

Folklorisms in Contemporary Uzbek Poetry

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the spiritual and educational significance of oral folk art, its role as one of the key factors in the development of the literary process, and the reflection of the melody, style of expression, system of imagery, symbols, and archetypes inherent in folklore works within contemporary Uzbek poetry.

Keywords: Folklorism, folklore, contemporary Uzbek poetry, motif, symbol, image, dastan, proverb, myth, mythology (myth), literary education.

The art of the word – prose, poetry, drama, journalism, songwriting, the humorous genre, and overall the artistic and aesthetic reality created through the medium of the word – is beautiful and eternal owing to its distinctive plot, styles, ideas, images, symbols, signs, motifs and melody. These elements, which serve as the cornerstone, foundation, and indispensable links of the fine arts, are sustained by oral folk art, drawing their strength from it and undergoing continuous development.

For millennia, oral folk art and written literature have evolved in close interaction, mutually enriching each other and exerting an invaluable influence on their reciprocal progress. This dynamic interaction has given rise to such phenomena as folklorism and folklorization.

Doctor of philological sciences B. Sarimsokov, in his article ‘On the Typology of Folklorisms’ notes that the role and significance of folklore in the development of Uzbek culture are invaluable. As a constituent part of any nation’s culture, folklore

has consistently fulfilled an important ideological and artistic function – a function that maintains its defining role even at the contemporary stage, where all spheres of our culture have attained a high degree of professionalism [1].

Thus, what constitutes folklorism? What is its significance as a literary and aesthetic phenomenon?

Doctor of philological sciences L. Sharipova, who comprehensively investigated the influence of folklore on written literature, further developed the scientific views of Professor B. Sarimsokov in her PhD thesis, elucidating the functional characteristics and the core essence of the term “folklorism.” According to the researcher, folklorism emerged simultaneously with the advent of written literature. However, because its aesthetic nature had not been specifically studied, this phenomenon was historically expressed in a syncretic manner from the twentieth century to the present day through such terminological phrases as “the utilization of folklore” and “the influence of folklore.” These terms inherently correspond to the concept of “folklorism” given that folklorisms arise within written literature as a result of deploying folklore material under the direct influence of oral folk art [3: 16].

Contemporary Uzbek poetry exhibits all categories, types, and forms of folklorisms, classified according to their locus of application, quality, orientation, and function. In particular, artistic, scholarly, ethnographic, simple and complex, analytical, synthesized, and stylized folklorisms ensure that the works presented to readers are substantively mature, poetically elegant, aligned with the criteria of high artistry, and endowed with an authentic folk melody.

For instance, the People’s Poet of Uzbekistan, Khurshid Davron, in his poem entitled *Бир-бирин эркалар икки кабутар* (‘Two Doves Caressing Each Other’) provides the following imagery: “It was the very portrait of these two worlds/ It was the inner reflection of Adam and Eve” [4: 443]. Through this depiction, the poet guides the reader’s imagination toward a mythological realm. The ancient narrative of Adam and Eve, along with its inherent plots and motifs, revitalizes the concepts of a divinely created couple, alongside the notions of love,

fidelity, and affection in the human mind. Utilizing the stylization of mythological archetypes deeply embedded in the collective folk consciousness, the poet encapsulates his intended meaning within a single stanza. He demonstrates the perfect compatibility of the two caressing doves, and through this symbolic medium, manifests his profound philosophical reflections on love and devotion.

In another poem, *Бир олма гуллади...* ('An Apple Tree Has Blossomed...') Kh. Davron employs the image of the apple, which is widely utilized in the folklore of not only the Uzbek people but also many other nations worldwide. Through the stylization of this symbolic image and motif, he constructs a model of synthesized folklorism.

Literary scholar A. Sharapov, in his book *Оламлар ичра оламлар* (*Worlds within Worlds*) notes that the apple symbol in poetry emerged from a traditional image found in folk songs and carries a symbolic meaning that expresses romantic relationships [5].

Indeed, in folk songs, as well as in folk dastans, terms (traditional song-tales), fairy tales, myths and mythologies the image of the apple is frequently utilized as a symbol of love. Alongside this, this image is effectively deployed to convey such meanings as childbirth, choosing a beloved, trysts and separation. Examples include the dastan '*Гўрўғлининг туғилиши*' ('The Birth of Gurugli'), as well as the fairy tales '*Олтин олма*' ('The Golden Apple'), '*Зар кокилли йигитча*' ('The Boy with Golden Curls') and '*Тоҳир ва Зухра*' ('Tahir and Zuhra').

