

THE MYTHOPOETIC ROOTS OF THE BIRTH MOTIF AND ITS UNIVERSALITY IN EPIC THINKING

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Annotation: This article examines the mythopoetic roots of the birth motif—one of the most ancient layers of human thought—and its philosophical universality within epic consciousness. Drawing on examples from Uzbek folk epics such as *Alpamysh*, *Gorogli*, and *Rustamkhon*, the study shows that the birth process is portrayed not merely as a biological event but as a metaphysical phenomenon intertwined with symbols of divine will, light (*nur*), water, and sacred prayer (*duo*). The article compares scenes of creation in Uzbek *dastans* with those in world epics (Indian, Greek, Persian), revealing their shared archetypal foundations and distinct national interpretations.

Keywords: birth motif, mythopoetic thinking, epic universality, archetype, symbol, Uzbek epic, light, water, divine will, renewal.

Introduction: The birth motif belongs to the most ancient strata of human thought. It embodies ideas of creation, renewal, and the eternity of life in the myths, epics, and religious views of all eras and peoples. In the oral literature of every nation, the process of birth represents a sacred event expressing the organic connection between human beings and nature, humans and the Divine, and individuals and society. For this reason, the “birth” motif has formed as a central archetype of mythopoetic thinking—a timeless artistic image oriented toward humanity’s understanding of its origins and the meaning of existence.

Main Part: In the mythology of the ancient world, the process of creation occurs through the word, breath, or light of the Divine. This idea lives on in various interpretations across all cultural systems. For example, in Babylonian myths, humans are created from clay; in the Indian *Rigveda*, humanity emerges from a cosmic sacrifice; in Greek mythology, Prometheus creates humans; and in the Islamic tradition, Allah creates man from dust and bestows a soul upon him. In all these cases, creation is interpreted as the beginning of life and the infusion of divine will into human existence.

These mythopoetic foundations are also reflected in Uzbek folk epics. In *dastans* such as *Alpamysh*, *Gorogli*, and *Rustamkhon*, the hero’s birth is directly linked to divine power, light, prayer, or a prophetic dream. This reflects the harmony between divine will and human life in popular consciousness. For instance, in the *Gorogli* epic, the hero’s birth in the grave artistically embodies the eternal balance between life and death, darkness and light, loss and renewal. Thus, in epic thinking, birth is regarded as the metaphorical rebirth of nature and the eternal law of life’s cyclical renewal.



In mythopoetic thinking, the birth motif signifies not only a biological process but also a cosmic awakening. With the birth of a human being, order, meaning, and harmony emerge in the world. Therefore, in *dastans*, the hero's birth is often depicted in harmony with the elements of nature: the wind blows, waters surge, the sky brightens, and the earth receives blessing. These images indicate that life obeys the general law of universal harmony, and humanity occupies a divine place within this chain.

From the perspective of epic thinking, every birth is an act of renewal. In this regard, the birth scenes in Uzbek folk epics reflect the people's dream of spiritual awakening. In *Alpamysh*, the anguish of Boyburi and Barchinoy over childlessness expresses the nation's faithful patience and hope, while Alpamysh's birth symbolizes the renewal of the national spirit and the restoration of justice and courage. Consequently, the birth motif has become a symbol of spiritual salvation and the triumph of faith in popular thought.

The philosophical universality of the birth motif lies in its association with the beginning of goodness and the awakening of hope across all eras and cultures. For example, in Greek myths, Zeus's birth brings order to the heavenly forces; in the Indian *Mahabharata*, Karna's supernatural birth signifies humanity's moral trials; in the Persian *Shahname*, Rustam's birth expresses the Iranian people's dream of freedom and power; and in the Uzbek *Alpamysh*, birth represents the spiritual revival of the people and the eternity of national identity. In this way, the birth motif unites the common philosophical essence of epic thinking—the process by which humanity seeks its roots, its meaning, and eternal existence.

The universality of the birth motif is primarily connected with the concept of the “birth archetype.” According to Carl Gustav Jung's theory, humanity's collective unconscious expresses the eternal desire for renewal through symbols such as “birth,” “mother,” “light,” “water,” and “earth.” On the basis of these archetypes, scenes of birth take shape in folk *dastans*: the prayer of the people's mother, a prophetic dream, or a divine voice represents the artistic manifestation of the creative force within the human collective psyche. Therefore, although the birth motif acquires a national coloring in every epic, it essentially carries a global, universal meaning.

Uzbek *dastans* have created a unique national interpretation of this global archetype. In popular consciousness, divine grace, parental prayer, the awakening of nature, the people's aspirations, and faith are united to form a sacred scene of birth. This scene testifies to humanity's belief in the law of harmony between nature and the Divine. Thus, the birth scenes in *Alpamysh*, *Gorogli*, and *Rustamkhon* embody the metaphysical code of Uzbek epic thinking: they serve as artistic symbols of humanity's conceptions of life, faith, and eternity.

