PAST
        The happy-house was changed into a place (full of) mourning.
(*Khorram-sarā* also refers to an oasis-like place with rich green vegetation.)

From a linguistic perspective, when the actor-agent is obscured and de-emphasized, the effect or the result of the action is instead foregrounded. Therefore, the use of the above change-of-state utterances in Aposh's dialogues decreases his level of involvement in destroying the environment. By backgrounding this actor, the audience is stimulated to investigate who the actual actor of all environmental destruction is, and/or who should take responsibility for this destruction. This implication is also intensified by Aposh's hidden engagement in environmental destruction throughout the series. The viewers never observe Aposh in a scene while he is destroying the environment or causing damage. Instead, he is mostly shown in his cave narrating all the environmental destruction that has been done. Implicitly he is the agent, but he never quite says so. This elision makes the viewers perceive Aposh's character as an icon of drought and evil inclinations in relation to the environment, as my focus group interviews have shown (see Chapter 4). It also creates an emotional distance between the viewers and Aposh. Thus, the audience's attention turns towards more realistic causes and the actual actor of environmental

degradation, the human. Through this de-emphasizing of mythological agents, combined with powerfully juxtaposed imagery in each episode, the audience understands that human action and human irresponsibility cause most all environmental issues shown in the series, and Aposh is just an icon to blame. In the series, Aposh mostly seduces humans into damaging the environment, rather than performing the destruction himself. The expected agent of the original (mythological) phrase in Example 11 below, for instance, is *Sheitān* 'Satan', yet in the series, *Sheitān* has been replaced by the drought devil's name *Aposh*. This substitution shows that Aposh's role is to incite humans and evokes the prior text of the viewers' common cultural heritage.

Example (11):

> *Aposh dar jeld-e   adam-hā   rafte   ast.*
> Aposh in   cover-EZ   human-PL   go.PP   be.PRS
> Aposh has gone under human cover. [Aposh has seduced the humans].

3.9.4. Thriving-related Figures of Speech in the *Āb-pariā* Series

The figurative expressions of this category relate to the successful and abundant growth of plants and include flowers, trees, and other plants (either in general or their specific names), as well as plant parts such as roots, leave, blossoms, stems, or any feature associated with them, such as colors (especially green) or shadows. Most of the figures of speech contain positive connotations and promote ecosystem development, growth, environmental consciousness, happiness, and hope for the environment. These verdant living elements emphasize vibrant life and its continuity, through images of natural flourishing, despite all environmental challenges. This communicates that hope still exists and stimulates humans to attempt survival by saving or protecting the environment (example 12).

Example (12):

> *Tā   shaqāyeq hast,   zendegi   bāyad   kard.*
> as.long.as poppy   exist.PRS life   should   do.PAST
> As long as a poppy exists, life continues.

Along with the idea of growth and development, some figures of speech index the green color as the most common color in the natural world, using it as a symbol of prosperity, freshness, and progress. Green in modern Iran and the Persian language is usually associated with nature, eternal life, and heaven, and is often designated as a sacred color. Green has had various connotations in different periods of history and in mythology, theology, and literature, some of which have been transmitted to contemporary Iran and are still used frequently in discourse. In Persian mythology and rituals, green sometimes represents the sky, the moon, and water. It also represents *Sroasha*, a Zoroastrian divinity, who embodies human obedience; he is a force that preserves the soul and destroys evil and is also considered a symbol of justice. In Islamic thought, green is associated with the prophet Mohammad and his family and connotes heaven (Danesh and Khazaei, 2020). In the *Āb-pariā* series, green most commonly represents nature, fertility, youth, vitality, and life, and is used to make a wish for prosperity (example 13). Green is also used metaphorically to express an event's auspiciousness, or a person's positive features such as inner strength, prosperity, or purity (example 14). Such figurative expressions are mostly used by Green-fairy, who herself represents nature and is the guardian of plants. The color green in her visual appearance (green outfit, accessories, and makeup) reinforces her character's positive attributes and signals her role as the most hopeful fairy among other fairies, and her talent for communicating with natural beings like plants. By embodying the color green and indexing positive green values in her discourse, the character Green-fairy stimulates viewers' hope and desire for a better, greener environment.

Example (13):
>
> *Sabz   bāsh-i.*
> green   be.OPT-2SG
> May you be ever green! [I wish you prosperity.]

Example (14):

> *Qadam-at   sabz   ast.*
> step-2.POSS   green be.PRS
> Your stride is green. [You are a blessing].

Although most of the figurative language related to plants evokes positive ideas (as discussed above), there are a few expressions that have negative connotations or evoke negative feelings about the environment. They usually personify natural elements such as trees or flowers and imply that nature is the victim of anthropogenic problems (example 15). The series authors aim to remind us that the environment is suffering from human activities and make an emotional and rhetorical plea to viewers. Viewers have empathy and are influenced to think deeper about the environmental consequences of human activities.

Example (15):
> *Derakht farāmushi   gerefte   ast.*
> tree   Alzheimer   get.PP   be.PRS
> The tree has gotten Alzheimer's disease. [i.e., the tree is mortally ill]

What we have thus explored above are the key semantic domains – and one syntactic strategy – for the figurative language used in the *Āb-pariā* series. These forms index cultural meanings that are both historical-mythological and contemporary. This resonance is intended to emotionally affect the audience. Figurative language, together with the visual and contextual material discussed in this chapter, frame the environmental message of the *Āb-pariā* series in the service of persuasion. Dualism is culturally familiar, and as we have seen, the compilers of the series make use of it in two ways. First, the deployed reference points and characters (e.g., fire or the Green-fairy) are both backward-looking and forward-looking, indexing Persian mythology and contemporary Persian society. Second, dualism is employed in the juxtaposition of positive and negative images. Deploying such expressions and characters in the series not only elevates the aesthetic value of the series, but it also is an innovative discourse strategy of persuasion, by

connecting key phrases with visual referents, and connecting the past to the present. Therefore, the series' figurative referents create compelling imagery by which the audience can use the linguistic and nonlinguistic signs to make connections between the mythical and the real, between the mundane and the profound. The series thus leads the viewers to seek deeper meanings, as they make these connections.

The series appeals to the cultural and environmental conscience of the viewers. The figurative referents are imbued with cultural values that are meaningful among Persian language users. These referents are mostly perceived as cultural signs that imply particular meanings and purposes in the cultural system. The surface figures of speech in the *Āb-pariā* series reflect cultural values meaningful for both the characters in the series and for listeners (viewers), who share the same cultural group. As shown above, the figurative language in *Āb-pariā* focuses on particularly salient environmental indices of cultural meaning, both past, and present. These environmental expectations are arguably derived from cultural values. The figures of speech of the *Āb-pariā* series focus on environmental features such as water, fire, and plants in a way that is meaningful in that culture. In the series, these signs are also used in accordance with other mythological and cultural signs to make language, image, and theme actively interact. For example, a figure of speech compares water to a pearl or a gem, implying that it has great value and should not be wasted. This specific example is used by the Water-fairy character, who is the guardian of water. She is shown holding a handful of shining sparkling water and explaining that the water is sourced from the *Cheshme Chehel-pari* 'Forty-fairy spring' (a well-known fictional water spring in Persian literature and narratives that is said to have the purest and tastiest water). Therefore, the environmental signs (both linguistic and non-linguistic) are framed in this cultural

context to index environmentalist messages, and to create expectations that are understandable and appropriate in that culture.

Through this analysis of the *Āb-pariā* series, I have demonstrated that the series invoked mythological, historical, and cultural concepts derived from past narratives, and innovatively deployed them in the environmental discourse of the series. Each sign had been purposefully selected to signify an environmental message, stimulate the environmental consciousness of viewers, and raise environmental awareness. The mythological and cultural referents and figurative language together communicate specific environmental meanings and evoke shared environmental values in the Iranian context. The *Āb-pariā* series aimed to stimulate a pro-environmental ideology in Iranian viewers as they respond to mythological and cultural themes. We have relied on sociocognitive critical discourse analysis and semiotics to show the series' coherence in theme, story, element signification, and consistent patterning of cultural meanings. In an interactive context like this one, merely analyzing the text and its messaging alone would overlook the *reception* of the text.

The next chapter focuses on the other key part of the discourse: the audience. We hope to understand if and how they received the environmental message, whether their environmental attitudes were influenced, and whether these supposed shared cultural values were salient. The next chapter presents the responses of two sample focus groups, is to evaluate the efficacy of the *Āb-pariā* series in delivering its message and its public reception.

Chapter 4: Reception of the *Āb-pariā* Series

By drawing on past mythological, historical, cultural, and social concepts, the *Āb-pariā* series creates an environmental message in contemporary Iran that is both confrontational and aesthetic. Using its initial raw power as a means of entertainment in the public television, and reconstructing shared values and meanings embodied in the narratives of the past, *Āb-pariā* tries to influence its audience to think about the environment. It wisely selects environmental signs and symbols from the past narratives and legends and solidifies them into a unified pattern to shape its discourse. As discussed in the previous chapter, the series transforms abstract mythological gods into more accessible and iconic fairies to bridge between the supernatural world and the human-environmental interface. In the series, the fairies, as the guardians of nature, are correlated with other environmentally-related mythological and cultural signs and symbols; they are used to evoke a response to recent environmental problems. The evocative message is intended to provoke the audience. The audience receives images and phrases in the series; these images and phrases index shared cultural and mythological meanings, as well as contemporary environmental meanings. The viewers evaluate this input (both the signs *and what they index*) with the shared cultural knowledge that they have obtained from their life experiences and narratives. Thus, the viewers are cognitively and emotionally involved in understanding the meanings, while they are also entertained.

In order to explore the impact of the *Āb-pariā* series in reconstructing mythological and cultural elements of past narratives and in shaping or changing people's outlooks on the current environmental problems, another layer of analysis is required. It is essential to understand how the audience received the environmental message of the series and how they reflected on and responded to the series' message. This chapter entails how the *Āb-pariā* series was received in

public in a broad sense, and according to available information found on online platforms as well as a more comprehensive study of two focus groups.

I first describe my four sources of data in some detail. Then I describe my methods of collection and analysis, and finally my results.

