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VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

When the attraction of Ta'ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it

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Abstract: This article studies the influence of form and content of Ta'ziyeh on theatre alongside replacement of Ta'ziyeh in modern theatre by eclectic theatre. In order to investigate and critic the character of Ta'ziyeh on modern theatre, Ta'ziyeh and its influence of artists works are analysed. This raises the question, Is Ta'ziyeh only a traditional, symbolic and unrealistic form of theatre, incomparable to other theatrical styles, or it needs to be focused with evaluation of traditional ceremonies? To address this question, we analysed some theatre productions based on eclectic theatre.

Subjects: Arts; Drama; Theatre; Theatre & Performance Studies; Theatrical Production

Keywords: Ta'ziyeh; eclectic theatre; traditional; symbolic; unrealistic; theatrical style

1. Introduction

Ta'ziyeh¹ as a kind of passion play is a kind of comprehensive indigenous form considered as being the national form of Iranian theatre which have pervasive influence in the Iranian works of drama and play. It originates from some famous mythologies and rites such as Mithraism, *Sug-e-Siavush* (Mourning for Siavush) and *Yadegar-e-Zariran* or Memorial of Zarir (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2015).



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Currently, different theatrical styles and methods are intermingled without regards for the limits and boundaries, which are manifested in a performance. Subsequently, in the contemporary setting, many directors and playwrights have been influenced by the form and content of Ta'ziyeh and apply it in their work. They have brought these elements of Ta'ziyeh and combined them with Western influenced theatre styles to create a new genre of works. This new style is known as "eclectic theatre" that is a new style in postmodernism which can be manifested in connection with theatre activities of Iran.

To that end, the current research and its subsequent argument rely on the significance, both historical and moral on the dramaturgy around the tragedy of *Veda-e Yaran* (To observe the ceremonies of farewell), "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) and *Namira* (Immortal).

Currently, different theatrical styles and methods are intermingled without regards for the limits and boundaries, which are manifested in a performance. Subsequently, in the contemporary setting, many directors and playwrights have been influenced by the form and content of Ta'ziyeh and apply it in their works. They have brought the technique and method of Ta'ziyeh and combined them with Western influenced theatre styles to create a new genre of works.² This new style is known as a type of "eclectic theatre" and is a new style in postmodernism which can be manifested in connection with theatre activities of Iran.

In order to draw an evolution, and conduct studies with Ta'ziyeh, method and style of Ta'ziyeh according to "eclectic theatre" alongside some theatre productions analysed. The method of research is based on a descriptive-analytical approach based on tragedy of some theatre productions like: *Namira* (Immortal)³ by Larian (1987), *Pol* (Bridge) by Rahmanian (2014), *Veda-e Yaran* (To observe the ceremonies of farewell) by Mousavi (2012), and "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) by Amini (2004). Results are compared to the analysis of dominant principles in traditional performance and modern theatre throughout the "eclectic theatre" where required. The objective of this study is to reflect on the elements of Ta'ziyeh and modern theatre, with regard to their differences.

2. Replacement for Ta'ziyeh

Hashem Fayza (as cited in *Uncle Hashem and Ta'ziyeh-influenced Theatre*) believed that it is not possible innovation in Ta'ziyeh. Do you want to drive Imam Hussein up a car to the stage or bring Yazid by bicycle? If the content and form of Ta'ziyeh changed it will not carry out the name of "Ta'ziyeh" (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2015; Mousavi, 2004). Considering current transformations, changes in traditions along with the hastiness and impatience of the new generation different experiences have been considered on the basis of field and open area performances with the objective to benefit on the styles and methods of Iranian plays in closed area of theatre halls.

In the past, there were places for performing Ta'ziyeh which were specifically limited to such performances. On the other hand, people were not familiar with Media like radio and TV to the extent they are today. Therefore, in certain months of the year, they patiently watched a scene (a drama of Ta'ziyeh) for some hours for religious ceremonies like the 10-day of Muharram and other events of Martyrdom. Scripts (copies Ta'ziyeh) were written depending on the *shabihs'* (role-carriers') intelligence and potentialities and were not valuable literary works. When modern styles of Western theatre made their way to Iran, Ta'ziyeh lost its traditional appeal. Places where Ta'ziyeh had been performed earlier changed into buildings, passages and place in modern life. Nowadays, in Iran there are few places for Ta'ziyeh such as the city of Ghochan where Ta'ziyeh could maintain its traditional role. The city serves as a local function and might be useful for researchers who are interested in studying about Ta'ziyeh.

