

The Function of Poetic Symbols Associated with Bread in Poetry

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Abstract: This article describes the ideological-philosophical, artistic-aesthetic aspects of bread-poetic image in poetry. The figurative and symbolic meanings expressed through the poetic image of bread are analyzed.

Keywords: Poetic image, symbol, metaphor, psychological interpretation, lyrical hero.

Introduction: The transformations and evolutions in a person's heart and mind lead to a renewal of the artistic criteria of life. The creative individual deeply comprehends the diverse conditions of any society and life. Lyric works hold particular importance as a means of expressing human emotions, feelings, and inner worlds. Poetry serves as a tool that demonstrates the connection and harmony between nature and humans, celebrates aesthetic aspects, and generalizes the spiritual experiences of the lyrical hero.

Works written in this genre often contain metaphorical and symbolic meanings. The poetic image of bread, a gift of nature, holds a special place both in the daily life of the people and in literary interpretations. Since ancient times, bread has been regarded as a symbol of life, blessing, peace, and abundance. Therefore, in lyric works, the poetic image of bread is often used to reveal the author's philosophical views, historical reality, and human relationships.

In lyrical works, bread frequently appears as a symbol of the people's lifestyle and material existence. Through the poetic image of bread, poets strive to express the meaning of both the difficult and joyful days of human life, as well as the hardships and pleasures experienced by the people. For example, bread can symbolize poverty and the fruit of labor,

thereby emphasizing the value of hard work. In times of war or famine, it is interpreted as a symbol of the struggle for survival.

The poetic image of bread in lyrical works plays an important role in understanding national identity and emotionally grasping the historical processes experienced by the people. By employing the image of bread, poets symbolically depict the social, economic, and spiritual state of their time, which enables the reader to draw deep philosophical conclusions.

In classical poetry, bread has always represented essential human values: patience, labor, social unity, kindness, and daily perseverance within society.

In contemporary poetry, interpretations of the image of bread have entered a new dimension. Today, bread is closely linked not only with social and cultural changes but is also reflected in philosophical and psychological interpretations alongside realistic worldly contexts. In modern literature, bread is portrayed not only in connection with hunger but also through analyses related to worldly values, the decline of humanity, and reflections on personal past and future.

Its symbolic analysis consistently conveys sincerity and human values. This becomes especially evident in the analysis of Qudus Muhammadiy's poem "Bread."

In our nation,
About bread,
About grain,
In the people's sayings
They say this —
All nations do...
Moon-faced flatbread,
Praised so greatly,
Even a crumb, a piece,
Let it not fall — says everyone.
[Muxammadiy Q. 3:13]

The poet conveys universal values by depicting an ordinary life concept—bread—in a simple, clear, yet meaningful way. By describing different forms of bread such as kulcha (flatbread), ushoq (crumb), and parcha (piece), the poet elevates everyday details to poetic analysis and connects them with the national mentality.

Although the poem consists of only four syllabic lines, it encapsulates profound ideas and semantic depth. This reflects the poet's skill in expressing meaning through a brief yet impactful style. Bread is interpreted not just as a source of nourishment but as a symbol of the people's cultural and spiritual wealth. Through the image of bread, concepts such as gratitude, the value of labor, carefulness, and human virtues are illuminated.

The image of bread is presented as one of the core symbols in the life and culture of the people. Here, bread signifies peace, abundance, and gratitude. Mentioning states like crumb and piece reflects the people's appreciation for labor and their reverence for nature. Through this imagery, the poet paints a collective psychological portrait of the nation. Bread becomes not only a material possession but also an expression of spiritual heritage. Within this symbol lie deep meanings such as national identity, family, and attitude toward work.

The poem's language is simple and folkloric, making it accessible and emotionally powerful for a wide audience. The poet uses expressions from folk speech and wisdom, presenting the meaning in a form that is easily digestible. Repetitive phrases like "Non haqida, don haqida" ("About bread, about grain") give the poem a melodic rhythm and enhance its emotional impact. Figurative expressions like "Oymoma kulcha," "ushoq, parcha" vividly recreate scenes from everyday folk life. This attention to detail helps bring the poem to life in the reader's imagination.