4.1. Data Sources

To assess the impact of the *Āb-pariā* TV series, I relied on three sources of data: primarily the images, text, and sound of the series itself (with a shorter, coherent excerpt for the focus groups). Secondarily, I recruited a total of 34 Iranian individuals in two groups (one in the country and one expat group) to gauge audience response. They viewed the excerpt and filled out pre-viewing and post-viewing questionnaires of my design. Finally, I used public websites and social media to round out the assessment of audience response.

The following section provides details about the three sources (in 4.1.1, 4.1.3, and 4.1.4 below) I used to collect research data from recruited participants (in 4.1.2 below), in order to evaluate how the *Āb-pariā* series was received by viewers. They include the following:

4.1.1. Television Series and its Excerpt

For my primary research, I watched the entire 17-episode *Āb-pariā* series (2013), and it serves as the primary source of data and stimulus in my entire research. Multiple viewings of this series allowed me to create a 100-minute excerpt of the series to show to these groups. I selected core elements of the series for the excerpt, with a coherent story, and a beginning and an ending. In order not to lose the focal point of the story, I excluded the marginal and less relevant stories. I focused on the central story that narrates how Water-fairy was trapped by the drought demon

along with the story of her sister fairies having to resolve several environmental problems to rescue Water-fairy. I also intentionally included those parts that are highly influenced by mythological and cultural signs and are rich with elements of figurative language. The excerpt helped the participants to understand the gist of the entire story while viewing images and hearing expressions with these environmental messages that are the focus of my research.

4.1.2. Focus Groups

I collected my research data from two focus groups of Iranian adults, Group A - an expatriate group of Iranians residing in the United States, and Group B - a group of Iranians living in Iran. In both cases, I used opportunistic sampling to recruit participants. I administered two questionnaires (discussed in 4.1.3 below) to each group, and also asked follow-up questions to Group A. In-person questioning and verifying self-reported demographic information was only possible with this first group.

Focus Group A: This group includes 15 Iranian adults selected from the small expatriate Iranian community residing in Kansas and western Missouri in the United States in 2019. I announced this via the social media (Facebook and Telegram) of this community and called for volunteers to participate. The announcement flyer described the nature of the research and what the participants were expected to do. Interested participants were invited to attend a two-hour session at the University of Kansas in Lawrence campus. They were informed about all the typical Human Subject protocols. (See Appendix A, B, and F for the sample of the consent forms in both English and Farsi, and for a copy of the University of Kansas Human Subjects protocol approval. They watched the 100-minute excerpt of the *Āb-pariā* series and answered the questionnaires that I prepared. (See 4.1.3 below, and Appendix C for the questionnaires.)

The members of this group were mostly ranged in age from 26 to 35 years old, with a ratio of 6 males to 4 females, and they were all fluent in at least Farsi and English. All were seeking graduate degrees in higher education. They were originally from various geographical locations in Iran and had been residing in the U.S. for at least six months.

This group is far from representative of the typical Iranian viewers for several reasons: 1) They mostly represented only one age group belonging to the same young generation. This provided a single-perspective cultural identity. 2) Most of them were academically advanced in engineering fields and some relatively had more expertise in environmental data and science. 3) Due to their expat experiences, they were both exposed to cross-cultural differences and dissociated from their native culture. This reason was heavily influenced by the number of years being an expat. This gave them contrasting and critical perspectives about the socio-cultural values of their native country. 4) Iranian public media was less accessible due to time differences between Iran and their country of residence. They were able to choose what to watch from the online platforms based on their own preferences.

Focus Group B: This group includes 19 Iranian adults residing in several geographical locations in Iran. It was not possible to do this research in person. I made an announcement and posted it in several virtual groups of acquaintances such as WhatsApp groups (currently a widespread source of communications among Iranian for various purposes) in 2021. The announcement explained the nature of the research, its significance, and its goals as well as a primary instruction on what participants would need to do. The interested participants contacted and met with me via remote video chats, either individually or in groups of 2-4 people. I explained the purpose of the research, their anonymity, that they can withdraw anytime, of the potential benefits and lack of harm of the research. I also provided detailed instructions on what the

participants would need to do. The consent form in Farsi was shared via Google Forms with each

individual and was completed and submitted to me electronically. I shared a virtual link to the

100-minute excerpt of the series as well as the virtual link to the online questionnaires via

Google Forms with the participants. The questionnaires were completed and submitted to me via

anonymous Google Forms.

The members in this group were from a diverse age range between 18 and 60 years old,

with a relatively equal distribution of males and females. Their educational background ranged

from high school diplomas to university degrees, as well as advanced masters or Ph.D. degrees.

The majority, 68%, had a bachelor's degree. The majority of participants identified themselves

as members of the middle class.

This group was more representative of the Iranian public. Unlike Group A, they were not

characterized by single features that excluded them from the typical Iranian viewers. They all

had access to the public media in Iran. They lived in the current society of Iran and were still

attached to the socio-cultural context in their daily interactions.

4.1.3. Questionnaires

The participants responded to two questionnaires, one before and one after watching the

excerpt. The questionnaires used for the U.S.-based focus group of Iranians were in written

format on paper printouts. I entered the answers manually into a spreadsheet and then

categorized them demographically and by theme. The Iran-based focus group completed the

questionnaires anonymously via online Google Forms. After all, participants submitted their

responses, I compiled a spreadsheet of all collected data via Google Forms. No identifying

information such as names, phone numbers, or email addresses was collected for this group.

The questionnaires both contained a set of open and closed questions. (See Appendix C and D

for both questionnaires in Farsi and their translations into English). Closed questions were either

in multiple-choice format or agreement/disagreement questions on a ranking basis from a 0 to 10

score, with 0 indicating disagreement. Open-ended questions allowed short or long answers,

which were all optional to answer. The questions sought demographic information about the

research participants such as age, gender, educational level, geographical locations, and socio-

economic status. They examined the environmental attitudes of research participants as well as

their television viewing behavior. The second questionnaire mainly explored how the excerpt of

the *Āb-pariā* series was received by the participants and how they reflected and responded to the

mythological and cultural stimuli and the figurative language used in the excerpt.

4.1.4. Additional Public Responses to the *Āb-pariā* Series

Since the series was well-known in Iran, I collected a wide range of data from news

articles as well as public reviews and ratings of the *Āb-pariā* series available in several online

web platforms such as the *Āb-pariā* website (now archived) (Aabparia, 2013). The website in

particular was designed to allow the series producers to communicate with the public. Similarly,

Iranian video-sharing platforms such as *Āpārāt* and review-aggregation websites such as

Manzoom provided opportunities for public reviews and open discussions or comments about the

Āb-pariā series. I explored those web forums via keyword search and the manual collection of

sample comments and discussions.

4.2. Methodology

Applying primarily sociocognitive critical discourse analysis to the collected data from the above data sources, I conducted a qualitative and interpretative content analysis as well as doing basic frequency counts to understand how the *Āb-pariā* series was received by a sampling of viewers. The analysis allowed me to study the language used in the participants' narratives and responses to the *Āb-pariā* series, especially how they used their shared cultural knowledge to evaluate the mythological and cultural elements related to the environment. I examined viewers' lexical, grammatical, and semiotic choices to identify viewer ideas, values, and identities, and how they contributed to the process of meaning-making in a social setting. I wanted to evaluate to what extent they drew on a common cultural background, which is an assumption that is not to be taken for granted. I also investigated which ideologies were revealed, as well as the power interests buried in them.

To analyze Group A and Group B viewers' responses, I first categorized them based on demographic variables, as well as by their environmental attitudes and television viewing behavior. I will discuss the results in detail in 4.3 below. The categorization and interpretation of the data revealed interrelations between viewer understandings of environmental meanings and the *Āb-pariā* structure, themes, and messages. I drew conclusions based on how each variable could affect the understanding of environmentalism and how participants have shaped particular attitudes toward environmentalism in the Iranian context.

Looking through the questionnaire responses and my notes from follow-up discussions with the focus groups as well as my own observational notes, I looked for key thematic terms. In the previous year, I had already made a list of potential key terms based on my multiple viewings of the series. This prepared coded list contained the lexical items and phrases used to denote,

connote, describe, or explain some aspect of the environment, culture, and mythology and it included nouns, verbs, and adjectives. For example, I looked for the Farsi equivalent of such English environmental terms such as *environment, water, drought, pollution*, or the equivalent of mythological and cultural terms such as *fairy, demon, and magician* (especially those that were projected in the *Āb-pariā* series). Next, I looked at how these terms and concepts were used in the participant's narratives, notes, and responses; what meanings can be understood from them in the corpus; and, how the participants described concepts in the *Āb-pariā* series. To begin the process, I analyzed participant word choices. I simply looked for the kinds of words (parts of speech) in what order, and/or what word connotations were used to refer, express or describe the concepts; whether there was any dominant lexical or phrasal choice in expressing a particular idea; whether the participants used any type of overlexicalization, i.e. repeating terms and synonyms for emphasis; whether there was any suppression of terms (i.e. lexical absence), where certain terms that I expected were absent. This step revealed what was important and salient for the viewers, which in turn may clarify viewer ideologies of and attitudes towards environmentalism.

I also sorted viewers according to whether they were pro or con various ideas in the series (via the Likert scale closed questions). Part of my questionnaires asked participants to rank their agreement or disagreement with various statements, from 0 to 10, with zero indicating disagreement. These statements might for example elicit viewer opinion on the repurposing of mythological or cultural images of the fairies, or whether or not the use of figurative expressions made the environmental message more effective.

These Likert-scale closed questions helped me understand how well viewers responded to the mythological and cultural elements and figurative language of the series, and how well the environmental meanings were understood.

I also looked through three online sources such as the *Āb-pariā* archived website, *Manzoom* review-aggregation website, and *Āpārāt* video-sharing platform to 1) investigate public reviews and comments, and 2) estimate the number of times that the series was uploaded, viewed or downloaded (wherever applicable). Each of these online resources has a commentary section under the *Āb-pariā* entries in which the public can leave a 'comment' and share their views. Users are also able to reply to each other's comments and discuss viewpoints. I randomly selected ten sample comments on each platform. The comments ranged from 2013 to 2021. Reading through all sample comments, I sorted them according to their content and whether they were generally pro or contra the series and whether there was a salient feature that the reviews pointed out. The data from these platforms was supplemental to the data from focus groups and gave us a general sense of the *Āb-pariā* series' public reception.