When the attraction of Ta'ziyeh is diminished, the community should inevitably find a suitable replacement for it. If Ta'ziyeh has no attraction among some people, such as intellectuals and modernist social groups, the attraction and acceptance is not of the same type which is seen among the traditional mass. The attraction towards Ta'ziyeh among this group is based on their attitudes to Ta'ziyeh as a racial dramatic art from the distant past. Le Bon revealed that no culture would exist without long lasting narratives and there would be no progress without gradual elimination of such narratives. The problem is to find a balance between the result of the end and changing narrations. He also believed that the community is responsible to protect what has survived from the past and gradually to replace it (LeBon, 2014, p. 40).

The Iranian community today is different from the traditional community and that of the Qajar period. The system of thinking and behaviour of the community has been transformed; social, economic and cultural connections and tastes, and artistic talents have changed. Today Iranian people are looking for a drama which represents their religious history and beliefs in a very modern and artistic manner, with a new language and narration which better match the world today. Ta'ziyeh,

the ancient Iranian religious tragedy, would not be able to maintain its status in terms of its position and place in the Iranian community due to social, economic and cultural changes in recent decades.

Although, Ta'ziyeh changed a little during the reign of Nasser Din Shah Qajar, comic and joyful Ta'ziyehs, mocking the enemies of the Imam became fashionable; historical and love Ta'ziyehs (such as "Joseph and Zuleikha" or "Yousef and Zuleikha") emerged, but without growing that much. Ta'ziyeh does not fall apart from its essence in the sense that at the end of the comic Ta'ziyeh performances, mourning and lamentation ceremonies on the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and the suffering of his family are still performed, however not as perfect as Nasser Din Shah (1848–1896) era (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2015). Basically, the objective of performing Ta'ziyeh has been none, but invigoration of people's faith. What is important in performing Ta'ziyeh is to the epic poems that reveal the story of Imam Hussein's martyrdom and the life of the Prophet and his family. For that reason, the Ta'ziyeh writers refrained from signing their names at the end of the script because, they wished to have their reward reserved with God as they wrote and sang for the Divine blessing. On the same token, the spectators in Ta'ziyeh ceremonies helped in any way they could so they would be blessed too. These esoteric signs indicate unity and association between the *shabihs* (role carriers) and the spectators. From a religious standpoint, the spectators by participating in Ta'ziyeh reached a level of catharsis and purification. For example, the Ta'ziyeh spectators believed that by watching Ta'ziyeh and lamenting, their sorrows would decline a little.

Ta'ziyeh is performed at a special time in Muharram and Safar every year. The audience and *shabihs* of Ta'ziyeh had a connecting set, which was not limited to the time of the performance. It was initiated long before the performance's time, and continued long after the performance was completed. Ta'ziyeh formed the connecting space made by symbols. The public would organize the Ta'ziyeh and prepared the conditions by creating the set of symbols. Such people were changed into the audience during the performance. Jean Calmard regarded Ta'ziyeh Muharram ceremony was more of a public movement which results in severe competition among social groups; *shabihs* or *Ta'ziyeh-khans* indebted to cooperation between the associations population such as that of Tehran *Dash*⁴ (*das de Tehran*). Usually such inheritors of the former *futuvat*⁵ were a sponsor and took the responsibility of making takiyeh ready to perform the ceremony (1979, p. 127). In addition, Nasser Din Shah become in his late reign a great sponsor of Muharram ceremonies and also *Ta'ziyeh-khanis* in his *Takiyeh Dawlat* (Calmard & Calmard, 2010, p. 70, see Figure 1). Takiyeh Dowlat and other places for performing of Ta'ziyeh as Peter Brook indicated is "empty space" (Brook, 1996). "The takiyeh, like most other takiyehs, was a large rectangular yard surrounded by rooms. About one thousand people were seated, mostly on the yard, leaving in the middle a circular space for the performers. Women sat on one side and men on the other (men and women are always seated separately in takiyeh as they are in a mosque). Children were free of this restriction and sat wherever they wanted. A big wooden chair and small rug were placed on one side of the circular and a big pot of water standing on the stool. On the opposite side were placed two chairs and a big pot of water standing on a stool. There were the only visible elements of scenery on the stage. These two simple scenic locations depicted the rival camps of Imam Hussein an Yazid. The big wooden chair was for Imam Hussein, while the rug was for the members of his family to sit on. On the opposite side, the two chairs were for Ibn-e Saad and Shimr, two commanders of Yazid's army. The pot of water represented a river that Yazid's army was refusing to allow Imam Hussein and his followers to drink from" (Malekpour, 2004, pp. 105–107).

