

The Female Image and Folklorism In the Poetics of The Historical Novel: The Archetypal Foundations of The Image of Ma'suma

Nilufar Tosheva

Associate Professor at Navoi University of Innovation, Uzbekistan

Received: 26 April 2026; **Accepted:** 22 May 2026; **Published:** 08 June 2026

Abstract: This article analyzes the artistic interpretation of the female image in the poetics of the historical novel on the basis of folklorism and archetypal theory. Using Isajon Sultan's novel Ma'suma as an example, the study reveals the role of oral folk tradition, mythological views, and the archetypal system embedded in collective consciousness in shaping the image of the main character. As a result, the possibilities of expressing national identity and transformations in social consciousness through the female image in historical novels are identified.

Keywords: Historical novel, folklorism, archetype, female image, Ma'suma, mythological thinking, artistic transformation, national identity, Jadidism, neomythologism.

Introduction: In Uzbek literature of the independence period, the historical novel has emerged as one of the leading forms of understanding national identity, restoring historical memory, and artistically interpreting socio-cultural processes. In this process, writers seek to represent historical reality not merely as a sequence of facts, but through a profound poetic system harmonized with national thought and cultural layers. In particular, folklorism has become an important structural component of the poetics of the historical novel, expanding the semantic and aesthetic possibilities of a literary work through the integration of elements of oral folk art into the artistic text.

In contemporary literary studies, folklorism is examined not only in terms of the use of folklore elements, but also from the perspective of their artistic transformation, functional meaning, and semantic activity within the text. The stylization of folklore elements in historical novels, their reinterpretation in a new context, and their transformation into a means of expressing social ideas require particular scholarly attention. From this perspective, studying folklorism in connection with archetypal theory is of considerable

significance as an effective methodological approach to revealing the deeper layers of literary images.

The female image occupies a special place in the poetics of the historical novel. Through this image, the spiritual values, social views, historical consciousness, and cultural identity of society are expressed. In the prose of the independence period, in particular, the female character moves beyond the limits of traditional representations and is interpreted as an active and conscious subject capable of directly influencing social processes. Such an approach creates the need to reconsider the folkloric roots of the female image, determine its archetypal foundations, and define its place in contemporary artistic thought.

Isajon Sultan's novel Ma'suma constitutes an important literary source for the study of these issues. In the novel, the female image formed within the social environment of the Jadid period is created through a synthesis of folk thinking, mythological views, and archetypal models. The image of Ma'suma appears not only as an artistic interpretation of a historical personality, but also as a complex character reflecting the socio-cultural transformation of women during the

period of national awakening. Therefore, analyzing this image on the basis of folklorism and archetypal theory makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of its artistic essence.

The study identifies the folkloric roots and archetypal foundations of the protagonist's image in the novel *Ma'suma*, as well as the processes of artistic transformation and their semantic functions. It also provides a scholarly justification of the role of the female image in expressing national identity and its functional significance in the poetics of the historical novel.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the interpretation of *Ma'suma's* image not through comparison with a particular folklore character, but as a multilayered archetypal system. This offers a new theoretical approach to the study of female images in historical novels. Furthermore, the functional possibilities of folklorism in a literary text are systematically analyzed through the example of the female image. This approach has considerable theoretical and practical significance for the study of the poetics of the historical novel in Uzbek literary criticism, particularly for the deeper investigation of folklorism and archetypal issues.

In Uzbek prose of the independence period, the historical novel has become an important artistic form for understanding national identity, restoring historical memory, and reflecting socio-cultural transformations. The female image, in particular, serves to reveal the system of values, spiritual views, and changes in social consciousness. From this perspective, the protagonist of the novel *Ma'suma* appears not only as a historical figure, but also as an artistic construct enriched with layers of folkloric and mythological thought.

The image of *Ma'suma* in the novel represents a new type of active, conscious woman capable of social transformation. It is a reinterpretation of the folklore archetype of the "faithful woman of the Barchinoy type" within the social consciousness of the Jadid period.

As is well known, in fiction the female image is often associated with such symbolic meanings as the embodiment of beauty and a source of inspiration. In the novel *Ma'suma*, however, *Ma'suma* is neither merely an embodiment of beauty nor a source of

inspiration. She is presented primarily as an active subject.

When *Ma'suma's* father-in-law, brother-in-law, and husband are arrested as "enemies of the people," society's attitude toward her changes.

"Her gaze seems to say: 'What have I done that you isolate me so much? Wherever I go, people avoid me and keep their distance. If my father-in-law, my husband, and my brother-in-law committed a crime, what about me and my children? What kind of injustice is this?'

The elder brother's gaze replies: 'Be patient, daughter of the East, be patient...'"

At the theatre, *Ma'suma* is no longer given any roles to perform. The people working there isolate her, yet she does not abandon the theatre and patiently endures all hardships. The motif of patience is characteristic of oral folk art. It is present in the emotional world of the childless mother, the oppressed stepdaughter, and the suffering people portrayed in folklore. The images of Barchinoy in the epic *Alpomish*, *Huroyim* in *Rustamkhan*, and *Kuntug'mish* and *Kholbeka* in the epic *Kuntug'mish* may be regarded as archetypal sources for the image of *Ma'suma*. The folkloric motif of patience is thus transformed within *Ma'suma's* character.

When *Ma'suma's* sons attend school, their classmates treat them as children of an "enemy of the people." Following this attitude, both boys stop attending school and begin working as assistants to the relative who had raised and supported *Ma'suma*. When the war begins, her sons decide to go to the front in order to clear their family's name and prove through their struggle for the homeland that they are not enemies of the people. At first, *Ma'suma* opposes their decision, but later gives her consent.