The following section provides the result of applying these methods to the three data sources. The public response to the *Āb-pariā* series was evaluated in three ways: (1) characterizing the response of each focus group; (2) comparing the responses of the two focus groups; and (3) comparing their responses to online reviews and comments.

4.3. Results and Analysis: Reception of the *Āb-pariā* Series in Focus Groups and the Public

The *Āb-pariā* series was first broadcast on Channel 2 of Iranian public television in 2013, every evening during the spring Nowruz holiday. It was then rebroadcast by other public television stations such as *Āmuzesh* and Channel 5 in the following years. Two years later in 2015, the series was first released on the *iFilm* channel, an online entertainment network of

Iranian films and film series, to launch it online for the global audience (Mizan News Agency, 2015). Afterward, numerous users downloaded the series from iFilm and uploaded it in various formats and in variable quality to free Iranian online video-sharing platforms such as *Āpārāt* and *Namāshā*. This made the series more accessible to the general public for downloading or online streaming, on a variety of devices. The video-sharing platforms also provided opportunities for the public to leave reviews and garnered 'Likes' from users. To the best of my knowledge, there is no official Iranian public television report showing the series' original number of viewers; nor is there a comprehensive count showing downloads or online views via the video-sharing platforms.

I conducted a manual search through the two popular video-sharing platforms *Āpārāt* and *Namāshā* and found that the series was uploaded dozens of times on those websites by various users between 2015 and 2022. Each episode of the series has been viewed by the public between several thousand times (for recently-shared episodes) to several hundred thousand times (for the older shared episodes). While this estimated viewing count is imprecise, it is still an impressively large number. As to the popularity of *Āb-pariā*, the online response to the series was generally positive, gauged from hundreds of public comments and an estimated number of 'Likes' under each episode of the series. On the Iranian review-aggregation website *Manzoom*, the general public rated the *Āb-pariā* series 6.9/10. *Manzoom*, similar to IMDb and Rotten Tomato, aggregates public ratings of movies and television series according to different criteria such as storyline, quality of the production, and casting. Figure 1 below shows the *Manzoom* ratings for the *Āb-pariā* series; viewer ratings in each individual category were above average in 75 public reviews between 2015 and 2021:
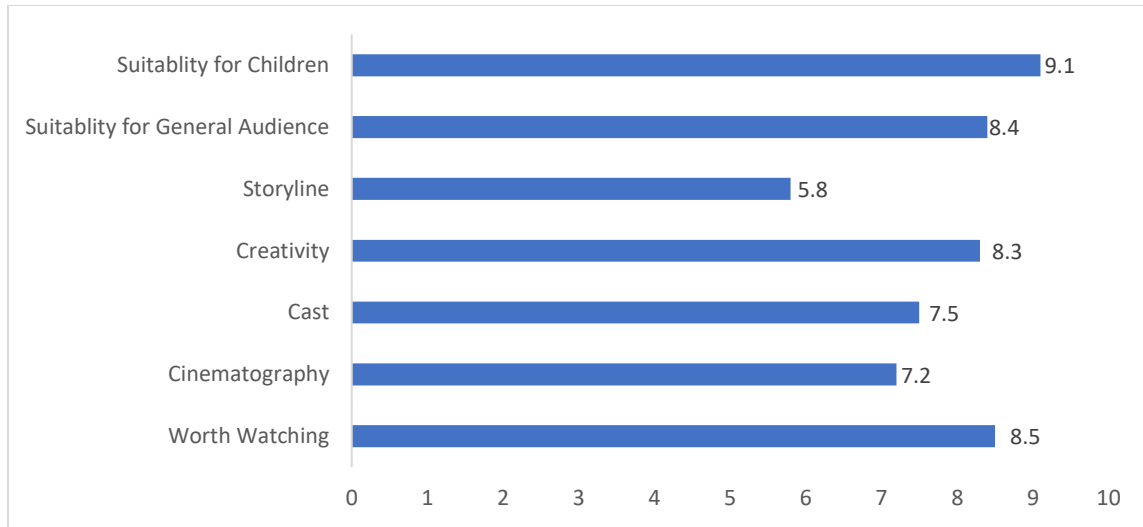
Figure 1: *Āb-pariā* Series Public Reviews (on *Manzoom* website 2015-2021)

In addition to general ratings of the series, the public was able to discuss their opinions about the series in public online domains. The analysis of the thirty sample comments collected from the three online sources (discussed in sections 4.1.2 and 4.2) shows that about 70% of them praised the *Āb-pariā* series in terms of storyline and characters. The pro comments simply admired the story of the series and expressed how "informative," "creative" and "entertaining" the series was. They also warmly appreciated the series' characters and cast for persuasively impressing the audience. Whereas the contra comments mostly disapproved of the series content and expressed unfavorable opinions about the characters. They said that the series was "superficially" made, and it was "not comparable" to other productions from the series director that they had watched before. The example 1 below quotes a pro comment, from the *Āpārāt* website, whereas the example 2, from the *Āb-pariā* archived website, shows a contra comment about the character of Aposh. Example 2 is followed by a response from another user that approves a pro-opinion about the series. These quotes simply exemplify how the public expressed and shared their views about the series in public domains.

Example (1):

"Thanks to Ms. Broumnad for such a wonderful series she made. Like always, she enthusiastically created the characters. They are very splendid. I have many childhood memories of other series made by Ms. Boroumand. During Nowruz, I watched the *Āb-pariā* with my daughter every night. My daughter loves [the character of] *Āb-pari* [Water fairy]. She pretends to be *Āb-pari* in her dramatic play. I am so impressed that she now cares about saving tab water when she wants to wash her hands."

Example (2):

"What a poorly-made series the *Āb-pariā* was! If it was really made for children, why would the character of Aposh be so terrifying? My 7-year-old nephew was so scared of him to death. He still bursts into tears when he remembers his scary face. Have you pre-tested that character and showed it to other children before producing the series? I don't want to criticize the series just because of one scary character, but this series is weak and is not generally what we expect to watch from Boroumand [the series director]. I wish she had not made this series."

Another user replied to this comment with:

"I am sorry to hear that! But, I think, Aposh character is a demon, and a demon is really supposed to be scary, otherwise, it is not a demon. Fear, just like other emotions such as happiness, sadness, and excitement, is a normal emotion in the human experience. It prepares children for real-life tragedies."

While the above film-review ratings only give us a general sense of the *Āb-pariā* series' public reception, the responses of my two focus groups provide much more comprehensive responses in line with the goals of this study. I hypothesized that indexing (specifically, reconstructing and repurposing) past mythological and historical elements related to the environment can positively influence viewer perceptions about the current environmental problems in Iran. The responses of the two focus groups (to the second questionnaire which concerns the series itself) provided evidence for the plausibility of this hypothesis.

To summarize viewer responses from both focus groups: the *Āb-pariā* series excerpt garnered a solidly positive response in Iran, and less so for the overseas Iranians: 77% of the Iran-based participants (Group B) and 43% of the US-based participants (Group A) enjoyed the content, message, and storyline, and understood the embedded environmental meanings.

The majority (68.5% of the participants in the Iran-based focused group and 100% of the U.S.-based focus group) had never watched the *Āb-pariā* series before. Of the Iran-based focus group, after viewing the excerpt, only 55% were willing to watch the entire series.

The U.S.-based participants in general showed less enthusiasm for the series: while 43% enjoyed watching the *Āb-pariā* excerpt, only 29% were willing to watch the entire series. The majority of participants in both groups provided two main reasons. Most of the Iran-based participants had watched the series before, and they were not motivated to re-watch it. Secondly, both groups were pessimistic about the ability of such media to effect change; both mentioned that the effectiveness of Iranian public media to address environmental problems and create awareness is at best quite weak. The participants in Iran evaluated the public television's effectiveness in this regard with an average of 29%, while the U.S.-based group estimated it about 56% effective. This disparity implies that many of the participants (especially those in Iran) were critical of Iranian public media productions, which correlated to their background experience and/or impressions of the public media. Such views colored their initial assessment of the *Āb-pariā* series. These participants explained that as a component of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), public television is a state-funded medium that single-mindedly pursues and reflects the socio-political ideology of the state, including in response to the environmental problems in Iran. Viewers believe that the IRIB does not report on environmental problems related to government mismanagement and does not necessarily broadcast in the best interest of the public and the country.

The participants rationally expected such a public medium to represent a neutral perspective that reflects current environmental facts, to critically investigate real root causes of environmental problems in Iran, and to report and discuss realistic solutions without unfair

prejudice towards individuals or entities. Although probing the skepticism if not cynicism of participants was not within the scope of this study, clearly, the existence of such pre-existing mental models affected participant responses to the *Āb-pariā* series: Many participants had framed any television program as part of the state apparatus, so it was impossible for viewers to see the program as outside of this context. Such lived experience created a general viewer distrust of all productions of the Iranian public media, regardless of their qualities, themes, or types, and consequently impacted their overall judgments about the *Āb-pariā* series.

Critical views of the *Āb-pariā* were understandably affected by age and education. Those participants aged 26-35 years old who mostly completed a graduate degree such as a master's or a Ph.D. in higher education were most critical about the ability of the *Āb-pariā* series to address environmental problems. They opined that the *Āb-pariā* series superficially presented environmental problems, without showing accurate and scientific evidence and discussing the root causes of the problem. The series provided only vague solutions for resolving those problems. These participants stated that environmental degradation is a complex problem with various social, cultural, political, and economic factors, none of which should be taken for granted. Oversimplification of the problem creates a fallacy by which accurate assessment and appropriate resolution are underestimated. Such facile solutions are misleading, reported viewers. This type of opinion reflects the high educational attainment of these participants: the extensive knowledge and the critical thinking that they deploy through years of education have led them to have high expectations for a television series intended for a general audience.

Above, these views reflect the mixed if not largely critical reception of the overall messaging of the *Āb-pariā* series as a whole. In the next section, a deeper investigation follows, based on participant responses to the more subtle indexical language and semiotics.

