

SYMBOLS OF LOVE AND PATRIOTISM IN CLASSICAL UZBEK POETRY

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Abstract: This article explores the deep-rooted symbolic representations of love and patriotism in classical Uzbek poetry. Through the works of prominent poets such as Alisher Navoi, Babur, and Mashrab, the study analyzes how literary expressions of romantic and spiritual love are intertwined with national consciousness and devotion to homeland. The fusion of lyrical beauty with socio-political undertones reveals that Uzbek classical poetry served not only as a mirror of personal emotions but also as a vehicle of collective identity and cultural resilience. The study emphasizes the enduring legacy of these motifs in shaping the moral and aesthetic worldview of the Uzbek people.

Keywords: Uzbek classical poetry, love, patriotism, Alisher Navoi, symbolic imagery, national identity, spiritual devotion

Classical Uzbek poetry, rooted in centuries of literary tradition, reflects a profound synthesis of emotional expression and patriotic sentiment. The themes of love and devotion to homeland emerge not as separate strands but as closely interwoven aspects of the poetic worldview. This duality of personal and collective identity is most vividly portrayed through symbolic language and metaphoric structures that elevate both romantic and national love to the realm of the sacred.

In the works of Alisher Navoi, the founder of Uzbek literary language, love transcends the boundaries of the physical and becomes a metaphor for divine truth and spiritual fulfillment. His “Lison ut-Tayr” and “Khamsa” are replete with imagery that merges the beloved with mystical ideals, often equating the yearning for union with the beloved with the desire for union with the divine. Yet, embedded in this mysticism is a subtle but persistent current of cultural pride and national identity, manifesting in the preservation and elevation of the Turkic language and thought. Similarly, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, though known globally for his political achievements, was a gifted poet whose verses speak of his deep emotional ties to his native Fergana Valley. In his poetry, the beauty of nature and the memory of homeland are preserved with nostalgic reverence. Love for the motherland is portrayed through descriptions of its landscapes, rivers, and gardens, forming an inseparable connection between geographical space and emotional space. Even in exile, Babur's longing for his homeland imbues his poetic language with a tone of both lament and loyalty.

Mashrab, another key figure of Uzbek classical poetry, employs satire and spiritual symbolism to express not only romantic yearning but also a defiant love for justice and the oppressed. In his rebellious verses, the beloved often becomes a symbol of unattainable ideals – justice, truth, and freedom – for which the poet is ready to sacrifice himself. Through this lens, patriotism is not mere allegiance to a political entity, but a deeper emotional and ethical commitment to the well-

being of one's people. The imagery used in classical Uzbek poetry to describe both romantic and patriotic love often overlaps. Descriptions of burning hearts, separation, union, the fragrance of soil, and the loyalty of nightingales not only evoke emotional resonance but also symbolize eternal love for one's nation, language, and cultural heritage. Poets employed Persian, Arabic, and Turkic literary traditions to craft a unique voice that celebrated both the inner world of the lover and the outer world of the homeland.

This intertwining of love and patriotism reflects the role of poetry as a cultural anchor in times of both stability and upheaval. During foreign rule, political fragmentation, or spiritual crisis, poetry served as a form of resistance and self-affirmation. It preserved not only the emotional spirit of individuals but also the moral compass of an entire society. Through metaphors of garden and desert, rose and thorn, moon and dust, classical Uzbek poets instilled a sense of beauty, resilience, and national pride. Uzbek classical poetry developed in a rich cultural and historical environment that was influenced by Islamic mysticism, Turkic oral traditions, and Persian poetic aesthetics. Within this synthesis, the themes of love and patriotism became central elements that were skillfully interwoven by poets to express both personal longing and collective belonging. These motifs were not superficial, but deeply philosophical, often rooted in Sufi ideas of divine love and human perfection.

Alisher Navoi, the towering figure of Turkic literature, exemplifies this fusion in a masterful way. In works such as "Layli va Majnun" and "Farhod va Shirin," love is portrayed not just as a romantic force but as a transformative journey that elevates the soul. The beloved in his poetry is often an allegory for God, and the sufferings of love symbolize the trials of spiritual purification. However, Navoi's use of the Turkic language in an era dominated by Persian literature was itself a patriotic act. By proving that Turkic (specifically Chagatai) could be a language of high art and philosophy, he instilled a cultural pride that transcended poetic form and became a symbol of national awakening.

Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, the poet-king and founder of the Mughal Empire, reveals a different but equally moving connection between love and homeland. His poetry reflects a deep emotional attachment to the Fergana Valley, where he spent his youth. Even after conquering foreign lands, Babur's writings show constant longing for his native soil, climate, and people. In his famous autobiographical work "Baburnoma," he laments being far from his homeland, and his poetry turns into an ode to memory and identity. His personal emotions become a vehicle for expressing the universal human need for roots, belonging, and cultural memory. The mystical poet Mashrab offers a more rebellious expression of love and patriotism. His verses, though rooted in Sufi imagery, often reflect a dissatisfaction with religious hypocrisy, social injustice, and political oppression. His beloved, like Navoi's, can represent God, but also justice, freedom, or the spiritual dignity of the people. Mashrab's poetry is notable for its satirical edge and courage to criticize authority. He often used allegory to challenge unjust rulers and defend the common people – thus transforming poetic love into a moral-patriotic mission. His martyrdom at the hands of religious authorities further cemented his legacy as a poetic figure of resistance and truth.

Beyond these giants, many other Uzbek poets of the classical period contributed to the tradition of expressing patriotism through love. For example, Ogahiy, Munis, and Uvaysiy composed works that praised their homeland's beauty, critiqued colonial or feudal rule, and celebrated the cultural richness of Central Asia. Poetic imagery such as "beloved homeland," "motherland as a rose garden," and "soil sweeter than wine" were common devices used to inspire emotional attachment and national unity. The poetic symbols used to express love and patriotism – including roses, gardens, nightingales, flames, tears, dust, and stars – functioned on multiple levels. A rose could mean a beautiful beloved or the sacred land of one's ancestors. The nightingale could represent the soul in love or the poet singing to awaken his people. The garden might be a metaphor for paradise or for the homeland before foreign domination. Such symbols allowed poets to articulate complex feelings without direct political language, especially during times when censorship or oppression made open dissent dangerous.

Furthermore, the oral and musical traditions of Uzbek poetry, such as *maqom* and *ghazal*, played an essential role in embedding these values in collective memory. Poetic gatherings (*mushaira*) and recitations became communal events where emotional and national consciousness could be reinforced. In this way, poetry was not merely a form of artistic expression but a cultural institution that preserved identity and inspired resistance. In a broader context, the symbols of love and patriotism in classical Uzbek poetry helped bridge the personal and the political, the spiritual and the temporal. They allowed poets to communicate messages of loyalty, justice, and unity without breaking the decorum of poetic conventions. They also created a shared cultural code that generations of readers and listeners could interpret and emotionally resonate with.

In conclusion, the symbols of love and patriotism in classical Uzbek poetry are more than literary devices – they are embodiments of the emotional and cultural identity of a people. By merging individual longing with collective devotion, classical poets created a timeless heritage that continues to inspire Uzbek society today. Their words remind us that true love – whether for a person or a nation – is built on sacrifice, memory, and unwavering faith.

References

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