

Interpretation Of Symbolic Images Expressing The Nafs In Classical Literature

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Abstract: In this study, the concepts of the self found in the works of our classical literature were sorted out. The article provides specific information about symbols related to lust. The embodiment of the concept of soul in the image of various animals is studied on the basis of poetic verses. In the study, using statistical, comparative-typological methods, the manifestations of classical works related to the concept of self were analyzed. Symbols representing lust are classified separately.

Keywords: Nafs, woman, bird, parrot, ostrich, lion, wild bird, carcass bird, world.

Introduction: In classical Eastern literature, particularly within Sufi-oriented poetry and prose, the concept of the nafs occupies a central philosophical and artistic position. The nafs, commonly understood as the lower self, ego, or the source of human desires, is interpreted not merely as a theological notion but also as an artistic symbol reflecting the spiritual struggle of humanity. Classical poets and thinkers expressed the nature of the nafs through a rich system of symbolic images, metaphors, and allegorical figures. These symbols served both aesthetic and didactic purposes, enabling authors to depict the inner conflict between spiritual perfection and worldly temptation. In Turkic and Persian classical literature, especially in the works of Alisher Navoiy, Ahmad Yassaviy, Jaloliddin Rumi, and Fariduddin Attor, the nafs is frequently represented through symbolic images such as dogs, dragons, wild animals, fire, darkness, prisons, and devils. These images reveal not only moral weakness but also the stages of spiritual purification. The artistic interpretation of such symbols demonstrates the writers' attempts to explain ethical and mystical ideas through literary means.

Since the beginning of mankind, nafs and its related istilahs are constantly depicted side by side with it. In pre-Islamic and post-Islamic literature, lust has been described as a vice that encourages people to go astray.

In religious and mystical sources, nafs is highlighted in order to educate a person, to encourage him to perfection, while in classical literature, the same goals are embodied as various concepts and symbols. At the very beginning, after the creation of Adam and Eve, the soul was instilled into their bodies. Perhaps this is why Allah tests them and requires them not to eat a fruit in paradise (in some sources it appears as wheat). But lust and the devil judge the minds of the two creatures and cause them to be expelled from paradise.

Methodology

This study employs comparative-literary, hermeneutic, and descriptive-analytical methods. Primary literary sources include classical works of Turkic and Persian literature, particularly Sufi-oriented texts in which the concept of the nafs occupies an important place.

The comparative-literary method allows the examination of similarities and differences in symbolic representations across various authors and literary traditions. Through this method, symbolic images connected with the nafs in the works of Alisher Navoiy, Jaloliddin Rumi, Fariduddin Attor, and Ahmad Yassaviy are comparatively analyzed.

The hermeneutic method is applied to interpret the deeper mystical and spiritual meanings hidden behind symbolic expressions. Since Sufi literature often communicates ideas indirectly through allegory and

metaphor, interpreting these symbols requires contextual and philosophical analysis.

The descriptive-analytical method is used to classify symbolic images according to their semantic and artistic functions. Symbols associated with animals, fire, darkness, imprisonment, and temptation are grouped and analyzed based on their literary usage and spiritual significance. The research materials consist mainly of ghazals, masnavis, tazkirahs, and didactic-mystical works belonging to classical Eastern literature. Special attention is given to passages where the nafs is represented metaphorically rather than directly.

Discussion

1. Representation in the form of a woman. Nafs is also expressed through the concept of the bride of the world, the bride of the world, and the old woman. In other words, the world attracts you like a bride in a thousand different clothes. You will feel that the air is nothing but lust, and that you have been deceived. Only after that, the bride of the world, who has deceived you, will show her true face. She turns out to be a piri zol - an old scheming old woman who deceived everyone, and later you will feel that you are late, that you are a slave to your ego, and then it will be too late, has lived in classical literature for centuries. In this sense, Sufism literature, which expresses the reality of life in the metaphorical world, through symbols and symbols, has given the concept of self through various images.