4.4. Responses to Semiotic Aspect of the _Āb-pariā_ series

First, I will evaluate responses as to what main aspect (messaging, storyline, and characterization) enhanced the series. Then I will examine participant responses to individual characters (e.g., fairies and demons), and to symbolic and cultural images. The participants found that the series' environmental message was the most salient point, compared to the storyline and characterization (see Figure 2).
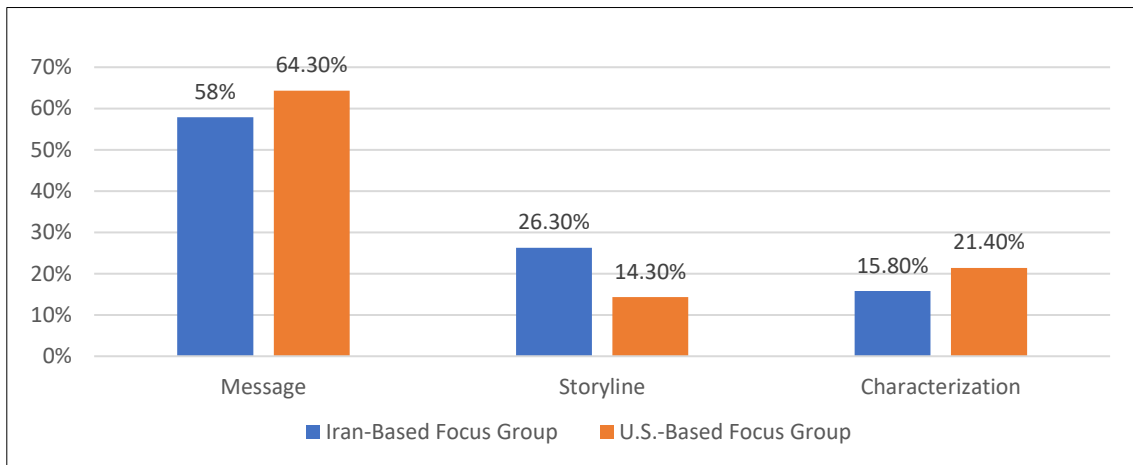
Figure 2: Strength of the _Āb-pariā_ Series

The prominent characters in the series included fairies, demons, and humans. Participants identified the fairy characters as the most salient in carrying the narrative (for 76.5% of the Iran group and 64% of the U.S.-based group). From open-ended responses and our live discussions, participants found the characters of fairies to be robust, leading the trajectory of environmental events in the _Āb-pariā_ story. These characters inspired these viewers to immerse themselves in the plot and envisage scenes in their minds. Fairy characters were said to serve as role models, receiving, interpreting, and pursuing the environmental message of the story.

As discussed in chapter 3, the fairy and demon characters and other mythological and cultural signs are indexed to communicate environmental meanings. Participants' background knowledge of the mythological and cultural origins of fairies, demons, and other symbolic images of the series correlated with their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of such semiotic elements in carrying environmental meanings. The majority of the Iran-based participants (77.5%) assessed such indexical characters (ones based on shared mythology and culture) as successful, whereas only 46.5% of the U.S.-based focus group felt these images successfully conveyed the intended environmentalist content. These participants explained that these characters were "symbolic" (i.e., indexical and semiotic) and that the symbolic theme of the series invited them to infer certain cultural values from the characters' actions, appearance, and dialogue. This shared cultural knowledge, embodied in this "symbolic" character, made the series more impressive, influential, and memorable for them; more than if, say, an environmental message had simply been narrated to them.

Participants also indicated that such referencing of mythological, historical, and cultural images is specifically beneficial for the younger generations. In addition to being entertaining and attractive, viewers said that this framing helped them to understand the embedded environmental values in the culture and transmit what they learn to the next generation. This view makes the culture stay alive, they said.

For the participants, especially those in the U.S.-based focus group, whose mental models were less idealistic and more critical, deploying mythology to address such a critical topic weakened the message. These participants said that environmental problems with such a broad impact on human life should not be framed as mythical stories, because it minimizes the extent, importance, and seriousness of environmental problems. They further argued that myths

encourage viewers to reject the very tools that they need to solve environmental problems: rationality and logic. Participants disapproved of assessing and solving environmental problems with emotions, feelings, and instincts, which creates unreasonable expectations of an easy fix.

This focus group seemed to advocate for rationality and results (i.e., environmental education and awareness). However, the producers of the series knew that selecting an effective means (i.e., figurative language and characters) by which environmentalism is communicated was crucial. And, as noted above, even 46.5% of this same U.S.-based group felt that these means were effective. So, on the one hand, somewhat less than half of them were at least partially affected by the "symbolic" indexicality, while at the same time, finding the approach to be trivializing a grave problem. These participants continued to explain that certain kinds of beliefs and shared cultural values that are easily understandable to the public are irrational or even unsound. Assessing cause and effect and solving environmental problems requires rationality, rather than individual perceptual experiences, emotions, and desires.

Balancing these viewer objections with the *Āb-pariā* series producers' intent, in a television program designed for the general audience, applying objective rationality may fail to gain traction. Since the audience is composed of people with different backgrounds and cognitive models, the primary goal of a television series is to be entertaining. The environmental message, here, is secondary, intended to be absorbed indirectly. Entertainment is best supplemented with mental and cognitive models derived from cultural values and expected personal and collective memories so that the general audience receives emotional satisfaction. Not everyone in the public audience has had access to advanced education about the environment, and not everyone knows or has access to scientific evidence about environmental degradation. Yet the majority can recognize and respond to the indirect messaging via familiar cultural meanings. This indexicality

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stimulates them to understand the intended environmental meanings and motivates their

responses and actions.

4.5. Responses to Figurative Language of the *Āb-pariā* Series

As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Āb-pariā* discourse is enriched with numerous

figures of speech that are used to project environmental meanings. Figurative language,

therefore, was another variable by which the environmental understanding and attitudes of focus

groups evaluated the series' effectiveness in conveying environmental meanings. Participants in

both focus groups were asked to provide their perceptions of figurative language and their own

frequency of using figurative language in their discourse. I evaluated participant responses as to

how they comprehend, interpret, relate, and remember environmental figures of speech used in

the *Āb-pariā* series, in order to evaluate the series' effectiveness. Participants were also asked to

link their understanding of figures of speech to the environmental context of the series. These

questions allowed me to analyze how participants conceptualized the indexicality of such figures

of speech, pointing to the environmental message.

Participant responses show that using environmentally-themed figurative language in the

Āb-pariā discourse is effective in communicating environmental meanings: 77% within the Iran-

based focus group and 57% in the U.S.-based focus group. The participants generally expressed

their appreciation for the songs and poetic language throughout the series and found songs to be

an engaging feature that connected them to the series.

Participants mostly understood that the figurative language used in the series served to

deliver an environmental message. Although the figures of speech were not used in their

traditional way, the participants were able to understand their new meanings. After watching the

Āb-pariā excerpt, they could interpret the figures of speech and symbolic expressions as the

producers intended. They were also able to detect the socio-cultural values within the examples, properly make assumptions about the signs for environmental meanings and conceptualize them in the context of the series. Participants mentioned their mutual knowledge of the cultural elements embedded in the figurative language of the *Āb-pariā* series. They remembered figures of speech, verses of poems, songs, and mottos from elsewhere, outside the context of *Āb-pariā*, -- the intended cultural codes -- and used this cultural knowledge to understand the environmental meaning of the series. In other words, this mutual knowledge guided the access to information through their personal and collective memory. Processing the non-literal language of *Āb-pariā* allowed successful interaction with the series' message.

By drawing environmentally-themed figurative examples out of their personal language treasury, participants mentally represent their pre-existing environmental knowledge in an interactive process with the environmental message of *Āb-pariā*. For example, a participant responded using the following verse from a well-known poem. The participant wished to emphasize that environmental degradation in Iran is a serious problem and beyond what little is shown in the *Āb-pariā* series. That participant clearly was emotionally engaged with the environmental message, and immediately remembered a verse of a poem, whose literal meaning precisely supported their perception in response to the *Āb-pariā* scope (although the actual connotation of the poem is related to a social problem and not about the environment):

Example (16):
Sohbat   az pazhmordan-e yek barg nist   Vāy! jangal rā   biābān   mi-konnad.
speaking of withering-EZ   one leaf   be.NEG oh forest OBJ desert   PROG-do
It is not [only] about a leaf withering, oh, they turn the forest into a desert.

In addition to evaluating the reception of figures of speech, I also asked participants whether they remembered the newly-coined figures of speech (neologisms manipulated for

environmental purposes) of the *Āb-pariā* series. Although 58.5% of the participants in both focus groups reported using neologisms in general (learned from other media) in their daily interactions and outside of that series context, they did not use any of the figures of speech of the *Āb-pariā* series in their own discussion of the series. The participants were only able to remember the figures of speech or symbolic terms and expressions that they overheard during watching the *Āb-pariā* excerpt. They could barely recall those exact strings of words for the coined utterances that appeared only once or twice.

Figures of speech, especially neologisms that reference the past, are a complex unit of language that is not easily memoizable. Their meanings are intrinsically related to culture, and they usually foster social and cultural values. Therefore, they are more difficult to be learned, remembered, and re-used when they are recently innovated for a particular purpose, and they sound unfamiliar to listeners. In order to create a salient icon for a long-term usage (by which the intended meanings are satisfactorily realized, and they enter into the cycle of broad usage), additional efforts are required. For example, by producing multiple seasons of the series, viewers would be exposed to the content and language utterances of the series for a longer time. This could potentially create a salient effect in the audience to remember more frequent utterances and use them. Therefore, it was unreasonable to expect that research participants would actively use the new figures of speech that they just learned from a 100-minute show, without a long-term exposure to that utterance. Perhaps, if they had viewed the whole 17-episode series, high-frequency neologisms would be more memorable.

The above analysis evaluated the reception and effectiveness of the *Āb-pariā* series. Participant reactions to *Āb-pariā* were shaped by the interaction of three elements: their cultural and social values (collective memory & identity), their ideologies and mental models, and the

series' indexical messaging. But how do we know that participants extracted the intended message of the series using their collective memory and shared knowledge? One answer might be through the way they recall their personal narratives or memories, and correlate them with the mythological, cultural and environmental theme of the series. In the next section, I discuss how collective memory and cultural identity embedded in the *Āb-pariā* series influenced the environmental attitudes of the participants and are reflected in their personal narratives of the participants.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusion

This chapter concerns the impact of the *Āb-pariā* series on the research participants by using narrative models that have been drawn out from collective and personal memories. Section 5.1 discusses how the research participants reacted and responded to the *Āb-pariā* series by recalling their own experiences and how they showed their environmental attitudes reflected after watching the *Āb-pariā* excerpt. Section 5.2 summarizes and concludes the results of this study.

