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THE POETIC FUNCTION OF THE SAQI IMAGE IN EXPRESSING LYRICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE POETRY OF MUNIS KHOREZMI

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ABSTRACT: This article investigates the poetic functions of the Saqi image in selected ghazals by Munis Khorezmi. Based on textual, semantic-contextual and poetic analysis, it identifies the distinctive ways in which this traditional image contributes to the representation of lyrical experience. The findings reveal that the Saqi image functions differently depending on its poetic context: it is associated with the intensification of khumor, the hope of union, the expression of repentance and the overcoming of separation. The study also highlights the interaction of the Saqi image with wine and the cup in shaping the emotional structure of the couplets. It concludes that Munis uses the traditional image as a flexible poetic device for conveying diverse lyrical states.
Keywords: Munis Khorezmi, Saqi image, lyrical experience, ghazal, wine symbolism, poetic function, classical poetry.

INTRODUCTION

In the poetry of Munis Khorezmi, the saqi image performs an important poetic function in expressing the lyrical hero's inner world, emotional needs and personal experiences. Although in the tradition of classical literature the saqi image is often portrayed as the one who serves wine, in the poet's works this image carries a broader artistic meaning. Through addressing the cupbearer, the lyrical hero expresses various emotional states, including the torment of khumor, the anguish of separation, spiritual distress, longing for union and the search for consolation. The symbols of wine and the cup are also closely associated with these experiences.

The poet presents the cupbearer as the recipient of the lyrical hero's appeals when he is exhausted by separation, in need of spiritual support or seeking consolation through wine. In some instances, the cupbearer becomes a symbol of kindness and compassion, while in others, he appears as a figure who fulfils the hero's desire for wine. In this respect, the image of the cupbearer in Munis's poetry is not merely a conventional poetic figure; it also serves as an artistic means of revealing the emotional and psychological dimensions of lyrical experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The image of the saqi (cupbearer) has been widely discussed in studies of classical Eastern and Persian literature, particularly in relation to Sufi symbolism and the poetic tradition of wine imagery. One of the relevant studies is Sadoqat Otamuratova's article, "The Image of Soqiy in the Poetry of Shermuhammad Munis" (2025). The author examines the artistic characteristics of the cupbearer in Munis's poetry, emphasizing its connection with Sufi concepts and related images such as wine, the tavern, the sheikh and the spiritual guide. The study also highlights the influence of Alisher Navoi's literary tradition on Munis's use of mystical imagery. [1]

Another important contribution is Paul E. Losensky's study of the Sāqi-nāma, published in the Encyclopaedia Iranica. The scholar explains that the cupbearer traditionally appears as a figure whom the lyrical speaker addresses in search of relief from suffering, loss and disappointment. His discussion also demonstrates the versatility of wine imagery in Persian literary tradition, where it may symbolize consolation, spiritual transcendence and courtly pleasure.[2]

The study "Persian Wine Tradition and Symbolism: Evidence from the Medieval Poetry of Hafiz" by Ali Saeidi and Tim Unwin (2004) also provides a relevant theoretical perspective. The authors investigate the historical and literary dimensions of wine symbolism in Persian poetry, focusing on

the works of Hafiz. Their research demonstrates that wine imagery carries meanings beyond its literal interpretation and is closely connected with the poet's ethical and philosophical outlook. [3]

Furthermore, the article "Ghazal: Characteristics and Conventions" in the Encyclopaedia Iranica discusses the established imagery of classical ghazal poetry. It identifies wine as a source of consolation for the lover suffering from separation and describes the cupbearer as a figure who is called upon to relieve the lover's sorrow. This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding the relationship between the cupbearer and the lyrical hero's emotional experiences in Munis's poetry. [4]

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the symbolic and literary functions of the cupbearer, further attention can be given to the specific ways in which this image expresses different emotional states in Munis's poetry. Therefore, the present study focuses on the relationship between the cupbearer and the lyrical hero's experiences of separation, longing, spiritual distress and consolation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs textual, semantic-contextual and poetic analysis methods to examine the function of the Saqi image in expressing lyrical experience in the poetry of Munis Khorezmi. The research is based on selected couplets from the poet's "Divan", in which the Saqi image appears in connection with wine, the cup, separation, longing, repentance and spiritual distress.

The textual analysis method is used to examine the selected couplets in terms of their lexical structure, imagery and semantic features. Particular attention is paid to the poet's choice of words and expressions through which the lyrical hero's emotional and psychological states are conveyed.