However, nowadays, the way that Ta'ziyeh performs is to some extent different. Whole *shabihs* and formers view the performance of Ta'ziyeh such as a job. Playwright and performers of Ta'ziyeh mention their names as author or performers. They contrast to past, contract for each performing and get paid. They are not worshiping and are not objecting point for people. People may stop for a while and watch it, however, they do not have connection with *shabihs* or moin al-Boka (*Ta'ziyeh gardan*), they do not cry and do not make sympathy with the story.

Figure 1. Takiyeh Dowlat a painting by Kamalol Molk from Qajar period (Mousavi, 2009).



The question is: How can we change the static manner of Ta'ziyeh and give it a dynamic and efficient role? During recent years, some cultural and public foundations have paid attention to Ta'ziyeh and have assisted Ta'ziyeh dramas in Tehran and other cities. Through this process some writers have made changes to the plays and scripts in order to perform them on the theatre stage for those more interested in theatre. These artists, with good intentions, try to preserve Ta'ziyeh and make changes in Ta'ziyeh literature and its execution and performance in order to release this ritual and religious drama from its current static position, make it a new, dynamic and acceptable form of art. According to Shahidi Parviz Sayad produced "The Ta'ziyeh of Abdullah Afif" on the theatre stage⁶ in the Sang-Laj Theatre, in autumn 1955 (2001, p. 52). Nevertheless, according to some critics, the new conditions have destroyed the Ta'ziyeh, as Parviz Mamnoon stated "We must not forget that on the day when the Ta'ziyeh costumes are brand new and historically accurate; that day on which, God forbid, imaginative sets are used; that day on which realistic artists under the Ta'ziyeh and natural acting replaces the present "artificial" gestures; that day on which the performance is removed from the platforms of the takiyeh, from the bare fields of the villages, from the asphalt pavement of small towns, and is transferred to the boxlike stages from the beginning of the performance to the accompaniment of the usual mysterious dramatic music; that day, the day when Ta'ziyeh becomes realistic, will witness its death" (Mamnoun, 1979, p. 159). "However, considering the demands of society today, we cannot remain in the traditional and religious ways and preserve the ritual drama in its old form" (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2015). However if we change Ta'ziyeh's semantic form, appearance and coordinate it with the social, cultural and religious system of society today and modern mental characteristics, it may be possible to protect and keep its values and create works of art which conform to demands expressed by the community. Considering eclectic theatre as a form of theatre could be a solution to keep the Ta'ziyeh value and bring back the attraction of Ta'ziyeh for today's audiences.

According to Nazerzadeh-Kermani (2005) eclectic theatre is a relatively new form internationally. This theatrical form was developed by directors such as Max Reinhardt (1873–1934) in Germany; Sevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), Mikhail Chekhov (1891–1955), Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883–1922), and Alexander Tairov (1885–1945) in Russia; and Peter Brook (1925) in Britain. These created a new style in directing as well as selecting and combining forms with their inner thoughts to create a new phenomenon called eclectic theatre (p. 473). Eclecticism as a style of theatre and a way to protect Ta'ziyeh utilizes form and content of Ta'ziyeh through theatre productions. There are some references which show the roots of eclectic theatre in Iran as influenced by Iranian traditional elements or other places like “The Serpent A Ceremony” (as cited in Itallie, 1998) by Itallie was directed by Joseph Chaikin for the Open Theater in 1969.