By highlighting the social and spiritual role of bread as a symbolic image in people's lives, the poet poetically reveals national values. The following generalizations can be drawn from the poem: When a girl is married off, a pair of loaves is placed on her head with the blessing, "May you be as dear as bread." Bread is placed under children's pillows as a protective charm. Fathers send sons on journeys by handing them a piece of bread and a handful of soil as a blessing against misfortune. Horsemen tie whole loaves to their belts before participating in ulak (buzkashi) for support. Hunters used to carry bread in their pockets to ward off wild animals. Before someone departs on a journey, loved ones make them bite a piece of bread, wishing a safe return. In mourning households, odd-numbered loaves are placed on the table, and after mourning, the custom is to return with even-numbered loaves.

The poem's final lines harmonize with proverbs such as "Non ham non, ushog'i ham non" ("Even a crumb is still bread"), "Non bolasi – non ushoq" ("The child of bread is the crumb"), "Nonni uvatma, qadrini otma" ("Don't crush bread, don't lose its value"), and "Nonga hurmat – elga hurmat" ("Respect for bread is respect for the people"). The references to bread in forms like kulcha, crumb, and piece call attention to valuing even the smallest fragments of life's essential elements.

Quddus Muhammadiy's reverence for bread is reimagined in the poem "Non ushog'i" ("Bread Crumb") by Abdulla Muhammadiy Q. In this poem, the poetic image of bread transcends being a mere object to embody spiritual wealth and human values. The scene where two close companions encounter bread crumbs carries a profound symbolic meaning tied to respect, mindfulness, and appreciation. Through this image, the poet evokes the people's deep respect for labor and reminds readers of ancient traditions.

Two dear companions, side by side,
Walked ahead with joy and pride.
Then along their path one dawn,
They came upon a bread crumb drawn.
[Polatov A. 6:1]

The image of bread serves as a symbol of harmony and unity among people. Seeing bread and sharing it with close companions glorifies the ideas of mutual support, compassion, and cooperation. At the same time, this image evokes a sense of social responsibility: it reminds us that every portion, every blessing in life must be treated with care and respect.

He placed it beneath a tree,
Then looked back—what did he see?
His friend, in haste and unaware,

Sat in a cab without a care.
Off he went, heading home,
Arrived there just as he'd known.
To ignore the bread—that careless one,
Such neglect is poorly done!

The poet aims to convey spirituality, respect, and human relationships to the reader through an event associated with bread.

In the poem, a person notices a piece of bread on the road and respectfully moves it aside, which symbolizes reverence for moral values in life. Through this act, the poet promotes the idea of not wasting bread and not leaving it abandoned.

The central character in the poem respects the bread when he sees it and places it under a tree to prevent it from being wasted. This reflects a responsible attitude toward values. However, the other character — his friend — does not appreciate the bread's worth, treats it indifferently, and regards it as something insignificant. This highlights the loss of human values.

Although the poem is not directly tied to a specific historical event, its content reflects the traditional values of the Uzbek people regarding bread and sustenance. The following ideas can be identified:

The sacredness of bread: In history, the Uzbek people endured famine and hardship, which taught them to respect sustenance. This value is carried forward in the poem, emphasizing the importance of avoiding waste and highlighting its educational significance.

Social consciousness: Among Uzbeks, respect for bread is not only a personal matter but also a social responsibility. Bread left on the road is a sign of social negligence, while preserving it represents collective values.

The poem reveals two opposing attitudes toward the value of bread. Through the character who respects the bread, positive traits such as attention to and responsibility for values are promoted. The other character represents carelessness and the negative consequences of indifference toward values. Thus, the image of bread becomes a symbol of the system of spiritual and social values.

Bread, as a symbol of life, is considered sacred — like a mother or the homeland. These views are expressed in Tolqin Rasulov's poem "Hymn to Bread."

