

Artistic Interpretations of Savior Figures in Folk Epics

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Abstract: This article analyzes the artistic interpretations of the image of the savior in folk epics, the sources of its formation, poetic features, and ideological and aesthetic significance. The image of the savior is studied as a central image embodying the people's dreams and hopes for justice, freedom, and social equality. The article examines the physical and spiritual power, spiritual experiences, symbolic elements, and connection with the collective interest of the savior hero on the example of epic works such as Uzbek folk epics - "Alpomish", "Gorogly". The results of the study show that the image of the savior hero was formed as an ideal hero in folk artistic thought, and its educational and aesthetic significance is still relevant today.

Keywords: Folk epics, epic hero, savior image, symbolic image, artistic interpretation.

Introduction: Folk oral literature constitutes the historical memory, spiritual world, and artistic thinking of every nation. The works of oral tradition, formed over centuries, embody the social life, aspirations, struggles, and moral values of the people. Within this artistic heritage, the epic (doston) genre occupies a special place. Epics serve as an important source that expresses the historical destiny, social relations, and aesthetic views of the people in a highly artistic form.

One of the main features of folk epics is the depiction of heroes who defend the interests of the people and struggle for justice and freedom as central figures. In literary studies, such heroes are often interpreted as savior figures [Yo'ldoshev, J. 5:86]. The savior figure represents a hero who rescues the people from oppression, invasion, injustice, or social crisis and assumes responsibility for the fate of the nation. In the collective consciousness, this image has formed as an ideal human being. The savior is portrayed not only as physically strong but also as spiritually mature, just, loyal, and self-sacrificing. Therefore, the savior figure embodies the social ideals cherished by the people. In Uzbek folk epics, characters such as Alpomish, Gorogly, and Rustamkhan are vivid examples of the savior

archetype.

The formation of the savior figure in folk epics is directly connected with the historical life and social needs of the people. In different periods, the people have faced oppression, invasions, and injustice. Under such difficult conditions, the image of a hero who would rescue them and restore justice emerged in the collective consciousness [To'rayev, M. 3:67]. This image was idealized in oral tradition and elevated to the level of an artistic character.

The influence of mythological and religious beliefs is also evident in the formation of the savior figure. In many epics, the birth of the hero is associated with extraordinary events. This suggests that the hero is not an ordinary person, but rather an individual chosen by fate. For example, in the epic Alpomish, the birth of the hero is depicted in connection with the parents' long انتظار for a child, their prayers, and various trials. This motif demonstrates the near-divine nature of the savior figure.

"Boybo'ri said: 'From here, the shrine of Shohimardon Pir is a three-day journey. Whoever goes there and spends the night may ask for fortune, for a child, or for faith in the hereafter. Let us also go, offer our vows,

spend the night there, and ask for a child.”

Both elders approved of this idea and said to each other, “You are right.” Taking their offerings, they set out without rest for three days. After traveling for three days, they reached the shrine of Shohimardon Pir, presented their offerings to the sheikhs, and spent the night there [Alpomish, 1:8].

In folk epics, the savior hero is often portrayed as possessing unparalleled strength. His physical power exceeds that of ordinary humans, enabling him to confront enemies single-handedly. However, this strength is not the only defining feature of the hero. The essential characteristic of the savior figure is moral strength. The hero is distinguished by qualities such as honesty, loyalty, patience, and devotion to justice. He prioritizes the interests of the people over his own. For example, the character of Alpomish considers the defense of his people’s honor more important than his personal happiness. The moral maturity of the savior hero is reflected in his decisions, relationships, and actions. He uses his strength only in the service of justice and regards the struggle against oppression as a sacred duty.

In the artistic interpretation of the savior figure, the idea of justice occupies a central place. In epics, the hero’s main task is to eliminate injustice, eradicate oppression, and liberate the people. This struggle often acquires a social dimension and represents the collective interests of the community. In the epic Gorogly, the hero is depicted as a defender of the poor and oppressed, fighting against tyrannical rulers. Each of his actions serves the idea of justice. Through the image of Gorogly, the people express their aspirations for freedom and equality. The idea of justice idealizes the savior figure and elevates him to the level of a brave and exemplary hero in the popular consciousness.

