

An Interpretation Of The Gathering Of The Moths Around The True Candle

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Abstract: In Eastern classical literature, particularly in Sufi literature, there exist numerous paired symbolic images. Poets have created ghazals, stories, debates, and masnavis devoted to these images. The pair of the candle and the moth is one such symbolic image, which poets have widely and effectively employed in their works. Alisher Navoi also made extensive use of these paired images in his writings. This article analyzes the story of the candle and the moth presented in Navoi's epic "Lison ut-tair." The role of these images within the narrative and their thematic significance are examined. In particular, the true identity, purpose, and self-sacrificing nature of the moth are explored.

Keywords: Candle, moth, image, ghazal, masnavi, story, Sufism, flame, annihilation, heart, simile, union.

Introduction: In Eastern classical literature, tales and masnavis occupy an important place. During this period, poets created numerous stories, among which there are also narratives devoted to the candle (sham') and the moth (parvona). Some information about this pair is presented in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, where stories of the candle and the moth are described as allegorical love narratives. In these stories, divine love is portrayed. Such narratives first appear in Mansur Hallaj's Tawasin. Later, they were employed in the works of Ahmad Ghazali and other Persian-Iranian writers. The stories of the candle and the moth were included within the structure of a masnavi for the first time by Fariduddin Attar in Mantiq al-Tair. Sa'di of Shiraz also presents two stories about the candle and the moth in his work Bustan, and unlike other creators, he depicts these images from different perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In world literary scholarship, the images of the candle (sham') and the moth (parvona) have been studied as an independent object of research, particularly in Turkey. In this regard, Fatma Kopuz Çetinkaya defended her doctoral dissertation in 2016 on the topic "The Candle and the Moth in Persian Literature." Günay Alpay has also conducted her own studies on candle-and-moth masnavis. Dr. Sadık Armutlu has likewise carried out a number of researches devoted to candle-

and-moth masnavis. In these studies, the main focus is placed on masnavis, and the semantic layers of the poetic images have been examined to a certain extent. In Uzbek classical literature, symbolism and imagery hold significant importance. Each author enriches images semantically based on their own imagination and beliefs. In this way, the images of the candle and the moth have also come to possess rich layers of meaning. Despite the special role of these images in literary works, sufficient research has not been conducted to determine their place in the history of Uzbek literature. Although the candle and the moth have not been studied monographically, scholars such as I. Hakkulov, S. Rafiddinov, I. Salimov, H. Eshonkulov, T. Mamatkulova, N. Bozarova, D. Hamroeva, K. Mullakojaeva, Z. Kabilova, Z. Mamadalieva, R. Jumanov, and U. Kabilov have briefly addressed these images in their candidate and doctoral dissertations. The works of scholars such as Sultonmurod Olimov and Sharofiddin Sharipov also discuss these images. In these studies, the images of the candle (sham') and the moth (parvona) have been examined within a limited scope. Within the framework of Hafez of Shiraz's oeuvre, the images of the candle and the moth have not been studied by Uzbek scholars.

RESULTS

In the works of Alisher Navoi as well, the influence of his predecessors is clearly perceptible. After Sa'di,

narratives connected with the candle and the moth appear in Navoi's creation. In *Lisan ut-Tair*, which he wrote in response to Attar's work, Navoi presents a story about the candle and the moth. He entitles this narrative "An interpretation of the gathering of the moths around the true candle" (*Parvonalar majma'i sham'i haqiqiy sharhida*). Like his predecessors, Navoi shapes the relationship between these two images into a beautiful narrative through refined artistic and figurative devices.

The story begins with the depiction of moths gathered together and striving to become seekers of the candle:

Bir kecha parvonalar jam' o'ldilar,

Sa'y birla tolibi sham' o'ldilar.

One night, the moths gather together and strive to devote themselves to the candle. Placing their wings into the flame, the moths wish to obtain a sign from the light of their beloved. They become curious about the nature of the candle and seek to learn its secrets. The moths resolve to approach the candle and discover its true essence, agreeing that whoever finds anything about it will return and tell the others. After these words, one of the moth flies toward the candle in order to learn its true nature:

Bu so'z oytig'och biri ochib qanot,

Sham' tahqiqin qilurg'a bordi bot.

After agreeing to study the candle and share what they learn, one of the moths flaps its wings and flies toward it. It strives to understand the true essence of the candle. The moth is drawn to the candle, seeking to uncover what it does not yet know and to reveal the secrets hidden within it. An عاشق (*ashik*), having stepped onto the path of love, goes toward the beloved and attempts to comprehend her true nature. For the ashik, the beloved is a being full of mysteries, and he longs to know her more deeply. In the same way, the moth tries to gain a deeper understanding of its desired object.

While describing how the moth beholds the candle burning in the darkness, he renders its radiant brilliance even more beautifully through the image of the shambiston:

Bir shabiston ichra ko'rdi jam'ni,

Kim yorutmishlar aroda sham'ni.