5.1. Narratives and Collective Memory in Response to the *Āb-pariā* series

In Wertsch's (2008) model of narrative organization, he argues that the study of collective memory requires considering a second level of narrative organization in which one is mostly concerned with a general pattern of a collective memory rather than specific details of individuals' narrations. He refers to such patterns as "schematic narrative templates" that project a general storyline about a shared event with a few basic building blocks. I selected this model because a schematic template focuses on the collective memory as a cultural tool for recounting the past. It does not concern how small or vast the background knowledge or the collective memory is. It is the interaction between cultural tools (i.e., collective memory or shared knowledge) and social actors' cognition, feelings, or personal experience that constructs the narratives. They vary in detail, but they share a general pattern.

I used Wertsch's model to evaluate how participants applied their collective memory to the *Āb-pariā* series, supplying their own narratives or memories in response to environmental meanings. As discussed in previous chapters, the *Āb-pariā* series uses illustrating examples from the past, such as the mythological images of fairies and other cultural concepts, to highlight environmental degradation in contemporary Iran. Such examples originated in old narratives and

oral practices construct a social and national heritage for viewers. The old narratives passed down through generations act as a repository of collective memory in the series. They are used to reflect on current environmental problems. Recalling episodes of the past events in connection to the *Āb-pariā* discourse, participants were able to perceive salient cultural and mythological. They reconstructed and reflected on those salient events and images, supplying their own stories and narratives. The entire process occurred in their minds through emotions and cognition, stimulating participants to retell their own narratives about environmental attitudes and responses.

In this study, I have claimed that the narrative organization of the entire series targets the collective memory and shared knowledge of its viewers. We see above and elsewhere in this study that participants summon specific narratives (ones uniquely situated in time and space in their personal life) to relate that specific event or memory to the collective event in the near or distant past. I have focused on the interactions between participants (as social actors), the *Āb-pariā* series' indexed environmental message, and the cultural tools participants applied to interpret the series' messaging. In this interactive process, I have mainly characterized the participants as memory carriers and did not expect the individuals to perform the same environmental actions as what they had watched in the *Āb-pariā* series.

I asked the participants to organize and share their own past memories or narrate a story they remember in response to any element that they found salient in the *Āb-pariā* series. I made the intended indexicality of the series explicit for the participants so that I understand what patterns of memories and personal stories were evoked by the series; whether there was a narrative that was particularly stimulated by mythological and cultural signs embedded in the series. Their narratives provided insights into participants' mental models and their attitudes and

ideologies. For example, below is a part of a participant's narrative in reflection to the sign of 'wild violet' in section 3.8.3.

> "I am from northern Iran. In my hometown, people think spring is around the corner when they see violets blooming. … Every spring, my mother goes to the woods around my hometown, looking for wild plants such as *Baarangebe*, *Ooji*, *Ennarije* for herbal remedies. It is always so nice for me watching her carefully sort these aromatic plants, and use them in teas, soups, bread, and many other things. By watching the *Āb-pariā* fairies who looked for wild violets, I remembered my own mother. In recent years, she has always complained that she could not find some of the herbs any longer, and she was unhappy about that… Now, based on what I learned from the story of the *Āb-pariā*, I realized that the disappearance of those wild plants had a reason… Maybe it was also because of the land pollution; just like what was shown in the *Āb-pariā*."

The participant, in the above narration, is familiar with the cultural values of the violet in that region and cognitively feels the violet as a salient sign. This participant connects the sign of violet to their personal experience and draws out an environmental meaning. Such a pattern was typical in most narratives.

After viewing the *Āb-pariā* excerpt, most participants were stimulated cognitively to perceive, imagine, remember, think, and reason about the environment and environmental responsibility. Going through all these processes facilitated participant sharing of their own stories. Most of the narratives in both focus groups shared a general pattern, like a template, with similar storylines or flashbacks to similar experiences. However, each individual's narrative included many different details about time, space, and events. Depending on which part of *Āb-pariā* was salient to the participants, their narratives fell into two general templates: 1) Narratives that communicated their environmental meanings in response to the mythological, historical, and cultural signs in the *Āb-pariā*. For example, some participants selected cultural practices such as the Iranian new year holiday, Nowruz, or the Iranian earth day on the 13th day of Nowruz as collective environmental events in society; they noted the high volume of (not-so-environmentally friendly) traveling during that season. Recalling personal experiences, participants mentioned the increasing problem of littering in nature during the Nowruz season.

Another set of narratives recalled childhood stories that participants had heard from parents or grandparents and the familiar mythological characters of the rhymed epic *Shāhnāmeh*, relating these narratives transmitted in the home to the fairies and the drought demon in *Āb-pariā*.

2) Narratives that foregrounded a personal event in which they themselves experienced an environmental change or problem. Many narratives included a memory of traveling to one of the places shown in the series, or to other places. Detailing the nature of the trip, its frequency, or its time frame, the participants reported the changes they had noticed in the environment of that location. Participants described how the rivers were drying out, how a variety of plants was not found due to the drought, or how the beautiful natural environment they had bonded with in earlier days has been urbanized and had lost its beauty.

Evaluating the above two narrative templates, participants were clearly able to understand and internalize the complex information they received through observing the *Āb-pariā* series. Environmental knowledge, in this study, was expressed primarily at the semantic level of *Āb-pariā*'s environmental discourse. Viewers made connections to environmental meanings through the storyline, cinematography, dialogues, and characters. In addition, the meanings were understood based on personal mental models. As a result, individuals' mental models provided a schema by which individuals could analyze and understand the environmental events represented in the series. By interpreting the message of the *Āb-pariā* series and interacting with its environmental signs, individuals were able to respond to its embedded values.

The *Āb-pariā* audience interpreted its environmental discourse not just as individuals, but also as members of the Iranian society (whether in-country or overseas). They shared a sociocultural knowledge of the discourse, as well as their attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values based on personal experience. These participants were also easily able to organize their own

narratives in a compelling way to display their pro-environmental attitudes echoed in or inspired by *Āb-pariā*. Participants' environmental understandings incorporated one or more elements from a repository of shared values, knowledge, and/or cultural identity.

Different participants often pointed to the same scene, episode, sign, or character that was salient and possibly inspired them. They then correlated their selection to a collective memory or a personal experience and shared their perceptions of meaning correlations as communicated to them. Many participants also tended to form logical judgments about the environmental problems they mentioned in their narratives. The participants clearly displayed emotions when recalling memories; these feelings also seemed to elicit a more environmental engagement.

Interacting with the *Āb-pariā* series and its embedded signs, every participant's narrative connected lived stories and intertwined environmental attitudes with the environmental theme of the series. We saw two general patterns of narrative; both were associated with a particular pro-environmentalist mental model. These individual problematizations in participants' minds were the basis for discursive thoughts about the causes and effects of environmental problems. These narratives showed, with partially mixed results, that *Āb-pariā*'s interactive meaning-making process made viewers more aware of the environmental challenges facing Iran.

5.2. The *Āb-pariā* Series: An Awakening Path Forward for the Environment

Most people understand the harmful impact of environmental degradation and the importance of preserving natural resources. Yet linking such abstract ideas to peoples' everyday experiences in meaningful ways is a persuasive art. This dissertation examined the persuasive power of certain discourse tropes in present-day Iran to persuade and remind citizens of their environmental responsibilities. The study investigated the effectiveness of the imperfect tools of government-led public media in promoting pro-environmental attitudes and increasing

environmental awareness. For this purpose, I selected a 2013 Iranian television series, *Āb-pariā* [Water Fairy], as the foundational discourse text of my research. Inspired by and indexing Persian mythology and cultural practices, the *Āb-pariā* series addresses several recent real environmental problems in Iran with a particular focus on the water shortage and drought. The *Āb-pariā* series conveys its environmental message by indexing shared mythological and cultural signs to evoke individual and social memories in viewers, in order to endorse the series' pro-environmental message. I evaluated my research hypothesis and based my analysis of environmental, mythological, and cultural discourse primarily using sociocognitive critical discourse analysis both as a theoretical and methodological framework. Analysis of the *Āb-pariā* discourse revealed cultural and ideological dimensions of environmental and social knowledge.

In the first chapters of this dissertation, I showed the deliberate juxtaposition of old (mythological) and new (environmental) signs in the *Āb-pariā* series itself. I discussed the Persian mythological, literary, and historical context of these signs. Describing the narrative arc of the series, I linked named characters and indexical entities (both things like plants and colors like green) to intended environmental meanings.

In the latter part of the dissertation, I showed that these indexical mythological and cultural symbols are likely more persuasive than rational scientific explanations of cause and effect. Semiotic theory suggests that repurposing a (partly lived, partly imagined) Persian heritage was an exceptional tool to persuade Iranian research participants, and the result can be applicable to larger groups. In addition to visual cultural symbols, the use of Persian figurative language in it can also create a similar effect. These indexical symbols reveal the cognitive and mental models of individual viewers, whose interpretive process entails evaluating mythological, cultural, linguistic, and ideological elements about the environment.

As a result of my analyses of media and focus group responses to the series, I conclude that Iranian viewers perceive and understand environmentalism cognitively by recalling salient historical events and narratives attributed to a collective past. Within the framework of sociocognitive discourse analysis, I found that the environmental discourse represented in the *Āb-pariā* series is understood as a profound cultural transformation in viewers' minds, as they reconstruct the mythological and cultural symbols and events in the series.

The study also explored the ways that the focus group members were able to integrate their environmental perceptions derived from mythological and cultural signs in the *Āb-pariā* series into their own personal environmental narratives and ideologies. Participants' facile production of real-life examples confirms the effectiveness of tailored mythological and cultural signs for persuasive purposes, by accessing their mental models, here for pro-environmental ideologies.

