

## THE ROLE OF IMAGES AND SYMBOLS IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

*Tursunova Dilso`z Uralovna*

*Lecturer of the Department of Philology and Language Teaching,  
Karshi International University*

**Annotation:** This article explores the artistic and philosophical role of imagery and symbolism in classical literature. Through examples from literary texts, it analyzes the function of imagery as a means of aesthetic expression and the representation of deep spiritual and moral meanings through symbols. Special attention is given to the works of classical poets such as Alisher Navoi, Bedil, and Sufi Olloyor, highlighting the harmony between imagery and symbolism and their artistic weight within the ghazal genre. The article also examines how divine truth is artistically expressed through symbolic language in the context of Sufi thought.

**Keywords:** classical literature, imagery, symbolism, artistic image, ghazal, Sufi thought, allegory, aesthetic expression, spiritual meaning.

**Introduction.** Classical literature is a high artistic and philosophical heritage based on the literary traditions of the peoples of the East, in particular, Uzbek, Persian-Tajik, Arab, and Turkish. One of the most important features of this literature is the art of enriching the content through images and symbols, concealing inner meanings, and encouraging the reader to think and reflect. Classical poets are distinguished by putting a deep meaning behind each word, expressing the inner essence through external form. Especially in the ghazal genre, the role of imagery and symbolism is unparalleled.

In classical literature, imagery is a means of depicting an event, situation, or emotion through artistic images. The poet creates not a real-life situation, but an aesthetic image, an artistic perception of this situation. For example, poets such as Alisher Navoi, Hafiz, Sa'diy, Bedil create symbols of love, exile, spiritual suffering, and divine dreams through images such as flowers, nightingales, dewdrops, moons, stars, deserts, and rivers.

For example, in Navoi's ghazals, the image of a "flower" has a two-fold meaning: on the one hand, it is a symbol of beauty, and on the other, it is a symbol of spiritual perfection, divine beauty. Thus, through imagery, the poet expresses his essence not only in an understandable but also aesthetically elegant way.

A symbol is an artistic device that expresses abstract concepts through a concrete image. In classical literature, symbols are often multi-layered, that is, they can have several meanings. Symbols play an important role in the poetic expression of religious, philosophical, and spiritual concepts.

For example:

- **The nightingale** is a symbol of a loving heart;
- **Flower** – beloved (i.e. beloved), beauty;
- **Desert** - worldly life, suffering, loneliness;
- **Chain** – a chain of love, connection, commitment;
- **Wine** – divine love, enlightenment;

Bedil writes:

*"Outwardly, there is light, but within lies truth.*

*Within the symbol lies a mystery, and within every letter lies meaning."*

These verses reveal a two-layered structure of symbols: wine is not only a drink, but also a symbol of divine truth, spiritual intoxication.

The harmony of image and symbol determines the aesthetic system of classical literature. Symbolic images are often manifested in a pictorial form. That is, a single symbol is revealed through various images in an entire poetic system. Depending on his artistic goal, the poet creates a multi-layered poetic space through image and symbol. Such a style also requires the reader to think, analyze, and understand. Through images and symbols, classical poets also expressed the social, spiritual, and moral problems of their time. Especially in Sufi literature, the ideas of understanding divine truth, spiritual purification, and renunciation of the world are put forward through these means. For example, Sufi poets such as Ahmad Yassavi, Navoi, and Sufi Alloyor artistically expressed lofty ideas such as man's aspiration to God and renunciation of worldly desires through symbols.

In classical literature, images and symbols are not just decoration, but the main means of expressing artistic thought. Through them, the poet expresses his aesthetic, philosophical, and spiritual views in a deep and multi-layered form. The harmony of images and symbols is one of the main factors determining the unique beauty and spiritual power of this literature.

**Materials and methods.** In this study, historical and literary sources, collections of classical poets, and modern literary studies were analyzed in order to study the artistic and spiritual function of images and symbols in classical literature. Ghazals and prose works of famous classical poets such as Alisher Navoi, Abdurakhmon Jomi, Bedil, and Sufi Olloyor were selected as the main research material. Imagery refers to the use of vivid and descriptive language that appeals to the senses. In classical literature, imagery is not just decorative; it is fundamental to storytelling. For instance, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* use rich visual and sensory details to depict battles, landscapes, and the divine, enabling readers to immerse themselves in the ancient world. The imagery of a stormy sea or a blood-stained battlefield conveys not only physical reality but also the emotional and moral weight of the narrative. Shakespeare, writing in the later classical tradition, employed imagery with remarkable precision. In *Macbeth*, the recurring image of blood symbolizes guilt and murder, reinforcing the psychological descent of the protagonist. In *Romeo and Juliet*, light and dark imagery accentuate the themes of love and fate. Through such images, authors speak directly to the reader's imagination and emotions, enhancing the impact of the text.