In the dark night, amid the deep gloom, the moth sees the gathering the assembly of moths. In their midst a candle is lit, and the moths have surrounded it. They strive to comprehend the truth of the candle. They are drawn to this light, yet they do not dare to approach it closely. Therefore, they all gather around it. From among them, some fly toward the candle, attempting

to discover its true essence.

The light of the candle illuminated the moth's eyes and made them radiant. Burning in the candle's flame, the moth speaks to the others about it. However, the remaining moths do not grasp the words of the burning moth and learn nothing about the candle. The burning moth reveals the truths of the candle, yet these words do not reach the hearts of the other moths. They consider the burned moth's knowledge of the candle to be insufficient, and another one once again flies toward the candle:

Chun oning taqriri sud oz ayladi,

Yona bir parvona parvoz ayladi.

Since the other moths derive no benefit from what the burned moth has learned and find its knowledge insufficient, yet another moth flies toward the candle. The moths' attempts to comprehend the truth of the candle prove fruitless. The reason is that only the burned moth knows the truth, but it cannot convey it to the others. The attempt to know the truth thus leads the remaining moths also to burn. Through this depiction, it is shown that love cannot be fully understood by anyone other than the ashik by the one who has burned in its fire. An ashik does not become a true ashik until he burns in the flame of love. Only the moth that does not fear being burned in the candle's fire can know its secret. Therefore, when the moth that flies toward the candle burns and perishes, another again strives to uncover this secret.

The moth that flies in order to know the truth of the candle stands closer to it and gazes attentively at its rays:

Sham' bazmig'a yaqin soldi guzar,

Nurig'a diqqat bila qildi nazar.

The moth approaches the vicinity of the candle's gathering and gazes attentively at its light. At first, it circles around the candle, trying to uncover its secrets. The moth initially attempts to study the candle from a distance. It watches and observes the candle's light with great care. Then, when it is unable to fully comprehend its truths, it moves even closer to the candle. As it draws nearer, its wings are scorched by the candle's heat.

Burning and with its wings singed, the moth continues to study the candle, yet the knowledge it seeks does not become clear to it. Then it strives to learn more about the candle and circles around it once again:

Yana bir ham ishga so'iy bo'ldi ko'p,

Sham' boshi girdiga evruldi ko'p.

It strives to learn more about the candle, and when its efforts bring no result, it comes even closer to the

candle and circles around it. For the ashik, the beloved is an ocean of mysteries, and he attempts to dive deeper into its depths. As the ashik draws closer to the beloved, he discovers new facets of her being. Only those who remain faithful to their quest and are not afraid of self-sacrifice achieve their goals. In pursuing their aim, they move only forward.

No matter how much the moth circles around the candle, it cannot attain its goal. It fails to uncover the candle's secret. The moth strives even harder to learn about the candle and attempts to come closer than before. However, when the moth approaches the candle too closely, it burns its wings:

Sham' davrida qanot ko'p urdilar,

Har bir o'z bolu parin kuydurilar.

Each of the moths that approaches the candle is burned, yet none of them is able to give an explanation of it. For it is difficult to express and convey the nature of that flame in words:

Shu'la sharhin til bila qilmas kishi,

Kuymaguncha hirqatin bilmas kishi.

The explanation of this flame cannot be given through words. No one can know its true essence unless they burn within it. Only those who have burned in this flame know its reality, yet they are unable to convey what they know to others. To understand the nature of this fire, one must burn and be consumed by it.

Whoever comes to know the truth of the candle must burn in its fire and be separated from the self and from all worldly existence. Without self-sacrifice, one cannot attain one's goals.

Ul bir ish tahqiqidin topti xabar,

Kim bo'lub kul qolmadi ondin asar.

The moth that strives to learn about the candle draws even closer to it. When it becomes aware of the truth of the candle, it burns and turns to ashes, leaving no trace behind. This fire consumes it completely and gives it no chance to express what it has learned.

The poet depicts the moth's self-sacrifice, its steadfastness on the path it has chosen, and its readiness to sacrifice body and soul on this path as follows:

Shu'lag'a urg'och o'zin bevahmu bok,

Shu'la bo'ldi o't tushub a'zosi pok.

The moth rushes toward the flame without fear or hesitation and, joining it, burns and becomes a part of it. The moth attains its desired object only through burning. By burning itself, it makes the candle's flame shine even more radiantly. In the very act of burning, the moth becomes one with the candle.

Its aim is to know the secret of the candle, and it achieves this while burning, yet it is unable to speak of it to anyone:

Chun tilar maqsud anga bo'ldi ayon,

O'zga zohir bo'lmadi ondin bayon.

At that moment, it attains its goal, and everything about the candle becomes clear to it. Yet others remain unaware of this knowledge. When the ashik burns in the fire of love, he comes to know its true nature, but he cannot describe it to anyone.

