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The Gender Significance of Mythopoetic Details and Symbols in Asqad Mukhtor's Novel "Chinor"

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Abstract: *This article examines the mythopoetic details and symbolic elements in Asqad Mukhtor's novel Chinor from the perspective of gender studies. The study focuses on the mythological motifs, archetypal images, symbolic details, and their artistic functions in revealing the gender characteristics of the characters. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which mythopoetic symbols reflect traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity, gender roles, and the spiritual and social identity of the characters. The analysis demonstrates that mythopoetic details and symbols in the novel serve not only an aesthetic function but also contribute to the deeper interpretation of gender relations, cultural values, and the author's artistic conception.*

Keywords: *Asqad Mukhtor, Chinor, mythopoetics, mythological details, symbols, gender, gender identity, masculinity, femininity, archetype, gender roles, Uzbek literature.*

1. Introduction

In Uzbek and world literary studies, the investigation of literary works from a mythopoetic perspective is regarded as one of the important theoretical and methodological approaches for revealing the subconscious experiences of characters, the philosophical and symbolic layers of a work, and models of social gender. Mythopoetics is not merely the retelling of ancient myths; rather, it examines how images, details, and chronotopes within a literary work are rooted in ancient archetypes and the collective unconscious. According to Carl Gustav Jung's theory, the collective unconscious of humanity contains universal symbols (archetypes) that manifest themselves in different artistic forms across different historical periods and shape the sexual, social, and psychological nature of human beings [1].

Asqad Mukhtar's novel *Chinor* occupies a distinctive position in Uzbek novelistic literature not only because of its realistic representations but also because of its powerful mythopoetic symbols and archetypes. The writer reveals gender relations, intergenerational continuity, and the harmony between human beings and nature not merely through everyday details, but through grand mythopoetic images such as the thousand-year-old plane tree, the Sumbultomchi waterfall, the dry steppe, and ancient legends.

From a mythopoetic perspective, the tree in ancient myths—the "Tree of Life" (*Axis Mundi*)—is interpreted as the axis of the universe, a medium connecting the past, present, and future, and a means of linking the earth with the heavens [2]. In the novel *Chinor*, this

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symbol acquires a gendered significance as a representation of the deep-rooted patriarchal (paternal) foundations of Uzbek national mentality, masculine stability, and the protector of familial lineage. Through mythopoetic details, the author philosophically generalizes the social position of men and women, as well as their primordial (natural) and social essence.

From the very opening pages of the novel, the reader encounters a magnificent and mysterious symbol—the plane tree (*chinor*). The writer presents this tree not simply as a natural landscape element, but as a powerful masculine image that determines the name and spirit of the entire surrounding space and community:

“That cloud-like thing on the mountain is not a cloud at all, but a plane tree. Indeed, the mountain itself and the village are named after it: Chinortog’ and Chinorqishloq. Our Ochil grandfather was born here... The entire village is situated beneath the shade of this plane tree” (Ch, 3) [3].

In this description, the plane tree represents the foundation of a patriarchal society, the embodiment of ancestral spirits, and a paternal figure protecting an entire community under the shelter of its shade.

In gender studies, the concept of patriarchy is often used by Western scholars in a negative sense, implying oppression, domination, or authoritarian control. In the Eastern and Uzbek cultural context, however, the concept may also convey the meanings of a “protector,” “root,” “support,” and “father who preserves values” [4]. The spiritual and mystical connection between Ochil grandfather and the plane tree represents the highest manifestation of the masculine archetype in the novel. Looking at the plane tree, Ochil grandfather sees the past of himself and his entire lineage:

“When he looked at it, an endlessness as vast as the sea and as green as the earth appeared before his eyes. His life seemed endless. It was as though he himself had lived for a thousand years and would live for another thousand... Then he gazed around at the entire surrounding nature as though he were its master...” (Ch, 4).

The idea that a man’s role within the family and in ensuring the continuity of generations should be as deep-rooted and steadfast as the roots of the plane tree constitutes one of the central gender-related ideas of the work. The plane tree’s standing “as though he were its master” signifies masculine power, while its “green endlessness” suggests that this power is creative and life-giving.