Iranian eclectic theatre is a theatrical form that emerged in Iran specially after reopening universities. This type of Iranian theatre was formed due to the efforts of artists who attempted to combine Iranian traditional forms with Western theatrical elements. According to *Conventions and Taxonomy of Iranian Theatre and Eclecticism in Drama*, these artists have eclectically combined diverse theatrical forms and attempted to make them cohesive through various techniques and methods. The current theatre combines elements of Iranian traditional forms with those of Western theatre, thereby creating a form of eclectic theatre (Alizadeh & Hashim, 2016; Nazerzadeh-Kermani, 2013). For example, *Namira* (Immortal) directed by Larian (1987) is a dramatic work that has been involved the Ta'ziyeh content and forms. “Ta'ziyeh of Imam Hussein's martyrdom” is the basis of *Namira* (Immortal) with some changes to the dramatic elements of its structure: *Namira* (Immortal) is displayed of Kabala event. The story starts a point in which according to the annual ceremony, actors perform the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and his family in Muharram month. The actor of Imam Hussein carries Hussein name plays the role. He had played the drama of Ta'ziyeh for years and cried the innocence of Imam Hussein. Now, he is searching to know *Seyed al Shohada* by himself involved internal conflicts with him. He played the role of Imam Hussein, but this time he finds to be humble compare with holy Imam Hussein which causes him not to ready for the role. This makes Hussein to find himself in the process of playing Imam Hussein role. Therefore, he leaves the play and goes to front war⁷ while the passion play continues by another player. However, the previous player is martyred in the war on the day of *Ashura*. And then, at *Ashura* noon, when Imam Hussein is martyred, players place his head beside the body of the Hussein passion player.

Pol (Bridge) by Rahmanian (2014) is another example which director has been influenced by the form and content of “Ta'ziyeh Imam Hussein”. The story of the *Pol* (Bridge) is about constructor of bridge who is supposed to be decapitated for being disloyal to Hussein. However, he claims to be innocent. Then, the constructor narrates the happenings in past same as *moein al Boka*. He constructs a bridge for Hussein and his followers to move to Kufeh. As people of Kufeh shirk their obligation towards Imam, Imam leaves to Karbala desert where he and his companions confronts with Yazid army. Hussein says his followers, “You are free to leave the field, if want to”. Then bridge constructor leaves Imam.

In addition to *Pol* (Bridge), *Veda-e Yaran* (To Observe the Ceremonies of Farewell) is another theatre production by Mousavi (2012) which the director is derived by form and content of Ta'ziyeh. *Veda-e Yaran* (To Observe the Ceremonies of Farewell) has a special place in Ta'ziyeh. It can be sad to be the starting point of a tragedy after farewell. In Iranian daily life, valediction comes with inner sorrow and in some cases comes with ceremonies such as singing while seeing off to a passenger leaving for pilgrimage, making goodbye stew, pouring water after the passenger. This Iranian ceremony is elegantly represented in Qasem and Aliakbar Ta'ziyeh. Despite the fact that in Karbala desert there were scarce sources of water, Iranian ceremony of pouring water after the passenger leaves is performed disregarding shortage of water, when they say goodbye leaving to the battle field. In addition, in Iranian marriage ceremony when mother rubs sugar loafs over the bride's head, she has a grief inside her heart for daughter is leaving her father's house going to bridegroom house. The same ceremony entered Qasem Ta'ziyeh. *Veda-e Yaran* (To Observe the Ceremonies of Farewell) comes with Iranian culture, ceremony and music which happen in a big tragedy among Arabs.

In fact Ta'ziyeh performances connected with Karbala desert are a type of farewell delivered to the family members and political or historical aspects of the period are not focused but emotional and sentimental aspects are more emphasized. *Veda-e Yaran* (To Observe the Ceremonies of Farewell) is a breaking point in such performances. In this play young Qasem (Imam Hussein nephew) farewell, that of 18 years Ali Akbar, handsome son of Imam Hussein, brave Imam Hussein brother namely Hazrat Abbas, saying farewell to suckling Ali Asghar (Imam Hussein newborn) and Imam Hussein farewell delivered to his family are all displayed while the stupendous instance of valediction happens when Imam Hussein's minor girl, Roghayeh, delivers farewell to her decapitated father by talking to his head. On the other hand, women's role as Karbala captives, mourners and singers in such valedictions means that they have to carry the heavy burden of loneliness and sorrow while men are not present. Variation of music and play characters, type of valediction by each character made the friends farewell oration a musical variety in which any theatrical scene represents a painting.

3. A lonely person's story (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*)

The question here is: How are Iranian traditions and theatrical forms combined with the Western style? To answer this question the play of "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) analysed based on some components of form and content elements like: plot, genre, theme, message, dramatic conventions, play construction and style.