The moth's sacrifice of its life on the path toward its goal leads it to annihilation (fano). The true purpose of the moth's yearning for the candle is union to become one with it.

Chunki maqsud ichra nobud o'ldi ul,

Ul fanoda ayni maqsud o'ldi ul.

For it perished for the sake of its goal and its love, and in that annihilation, in the fire, it itself became the goal. That is, it became one with the candle; the ashik attained the beloved, and the two became one, making the flame of love shine even more radiantly.

As the moth burns in the fire, no sound comes from it; it burns silently and turns to ashes. For nothing holds any significance for it anymore everything loses its meaning for it:

Chiqmadi ondin yana hargiz nafas,

Ul haqiqatdin xabar toptiyu bas.

No breath or word came from it anymore. For it, merely having attained knowledge of the truth was sufficient. The ashik is ready for everything that comes from the beloved; even the sufferings inflicted by the beloved are precious and a source of joy. For the ashik who sacrifices the self on the path of divine love, there is nothing better than burning together with the beloved.

The poet speaks of how people, by contemplating the state of the moth, may draw the necessary conclusions from it:

Boqsa el parvonalarining zotida,

Kashf o'lur ko'nglida, ikki foida.

If people observe closely how the moths yearn for the candle and burn in its flame, they will discover two benefits in their hearts. From the state of the moth, they will learn true devotion in love.

Navoi expresses what people should learn from the moth in the following couplet:

Bir bukim kuymay anga etmas kushod,

Bo'lmag'uncha kul topoolmas murod.

First, one cannot know the fire (in the sense of love) without burning, nor can one attain the goal without

turning to ashes. Until the fire of annihilation (fano) enters one's being, one does not burn in that flame. In other words, unless one burns and turns to ashes in the fire of love, it is impossible to know its true nature.

The other meaning is that it immersed itself in the sea of fire. In that state, there remains no possibility for anything else. The moth has uncovered the secret, yet it is impossible to speak of this secret to others, for it belongs only between the true ashik and the beloved. To know this secret, one must burn in the fire and keep it concealed from others.

The secrets of the candle are not revealed to the moths that have not burned in its fire. Those who have not burned in the fire of love do not possess true devotion, nor are they aware of the secrets of love:

Munda kuymay elga ish ochilmadi,
Ulki kuydi – kimsa holin bilmadi.

The secret of the candle was not revealed to those who did not burn in its flame, and no one knew the state of the moth that had burned in that fire. They only saw that the moth had burned; of what it had come to know, they remained unaware.

In the final couplets of the story, the poet addresses himself, saying that if one seeks union (visal), one must burn:

Foniyo, lofi fano urmog'ni qo'y,
Vasl esa koming, fano o'tig'a kuy.

Addressing himself as Foniyo, Navoi says: abandon boasting about annihilation (fano); if your aim is union (visal), then burn in the fire of annihilation. For only by burning in the fire of fano is it possible to attain union, which itself becomes the ultimate goal. Continuing his thought, the poet speaks of the necessity of resembling the moth:

Evrulub sham' o'tig'a parvonavor,
O'zni tashla shu'lag'a devonavor.

Become like the moth that hurls itself into the candle's fire, and, in mad devotion, cast yourself into that flame. Only when no trace of your existence remains will you attain your goal union (visal). The poet says that it is not necessary for anyone to know the sufferings endured by the ashik (himself) or that he has attained union:

Bo'ldi chun koming ravo maqsud aro,
Bilmasa el bilmasun ul mojaro.

He concludes the story by saying: let it remain unknown to the people whether you have attained your goal or not. All the sufferings and secrets that exist in love belong only to the ashik and the beloved. It is not necessary for others to know them, for even if they knew, they would not understand.

The events of the work are grounded in the ideas of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being). The poet states that for a true ashik to attain union with the beloved, one must renounce both body and soul. Only when the ashik turns toward annihilation does union become possible. Likewise, the moth attains the candle only when it burns in its flame and no trace of its body remains, becoming one in existence with it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the images of the candle and the moth are significant not only in ghazals, quatrains, and the couplets of epics, but also in narrative tales. Through the relationship between these symbols, poets convey moral and spiritual admonitions. The narratives highlight that true love requires a particular kind of self-sacrifice, that the fire of love is profoundly consuming, and that those who have not burned in it cannot comprehend its secrets. Genuine devotion demands a kind of madness like that of the moth. One cannot know the true nature of the candle without burning together with it. Love is rich in mysteries, known only to the ashik and the beloved. Neither the candle, whose body and soul burn within the fire, nor the moth, which does not refrain from approaching it even as its wings are scorched and which ultimately turns to ashes, can speak of this secret. There is only one way to become aware of this mystery: to know it by burning and turning to ashes in that very fire. Through the story, the poet reflects on love, the ashik, and the beloved, draws conclusions from them, and offers guidance and admonition through these reflections.

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