The semantic-contextual method is applied to identify the meanings of the Saqi, wine and cup images within the context of each couplet. This approach makes it possible to determine how these traditional poetic images acquire specific meanings in expressing such experiences as the torment of khumor, the pain of separation, the desire for union and the search for consolation.

The poetic analysis method is employed to reveal the artistic functions of the Saqi image and its relationship with other poetic elements. Special attention is given to the use of literary devices, symbolic imagery and semantic contrasts, as well as their contribution to the emotional and aesthetic impact of the couplets.

The selected couplets are analyzed according to their dominant lyrical and emotional characteristics. This approach allows the study to identify both the conventional meanings of the Saqi image and its specific poetic functions in Munis's works.

Through the application of these methods, the research aims to demonstrate how Munis Khorezmi employs the traditional Saqi image as an expressive poetic means of revealing the complexity and diversity of lyrical experience.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the poetry of Munis Khorezmi, the image of the Saqi image plays an important role in expressing the lyrical hero's emotional state and inner experiences. Through this image, the poet artistically portrays the pain of love, separation, the longing for union, and the desire for consolation. The following analysis of selected couplets explores the poetic functions of the Saqi image.

Xumor ichra men o'lgali yetmisham,
Qadah tut menga, soqiyo, lab-balab. [5, p.68]
(I have reached the brink of death from longing, Pour me a cup, O cupbearer, filled to the brim.)

The couplet reflects the lyrical hero's intense emotional need and his appeal to the saqi. He is so tormented by khumor (the distress caused by the absence of wine) that he feels as though he has reached the brink of death. His request for the cupbearer to offer him a cup filled to the brim expresses not merely his desire for wine, but also his longing to find relief from his inner suffering.

Here, the image of the cupbearer appears as a potential savior capable of satisfying the lyrical hero's emotional need. The act of filling the cup to the brim conveys the intensity of his desire and the extent of his need for consolation. The spiritual distress expressed through the state of khumor becomes more poignant through the appeal to the saqi. Thus, the saqi image functions as a poetic symbol connecting suffering with the search for relief in the lyrical experience.

Yetti, ey soqiy, Xizr oso labimga jon kelib,
Boshim uzra lutf ila tut obi hayvondek sharob. [5, p.71]

(Interpretation: O cupbearer, enough! Offer me wine that will restore life to my lips, holding it above my head with kindness, like Khizr presenting the Water of Life.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the saqi image embodies not only his need for a life-giving drink but also his longing for spiritual consolation. The association of wine with the figures of Khizr and the Water of Life gives it a meaning that extends beyond that of an ordinary beverage. In classical literature, Khizr is traditionally portrayed as a figure who has attained immortality through drinking the Water of Life. Drawing on this literary tradition, the poet elevates the wine offered by the saqi to the status of a life-giving blessing. The expression "bringing life to my lips" suggests that the lyrical hero has become physically and spiritually exhausted and hopes to regain vitality through wine. The saqi's act of offering wine above the hero's head with kindness establishes his role not merely as someone who serves wine, but as a figure who grants compassion and vitality to the lyrical hero. Thus, through the image of the cupbearer, the emotional movement from despair towards life and from spiritual weakness towards renewed vitality is conveyed.

Soqiy, xumor ranjida qoldim ayog'din,
Tut bir ayog', to chiqayin men ayog'lanib. [5, p.89]

(Interpretation: O cupbearer, I have been left unable to stand because of the torment of khumor. Offer me a cup of wine so that I may regain my strength and rise to my feet again.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the cupbearer expresses a state of spiritual and physical weakness caused by khumor. The phrase "left unable to stand" conveys that he has become so exhausted that he no longer has the strength to move. His request for a cup of wine is associated with the desire to overcome this condition, recover and regain his strength. The poetic expression is built upon a play on the word ayog', which carries the meanings of both "cup" and "foot" in the couplet. The semantic connection between "offer me a cup" and "rise to my feet again" presents wine as a restoring force in the lyrical hero's life. The sqi image, in turn, emerges as a figure who helps him escape the torment of khumor and regain spiritual vitality.