I concluded that participants connected the signs in the *Āb-pariā* series to salient past values and knowledge, allowing them to interpret recent environmental events based on their own experiences. Participant responses also evaluated the flaws and strengths of its storyline, particularly whether or not environmental problems were best addressed in this format. These participant responses were almost self-contradictory: on the one hand, these participants indicated that the mythological format trivialized and oversimplified serious and complex environmental problems. These participants would have preferred a "rational" and scientific presentation. Yet, these same viewers acknowledged the evocative power of using indexical signs from mythology to access their collective memory. Both focus groups were engaged and stimulated, even if they had some objections to the format.

As to the rational and scientific approach, existing environmentalist resources in Iran such as informational and inspirational seminars, environmental books and brochures, and educational programs aim to raise environmental awareness. Most of them draw attention to realistic and scientific aspects of environmental destruction, referring to environmental causes and their impacts on both the natural environment and the lives of people. These studies usually educate and discuss possible solutions to environmental problems. Despite socio-political challenges in current Iranian society, there is also research promoting environmental justice. Specifically, such research focuses on economic development to address the unfair distribution of resources and the unfair exposure of people to environmental harm, in order to motivate activism. However, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first research study that incorporates the anthropological dimensions of culture into the study of environmentalism.

This research examined the contemporary relationship between Iranian culture and the environment, yet with a diachronic cultural aspect (from past to present). Socio-cultural knowledge is a potentially powerful motivator for raising environmental awareness and encouraging personal responsibility, if not activism. This study suggested that appealing to cultural values in relation to the environment can be an entertaining and memorable first step in public environmentalism. When needing to convince humans, cultural perspectives about the environment are arguably just as important as scientific data. Together, they can create a path forward to environmental awareness that may also be applicable to other cultures as well.

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Appendix A: Consent Form in English

Adult Informed Consent Statement

This project is studying the use of traditional language and cultural elements to understand contemporary environmentalism in Iran. Your participation in this research project is **completely voluntary** and will take **2 hours**. You will be asked to do the following procedures: [Watch a 90-minute excerpt of the Iranian '*Ab-paria*' series and answer 2 questionnaires]. More detailed information on the procedures can be found below.

• No risks or discomforts are anticipated in this study.

• No direct benefits to you are anticipated.

• Your alternative to participating in this research study is not to participate.

For more detailed information about the project and your participation, please see below.

NAME OF THE STUDY

Crafting Environmental Discourse in Iran: The Uses of Mythological Narratives and the Popular Responses

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The research attempts to understand the use of traditional language and cultural elements to understand contemporary environmentalism in Iran. By exploring the links between cultural expressions, traditional culture and Persian mythology, I aim to examine whether this language and mythology can increase public environmental consciousness. I am looking at how culture and language is used to support and create a new Iranian environmentalism.

Your participation is **completely voluntary**.

The Department of Anthropology at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PROCEDURES

Your participation will take about 2 hours: You will be asked to watch a 90-minute excerpt of the Iranian '*Ab-paria*' ('The Fairies') television series with other research participants. You will answer two questionnaires before and after watching the excerpt that will not take longer than 30 minutes. The questionnaires are anonymous and will be collected by the principal investigator of this study.

RISKS

It is anticipated that there will be no burdens, inconveniences, discomfort nor risk associated with participation in the study.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you; but it is anticipated that the study will provide indirect benefits to society.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

You will not receive a monetary compensation or a credit for participating in the research, although I will show my appreciation for your participation by inviting you to a traditional home-style dinner.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

The identifying information will not be needed for the study.

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected from you, or with the research findings from this study. The ONLY record of your name and your signature will be on this consent form, which will be stored securely in an encrypted file. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form, you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of this unit. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Fatemeh Sadraee at the address provided below.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional data from you. However, the research team may use and disclose anonymous information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher or the faculty supervisor listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____   _____   _____
        Print Participant's Name   Date   Participant's Signature

Researchers' Contact Information

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Appendix B: Consent Form in Farsi

<div dir="rtl">

فرم رضایت برای شرکت در تحقیق
این نسخه با توجه به نسخه انگلیسی رضایت نامه تهیه شده است.
این تحقیق به تاثیر زبان و عناصر فرهنگی در درک مباحث زیست محیطی در ایران می پردازد. مشارکت شما در این تحقیق **کاملا اختیاری** است و حدود **2 ساعت** از وقت شما را می گیرد. از شما خواسته میشود که که یک گزیده ای از سریال آب پریا ساخته مرضیه برومند در سال 1392 را تماشا کرده و به مجموعه ای از سوالات قبل و بعد از آن پاسخ دهید.
شرکت در این تحقیق و پاسخ گویی به سوالات هیچ خطر یا آسیبی برای شما به همراه نخواهد داشت.
ممکن است این تحقیق در مقیاس کوچک هیچ فایده بخصوصی برای فرد شرکت کننده در تحقیق نداشته باشد.
شما می توانید هر زمان از مشارکت در این تحقیق صرف نظر کنید.
برای اطلاعات بیشتر درباره تحقیق و چگونگی مشارکت و حقوق معنوی شما، لطفا به مطالب زیر رجوع کنید.

عنوان تحقیق
مباحثات زیست محیطی در ایران: استفاده از روایت های اسطوره در فهم محیط زیست گرایی و واکنش به آن
اهداف تحقیق
در این تحقیق، محقق به دنبال یافتن روشهای درک مباحث زیست محیطی از طریق استفاده ابزاری از زبان است و می کوشد تا چگونگی درک مشکلات زیست محیطی و محیط زیست گرایی ایرانیان را از طریق عبارات و اصطلاحات فارسی و با رجوع به پیشینه های فرهنگی و تاریخی بررسی کرده و میزان آگاهی از مشکلات زیست محیطی در بین ایرانیان را بسنجد.

مشارکت در تحقیق
مشارکت شما در این تحقیق **کاملا اختیاری** است. بخش مردم شناسی دانشگاه کانزاس از حقوق شرکت کننده ها در این تحقیق حمایت می کند. اطلاعاتی که در زیر آمده جهت اطلاع شما برای شرکت در این تحقیق می باشد. در صورت تمایل، خواهشمند است بعد از خواندن این فرم، آن را امضا کنید. عدم امضا نشانه عدم تمایل در شرکت در این تحقیق می باشد، هرچند شما می توانید هر زمان از ادامه همکاری انصراف دهید. انصراف شما از مشارکت در تحقیق به هیچ عنوان تاثیری بر وضعیت شما یا ادامه خدماتی که از این واحد دانشگاهی دریافت می کنید ندارد.
مراحل تحقیق
مدت زمان مشارکت در تحقیق حدود 2 ساعت می باشد. برای این منظور از شما تقاضا می شود که یک گزیده 90 دقیقه ای از سریال آب پریا ساخته مرضیه برومند در سال 1392 را تماشا کرده و به مجموعه ای از سوالات قبل و بعد از آن پاسخ دهید. کل مدت پاسخگویی به سوالات 30 دقیقه تخمین زده شده است و پرسش نامه ها به صورت ناشناس و بدون اطلاعات هویتی توسط محقق جمع آوری خواهد شد.
خطرات و آسیب های ناشی از تحقیق
چنین برآورد شده است که شرکت در این تحقیق و پاسخ گویی به سوالات هیچ خطر یا آسیبی برای شما به همراه نخواهد داشت.
مزایای شرکت در تحقیق
ممکن است این تحقیق در مقیاس کوچک هیچ فایده بخصوصی برای فرد شرکت کننده در تحقیق نداشته باشد اما در ابعاد کلان می تواند برای آحاد مردم در سراسر جامعه مفید باشد.
حق الزحمه
برای شرکت در این تحقیق، هیچ حق الزحمه ای در نظر گرفته نشده است. در عوض، مراتب قدردانی از شرکت کننده ها با دعوت به یک شام ایرانی به عمل می آید.
اطلاعات محرمانه
نام و اطلاعات هویتی شما در هیچ یک از مراحل تحقیق اعم از انتشار و ارایه تحقیق مورد نیاز نیست و تنها در این رضایت نامه است که نام شما ثبت می شود و آن نیز به صورت کاملا محرمانه و در یک مکان امن ذخیره خواهد شد. مگر در موارد قانونی مورد تقاضای دانشگاه کانزاس یا طبق درخواست کتبی شما، اطلاعات هویتی شما با هیچ فرد دیگری در میان گذاشته نخواهد شد.
اطلاعات حاصله در این تاریخ به صورت نامحدود برای امور تحقیق استفاده خواهد شد و با امضای این رضایت نامه، به طور رسمی، موافقت و اجازه خود را برای همکاری در این تحقیق اعلام خواهید کرد.
عدم امضا و انصراف
امضای این رضایت نامه به هیچ وجه اجباری نبوده و شما می توانید در هر زمان انصراف خود را از شرکت در این تحقیق اعلام کنید. انصراف شما به هیچ عنوان تاثیر سویی بر وضعیت شما نخواهد داشت.
در صورت انصراف، تقاضای کتبی خود را به اینجانب فاطمه صدرایی به آدرس زیر ارسال نمایید و اطمینان داده می شود که از آن پس اطلاعات کسب شده از شما در تحقیق مورد استفاده قرار نخواهد گرفت.
سوالات
شما می توانید سوالات خود مبنی بر مراحل تحقیق را به محقق یا استاد راهنمای مربوطه به آدرس زیر ارسال نمایید.

</div>

اینجانب .... با آگاهی از اینکه حق پرسش و دریافت پاسخ در مورد این تحقیق را دارم ، مطالب این رضایت نامه را با دقت مطالعه نموده ام و در صورت بروز هرگونه سوال با شماره های 7858647429 یا 7858647385 تماس خواهم گرفت ، یا به آدرس پستی ذیل یا ایمیل irb@ku.edu ارسال خواهم کرد.

Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568

با امضای این رضایت نامه، اینجانب موافقت می کنم که در این تحقیق شرکت کرده، در زمان امضا حداقل 18 سال داشته و یک نسخه از این رضایت نامه را دریافت کرده ام.

نام .... امضا .... تاریخ ....