According to mythopoetic thought, sacred trees can communicate with human beings and become connected with their destinies [5]. In the novel, according to a legend, the plane tree was destined to burst into flames of its own accord upon reaching the age of one thousand.

2. Methodology

“One year... the elders of the village calculated the age of the plane tree, estimated the season in which it would reach one thousand years, and announced it publicly. According to their belief, at the very moment the plane tree reached one thousand years, it was supposed to burst into flames by itself” (Ch, 5).

Faced with this extraordinary situation, the entire village becomes frightened, and the inhabitants move to the hill for safety. Only Ochil grandfather refuses to believe that the tree will burn and goes to it at night, intending to burn together with it. At this point, a mythopoetic miracle occurs: the plane tree speaks:

“If I burn, the world will come to an end!” the plane tree is said to have declared (Ch, 6).

The gendered and philosophical significance of this detail is particularly profound. The “end of the world” does not merely signify the destruction of the physical world; it symbolizes the severing of the nation’s roots, the erosion of familial and genealogical values, the disappearance of paternal (masculine) protection that unites generations, and the transformation of the patriarchal order into ruins. Ochil grandfather and the plane tree become symbolic counterparts of one another. His sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are dispersed throughout the world like the branches of the tree:

“...he knows one hundred and thirty-seven of his grandchildren. He cannot even count the generations beyond them—the great-grandchildren and those who come after. This family has spread throughout the entire region” (Ch, 8).

Thus, through the symbol of the plane tree, Asqad Mukhtar artistically conceptualizes the primary role of man in society as uniting generations, serving as a bridge between history and the future, and preventing the destruction of the family tree. The image of the plane tree emerges as an artistic concept embodying the masculine essence of the Uzbek nation.

3. Results and Discussion

If the plane tree in the novel symbolizes masculinity, stability, and fatherhood, its counterpart is represented by the beautiful and delicate wonders of nature, particularly water, waterfalls, and flowers, which can be interpreted as feminine archetypes [6]. This is vividly illustrated in the later chapters of the novel through the village of Shivilg'on and the Sumbultomchi waterfall, which come to life in Orif aka's memories.

In describing Sumbultomchi, the writer directly compares it with feminine beauty and strands of hair, thereby creating a mythopoetic harmony between nature and woman:

“First of all, have you ever seen the sumbul? It is truly as delicate and pitch-black as a strand of hair, while its leaves are exceptionally small and delicate, as though fashioned by a jeweler's hand... Clear spring water drips from every leaf of the sumbul” (Ch, 42).

The dripping water, the delicacy of the waterfall, and the source of life flowing between the rocks have traditionally represented the Mother Goddess (*Anima*), fertility, purification, and feminine grace in ancient mythology. For Orif aka, Sumbultomchi and Shivilg'on are not merely geographical locations; rather, they constitute a sacred memory chronotope associated with his first love, Saragul. The beauty of Sumbultomchi concealed within the darkness of the cave serves as a metaphor for the mysterious inner world of woman [7].

During the Soviet period, when ideological policies sought to detach people from nature and reduce them merely to “means of production,” Orif aka's return to these delicate memories represents a distinctive form of spiritual resistance to a technocratic and emotionally sterile environment.

In a context where administrators such as Maria Vasilyevna, the regional party committee secretary, had lost their feminine grace under the influence of the system and had become emotionless “posters,” Orif aka seeks spiritual consolation in nature and in the feminine grace of Sumbultomchi. At this point, Asqad Mukhtar mythopoetically generalizes the idea that the natural essence of beauty and femininity cannot be completely destroyed by any social system; even if concealed among stones, it continues to flow eternally like water. The ancient customs of Shivilg'on village, the freedom of its girls, and Saragul's unspoiled nature are all presented by the author as representations of authentic femininity that has remained intact and free from artificialization.

The inclusion of legends and myths in a literary work serves not merely to enrich the plot, but also to expand the central philosophical concept of the work on a macro-scale by revealing its ideological and gender dimensions [8]. In *Chinor*, the legend of Abu Nasr al-Farabi and the oppressed people condemned to slavery constitutes one of the ideological centers of the novel.