In this manner, the mythopoetic roots of the birth motif are inseparably linked with the most ancient concepts in human thought—creation, cosmic awakening, the cycle of life, and divine renewal. It acquires new forms through the spiritual experience of the people in national *dastans* and attains general philosophical universality in epic thinking. In this respect, the birth motif appears in Uzbek folk epics not only as a national phenomenon but also as an integral part of world epic thought and an eternal metaphorical idea in the human collective unconscious.

The system of symbols occupies a special place in the mythopoetic interpretation of the birth motif. In popular thought, birth is the point of convergence of nature, divinity, and the human spirit. Expressing this process through symbols is a distinctive feature of folk poetic



thinking. Through symbols, the beginning of human life is interpreted not only as a reality but also as a spiritual-mystical and philosophical state.

1. The Symbol of Light (*Nur*) – Divine Grace and Renewal In almost all epics, light signifies the hero's divine election and spiritual purity. In Uzbek folk *dastans*, the light that enters the mother's dream foretells the birth of a child and testifies to divine will. In *Rustamkhon*, a child is born through light that descends upon the mother's bosom; this unites the ideas of creation, purification, and divine choice.

In Greek myths, the appearance of light in the sky at the birth of Zeus or Apollo, or the brightening of the heavens at the birth of the Pandavas in the Indian *Mahabharata*, confirms the epic universality of this symbol. Here, light serves as a metaphor for life and faith, and as a sign of the Divine in existence.

2. The Symbol of Water – The Eternal Cycle of Life Since ancient times, water has been recognized as the basis of creation. In the mythology of humanity, the origin of life is linked to the element of water: it is the source of life, purification, and rebirth. In Uzbek epics, rain, rivers, or springs that appear before or after birth symbolize blessing and the eternity of life.

For example, in *Gorogli*, after the child is born in the grave, the sound of surging water is heard, signifying the return of life. In the Persian *Shahname*, Sohrab's crossing of the river to confront his father symbolizes a vital transition (transformation). In the Indian *Rigveda*, water is called the mother of all beings and "amrita"—the water of immortality. Thus, the water symbol is a universal metaphor expressing the continuity of life and the cyclical nature of existence.

3. The Mother Symbol – The Creator of Life and Spiritual Center The image of the mother stands at the center of the birth motif in all peoples. In Uzbek *dastans*, the mother's patience, prayer, and faith become the cause of the child's arrival into the world. The figures of Barchinoy in *Alpamysh*, the mother in *Gorogli*, and the woman in *Rustamkhon* reflect the tradition of perceiving divine grace through the maternal principle.

This conception traces back to the ancient roots of folk thought, where the mother is regarded as Mother Earth, Nature, and the source of Life. For instance, Gaia (Mother Earth) in Greek myths, Parvati in Indian myths, and Jord in Scandinavian myths all represent various manifestations of the mother-nature archetype. Therefore, in epic thinking, the mother's prayer is essentially the blessing of nature and the Divine—the expression of creative energy.

4. The Symbol of Prayer and Word – The Source of Creative Power In folk oral literature, the word is accepted as a sacred force. "Prayer" (*duo*) is the act of creation and giving life through the word. In *Alpamysh*, a child is granted through the prayer of Boyburi and Barchinoy; in this process, the word acts as an intermediary for divine will.

This idea is widespread in other cultures as well. In the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word"; in the Hindu Vedas, the sound "Om" is the cosmic sound of creation; and in the Quran, the phrase "Kun fa-yakun" ("Be!" and it is) indicates that creation occurs through the word. Thus, the symbol of prayer or the word is an artistic metaphor for the act of creation and a means of spiritual connection between humanity and the Divine.

5. The Grave Symbol – Renewal Through Death The most profound mythopoetic scene in the *Gorogli* epic is the birth in the grave. After the mother's death, the child comes into the world in the bosom of the grave. This scene expresses the concept of constant interchange between death and life in folk thought. The grave is not only a place of death but also a site of



renewal and the starting point of life.

Similar symbols appear in the epics of other peoples: in Egyptian mythology, Osiris dies and is reborn through the Nile; in the Bible, Jesus Christ rises on the third day; and in Scandinavian mythology, Baldr is reborn after death. Therefore, the scene of birth in the grave in *Gorogli* is a unique national form of the archetype of eternal life and spiritual awakening in folk consciousness.

6. The Symbols of Sound and Dream – Divine Awareness and Prophecy In many *dastans*, the hero's birth is foretold through a dream or a voice. In *Rustamkhon*, the mother sees a star and light in her dream; in *Alpamysh*, the father hears a prophetic divine word in his dream. The dream is interpreted in folk thought as a message from the Divine and guidance in life.

This symbol also exists in the myths of other peoples: Vishnu's prophecy through dreams in Hindu tradition, Joseph's dreams in the Jewish tradition, and the voice of Zeus in Greek myths—all express the idea of divine awareness. Thus, the motifs of dream and sound signify the process of spiritual awakening through “seeing” and “hearing” in epic thinking.

These symbols—light, water, mother, prayer, grave, dream—manifest in national forms across the epics of various peoples, yet their semantic essence is common: they express the eternity of life, the victory of goodness, and the renewal of the human spirit. Through the mythopoetic roots of the birth motif, human thought has artistically expressed the philosophy of life's cycle, that is, the idea that “death is for birth, and birth is for renewal.”