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Appendix C: Questionnaires in English Translation

Questionnaire 1 - Before watching the series excerpt

Number --------

Demographic Data

1. How old are you?
1) 18-25   2) 26-35   3) 36-45   4) 46 and up

2. What is your gender identity?
1) Male   2) Female   3) Other   4) Do not like to answer

3. What is your education level? Or what degree are you currently pursuing?

1) High school diploma or under   2) Bachelor's
3) Master's   4) PhD or higher

4. What is your field of study? (optional)   ---------------------------------

5. Where are you from? Or Where do you live?
6. If you are residing in the U.S., how long have you been out of Iran? -----------------------------
7. How do you define your socio-economic status (focus on income variable)?
1) Upper middle class   2) Middle class   3) Lower middle class
4) Working class

Television Behaviors

8. a) Do you watch Iranian public television?
1) Yes, always or often   2) Yes, sometimes   3) No, seldom or never

b) If the answer to question 8a is "No, seldom or never," can you specify your reason(s)?

9. What type of television programs do you usually watch? (Might have multiple answers)
1) News   2) Movies and series   3) Sports   4) Educational
5) Documentaries   6) Other

10. What genre of movies and series do you enjoy mostly? (Might have multiple answers)

1) Drama/Family drama/Romance
2) Fiction/Fantasy/Historical fiction
3) Actions/Horrors/Thrillers/Adventure
4) Comedy
5) Musical
6) Documentary
7) Other

11. While watching a TV program such as a movie or a series, how do these factors attract you?
Rank: (0) Not attract at all   (10) Attract a lot
   a) Theme and content
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Visual images and special effects
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   c) Characters and how they are created
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   d) Dialogs
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

12. If you pay attention to the language used in the dialogs, how do these elements attract you?
   (Examples provided in Farsi for each)
Rank: (0) Not attract at all   (10) Attract a lot
   a) Coined terms used for the first time/ Old terms used for new purposes
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Use of idioms/proverbs/cultural phrases
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   c) Repeated catchphrases
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   d) Accent of a particular geographical are
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   e) Poetic and literary language   0
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

13. If you rank any of the above more than 5, do you usually like to copy/use them in your
   conversations with others?
1) Yes   2) No   3) Did not think about it before

14. If the answer to the question 13 is Yes, do you think you use the above language elements:
1) deliberately & intentionally   2) unintentionally   3) Do not know
15. If you use them intentionally, what does make you use them? (Might have multiple answers)
1) To attract others' attention
2) Because you like them
3) Because they are unusual

4) Because they remind you of that program/character
5) Do not know

Environmental Attitude

16. Do you believe in environmental changes in the world?
    1)Yes   2) No   3) Not sure

17. How do you agree/disagree with these opinions:
Rank: (0) Strongly disagree   (10) Strongly agree
   a) Environmental issues are anthropogenic (caused by humans).
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Climate change and global warming are either false or exaggerated by the
       environmentalists and scientists.
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

18. How often do you follow the news about the environment and environmental issues?

   1) Never or Rarely   2) Sometimes   3) Usually   4) Often   5) Always

19. In your opinion, how serious are the following environmental issues in Iran?
20.
Rank: (0) Not serious at all   (10) Extremely serious
   a) Air/water/soil pollution (such as greenhouse gases, wastes, chemicals, etc.)
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Water shortage/drought
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   c) Desertification/deforestation
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   d) Consumerism/ inappropriate use of resources
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

21. How do you agree/disagree with the following causes of environmental problems in Iran?
Rank: (0) Strongly disagree   (10) Strongly agree
   a) Governmental mismanagement in various sectors
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Irresponsibility of citizens (public) in protecting the environment
       0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

c) Natural disasters (such as flood, earthquake, etc.) which are the consequence of natural and environmental causes.

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

d) God's willing and destiny

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

If you have any additional comments about any of the causes above, please write it here.

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22. How effective does the Iranian public television work in public understanding of the environmental issues?

Rank: (0) Not effective at all   (10) Very effective
          0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Reflection to *Ab-paria* TV Series
Ab-paria **was a television series, which was aired during Nowruz Holliday in 2013. It was directed, and produced by Marzieh Boroumand for Iran Channel 2 productions. It was in 17 episodes of 45 minutes.**

23. a) Have you ever watched *Ab-paria* TV series when it was aired during Nowruz holiday in 2013? Or have you ever watched it from YouTube, Aparat or elsewhere?

 1) Yes – I watched all 17 episodes   2) Yes – I watched some episodes
 3) No   4) Do not remember

Questionnaire 2 - After Watching the series excerpt
Number --------
This part includes several open-ended questions that requires you to answer <u>in Farsi</u>.

Reflection to *Ab-paria* TV Series   نقطه نظر ها به مجموعه تلویزیونی آب پریا

 1. How did you like the *Ab-paria* excerpt you watched today?
Rank: (0) Not like it at all   (10) Like it a lot
          0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

 2. If you have not watched *Ab-paria* series before: how interested are you in watching all the episodes of the series (or the second season, if any) after watching the excerpt today?
Rank: (0) Not likely at all   (10) Very likely
0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

 3. Which factor makes the *Ab-paria* effective in understanding environmental problems or make it memorable?
     1) story flow and the theme of the stories
     2) characters and the way they were constructed
     3) message

4) Dialogs and songs used in it

4. Which character of *Ab-paria* was the most effective in understanding environmental issues?
   1) the fairies (Water-fairy, Snow-fairy, Cloud-fairy, Green-fairy)
   2) Aposh (drought demon)
   3) Ostad Bahar (human character)

5. After watching the *Ab-paria* excerpt today, what was the most significant thing that made you think about?

----

6. How effective does *Ab-paria* use the following factors to highlight the environmental issues?

Rank: (0) Not effective at all   (10) Very effective

   a) Mythological and legendary characters such as the fairies and the demon
      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   b) Poetic and literary language/idiomatic and cultural expressions/ symbolic language
      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   c) Visual effects and symbolic images
      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

   d) Cultural factors associated with the stories of the past
      0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

7. Could you explain <u>why or why not</u> the above factors are effective?

----

8. It is said, the *Ab-paria* characters have been derived from Persian mythology and legends. Do you know anything about their origin? Do you know their original names in the past narrative?

      ----

9. Do you think elements such as violet, golden fish, frog, spirit of the forests, *Kariz*, snow fairy have a particular meaning in Persian narratives and literature? Or do they remind you of a particular memory or a specific story?

      ----

10. a) After watching the *Ab-paria* excerpt today, how effective do you rank the Iranian public television's role (through movies and series) in understanding environmental issues?

Rank: (0) Not effective at all   (10) Very effective
         0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

b) How do you support your above ranking by providing a reason?

---------------------11. Does the *Ab-paria* excerpt you watched today remind you of any story, event, memory, or narrative of the past (from yours, your parents/grandparents, relatives, movies, etc.) <u>in response to the environment</u>? Please share it with me.

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12. Does the *Ab-paria* excerpt you watched today remind you of a Farsi poem, idiom, proverb, any cultural expression, or even a phrase from a movie, series or advertisement? Please share it with me.

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13. Is there any particular word, phrase or expression that you remember from the *Ab-paria* excerpt you just watched today? Please write them down here.

----

14. Is there any particular word, phrase, expression, quote, song or any concept and character in the *Ab-paria* excerpt that reminds you of a particular story, memory, event or narrative form the past? Please write them down and briefly explain what you remember from that.

Appendix D: Questionnaires in Farsi

پرسشنامه ۱ – قبل از تماشای گزیده آب پریا

| **اطلاعات فردی** |

۱. در کدام یک از گروههای سنی زیر قرار دارید ؟
۱) ۱۸- ۲۵ سال   ۲) ۲۶-۳۵ سال   ۳) ۳۶-۴۵ سال   ۴) ۴۵ سال به بالا

۲. جنسیت شما کدام است؟
۱) مرد   ۲) زن   ۳)   تمایل به پاسخگویی ندارم

۳. سطح تحصیلات شما کدام است؟
۱) دیپلم یا کمتر   ۲) کارشناسی   ۳) کارشناسی ارشد   ۴) دکتری یا بالاتر

۴. رشته تحصیلی شما چیست؟ (پاسخ اختیاری است)

۵. اهل کجا هستید ؟

۶. چند سال خارج از ایران بوده اید؟

۷. وضعیت اجتماعی- اقتصادی (با تاکید بر درآمد) ، چگونه تعریف می کنید؟
۱) متوسط به بالا   ۲) متوسط   ۳) متوسط به پایین   ۴) طبقه ضعیف

| **نگرش های مربوط به رسانه (تلویزیون)** |

۸ . آیا برنامه ها یا شبکه های تلویزیون ملی را تماشا می کنید؟
بله – همیشه یا بیشتر اوقات   بله – گاهی اوقات   خیر یا به ندرت

۹. اگر پاسخ شما به سوال قبل "خیر یا به ندرت " است، دلیل شما چیست؟

----

۱۰. معمولا علاقمند به تماشای کدام یک از انواع برنامه های تلویزیونی هستید؟
۱) اخبار   ۲) فیلم و سریال   ۳) آموزشی   ۴) ورزشی   ۵) مستند   ۶) دیگر موارد

۱۱. کدام ژانر فیلم و سریال را بیشتر می پسندید؟
۱) درام/ خانوادگی/ عاشقانه
۲) داستانی / تخیلی/ تاریخی تخیلی
۳) اکشن / ترسناک / ماجراجویی
۴) کمدی / طنز
۵) موزیکال / آهنگین
۶) مستند
۷) دیگر موارد

۱۲. هنگام تماشای فیلم یا سریال، چقدر به موارد زیر توجه می کنید؟ (۰ مخالفم – ۱۰ موافقم)
محتوا و موضوع

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0

نحوه فیلم برداری و جلوه های

10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1   0

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شخصیت ها و نحوه شخصیت پردازی ت

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

چقدر به دیالوگ ها و مکالمات بین شخصیت ها

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

13. در صورت توجه به دیالوگ ها، عوامل زیر شما را چگونه جذب می کند؟

واژه ها و عبارات ساخته شده جدید (مثال: یارانه به جای سوبسید یا کلمات /عبارات جدیدی مثل اینفلوئنسر – وایرال یا واژه ها و عبارات قدیمی در معنای جدید یا برای استفاده جدید (مثال: شاخ (در اینستاگرام))

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

استفاده از اصطلاحات (مثال: پاپوش درست کردن)/ضرب المثل ها (مثال: مرغ همسایه غازه)/ واژه ها و عبارات فرهنگی (مثال: صد سال به این سال ها (عید نوروز))

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

تکه کلام های تکرار شده افراد (تکرار واژه ها یا عباراتی در حین گفتگو) (مثال: آی خداااا. تکه کلام بهتاش در سریال پایتخت)

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

زبان شعرگونه و ادبی(مثال: برای آمدن به چشم نقاش، باید در چشم انداز بود (برگرفته از دیالوگ فیلم کمال الملک – علی حاتمی))

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

14. آیا کلمات یا عبارات جدید ساخته شده در فیلم و سریال ها را در گفتار روزمره خود استفاده کنید؟

بله – آگاهانه دوست دارم استفاده کنم. بله – به صورت ناآگاهانه استفاده می کنم

خیر- اصلا تمایل به استفاده ندارم   تاکنون به آن فکر نکرده ام

15. اگر به صورت آگاهانه و عمدی استفاده می کنید، کدام یک از موارد زیر باعث استفاده از آن ارکان زبانی میشود؟
(ممکن است بیشتر از یک پاسخ داشته باشد.)