According to the legend, a cruel king gathers slaves from different parts of the world and intends to make them construct the eighth wonder in Balochistan. However, an unknown illness spreads among the slaves, and they begin to die one after another. The great thinker Farabi, who comes before the king, explains the cause and cure of the illness: “This is the illness of longing and wasting away, the pain of separation, O king... The cure is to return them to their homeland. Only then will they survive” [9]. The king refuses to accept this advice and also enslaves Farabi. Farabi then plays the flute at night, awakening in the hearts of the slaves their longing for their homeland and their feelings of beauty and freedom: “The slaves, whose ears had become numb from the clanking of rusty chains, trembled when they heard the delicate melody of the flute... The painful climax of the

melodies pierced their hearts, and people found pleasure in this wound, forgetting themselves" (Ch, 37).

What, then, is the gender and social significance of this legend in the novel? The king's tyranny and forced labor symbolize a cruel system that deprives human beings of their nature, freedom, identity, and, consequently, their gendered existence, including their family, spouses, children, and responsibilities. In this sense, it represents a destructive form of masculinity. Farabi's flute, by contrast, restores the natural harmony within the human soul, the aspiration for freedom, and the sense of beauty and creativity. By recalling this legend, Orif aka expresses resistance to the spiritual enslavement of the Soviet period and to a system that viewed people merely as "mechanisms for fulfilling plans," severing them from their land and cultural values [10].

Like Farabi's slaves, people oppressed by repression and the harshness of economic administration were gradually losing their natural identity, compassion, and humanity. Orifjon's defense of human dignity and genuine human emotions in his confrontation with Maria Vasilyevna can be understood as a continuation of this Farabian humanism.

Furthermore, the sound of the flute in the legend evokes before the people's eyes images of their beautiful homeland and beloved ones. Through this image, the author ideologically affirms that no matter how cruel society becomes, it cannot extinguish the human soul's natural aspiration toward beauty and freedom: "Yet the sense of beauty in the human heart is the greatest of miracles, for without it a human being is not truly human..." [11].

In the novel, mythopoetic details do not merely serve as a philosophical background; they function as a distinctive cognitive framework through which the psychological and existential states of the characters, as well as their social and gendered identities, are revealed. Discussing Asqad Mukhtar's literary skill, O. Sharafiddinov emphasized that "Modernity requires a writer not only to think figuratively but also to think analytically at the level of his or her own time" [12]. The ancient legend concerning the origin of the tortoise and its direct connection with Akbarali's tragedy are products of precisely this powerful analytical and mythopoetic thinking. Through the use of a zoomorphic myth, the author artistically investigates the genesis of the breakdown of masculine will, the avoidance of responsibility, and psychological dependency.

In world mythology, particularly in Eastern legends, the tortoise is traditionally valued as a symbol of the foundation of the universe, wisdom, patience, and stability [13]. As B. Sarimsoqov notes, representations of animals and birds in folklore often embody stable archetypes of good or evil, wisdom or deficiency [14].

However, Asqad Mukhtar completely deconstructs this universal archetype and assigns it an entirely new psychological and social significance. According to the legend in the novel, the tortoise is not originally a wise creature that sustains the world, but rather a submissive and selfish being that abandons its masculine duty of protection in a life-and-death struggle:

"The tortoise was once... one of the agile, swift, and handsome creatures... Predatory animals came swarming from the direction of Mazandaran like locusts... and it fought with all its strength. But then an ominous thought and fear entered its heart: 'My turn is coming—am I simply going to die?!'... Trembling with fear for that brief moment, the tortoise unconsciously withdrew from the ranks and hid among the stones" (Ch, 222–223).

The subtextual meaning of this legend is remarkably profound. From the perspective of gender studies, the battle represents the ultimate testing ground for masculine will, endurance, and sacrifice. The tortoise's flight from this arena signifies its renunciation of its own nature, freedom, and responsibility. In an attempt to save its own life, the creature hides among the stones, and nature—or a divine power—inflicts the harshest punishment upon it: once the danger has passed, the stones above and beneath it become fused to its body. What it had regarded as a means of protection is transformed into an eternal prison and armor symbolizing submission:

"It can no longer see the sky or the sun; it passes through the world alone for the rest of its life, dragging its stone shell behind it like an eternal curse" (Ch, 224).