Uzbek folk epics nationalize this universality in their own way: the people's faith, prayer, maternal love, and aspiration toward goodness allow a universal idea to resonate in a distinctly Uzbek spirit. In this manner, the birth motif lives in Uzbek epic thinking as an artistic-philosophical phenomenon where national and universal values converge.

The birth motif occupies a central place not only in mythopoetic conceptions but also in the ethical and philosophical system of folk thought. It is closely connected with the eternity of national life, spiritual purity, and the strength of faith. In *dastans*, every birth is interpreted not merely as the arrival of an individual into life but as the beginning of a new era, a new spiritual stage, and a new moral awakening. Therefore, birth scenes constitute the “beginning” point of the epic structure and determine the spiritual-philosophical foundation of the entire *dastan*.

In terms of its artistic essence, the birth motif in Uzbek folk epics embodies the people's views on the relationships between life, fate, the Divine, and humanity. In *dastans*, every hero is born as a “chosen person,” a symbol of the people's inner aspirations, spiritual power, and moral victory. For example, *Alpamysh* is a symbol forged from the people's dreams of courage, loyalty, and justice; *Gorogli* expresses the people's dream of freedom and an immortal spirit; and *Rustamkhon* is a symbol of purity and goodness born from divine grace. Thus, the birth of each hero reflects the people's spiritual energy, hope, and sense of national identity.

At the core of the philosophical essence of the birth motif lies the people's belief in the struggle between good and evil. With human birth, the forces of goodness are renewed and the balance of life is restored. In this respect, the birth motif also appears as a spiritual metaphor in humanity's self-understanding and search for the meaning of life. Through this motif, folk thought organizes human life into three main stages: creation – trial – elevation. Birth in this system signifies “beginning,” “spiritual roots,” and “the spiritual content of life.”

A similar content-philosophical orientation of the birth motif is observed in world epics. In



the Indian *Mahabharata*, the divine-assisted birth of the Pandava heroes signifies humanity's readiness for spiritual trial; in the Persian *Shahname*, Rustam's birth symbolizes the power of the people; and in Greek mythology, Zeus's birth marks the supremacy of heavenly forces. Likewise, in the Kyrgyz *Manas* epic, the hero's birth with divine signs expresses the people's aspirations, spiritual courage, and the power of faith.

These cases prove the epic universality of the birth motif: in all forms of folk oral literature, regardless of nationality, human life is depicted within the framework of a divine plan. This plan interprets humanity not only as a biological being but as a spiritual essence endowed with creative power. Therefore, although the birth motif exists in its national form in every folk epic, it essentially relies on the single philosophical root of human thought.

In epic thinking, the birth motif stands out for its metaphysical essence. It artistically expresses the organic connection between life and death, and the harmony of humanity with nature and the Divine. Behind every birth scene lies the "law of the renewal of existence." Thus, the birth in the grave in *Gorogli*, the creation through light and prayer in *Alpamysh*, and the birth through dream and prophecy in *Rustamkhon* all lead to the single philosophical center of epic thinking: the eternal continuity of life and the immortality of the spirit.

In this respect, Uzbek folk epics achieve direct harmony with the images of creation in world epics. In the ancient *Gilgamesh*, humanity seeks immortality; in *Enuma Elish*, the gods struggle to create the world; and in the *Iliad*, human heroism seals itself into eternity. In all these, the idea of creation or birth expresses humanity's path of spiritual elevation. In the same sense, the birth scenes in Uzbek epics harmonize with global epic thought: through them, the people artistically comprehend their historical, spiritual, and philosophical essence.

Another aspect ensuring the philosophical universality of the birth motif is the idea of the cycle (circularity). Every epic birth actually signifies the eternal cycle of life. A person is born, undergoes trials, dies, but their spirit, goodness, and deeds continue. In folk thought, this becomes the principle of "the immortality of life" and "the eternity of goodness." Therefore, every epic birth appears as a symbol of the path from past to future and from life to spirituality.

In this way, with its mythopoetic roots, symbolic layers, and philosophical essence, the birth motif integrates Uzbek folk epics into the common stream of world epic thought. This motif is expressed in national art through the people's faith, aspirations, and striving for goodness; in the world literary heritage, it becomes the process of humanity's search for the meaning of existence and self-understanding.

Thus, the birth motif is one of the most ancient and eternal metaphors in humanity's spiritual history. It expresses not only humanity's coming into the world but also its spiritual awakening, renewal, and striving for eternity. Therefore, although this motif finds national expression in every folk epic, in essence it represents a universal philosophical law:

"Birth is the eternal continuity of life and the process of humanity's self-creation."

In conclusion, although the mythopoetic roots of the birth motif find national expression in Uzbek folk epics, its philosophical essence is shared with world epics: this motif is an artistic manifestation of epic universality in human thought and has become a symbol of the eternal continuity of life and humanity's striving for spiritual perfection.



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