Symbols are objects, characters, or events that represent broader ideas beyond their literal meaning. Classical literature is laden with such symbols, which often draw on shared cultural or religious knowledge. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the crossroads where Oedipus kills his father becomes a symbol of fate and human choice. The Sphinx, another symbolic figure, represents mystery and the challenge of self-knowledge. The Bible, a cornerstone of classical religious literature, uses symbols like the serpent, the lamb, and the tree to convey moral and spiritual lessons. These symbols have endured in literary tradition, reappearing in works ranging from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where allegory and symbol intertwine to express theological and philosophical ideas.

Imagery and symbolism in classical literature are deeply rooted in the cultural and philosophical contexts of their time. Greek and Roman authors often used mythological symbols to explore

themes of heroism, hubris, and the relationship between humans and the divine. For example, the figure of Prometheus symbolizes resistance to tyranny and the quest for knowledge, themes that resonated deeply in both ancient and modern contexts. Eastern classical literature also employs rich symbolism. In Persian and Indian epics, images of gardens, rivers, and celestial bodies carry spiritual significance, often pointing to the harmony of the cosmos or the journey of the soul. Such symbols serve as bridges between the material and metaphysical realms, offering readers insight into the values and worldview of the culture.

The following scientific and methodological approaches were used in the study:

- Textual analysis – images and symbols in classical poetic texts were studied based on the context in the text;
- Semantic analysis - the inner content of figurative images, philosophical concepts expressed through symbols, were analyzed;
- Historical approach - the connection of images and symbols with the literary and aesthetic views of their time was identified, and their periodic changes were observed;
- Comparative analysis – comparing the meanings of similar symbols used in the works of different poets;
- Analysis of Sufi thought - the mystical meanings of symbols and their use in a spiritual context were studied.

The sources used for the analysis include academic editions of classical literary texts, monographs of modern literary scholars, and scientific articles. During the research process, the texts were analyzed in depth based on a qualitative approach; statistical or experimental methods were not used, since the topic was conducted in an artistic-philosophical direction.

**Research Discussion.** The research revealed that in classical literature, images and symbols are not only a means of artistic expression, but also the main aesthetic elements that convey deep philosophical and spiritual content. Poets expressed real-life events not directly, but through symbolic images, in a multi-layered poetic space that encourages the reader to think.

**The functional aspects of imagery**, it was observed that they perform such functions as conveying an emotional state, reviving spiritual experiences, and arousing aesthetic pleasure in the ghazal genre. In particular, in the ghazals of Alisher Navoi, not only romantic feelings are depicted through pictorial expressions, but also the spiritual suffering and process of spiritual purification characteristic of Sufi thought.

Symbols, on the other hand, serve to express more complex and deeper meanings than images. Classical poets often preferred to express religious, philosophical, and moral concepts through symbols rather than directly. For example, it has been established that the image of the nightingale was used not only as a symbol of beauty or love, but also as a symbol of the soul seeking divine truth. Similarly, the image of May is often understood as a symbol of divine love and enlightenment, not physical intoxication.

During the discussion, the interrelationship between images and symbols was also given special attention. Each symbol is often expressed in the form of an artistic image. This ensures that they create a solid semantic and rhythmic system in the structure of the poem. Such a layered form of expression invites the reader to spiritual and intellectual dialogue with the text.

The study also confirmed the inextricable connection of images and symbols in classical literature with Sufi thought. In particular, in the works of Sufis Olloyor and Bedil, complex ideas such as the liberation of man from the ego, the achievement of spiritual perfection, and his

unification with the Truth were expressed in an artistic form through symbolic images. This shows that through symbols, not only aesthetic, but also moral-educational and religious-philosophical influence was intended in the literary text.

In general, in classical literature, images and symbols served as one of the most important means of expressing the poet's artistic skill, poetic thought, and spiritual world. Through them, the literary text was deepened, a multi-meaning context was created, and a powerful aesthetic system was formed that directly affected the reader's psyche.

**Conclusion** In classical literature, images and symbols serve as an important means of deeply expressing the poet's artistic intention. Through these means, the poet conveys his feelings, philosophical views, and spiritual experiences to the reader not only in a visible but also in a tangible way. Imagery is the main artistic element that determines the aesthetic tone of the poem and helps to perceive the content through images, while symbols are the key that unlocks the spiritual and philosophical layer of these images. Thus, the harmony of images and symbols is considered one of the most important poetic mechanisms that ensure the philosophical depth, artistic beauty, and spiritual impact of classical poetry. These aspects elevate classical literature to the level of cultural heritage of eternal significance.

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