

Mythological Themes and Neomyths in Uzbek Literature: Artistic Interpretation

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Abstract: In recent years, due to certain imposed restrictions focusing on the past and culture of the Uzbek nation, the use of religious and mythological themes and images has sharply declined. This has paved the way for the emergence of new myths and legends (neomyths) with fresh meanings in the history of Uzbek culture.

Keywords: Mythology, Theme, Neomyth, Artistry, Divine Law, Eternity, Image.

Uzbek national literature, like the literature of all world nations, has been nourished by the immortality of myths (legends, stories) from its earliest days to the present. It is well known that in classical literature, especially in the works of Hazrat Alisher Navoi, various forms of mythological models can be found. Of course, the myths referenced in this period often coincide with religious motifs and images. In fact, a significant part of the earliest mythological conceptions consists of divine and religious motifs and images. As we noted in previous sections, these two phenomena cannot be separated from each other; one always demands the other, whether we like it or not. As Jorge Luis Borges, one of the great Latin American writers, says, "Literature begins with myth and ends with myth." In a similar vein, literary scholar Jabbor Eshonqul emphasizes: "Any form of art, including the art of words, begins with folklore and develops with it."¹

By the 20th century, the evolution of religious mythological images and themes in Uzbek literature began to acquire a new meaning with the drastic changes in the political and social environment. During this period, writers did not stop using myths for various purposes in their creative works. Literary scholar D. To'raev writes: "In the early 20th century, Uzbek literature also made use of myths and folklore, and works were created using them. For example, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon used folklore motifs in writing *Yorqinoy*, while A. Fitrat drew upon Eastern mythology in *Qiyomat*. Notable poet Asqar Qosim, in translating Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, also used mythological foundations to create the dramatic epic *Samoviy Sirlar*."

Myths became a metaphorical reflection of social and political life. "In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the concept of myth in literature began to be interpreted in connection with socio-cultural life. Its most important characteristic is that it remains unchanged, serving as a model or an example. As in the mythical time and mysterious space, where supernatural heroes maintain the natural order, these heroes also maintain the social order, and in this context, magical and spiritual forces are replaced by human beings, which is a distinctive feature of mythology." Since writers were unable to openly write about the pressing issues of society, they explored various means to express their thoughts. Some writers expressed their dissatisfaction through nature, while others, such as the prominent Jadidist writer Abdurauf Fitrat, skillfully used divine-mythological images to create a metaphorical reflection of the political and social life in which

¹Jabbor Eshonqul: "Folklor – millatning boqiy tarixi" "Yoshlik" jurnali, 2014 yil, 8-son

they lived. The works of Fitrat, especially *Shaytonning Tangriga Isoni* and *Qiyomat*, illustrate this point. Fitrat scholar I. G'aniyev's observations further support this idea: "Such religious stories and images were often used during periods of political and social unrest. Fitrat's *Qiyomat* story and *Shaytonning Tangriga Isoni* play were created during times of political chaos, terrorism, repression, and executions. The playwright tried to convey his understanding of the truth to the public, even if indirectly."² The drama begins with a scene where Satan questions the power of God. In this religious-mythological story, the theme is familiar to Islamic traditions, but what is important is not just the plot, but the hidden reference to political events. In fact, the figure of Satan in the drama symbolizes the materialism of Russian Bolsheviks, and his ideas reflect the very principles of socialism. By using the mythological motif of Satan, Fitrat critiques the promises of the Bolsheviks who claimed to deliver a happy life to the people.

Satan, rebellious, realizes the "non-existence, soullessness, blindness" of his followers and seeks a way out. This mythological image parallels the ideology of socialism. As the story progresses, Satan's doubts about the eternal and unchangeable beliefs of his followers become evident. The angels in the story resemble those who, in the upheaval of the 1920s, were facing revolutionary-materialist threats to their faith.³ Fitrat's *Qiyomat* story is also based on a religious-mythological theme, dealing with the life of humans after death, using the motif of dreams. In the narrative, the author critiques the harsh laws and norms established by the Bolsheviks by transferring the social-political events of his time into the reality of the afterlife. Through this, Fitrat criticizes the established laws while using mythological tools to express his dissatisfaction in a creative and artistic manner.

In recent years, due to some imposed restrictions focusing on the past and culture of the Uzbek nation, there has been a sharp decline in references to religious-mythological themes and images. This has led to the emergence of new myths and legends (neomyths) with fresh meanings in Uzbek cultural history. In this context, it is worth recalling the works of one of the most prominent writers of the Soviet era, Asqad Muxtor. His novel *Chinor* (The Chinor Tree) is a prime example of how the use of neomyths can convey the author's creative intent. The novel consists of five parts, and in each section, the author introduces a myth that reflects his creative philosophy.

Through the use of neomyths, the writer incorporates ideas and critiques that could not have been directly expressed in his time. Myths, by nature, do not specify a concrete time or place, which allowed the author to use them as a convenient tool to communicate his philosophical messages. Asqad Muxtor, throughout his creative activity, relied on mythological models to convey his ideological messages. The author presents a narrative structure where the mythical elements allow him to address issues that could not be openly discussed in his time. The *Chinor* novel, in a retrospective style, reflects the essence of Eastern literary traditions. The novel touches upon ancient history, recent past, and the present, and uses myths to deepen the philosophical and symbolic message. The "Chinor" tree in the story becomes a symbol of eternity, a theme that ties into the timeless faith in God, representing the idea of an eventual

² Фаниев И. Фитрат драмалари поэтикаси ва фитратшунослик. – Бухоро: "Дурдона" 2024. 60-бет. (600 б)

³ Фаниев И. Фитрат драмалари поэтикаси ва фитратшунослик. – Бухоро: "Дурдона" 2024. 60-бет. (600 б)

liberation from the sufferings of the Soviet era. According to the American scholar Eric Fromm, "The universal language that everyone must understand is the language of symbols, and mythology, as a means of artistic expression, is the most essential and unique tool for interpreting any form of art."⁴

In summary, any social-political era significantly influences the development of literature and art. It contributes to the evolution and renewal of creative methods, genres, and themes. As literary scholar D. To'raev notes, "In recent years, Uzbek prose has undergone significant changes in terms of the diversity of themes, creative styles, psychological and philosophical analysis, and the interpretation of characters." This translation aims to convey the main ideas and literary analysis present in the original Uzbek article, focusing on the evolving role of mythological themes in Uzbek literature, especially in response to political and social changes.

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⁴ Jabbor Eshonqul: "Folklor – millatning boqiy tarixi" *"Yoshlik" jurnali*, 2014 yil, 8-son