Mother and bread – twins by blood, for life's sake,
If you wish to avoid wasting bread, know this meaning.
Whoever offends a mother deserves no bread to take,
One who disrespects bread does not know a mother's feeling.

— [Rasulov T. 2:43]

In the poem, two profound concepts — mother and bread — are placed on equal scales. Just as a baby cannot survive without a mother, a person cannot live without bread. One who dishonors their mother is bound to suffer from hunger. As stated in hadiths, the more sins a person commits, the less sustenance they receive. Disrespecting one's mother is considered a major sin. Understanding this deep spiritual truth, the poet declares: "One who disrespects bread does not know a mother."

Now, let us reflect on the line: "Whoever offends a mother deserves no bread to take."

In remote villages of Chust district, Namangan region, there is a common expression: "bread on a clod" (*kesak ustida non*). Historically, laborers forced into servitude were made to work relentlessly, day and night. Exhausted and starving, they would sometimes hallucinate, mistaking clumps of earth for bread. Many collapsed and died upon realizing what they thought was bread was just a mirage. Through these lines, the poet implies that one who displeases their mother is condemned to a fate of slavery and deprivation.

In the following lines, the poet draws attention to the idea that the white, fragrant bread we now eat in comfort may actually be the blessing forfeited by others — perhaps by those who failed to honor their mothers or disrespected the value of bread. This poetic reminder urges us to appreciate both our mothers and our sustenance with deep reverence and gratitude.

Bread – the portion of those who gave their lives in war,
Bread – the portion of those who suffered hunger and more.

Bread – the portion of tearful, starving infants forlorn,
Bread – the portion of those who vanished, with no name or form.

— [Rasulov T. 2:43]

In the poem, "bread" is portrayed as a symbol of independence. It reflects that our attainment of freedom and liberty was made possible through the sacrifices of those who perished, those who endured the horrors of war and the torments of deprivation, and those who went missing in battle. The poet's emphatic repetitions make it clear that enjoying the "bread of freedom" did not come effortlessly.

The poet highlights the emotional tension between past hunger and present-day abundance. Through the image of bread, a critique emerges against the failure to appreciate today's prosperity, given the harsh experiences of the past. The motif of bread conveys the emotional struggles, inner feelings, and societal

hardships endured by individuals, all depicted through the lens of artistic psychologism. Below, we analyze the artistic psychologism and bread motif in a passage of this poem:

In the line “Bread is the share of those who gave their lives on battlefields,” bread is depicted as a symbol of those who died in war. Here, bread serves as their memorial, reflecting the value of human life. Through the image of bread, the horrors of war and the sacrifices of people are conveyed with psychological weight.

In the line “Bread is the share of those who suffered hunger and need,” the focus is on human necessities, with the motif of famine and poverty. Bread here is linked to the essential human values of life, revealing both physical and emotional suffering.

The line “Bread is the share of starving infants with teary eyes” uses the bread motif to depict the helplessness of children suffering from hunger. Bread, in this case, symbolizes more than just food—it becomes a representation of despair, vulnerability, and the most delicate facets of human existence.

In the line “Bread is the share of those who disappeared without a trace,” bread symbolizes forgotten and lost lives. Here, bread reflects the transience of human life, the cruelty of time, and the injustice of fate.

Throughout the poem, the image of bread is used as a medium to illuminate the most fragile and painful aspects of human existence. Its meaning extends beyond mere physical need; it embodies sacrifice, suffering, and the sacredness of human life. Similar philosophical reflections are expressed in the poem “People” by People’s Poet of Uzbekistan Abdulla Oripov as follows:

Do not forget the grandfathers who gave their lives on the battlefields,

Do not forget the grandmothers who gave you bread by gleaning in the fields.

Do not forget the prayers that granted you faith and belief,

Only the people shall live on, only the people shall remain.

[Oripov A. 5:27]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of the poetic image of bread as an artistic device in poetry serves to comprehensively reveal its social and artistic functions. This poetic symbol has been formed in connection with the historical development of humanity, the relationships between different social strata, and cultural values within society.

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