When folk songs resonate with the lines: "I threw an apple to the one who threw it to me/ What, what, what will you say?" [6: 174], the lyrical heroine employs this symbol to convey that she has reciprocated the young man's declaration of love.

Folklore scholar Sh. Turdimov, in his book *Халқ қўшиқларида рамз* (*Symbol in Folk Songs*) utilized concrete examples to analyze how the apple blossom symbol expresses the concept of ephemeral love.

An apple blossom is no true flower,
Worn on the temple, it fades in an hour.

Another's love can never be your own,
In just a moment, they leave you alone...

The scholar writes:

The modifying attribute 'blossom' (apple blossom) attached to the core symbol 'apple' transforms the situational paradigm into a structural symbol based on its inherent natural characteristics. It is widely established that while the apple blossom is aesthetically striking and profoundly fragrant, it remains intrinsically seasonal, possessing a transitory lifespan. In the cited quatrain, this exact biological phenomenon serves as the objective correlative for expressing the ephemeral emotions and existential reflections associated with fleeting love, seamlessly manifested through the artistic imagery of the 'apple blossom'. [1: 48-49]

Kh. Davron skillfully employs this symbolic concept, deeply rooted in folk language and consciousness, regarding the apple and its blossoming. Depicting the apple tree that blooms "rebelliously and profusely," "shamelessly like a widow," and "like a majestic throne" within a "sleepless," "aged," and "isolated" garden – which reflects the lyrical hero's soul – the poet portrays the unexpected arrival of love, reserving the work's climax for the final stanza:

The path I trod, now choked with withered leaves,
Just as my soul and autumn grew to blend,
An apple bloomed, as white as hair that grieves,
Inside the garden where love's birds descend.

[4: 438]

It becomes evident that this unexpected love entered the lyrical hero's heart during the autumn of his life, at a time when his life paths were scattering with autumn leaves and his hair was turning gray. Consequently, his heart experiences turmoil, passion, and a profound sense of regret.

The comparison of human life to the changing seasons is a widely recurrent phenomenon in literary works. In this metaphorical framework, spring and summer are likened to youth

and the vibrant period of peak vitality, whereas autumn and winter are equated with the twilight years of old age.

In this sense, through the motifs of the path covered with falling leaves and reconciliation with autumn, the poet successfully conveys the stage of maturity of the lyrical hero. Concurrently, the emergence of love within his soul, echoing with youthful enthusiasm and delight, creates a state of contrast that significantly enhances the expressiveness and artistic value of the poem.

In her study, L. Sharipova writes:

The nature of Uzbek folklorism manifests itself in the selective utilization of plots, motifs, and artistic forms existing in oral folk art, as well as the ideological orientation and characters inherent to folklore. It also encompasses artistic means and concepts that express the aspirations, feelings, religious-philosophical views, and unique customs of our nation – particularly the linguistic richness and proverbs of folk works – in accordance with the context of events, phenomena, and ideology of the new era and the existing social system, thereby ensuring the national color and folk character of the newly created work. [3: 26]

Indeed, Uzbek folklorism cannot be conceptualized in isolation from the linguistic richness of folk works, proverbs, and aphorisms. Our ancestors possessed a strong inclination toward figurative thinking, utilizing words and expressions that were brief and laconic in form, yet deep and instructive in content. Alisher Navoiy, who wrote, “A truthful word is honorable, a good word is brief” [7: 108], praised precisely this aspect. Over time, these wise sayings were transmitted orally and popularized among the people, eventually transforming into proverbs and sayings that have endured to the present day. Today, by incorporating these deeply meaningful, grammatically and logically complete, fixed expressions into their verses, poets create simple folklorisms.

The integration of proverbs and sayings into poetry serves to enrich the content and enhance the folk character of the work. These wise maxims assist the poet in expressing feelings, thoughts, and perspectives in a concise, succinct and figurative manner.