Through *Ma'suma*, the novel embodies the image of a mother who sends both of her sons to war and continues to live in the hope of seeing them again. The folkloric motifs of contentment and gratitude are stylized in the novel. *Ma'suma* does not remain idle: she obtains a plot of land from the theatre, works there day and night, and helps poor families. In general, she does not live for herself. Although her family is declared to be a family of "enemies of the people," she does not turn away from her people or nation. On the contrary, she becomes increasingly devoted to them.

Although the war ends, Ma'suma's sons do not return. She travels to Moscow in search of them and learns of their fate. Her sons had removed the stigma of "enemy of the people" attached to their family and had died on the battlefield as heroes of the homeland. The grieving mother, who had endured all the hardships and blows of life, could not bear the news of her sons' deaths and passed away there.

In historical novels, folklorism is regarded as an important component of artistic thought. Folklorism is the transfer of elements of oral folk art into written literature, their reworking, and their fulfilment of new poetic functions. In this process, folklore elements are not directly copied; rather, they undergo transformation and acquire a new semantic meaning. In the novel *Ma'suma*, the female character is enriched with profound artistic content through folklore motifs, folk beliefs, traditional perceptions, and archetypal images.

The concept of the archetype constitutes one of the theoretical foundations of the present study. An archetype is a system of universal images formed within the collective consciousness and cultural memory of humanity. In folklore and mythology, the female image appears in various archetypal forms, including the mother, the embodiment of love, the devoted woman, the source of inspiration, and the symbol of spiritual purity. In the novel *Ma'suma*, the protagonist is shaped as a synthesis of these archetypes. On the one hand, she is connected with national traditions; on the other hand, she is interpreted as a character expressing the ideas of renewal and social awakening.

Traces of folklorism are clearly visible in the plot and composition of the novel. The female image is presented within a social context through elements of folk speech, proverbs and sayings, religious beliefs, rituals, and customs. These elements serve as important artistic means in revealing the character of the protagonist and depicting her inner world. In particular, through the image of *Ma'suma*, the social role of women, their position in society, and the process of self-awareness are expressed in harmony with folkloric thought.

Another important aspect of folklorism is related to its mechanisms of artistic transformation. In the novel

Ma'suma, folklore elements are not transferred directly; rather, they are reworked, stylized, and adapted by the writer to a new context. In this process, archaic images acquire a modern interpretation, while mythological elements are integrated with a realistic plot. As a result, the female image not only reflects historical reality, but also rises to the level of artistic generalization.

The analysis of the archetypal foundations of *Ma'suma's* image reveals its multilayered nature. First, she appears as the archetype of a devoted woman. This archetype is widespread in folklore and is characterized by a woman's patience, resilience, and struggle in pursuit of her goals. Second, *Ma'suma* is interpreted as a symbol of renewal. Within the context of the Jadid movement, she embodies the ideas of national awakening. Third, she represents spiritual purity and beauty, a quality that is also closely connected with folkloric traditions.

The archetypal features of this image are presented in harmony with its individual characteristics, demonstrating the writer's artistic skill. Whereas folkloric images are often generalized, the protagonist of a historical novel possesses distinctive individual qualities. In *Ma'suma*, these two layers are combined to create a new type of female character. This image reflects the balance between nationality and modernity, as well as between tradition and renewal.

Religious and belief-based forms of folklorism also play an important role in shaping the female image in the novel. Religious views, popular beliefs, rituals, and customs formed among the people serve as significant means of revealing the protagonist's spiritual world. Through these elements, the moral and emotional dimensions of the female character are portrayed in greater depth, while her inner experiences and psychological state receive artistic expression.

The semantic function of folklorism also deserves particular attention. In the novel *Ma'suma*, folklore elements do not perform a merely decorative role; rather, they carry profound meanings. Through them, the author highlights social problems, the position and status of women in society, and the significance of national values. This expands the functional possibilities of folklorism within the literary text.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in Isajon Sultan's novel Ma'suma, the female image is formed as a complex artistic system on the basis of folklorism and archetypal theory. Through the image of Ma'suma, the writer addresses such important issues as national identity, women's freedom, and social awakening. Folklore elements serve as principal artistic means in this process. The findings of the study demonstrate that, in the poetics of the historical novel, the female image may be interpreted more deeply and meaningfully through folkloric and archetypal foundations. This approach contributes to the study of folklorism in Uzbek literary criticism at a new theoretical level.

REFERENCES

1. Sobirov, O. Uzbek Realist Prose and Folklore. Tashkent: Fan, 1979.
2. Karimov, N. "Folklore Traditions in the Poetry of Hamid Olimjon." In Issues of Uzbek Soviet Literature. Tashkent: Fan, 1959.
3. Jalolov, G'. Hamza's Dramaturgy and Folklore. Tashkent: Fan, 1988.
4. Nosirov, O. The Treasury of Folk Art. Tashkent: Adabiyot va san'at, 1986.
5. Abduhamidov, A. "Folklore and the National Novel." In A Typological Study of the Novel Genre in the Literatures of the Peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Tashkent: Fan, 1991.
6. Amilova, M. Folklore Traditions in Uzbek Soviet Literature. Tashkent: Fan, 1990.
7. Imomkarimova, M. National Values in the Works of O'tkir Hoshimov. Doctoral dissertation in Philological Sciences. Tashkent, 2004.
8. Sharipova, L. Folklorism in Uzbek Poetry of the 1970s–1980s. Candidate dissertation in Philological Sciences. Tashkent, 2008.