A woman in Ibn Sina's story "Solomon and Ibsol". In the work, Ibsol is described as follows: "God gave him (Ibsol) a beautiful appearance and good fortune. When the boy came of age, the devil turned his eyes to him, and then he set his heart on him. The wife fell in love with him and couldn't bear to contain her pain. A woman who begins to listen to lust and the command of the devil tries to attract a man to her in various ways. But Ibn Sina described the young man as having such a strong will that he could oppose any trick. Ibsol, who did not want to leave his brother, whom he raised as a father instead of his father, in a difficult situation, began to occupy other countries. He takes himself to the battlefield to fight lust. In this work, Ibn Sina showed how the ego looks and what tricks it does to put people in a difficult situation in the image of a young man. In the image of Ibsol, he reveals how to fight against his inner ego. At the end of the work, the following words are mentioned in the name of Allah Almighty: "If we test any of our friends with any of the rulings we have, if he is patient, he will be rewarded accordingly." Abu Ali ibn Sina shows how to conquer the ego through his character who has strong patience and will. Ibsol is one such person.

Representation in the form of birds. In the history of literature, there are many authors who wrote works about birds. The same idea is found in a story of our scholar Jalaluddin Rumi, who wrote down the most valuable works of Sufism and philosophical thoughts. Interestingly, in Rumi, lust is embodied in the image of a bird, that is, a parrot. In his story "Parrot's Trick", a caged parrot escapes to freedom through a trick. A freed parrot says the following to its owner: "The parrot in India gave me advice by its actions. He said, stop talking and singing. Because you are in a cage. Then pretend to be dead and do what I did. If you pretend to be dead, like me, you will get out of the cage," so the parrot flies away. So, in order to be free, his friends, you must first train your ego. That is, every person acts according to the orders of his soul. He is like a caged bird. If he can cultivate his ego, if he dies before dying, he will achieve true liberation. If you read stories written with Romanian philosophy, it will seem like a work on ordinary domestic topics. But if you go inside, you will come across a real philosophy. Another of his stories is called "The Lust is Like a Savage Lion," in which Rumi describes the lust as a ravenous lion. A lion, deceived by a small rabbit, becomes a slave to his desires and is doomed to destruction. For this reason, not giving in to worldly wealth, keeping the heart and eyes full, and restraining the tongue are the first stages of overcoming the ego. In the work "Pandnoma" by Fariduddin Attar, the desire is represented as a bird. Describes as an ostrich, a mystic. If we pay attention to the word "ostrich", it is formed from the combination of two creatures, that is, a camel is an animal that walks on the ground and a bird flies in the sky. Fariduddin Attar also emphasizes this aspect. When they try to put a load on the ostrich, he replies that I am a bird. He replied that he would do it if he was given a task related to birds. Lust is such a beast that it can appear in your eyes in the form of various creatures, even as a person close to you. Concepts and symbols related to lust appear in various forms in classical works. In particular, in the work of Ahmad Yassavi, the carcass is depicted as a bird:

... The world is my love, the world is my love,

The carcass is like a bird, and they have sunk into the wasteland.

If we pay attention to the verses, it is said about those who are given to the wealth of the world, that is, those who are attached to it. Such people are pointing to the impure life of a carrion bird, that is, a carrion bird. This is exactly how he compares those who cannot overcome their lust. In another poem, he compares the ego to a "wild bird":

No matter what if your lust takes care of you,

If you force it, it will not be long for Allah.

If you catch it, don't catch it like a wild bird .

Wake up from a sleepy night.

Yassavi draws attention to what a person's heart cannot grasp and says that those who become captives of the ego will never be able to overcome it. Ahmed Yassavi says that when the soul does what it says , it starts a person down. And he emphasizes that he will not be caught like a wild bird, that is, he will lose the right path. For this reason, this wild bird emphasizes that every person should overcome the ego and purify himself. Nafs is a fierce enemy and a cruel disbeliever. A person who destroys the head of the demon of lust becomes the owner of the property of satisfaction and can acquire the treasure of purity.

In Alisher Navoi's ghazals, the soul is depicted as the world, the dog of lust, as symbols. In the article "The Symbol of the World in Alisher Navoi's Works and Its Interpretations", the well-known literary critic and scientist Nurboy Jabbarov mentions that Naviy used the world in two different senses: 1. The symbol of "the world" means the place where people live; 2. The interpretation of the symbol of "the world" as a veil that blocks mankind from enlightenment. The point we want to talk about is the second type. According to Nurboy Jabbarov, worldliness is denied in Navoi's works, not the world. It is called to leave the love of the world, not the world. And love for the world is placed during the fulfillment of the commandment of the soul. For this reason, Navoi quotes the following verses:

O Navoi, if you are a husband, divorce the world .