"A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) is a combination of the script of "the Imam Hussein Ta'ziyeh" and contemporary theatre which display the summarized martyrdom of Imam Hussein within 30 min.

The summary of this play is to narrate by a person who after a short time being with Imam Hussein left Imam before he was martyred. In the darkness of the scene, where audiences are sitting, continuous sound of stepping and panting are heard with some other indistinct sounds. The light levels gradually increase. A man appears on the stage. He is frightened and remorseful for leaving Imam alone in the war.

The story reads as follows: Imam Hussein, contrary to what requested by Moavieh, does not swear allegiance to Yazid (Moavieh's son) and does not accept him as the prince. As there is no allegiance, Moavieh confronts Imam Hussein and his companion. Then, the followers of Imam Hussein are killed for being the follower. For this reason Imam Hussein leaves Medina to Mecca. From Medina, Imam and his companion go to Kofa upon invitation by the people, not knowing that the people of Kofa would breach their promise and leave him alone. In the end, Imam has to leave Kofa and goes to Karbala, a dry and barren lot. That is the place where Imam Hussein and his family are prevented to drink water and they are taken captive. Finally, Imam is martyred by the sword stroke.

3.1. Methods of performance and theatrical convention

Among Iranian traditional performance, and also in Ta'ziyeh, *naqqali* (narration) and *Parde-khani* (storytelling, tableau description), the player is the *naqqal* "narrator" as well. The player is not transformed or steeped, as Stanislavski puts it; the player is not overwhelmed, and in some way goes closer to the style of Brecht. But the difference between the style of Brecht performance and Ta'ziyeh is that in the first style, the player would in some instance, enter the role and has the power to leave the role as well. While in Ta'ziyeh, the player would never be steeped into the role. In fact, the expressive method of Ta'ziyeh is that of "symbolic". For instance, it says the *olya* (approving actor) should recite the dialogues in a song while *ashghya* (disapproving actors) does not need to have powerful song as that of *olya* (approving actor). If we look at the subject realistically, both should perform their act in the same language, whether singing or not. This means that when we plan a vocal expression for the *olya* (approving actor) and a non-vocal for *ashghya* (disapproving actors), it would be mixed with symbolism.

Here, we refer Galileo theatre, performed in Brecht style, in which the character should be first taken Galileo character; following should put the role aside and judge. This is contrary to the method of playing in Ta'ziyeh where throughout the performance, *shabih* (role-carrier) emphasizes repeatedly that characters are imitated and are not the true characters. *Shabih* holds a copy of Ta'ziyeh in his hand does not mean that he has not memorized the text, but is an indication that he is similar to the character, but is not the character himself. However, the player of Brecht style accepts his role. As a single actor would play all the characters in "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*), it comes closer to Brecht theatre. In fact, in this single character play, the actor is an expert in the field of performance. In addition, the actor in Brecht style would play his role, according to the theatrical rules and principles, but in Ta'ziyeh there are no such rules and principles of theatre. What is important in Ta'ziyeh is the "belief". One impersonating of Shemr role is not interested to wear Shemr clothing and one dramatizing of Imam Hussein role does not consider him to have the place of Imam, but he only narrates the Imam words or Shemr words. However, there have been utilized such Ta'ziyeh conventions through the "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*).

"A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) emphasizes the presence of "one narrator" which means that he would be relying on the foundations of traditional narration (*naqqali*), quoting all events and characters. It also emphasizes on traditional performance of Ta'ziyeh, which means that player would involve with different characters and play different roles.

To what extent has the principle of theatre style and the method of performance in Ta'ziyeh been used in "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*)? One of the character of eclectic theatre is to combine divers traditional forms with elements of Western theatre. Current performance applied elements of Ta'ziyeh in the framework of theatre. Considering the studies of the play is enumerated theatrical conventions representing Ta'ziyeh conventions in the current performing that are as follows:

3.1.1. Using rhythmical speech

The language in Ta'ziyeh is a living language understood by every person close to the public and general language. This kind of language is a simple language from Ta'ziyeh script which has been used in the present play. It is noteworthy that parts of dialogues in "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) are exactly the speech of characters in the original copy of Ta'ziyeh which are spoken by the narrator with few changes and adjustments. In some other parts the versified speech of Ta'ziyeh has been used with no changes. Section one (Moavieh letter to Imam and Imam's reply to Moavieh) is written using the Ta'ziyeh poetry style by the playwright while sections two and three (Hurr martyrdom and Imam testaments) have been exactly borrowed from the copies of the Imam Hussein Ta'ziyeh. Examples of first, second and third sections are as follows:

Section one, Moavieh letter to Imam:

I hereby address you, the messenger of the Lord

Be frighten for you are making uproar between the Muslims

You plan to excite a disturbance

Among the Muslims, believers and Christians

You have been called to make mischief

Do not you remember that Kofians

Your father Ali martyred the way of our God

If you try to deny me

This is me who would disgrace you

And in case you may have a plot against me

I also plot to overthrow you

(Amini, 2005, pp. 62–63)

Addressed to Moavieh, Imam says:

You, go to your master now

And tell him that Hussein said you the Oppressor,

Stop saying such things by deceit

You are the murderer of the Messenger

You are the one who does not keep his promise

Taking your sword out to kill our friends

There is no worst sedition than you in the world

The religion was degraded and destroyed for your style of governance

(p. 70).

Section two, Hurr testimonial:

To you the antecedent of Ahmad Mokhtar

The guiding light, the star in the dark night

You are the sun and I have hurried to you

Searching for the light and the sun

My tongue is cut, as I came to fight

But I am wearied of this life

I have been charged by Obeid to do this

(pp. 62–63)

3.1.2. *Being tragic*

Another specification which is clearly found in this play is its tragic and sad nature. Most cases of Ta'ziyeh, especially those on the passions of Karbala and expression of Karbala martyrdom have tragic background.

3.1.3. *Stage design and costume conventions*

Ta'ziyeh is performed on the basis of symbolism. Performance, stage design, costume and music are used as symbols. Costume in Ta'ziyeh teaches us that even in the historical plays; the contemporary costume may be used. Because, there is the reflection in Ta'ziyeh that, all days are *Ashura*, all places are Karbala and all months are Muharram. In some Ta'ziyeh plays, *shabih-khan* (player) is wearing

Figure 2. Green cloak is a symbol of approving actor (Amini, 2005).



European cloth or local and native ones from different Iranian tribes. Such a style is seen in “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) as well as in a manner that the actors cloth is a combination of historical and current symbols, like long and colour sash in green for Imam and his followers, yellow for Hurr, white stuff for Imam and red ones for disapproving actor; green cloak for approving actor and red cloak for the disapproving actor (see Figure 2).

Stage design and decoration in the current theatre is taken from Ta’ziyeh and similar Ta’ziyeh everything is performed in a single stage. The scene is empty in Ta’ziyeh, same as the “poor theatre” invented by Grotowski and everything is formed by the actor and attains perfection. Stage design in Ta’ziyeh is unrealistic. Objects and props are used in a symbolic manner, as well as seen in “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*).

3.2. Performers’ and musical conventions in Ta’ziyeh

All performers of Ta’ziyeh are merely impersonated the characters; they involve the impersonation of the role of Imam Hussein, Yazid and Hurr. When player dramatize songs the role of protagonist, all audiences know the fact that the person imitating the approving actor is different from them, for the audience believe that approving actors are among the *olya* and sacred people. This applies to the antagonist as well, with the difference that disapproving actors are the direct opposite of the *olya* (approving actor, protagonist) and are deemed as enemies. In fact, from the viewpoint of Ta’ziyeh, the approving and disapproving actor are different players, with one being of the highest and the other the lowest human value. Audience of Ta’ziyeh having the knowledge of all events and using their imagination considers the imitation as true manifestation for the space of the scene is the reflection of a fact which has happened in the past. Manuchehr Yari writes that Ta’ziyeh players try to impersonate the *olyas*’ (protagonists’) character when performing their role in order to have something common with the *olyas* and this makes them respected by the audience (Yari, 2000, p. 214).