Jomi visol tutgil, ey soqiy, aylabon rahm,
Kim bu gado g'amingdin qon behisob yutdi. [5, p.147]

(Interpretation: O cupbearer, show mercy and offer me the cup of union, for this beggar has swallowed countless tears of blood because of your sorrow.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the saqi embodies the pain of separation and an intense longing for union with the beloved. The expression "the cup of union" conveys the desire to behold the beloved and attain a long-awaited meeting. By referring to himself as a "beggar," the lyrical hero reveals his helplessness and humble supplication before the beloved. The phrase "swallowed tears of blood because of your sorrow" expresses a profound emotional torment, revealing the intensity of his suffering. The word "countless" further emphasizes the enduring and immeasurable nature of this anguish. His request that the cupbearer show mercy and offer the cup of union establishes the latter as a source of consolation and salvation for the lyrical hero. Thus, the saqi image brings together the hope of attaining union with the beloved and the desire to escape the suffering of prolonged separation.

Soqiy, qilibon afv gunohimni, qadah tut,
Munis kibi gar shayx so'ziga iliqibmen. [5, p.185]

(Interpretation: O cupbearer, forgive my sins and offer me a cup. If, like Munis, I have been swayed by the words of the sheikh, then pardon me.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the saqi reveals a mood of repentance, apology and a renewed inclination towards wine. The expressions "forgive my sins" and "offer me a cup" appearing side by side create an inner conflict in his emotional state: on the one hand, he seeks forgiveness for his sins, while on the other, he asks the cupbearer to serve him wine. Being "swayed by the words of the sheikh" suggests an attempt to abandon wine under the influence of religious and moral admonition. However, the hero's return to the saqi indicates that this withdrawal has not lasted long and that his desire associated with wine and the cupbearer remains dominant in his inner world. Here, the cupbearer is portrayed not merely as someone who offers a cup, but as a figure expected to understand the lyrical hero's inner conflict and respond to his plea. Thus, the contrast between the images of the sheikh and the cupbearer reveals hesitation, an inclination towards wine and the question of freedom of spiritual choice within the lyrical experience.

Za'faroniy mayga andoq ho'y etibmen, soqiyo,
Kim qilur bu dayr aro daf'i xumorim za'faron. [5, p.190]

(Interpretation: O cupbearer, I have become so accustomed to saffron-coloured wine that, in this tavern, only saffron-coloured wine can relieve my khumor.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the saqi reflects an intense attachment to wine and an inability to part with it. The expression "saffron-coloured wine" not only describes the colour of the drink but also indicates its special place in the lyrical hero's inner world. The phrase "I have become so accustomed to it" conveys the extent to which drinking wine has become an established habit. The hero sees no other way to escape the torment of khumor; in his perception, only saffron-coloured wine can satisfy this need. His appeal to the cupbearer demonstrates that this desire can be fulfilled only through this figure. Consequently, the cupbearer emerges as a poetic figure who fulfils the lyrical hero's deeply ingrained desire and relieves his suffering from khumor. The couplet conveys the intensification of the lyrical experience through the hero's growing attachment to wine.

Hajr aro bo'lmisham mahzun base,
Soqiy, ey lutfe jomu g'amzudo. [5, p.207]

(Interpretation: I have become deeply sorrowful in the midst of separation. O cupbearer, show me kindness and offer me a cup that will dispel my grief.)

The lyrical hero's appeal to the saqi expresses profound sorrow caused by separation and a desire to escape this suffering. The phrase "in the midst of separation" establishes the emotional condition of the hero and conveys the anguish he experiences in the absence of his beloved. The expression "deeply sorrowful" emphasizes the intensity and persistence of this state. The request for the cupbearer's kindness reveals the hero's need for spiritual consolation. The expression "the cup that dispels grief" is particularly significant, as it presents the cup as a means of overcoming sorrow. Thus, the saqi emerges as a source of compassion, consolation and spiritual relief for the lyrical hero, exhausted by the pain of separation. The cup embodies his hope of finding relief from sorrow.

CONCLUSION

In the poetry of Munis Khorezmi, the saqi image plays an important role in expressing the lyrical hero's emotional state and inner experiences. The analysis demonstrates that through this image, the poet conveys such feelings as the torment of khumor, the anguish of separation, longing for union and the search for spiritual consolation. In some instances, the saqi appears as a symbol of kindness and salvation, while in others, he is portrayed as a figure who fulfils the lyrical hero's desire for wine. The symbols of wine and the cup contribute to revealing the hero's inner world. Thus, in Munis's poetry, the saqi image goes beyond its conventional poetic meaning and becomes an important artistic means of illuminating the various dimensions of lyrical experience.

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