In folk epics, the savior hero is portrayed not only as a victorious and powerful figure but also as a character rich in psychological depth. The hero faces long journeys, separations, betrayals, and trials. These trials reveal his endurance, patience, and strength of will. In the epic Kuntug’mish, Azbarxo’ja pretends to be a friend to Kuntug’mish but deceives him and attempts to kill him:

“Azbarxo’ja said: ‘My friend, let us sit together, converse, drink, and ease the burdens of our hearts

while we have the chance.’ With kind words and hospitality, he arranged a private gathering and sent the other caravans away. The two sat together, while young servants kept filling their cups. The prince drank strong wine, while Azbarxo’ja drank cold tea. After drinking several bottles, the prince became intoxicated and lost consciousness. At that moment, Azbarxo’ja betrayed his friend, took a sharp sword, and attempted to kill him. Among the caravan was a poor but devout student who, unable to endure this any longer, rushed forward and seized the sword from his hand” [Kuntug’mish, 4:78].

The inner suffering and emotional experiences of the hero make these characters more vivid and realistic. Motifs such as separation, longing, and anguish perform an important artistic function in epics. These elements reveal the human dimension of the savior figure [Rasulov, R. 2:39].

Symbolic elements also play a significant role in the artistic interpretation of the savior figure. The hero’s horse, weapon, clothing, and even name carry symbolic meanings that reflect his power and mission. For example, Alpomish’s horse Boychibor, as well as Gorogly’s weapons and attire, symbolically represent their invincibility and sacred purpose. The episode in which Boychibor outpaces others in a race and helps Qorajon is depicted as follows:

Qanday bo’p ilgari otdi Boychibor,

Poyganing oldini oldi jonivor.

Oldin olib borar bu Chibor oti,

Tomashamon o’n ming uyli elati.

Poyganing oldini olib boribdi,

Mamlakatga xo’p ovoza bo’libdi,

Qalmoq, o’zbek bari yig’ilil qolibdi.

Saf-saf bo’lib tomoshabon turibdi.

Kelayotgan yolg’iz otni ko’radi,

Boychibor deb o’zbek xurram bo’ladi,

Ko’kdo’nan deb jami qalmoq qaradi,

Ko’kdo’nanga hech kelbati kelmadi.

Barcha xaloyiqlar qarab turadi,

Boychibor ekanin aniq biladi. [Alpomish.1:218]

These symbols elevate the image of the hero in the collective consciousness of the people and reinforce his

association with the divine.

In folk epics, the savior hero prioritizes the interests of the people over his own. He does not separate his personal happiness from that of the community. This reflects the spiritual values of the people embodied in the epics. The hero's actions are directed not toward individual benefit, but toward the peace and prosperity of the nation. Therefore, the savior figure emerges as a distinctive social ideal of the people.

In folk epics, when the main heroes find themselves in difficult and hopeless situations, the forces of nature often come to their aid. In the epic Kuntug'mish, the ruler attempts to punish Kuntug'mish and Kholbek by having a camel slaughtered, placing them inside its raw hide, tying it to the tail of a wild horse, and sending them off into the desert:

"The wild mare, frightened, dragged the two along and threw them into the desert. The mare's tail, made of a single thin strand, gradually tore apart, and after six days, the hide fell to the ground. Under the heat of the sun, the raw skin dried and tightened so much that it hardened like iron."

Har nima deb so'zlar ekan buvishlar,

Qo'llarida nigin, tilla-kumushlar.

Yoronlar, xudoning qudrati kuchli,

Hu tog'dan bir quzg'un davr olib uchdi,

U jonivor parvoz aylab osmonga,

Nogahondan ko'zi qudoqqa tushdi.

Qanotim chimirib qo'nib ustiga,

Amri xudo bo'ldi, cho'qidi, teshdi.

Qo'lin solib ikkalasi yirtishdi,

Sog'-salomat shu qudoqdan chiqishdi"
[Kuntug'mish.4:52]

The artistic interpretations of the savior figure in folk epics occupy an important place in the history of national literature and artistic thought. Through this image, the people express their aspirations for justice, freedom, and happiness. Savior heroes are idealized figures formed on the basis of the people's historical experience and spiritual needs.

The artistic representations of the savior figure remain relevant even today. They serve as an important source in educating the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism, courage, self-sacrifice, and justice.

Therefore, a deep study of folk epics and the savior figures within them is of great significance for national literary studies and moral education.

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