In the present play, there is an “expert player”. Normal players or actors in most Iranian traditional plays are not a theatre expert player. This means that in traditional way each player is skilled in playing a certain role which is referred to as a “Type”. For instance, actors in Ta’ziyeh are known *olya-khan* (approving actor) or *ashghya-khan* (disapproving actors and *mokhalef-khan*). In fact the one with the powerful song is elected as *olya-khan* (approving actor) and another having no powerful song is *ashghya-khan* (disapproving actors). The difference between expert and skilled player is that the expert player is able to play different roles, but a skilled player is able to play one designated role only. For instance player of the *siah* (black man) in *takht hozi* (traditional play) can only appear in the role of a *siah* (black man) and is skilled in such form of play, for he has learnt this through imitation.

As player (actor) in this play is a theatrical expert, he can play both roles *olya* (approving actor) and *ashghya* (disapproving actor) as well which is possible as this has been influenced by the traditional play of “story telling”. In Iranian storytelling, the storyteller (one single person) plays different roles. Therefore, it can be said that the theatrical structure of “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) is a combination of Ta’ziyeh, storytelling and theatre elements.

Speech and music are inseparable elements in most traditional cultures, forming a single unit. Music has such a function in traditional Iranian plays: in tragic plays it helps create a sorrowful atmosphere while in comedy it is used to create a joyful space. Music is far from reality in Iranian play and emphasizes on soul and meaning, while attempting to steal the audience away from the real world. Study of such conventions indicates an important section of the music application in Iranian plays. Music plays its role in Ta’ziyeh as a live performance in combination with melody, rhythm and special harmony in the space. Following on, in “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*), music changes depending on the events in the play. Trumpet (a wind instrument) and percussions like drum, timpani and cymbal are used in order to bring more success in reinforcement and creation of the moods and space in different stages. For instance, in the beginning of the play, the musical band is placed in the corner of the scene playing the introductory music using cymbal, trumpet and drum as the signs of defeat in the war which is accompanied with lamentation.

3.3. Play structure (theme, style, message)

In the history of Ta’ziyeh, there have been scripted (copies) in the name of ‘The Scene of Solitude’ which were not well known for their performances. The play name seems to be taken from such script which has been performed by true-hearted *Ta’ziyeh-khan* (players, actors). On the other hand, the play has emphasized on using a single player, since “one” player can convey sense of solitude there. The traditional play of *pardeh-khani* and *naqqali* (storytelling) which were known before Ta’ziyeh, were based on a single player where a single storyteller or player would individually play and narrate all stages. In addition, selection of this name is based on the concept, because a single person is describing the event. In fact, the person is the man who before the event of *Ashura* and happenings of the Karbala has left Imam Hussein and his followers. Therefore his narration is related to the instance when he was still accompanying Imam Hussein. With such descriptions, it can be said that “solitude” is the theme and content of the present play the name of which is the same as its theme, like classic plays.

“A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) contains the musical and lyric aspects of Ta’ziyeh. Poem and music have significant roles in the symbolists’ works. The rules of symbolism are clearly seen in all spaces of the play as well. Meanwhile, the round scene; clothes; colour symbolism of green, yellow, white, and red; turning round the scene which signifies turning from one place to another or traversing of distance (for instance, from Medina to Karbala) are taken from Ta’ziyeh. All of which indicate using the symbolism style in the current play.

“A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) has been made on the basis of “tragedy”, events of Karbala and happenings thereafter. Imam Hussein and his friends are killed (martyred) in their search to find the truth. By his action, Imam Hussein guides people to discover and understand the truth in their individual life and such guidance to truth, which is to protect and preserve the prophet religion. This may be the “message” of this play.

3.4. Structure of “A lonely person’s story”

This work which has been written according to the script (copy) of Ta’ziyeh on Imam Hussein martyrdom is in fact generally similar to Ta’ziyeh. Versified words (poem) and prose both seen in this dramatic work. Usually the poems in Ta’ziyeh consist of 600 verses, however, in a theatrical work there are fewer verses and the dramatic and theatrical aspect are more emphasized as “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) has more than 100 verses. Instead of gathering *shabihs* (actors) and the choir in a play, “a person” appears in all roles and plays for all the characters one by

one. He sometimes impersonates the *olya* (approving actor) like Imam Hussein and his followers and in another time he appears in the role of the *ashghya* (disapproving actors) like Yazid and Moavieh.