In this regard, a poem by the poet Utkir Rahmat, which begins with the line *Гўзал маликами, гоҳо қарасам* (“Whether a beautiful princess, if I look at times”) is particularly noteworthy. While the poem describes the alternately captivating and bleak countenances of this transient world, illustrating that life consists of ups and downs, the lyrical hero finds solace and tranquility in the wisdom inherited from our ancestors:

The eye will witness what the fate ordains,
When thousand strings of nerves are sharply played.
The autumn holds the spring with gentle chains,
While restless snow and rain inside parade...

[8: 13]

In this stanza, the poet employs a modified variation of the traditional folk proverb *Боймга тушганни кўз кўради* (“The eye will witness what is destined for the head”) [9: 65] thereby invoking the cultural and religious convictions of the people regarding human resignation to fate and the inevitability of divine destiny. Although the lyric hero is incessantly disrupted by life's “rain and snow” – serving as metaphors for hardships and tribulations – and despite the transition from the spring of youth into the autumn of old age, the protagonist accepts this reality. Even when a myriad of neural chords is strained by existential complexities and various worldly grievances, a profound sense of contentment prevails. This spiritual resilience is fundamentally underpinned by the hero's ultimate patience, fortitude, steadfast will, and unyielding faith.

The poet, who has endured the dualities of the world without succumbing to its deceptions and illusions, harbors but a single plea. This desire and supplication are articulated in the final stanza:

Your lifetime will endure what fate imparts,
O Life! A queen so fair, a king so grand.
So many are your secrets, changing arts,
Throw not a stone, but flowers from your hand...

[8: 13]

The lyric hero implores life, which possesses the power, elegance and majesty of both a magnificent queen and a sovereign king, yet abounds in unpredictable whims and mysteries, to cast flowers rather than stones. This plea allegorically signifies the universal human aspiration toward benevolence and the pursuit of goodness.

On this occasion, the poet subtly modifies the proverb into the phrasing, “Your lifetime will endure what fate imparts”, thereby constructing a refashioned form of folklorism. This reiteration serves to intensify the poem's thematic core, reinforcing the ethos of patience and fortitude – a quality elevated to a core cultural virtue within the community – while simultaneously enhancing the artistic weight of the piece.

Furthermore, the line “Throw not a stone, but flowers from your hand” prompts a conceptual analysis of the symbolism associated with the “stone” and the “flower” as encountered in traditional folklore.

By virtue of its physical hardness, weight, and solidity, the symbol of the “stone” in oral literature – particularly within folk songs – frequently embodies concepts of resentment, slander, reproach, suffering, grief, and profound sorrow.

Do not cast at me a stone,
Let me fly with birds alone.
If they return and I do not,
May your eyes with tears be sown.

When the lover implores his beloved with these verses, he expresses his grief and sorrow, pleading with her not to condemn him by believing various conspiracies, slanders, and falsehoods. He warns that if they ultimately part ways, she will be utterly consumed by grief, regret, and lamentation.

As a phrasal expression, the idiom *Тошингни тер* (literally, “gather your stones”) is conventionally utilized to convey the meanings of “mind your own business”, “do not disturb me” or “do not interfere in my life.” Furthermore, the vernacular language encompasses numerous other collocations and idiomatic expressions such as *муш озор* (“heavy-weighted”),

тош бағир (“stone-hearted”), *қабр бошига тош қўйдим* (“I placed a stone at the head of the grave”), *этагимдаги тошни тўкдим* (“I poured out the stones from my skirt”), *уруғинг тошга экилсин* (“may your seed be sown on stone”) and *оёғимга тош бўлдинг* (“you became a stone to my foot”). The origins and contextual applications of these expressions are intrinsically linked to the traditions, rituals, customs, and mythological worldview of the people.

Conversely, the symbol of the “flower” carries a semantic weight that stands in direct opposition to the “stone.” Delving into this specific aspect in his book *Symbolism in Folk Songs*, Sh. Turdimov notes: “The flower serves as an expression of internal emotional experiences associated with beauty, elegance, chastity, and love” [1: 128].

Consequently, the line *Фақат қўлда тошмас гулларингни от* (“Throw not a stone, but flowers from your hand”) in U. Rahmat's poem is an artistic discovery. It is nurtured by folklore symbols, rich in content, and designed to cultivate inside the reader those skills associated with the figurative thinking that has long lived in the popular mind. Concurrently, it stands as a beautiful specimen of stylistic folklorism.