برای جلب توجه دیگران

چون آن ها را دوست دارید.

چون آن ها غیر متداول هستند

چون آن ها شما را به یاد آن برنامه یا شخصیت بخصوص می اندازند

نمی دانم

نگرش های زیست محیطی

16. آیا تغییرات اقلیمی را باور دارید؟

1) بله   2) خیر   3)درباره آن مطمئن نیستم   4) نمی دانم چیست

17. نظر شما درباره عبارات زیر چیست؟

انسان در به وجود آمدن مشکلات زیست محیطی (مثل آلودگی/ کم آبی) دخالت دارد.

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

تغییرات اقلیمی و پدیده گرمایش جهانی یا وجود ندارد یا به صورت اغراق آمیزی توسط دانشمندان و فعالان محیط زیست مطرح می شود.

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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18. اخبار مربوط به محیط زیست را چگونه دنبال می کنید؟

همیشه   غالبا   معمولا   گاهی اوقات   هرگز یا به ندرت

19. به نظر شما مشکلات زیست محیطی زیر در ایران چقدر جدی هستند؟

آلودگی هوا/ آب/ خاک (ناشی از انواع آلاینده ها مثل گاز های گلخانه ای، پسماندها ، مواد شیمیایی و غیره)

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

کم آبی/بی آبی/خشکسالی

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

بیابان زایی / جنگل زدایی (قطع درختان یا احداث بی رویه سد)

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

مصرف گرایی/ الگوهای نادرست مصرف منابع

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

20. اگر مشکلات زیست محیطی ناشی از عوامل زیر باشد، چقدر با هریک موافق /مخالف هستید؟

مشکلات زیست محیطی ناشی از مدیریت ناکارآمد در بخشهای مختلف است.

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

مشکلات زیست محیطی ناشی از بی مسئولیتی شهروندان در حفظ محیط زیست است.

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

بیشتر مشکلات زیست محیطی ناشی از عوامل طبیعی (بلایای طبیعی از قبیل بارش کم باران ، سیل ، زلزله و غیره) است.

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

بیشتر مشکلات زیست محیطی به خواست خدا و قضا و قدر است.

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

21. تاثیر رسانه ملی ایران در درک عموم از مشکلات زیست محیطی را در حال حاضر چگونه می دانید؟

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

نقطه نظر ها به مجموعه تلویزیونی آب پریا

مجموعه تلویزیونی آب پریا در ایام نوروز 92 از شبکه دو سیمای ایران پخش شده است. این مجموعه ساخته مرضیه برومند است که در 17 قسمت 45 دقیقه ای ساخته شده است. و بعدها در شبکه آی فیلم پخش مجدد شده و همه قسمتهای سریال در شبکه هایی مثل آپارات هم قابل دیدن بوده است.

22. آیا قبلا مجموعه تلویزیونی آب پریا را تماشا کرده اید ؟

بله – همه قسمتها را دیده ام   بله – بعضی قسمتها را دیده ام   خیر – اصلا ندیده ام   یه یاد نمی آورم

پرسشنامه 2– بعد از تماشای گزیده

این بخش حاوی تعدادی سوالات تشریحی است که نیازمند پاسخ به زبان فارسی می باشد.

1. چقدر از تماشای این گزیده 90 دقیقه ای از سریال آب پریا لذت بردید؟

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<div dir="rtl">

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

2. بعد از تماشای این گزیده، چقدر به تماشای کامل همه قسمتهای سریال ترغیب شده اید؟

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

3. به نظر شما چه انگیزه ای باعث تماشای این سریال میشود یا آن را به یاد ماندنی می کند؟

داستان و محتوای آن   پیام داستان   شخصیت ها   دیالوگ ها یا اشعار استفاده شده در آن مثل

4. تاثیر کدام شخصیت داستان را بیشتر می دانید؟

استاد بهار   اپوش   ابرپری   سبز پری   برف پری   آب پری

5. آیا وجود شخصیت هایی مثل پری و دیو (برگرفته از افسانه) یا عناصر فرهنگی در ارتباط با داستانهایی از گذشته در آب پریا میتواند به درک بهتر مسائل زیست محیطی کمک کند؟

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

6. آیا زبان شعرگونه و ادبی / عبارات و اصطلاحات فرهنگی مثل ضرب المثل / زبان نمادین در آب پریا میتواند به درک بهتر مسائل زیست محیطی کمک کند؟

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

7. آیا جلوه های ویژه و تصویرسازی نمادین در آب پریا میتواند به درک بهتر مسائل زیست محیطی کمک کند؟

جلوه های ویژه و تصویرسازی نمادین

| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

8. توضیح دهید که عوامل ذکر شده در سوالات 36 تا 39 چگونه می تواند به درک مسائل زیست محیطی در ایران کمک کند؟

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9. گفته میشود شخصیتهای آب پریا از شخصیتهای اسطوره ای و افسانه ای برگرفته شده اند. به نظر شما منظور کدام اسطوره ها هستند؟ آیا شما آن اساطیر را میشناسید یا اسم آ نها را می دانید؟ لطفا ذکر کنید.

----

10. به نظر شما واژه های زیر معنا یا مفهوم خاصی در فرهنگ ایران یا زبان و ادبیات فارسی دارد یا اینکه نشانه یا یادآور یک روایت قدیمی یا فرهنگی است. درباره هرکدام که میدانید توضیح دهید.
بنفشه – ماهی طلایی – قنات – قورباغه – غول بیابان – روح جنگل

----

11. آیا تماشای این گزیده از آب پریا، شما را به یاد یک داستان، رخداد، روایت یا خاطره ای از گذشته <u>در رابطه با محیط زیست/طبیعت</u> می اندازد؟ (هرچیزی که خودتان تجربه کرده باشید یا از والدین، پدربزرگ مادربزرگ، دوست و یا غیره شنیده باشید). لطفا آن را ذکر کنید.

----

12. آیا تماشای این گزیده از آب پریا، شما را به یاد یک شعر، اصطلاح، ضرب المثل، عبارت فرهنگی، یا حتی یک عبارت از یک فیلم، سریال، تبلیغ یا کتاب می اندازد؟ لطفا آن را ذکر کنید.

----

13. آیا هیچ واژه، عبارت یا شعر بخصوصی از آنچه امروز مشاهده کردید در ذهنتان مانده است ؟ لطفا آن را ذکر کنید.

</div>

Appendix E: **Pronunciation Guide and Abbreviation Key**
based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

Symbol	Sound	Example
ā	/ɑ:/	c**ar**
a	/æ/	c**a**t
ai	/aɪ/	m**y**
e	/e/	s**e**t
ei	/eɪ	**a**ge
i	/i:/	s**ee**
o	/ɔ:/	f**o**rm
ou	/oʊ/	g**oa**t
u	/u:/	c**oo**l
y	/j/	**y**ellow
h	/h/	**h**all
sh	/ʃ/	**sh**ell
ch	/tʃ/	**ch**air
zh	/ʒ/	plea**s**ure
kh	/χ/	*1(below)
gh	/ʁ/	*2 (below)
q	/q/	**Q**uran

*1: It is a voiceless velar fricative consonant: it is articulated with the back of the tongue at the soft palate without vibrations of the vocal cords.

*2: It is a voiced velar fricative consonant: it is articulated with the back of the tongue at the soft palate with vibrations of the vocal cords.

Abbreviation Keys

EZ	Ezāfe construction
NEG	Negative marker
OBJ	Object marker
OPT	Optative
PAST	Past tense
PL	Plural marker
POSS	Possession
PROG	Progressive marker
PRS	Present tense
PP	Past participle
SG	Singular

Appendix F: IRB Approval

Date: December 14, 2018

TO: Fatemeh Sadraee, (fsadraee@ku.edu)
Jocelyn Isley, MS, CIP, IRB Administrator (785-864-7385,
FROM: irb@ku.edu)

RE: **Approval of Initial Study**

The IRB reviewed the submission referenced below on 12/14/2018. Approval expires on 12/13/2021.

IRB Action: APPROVED	Effective date: 12/14/2018	Expiration Date : 12/13/2021
STUDY DETAILS		
Investigator:	Fatemeh Sadraee	
IRB ID:	STUDY00143411	
Title of Study:	Environmental Discourse in Iran: The Role of Idioms in Environmental Awareness	
Funding ID:	None	
REVIEW INFORMATION		
Review Type:	Initial Study	
Review Date:	12/14/2018	
Documents Reviewed:	• Abparia Clip.mp4, • Environmental Discourse in Iran, • Sadraee_3Questionnaires .docx, • Sadraee_Consent Form_ Farsi.docx, • Sadraee_Consent Form_English.docx, • Sadraee_Consent Form_English_Revised.docx, • Sadraee_Focus Group Questions.docx, • Sadraee_Information Statement.docx, • Sadraee_KU-HRPP_Revised.docx, • Sadraee_Social Media Annnouncement.docx	
Expedited Category(ies):	• (6) Voice, video, digital, or image recordings • (7)(b) Social science methods • (7)(a) Behavioral research	
Special Determinations:		
Additional Information:		