The structure of the “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) is summarized in two patterns:

- (i) Imam is elected to be martyred. For instance, it refers the speech of the man (player): “He knew from the beginning that he started to go a way which ends with blood (death) and it happened as it had to be (Amini, 2005, p. 63).”
- (ii) It is the traversing and selection of the companion (from Mecca to Medina) and martyrdom (its terms of witnesses). In such traversing, Imam Hussein elects his companion for death and to meet the divine. On the other hand, those of lose belief escape to save their life. Yari writes that “it is said that of hundreds of men there [in the Karbala] only remain 72 persons, [similar to] the story of the ‘Conference of the Birds’ in Mantegh-O Teir Attar’s allegorical-mystical work in which of thousands of birds there remained only thirty birds” (Yari, 2000, p. 215).

3.5. Play construction (general plan of the play)

Non-realistic contemporary of “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) displays an event; Imam Hussein starts a way which ends with blood and death. He accepts his fate, destiny and the plot of his life. The cognition is similarly seen in the epics like the Mourning for Siavush (*Sug-e Siavush*) and Mithraism (the passion of Mitra). They indicate that there is determinism information of events and happening with which the characters are involved. So, the *olya* (approving actor) talks about determinism and destiny against offence and consider the origin and source of happening are deterministic and beyond their will. For instance, in this present play Imam Hussein dreams his martyrdom and believes that in case his ancestor religion is preserved and protected by him and his family blood then he should obey the order of the God.

The actor in “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) accompanies Imam Hussein family. He does not follow Imam to the end, but accompany him before going to Karbala desert. However, the actor (the man) is satisfied by playing the whole events in Karbala to other people. Therefore, he could send Imam’s message to other. And in doing this, he dramatizes, impersonate and appears in the role of Imam or *olya* (approving actor), Moavieh (disapproving actor), Hurr and the Man (narrator).

4. Conclusion

Since *Ta’ziyeh* is important ritualistic Iranian dramatic, Iranians contemporary theatre have been derived on it. Playwrights have paid more attention to the events related to the imams and the Prophets. *Namira* (Immortal) by Larian (1987), “A lonely person’s Story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) by Amini (2004), *Veda-e Yaran* (To observe the ceremonies of farewell) by Mousavi (2012) are examples of this claim. The most remarkable of point among these theatre productions are to perform in simplicity and understood by all, and such *Ta’ziyeh* good (*olya*) or bad (*ashghya*) characters are played out and the theatrical characters utilize both the principles Western theatre and also the black and white conventions of *Ta’ziyeh*. Directors apply half-payer principles style in order to be close to such that *shabihs* (role carriers) dramatize their roles in *Ta’ziyeh*. Because, what audience watch on theatre stage does not have emotional consequence, namely such *Ta’ziyeh* and pre-Islamic legends as the passion of Siavush is related to redemption and intersessions. Thus, we should not consider those characters are similar as or *shabih* in *Ta’ziyeh*, although, principles seem to conform with conventional of *Ta’ziyeh*. Such as in the theatrical style’s of the “A lonely person’s story” (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) which both the actors of *Ta’ziyeh* are seen, however, they are not.

During this current research, we attempted to response this question that according to the principle of *Ta’ziyeh*, is tragedy of *Ta’ziyeh* able to combine with many artists works, and replace symbolism acting of *Ta’ziyeh* to realistic one? Will its character be transformed or does it retain its identity? With

all that said, in order to employ and use the conventions and attributes of Ta'ziyeh in Iran's modern day theatre, the structural form of Ta'ziyeh must be maintained either what has happened in the play *Veda-e Yaran* (To observe the ceremonies of farewell) or the conventions and qualities of Ta'ziyeh potentially take a new form according to the aesthetic perception of the director and the creator of the play, a form which is different from the original Ta'ziyeh that called eclectic theatre like "A lonely person's story" (*Majles-e Gharib-e Tanhayee*) and *Namira* (Immortal).

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Notes

1. For more information refer to Alizadeh (2012, p. 2680).
2. For more information refer to Alizadeh (2009).
3. For more information refer to Alizadeh (2011).
4. *Tehran Dash* or *das de Tehran* were people with zeal and great eager who involved in the Ta'ziyeh.
5. An association of former of Ta'ziyeh which Ta'ziyeh were covered and sponsored in Tehran.
6. Scenc of theatre is just architectural issue for theatre which have different categories, such as black box, two sides and three sides.
7. By the time, Iran was at war with Iraq. Thus, some playwrights were influenced on the content of the "war".

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