By turning to oral folk art, the poet utilizes a single proverb to craft beautiful expressions of such poetic devices as *такрир* (repetition), *истуора* (metaphor) and *ирсоли масал* (incorporating proverbs into verse), demonstrating that contemporary Uzbek poetry continues to evolve upon the foundation of ancient traditions.

A number of poems by the poetess Adiba Umirova reveal the characteristics of utilizing mythologisms in modern poetry. For instance, while reading the poem *Болалик* (“Childhood”), [10] one is involuntarily immersed into the mysterious world of childhood and, at the same time, into the realm of fairy tales and legends. Before one's eyes, a succession of vivid scenes begins to unfold: “The golden shoes worn in the dreams/ Of little girls with cracked heels,” “The eyes of horned deer gazing out/ From the patterns of Siyob carpets,” “The dawn-enchanted words/ Of the endless-tale-spinning Scheherazade”, “The lamp that turned into a slave of dreams/ The treasure guarded by a dragon” and “The

genie that swore an oath to our grandfather/ Saying “I shall not harm your seven generations.” These scenes, nourished by oral folk poetic creation, are inextricably linked with magical and adventurous events, their heroes, and characters, reflecting the childhood memories etched into the consciousness of the lyrical protagonist. Although these reminiscences once seemed terrifying and alarming to an immature mind just starting to perceive the world, they are significant for having helped the protagonist comprehend the essence of life's fundamental concepts, such as light and darkness, good and evil, bravery and cowardice, creation and destruction, beauty and ugliness, humility and arrogance, loyalty and betrayal. Hence, for the poetess, both these apprehensions and joys – indeed, all recollections evoking childhood, along with the enigmatic realm enveloped in fairy tales and legends – remain profoundly sweet and cherished.

Watching in silence from corners obscure,
A massive alarm in a world rather small.
The sweet, gentle cooing, so pristine and pure,
Left high in the air by white birds in their fall...

The imagery and motifs utilized within the poem – such as the golden slipper, the horned stag, the tales of Scheherazade, the magic lamp, the treasure-guarding dragon, the human-interactive genie, as well as the wooden horse (the companion of childhood), the doll and the dove – vividly manifest a mythopoetic nature. By stylizing these motifs and images into the composition and core essence of the work, the poetess generates a sublime paradigm of synthesized folklorism. She robustly demonstrates the aesthetic power of the word and its profound capacity to influence the human psyche. This, in turn, ensures the timeless vitality of a poetic tradition that has endured through the centuries.

It is precisely this dimension that the folklorist scholar J. Eshonqul conceptually targets when he posits in his book *Фольклор: образ ва талқин (Folklore: Image and Interpretation)*: “Had it not been for myth, and had it not been for the formidable, wild, and primitive conceptions of the universe,

contemporary literature, art and civilization as a whole would not exist today” [11: 5].

The source materials utilized by A. Umirova for the generation of folklorisms encompass Eastern and Western legends, fairy tales, folk dastans and narratives from sacred texts. In particular, her poem ‘Ёрилтош’ (“The Splitting Rock”) [10] exhibits a distinct interpretation of mythologism and archepoetics. In this work, while narrating her childhood memories, the lyric hero transforms into a narrative plot how she spent entire nights until dawn listening to the fairy tales recounted by a mother of nine children. She depicts how the events of the fairy tales, the temperaments of the characters and their hopes and aspirations persist within the psyche and thoughts of her own siblings:

My father returns at the dawning of day,
The heart of the boulder will rupture and break.
The fairy tales told by our mother so bright,
Live on in our dreams as we sleep or awake...

In this poem, too, the imagery and motifs characteristic of folklore enrich the work both compositionally and semantically. This phenomenon demonstrates once more that folklorism serves as an exceptionally effective instrument for enhancing the readability, vernacular authenticity and emotional resonance of poetry.

Consequently, through the comprehensive study, analysis and interpretation of the works of contemporary poetic figures, we observe the ongoing, consistent integration of folklore influences. By utilizing symbols and archetypes fashioned by the collective genius of the people, these creators construct accessible yet deeply profound literary pieces, thereby continuously enriching contemporary Uzbek literature from both compositional and semantic standpoints. The academic investigation and promotion of these works – specifically their integration into school and university literature curricula – will significantly elevate the educational process, contributing to the upbringing of the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism,

devotion to ancestral values and a profound reverence for the verbal arts.

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