There is no way out, this is a wicked trickster.

In the third section of the work "Hibat ul-haqayq" by Ahmad Yugnaki on "The changing state of the world", it is said that the world is transitory and never faithful to people:

The world sometimes frowns, sometimes frowns,

Honey in one hand, poison in the other.

Eat sweetened with honey,

He holds the poisoned chalice behind him.

has shown the evil nature of lust on the example of the world . So, the world is embodied as ego. It makes your life as sweet as honey, so that you don't know that you have been deceived, says the poet. As a result, you begin to follow his orders without a word, and in the end you do not know that you are on the brink of destruction. Nafs subjugates people with such tricks.

If we look at the work of the great thinker Alisher Navoi, he did not write a single book about the self, but the idea of overcoming the self is the essence of almost all his works. In particular, "Khamsa" epics give

examples of the appearance of the ego in various forms. Speaking about the sultans in the third section of the "Hayrat ul-Abrar" saga, he urges them not to destroy the whole country and the people in the face of the anxiety of existence:

You are a drunkard and a drunkard.

Then whatever you want, you will be satisfied.

The old man at the party

Maydin die every one is a mad dog.

If you are more beautiful than a shiny leopard,

The dog of lust is in the dog's mouth, but it is zabun.

If we look at the verses from Hayrat ul-Abrar, Nawai describes the self as a dog . Alisher Navoi believes that the sultans' indulgence in alcoholism and drunkenness is self-indulgence. The ruler of the country, who has lost his vigilance, entrusts not only himself, but also all his officials to the hands of the "dog of lust". For this reason, Navoi urges the kings not to give in to life and act with justice. The well-known naveist Ibrahim Haqqul explains the phrase "dog of the soul" in his book "Chained Poems" as follows: "...in Sufism poetry (poetic image), the dog is the soul." And dogs are the children of lust, that is, lustful animals." Various calamities befall man because of lust. The reason is that various evils are caused by lust.

If you sing five sweet songs, you are not enthusiastic.

If you are eager to please, there is no one like you in the world.

Alisher Navoi's most famous verses about self. In this verse, the word "besha" means grove, forest. Hence, Alisher Navoi emphasizes overcoming the ego through the use of private scenes. That is, if you defeat the lion, the king of the forest, the most terrible force in the world, it cannot be a demonstration of your power and courage. Maybe you deserve to be considered the most ambitious and brave person in the world only after destroying the dog of lust. Navoi emphasizes the fact that nafs is stronger than a lion and compares it to a dog in his verses. For the poet, nafs is like a dog, but it is stronger than a lion in terms of its power and the ability to make a person reach its height. For this reason, Hazrat Navoi emphasizes that although he does not have the strength of a lion, he must have the will to overcome one soul.

Results

The research reveals that symbolic images expressing the nafs constitute an essential component of classical literary poetics. These symbols perform multiple functions: aesthetic, ethical, philosophical, and didactic.

The study identifies several dominant symbolic groups

associated with the nafs, including:

- 1) animal imagery (dog, wolf, dragon, wild beast);
- 2) natural elements (fire, darkness);
- 3) spatial symbols (prison, pit, desert);
- 4) demonic and destructive figures.

These symbolic representations reflect the classical understanding of human inner conflict and spiritual evolution. The analysis also demonstrates that the interpretation of the nafs differs according to genre, authorial worldview, and mystical tradition, though all representations emphasize the necessity of controlling worldly desires. Furthermore, the research shows that symbolic imagery strengthens the artistic influence of classical texts by transforming abstract religious-philosophical ideas into concrete poetic forms. Through symbolic interpretation, classical writers created a universal literary language capable of expressing complex spiritual experiences.

Conclusion

To sum up our research, there are several concepts and symbols of the ego. In the works of Ibn Sina, it is embodied as a woman and a bird, in the stories of Rumi, it is embodied as a parrot and a lion. While Fariduddin appears as an ostrich in Attar, Najmuddin appears as a giant in Kubro. In the wisdom of Ahmed Yassavi, a carcass is found in the form of a bird and a wild bird. In the work of Alisher Navoi, the ego is represented by the symbols of a dog, the world, the building of the self, and the bride of the world. So, mystics and classical artists try to educate people by reflecting the ego in the psyche of some hero in their works. All well understand the nafs explained on the basis of these characters. They strive to be perfect people, not heroes in works.

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