The writer does not introduce this legend immediately before the Akbarali episode by coincidence. Akbarali's fate, which begins with Nasriddin Afandi's epigraph, "The most terrifying predator is the rabbit," represents a realistic, psychological, and brutal twentieth-century Soviet-era manifestation of the events depicted in the legend. When a transformer is at risk of exploding, Bektemir aka, an elderly, one-eyed war veteran standing beside Akbarali and embodying genuine masculine courage, throws himself under the flames and metal without hesitation in order to save the lives of hundreds of people and asks Akbarali for assistance [15]. However, instead of helping him, the young and physically healthy Akbarali is overcome by animalistic fear and flees, abandoning his companion face-to-face with death: "Run, Bektemir aka! Run quickly, it will explode!"

The writer conveys this psychological state with remarkable precision:

"Someone was not afraid; he was afraid. He was afraid for only a moment. Just one moment... That moment decided everything. He had even wanted to turn back, but he did not. The box... the heavy, cement-filled box... He did not turn back. He was afraid. Just one moment of fear... Now he had to run! He had to run!" (Ch, 240–241).

In his work *Escape from Freedom*, German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm interprets a person's attempt to escape freedom and responsibility in extreme situations and voluntarily hide within a state of submission as a form of spiritual death. Akbarali's flight from the site of the disaster represents precisely such an escape from social responsibility and the paralysis of masculine will. As Q. Yo'ldoshev observes, in genuine literature, the fears and transformations occurring within a character's inner world expose not only the individual's personal tragedy but also the psychological pathology of a particular social system and environment [16]. Akbarali's "momentary fear" ultimately shatters his entire human essence.

The social consequences of this gender crisis are even more devastating. When a man loses his position and sense of responsibility, it is often the family and women around him who bear the consequences. According to U. Normatov, the most intense psychological crises experienced by Asqad Mukhtar's characters become apparent at the moments when they are forced to confront their own consciences. As a consequence of Akbarali's lack of will, his mother Sharofat khola suffers immeasurably, while the woman he loves, Hadiya, faces an unhappy fate.

Lying on her deathbed, his mother witnesses her son's torment of conscience and shows him a path toward redemption:

"My son, you must go to the people of Shodaso and ask their forgiveness for your sin—not from the waitress's wife, nor from anyone else, but from them alone. Only they can forgive your sin. Show yourself to them, bow your head. No matter how much you confess to others, that accursed yoke will remain upon your neck" (Ch, 253).

The mother's advice embodies an Eastern philosophy of repentance and purification, or social catharsis: an individual can restore his fallen dignity and masculine agency only by acknowledging his guilt before society. Yet Akbarali is unable even to undertake this step; his inner fear prevails even in the presence of his dying mother. Like the tortoise in the legend, he withdraws from society and from his own identity, imprisoning himself in a psychological cage of alcoholism and solitude.

The most climactic and mythopoetically complex moment of Akbarali's tragedy occurs in the cemetery scene. The state, representing the Soviet system, attributes Bektemir aka's heroic deed to Akbarali G'oziyev on the basis of the identification document found in Bektemir's pocket and erects a bronze statue in Akbarali's honor. In Carl Gustav Jung's psychoanalytic theory, a character's confrontation with a false representation or statue of himself can be interpreted through the archetype of the "Shadow" or the motif of the double-shadow. The inscription on the statue becomes the most painful irony and punishment for Akbarali. The statue represents the authentic ideal—the "true man"—that he could have become but abandoned because of his cowardice.

In reality, however, Akbarali is merely:

"...a miserable coward, hiding in hollows like an ugly insect, thinking only of his accursed, filthy body and the life that was worth no more than a bucket, trampling upon

such noble things as friendship, love, and a mother's affection, and now sitting here in this cemetery..." (Ch, 264).

When he touches the bronze statue with his fingers and his fingernail bends back, causing it to bleed, this becomes a powerful artistic detail signifying that his spirit has already died and that he has been reduced to the level of the tortoise—a creature capable of experiencing only physical pain. Ochil grandfather's aphoristic statement, "A person who dies for the sake of others remains alive forever... The one who lives only for himself is dead" (Ch, 266–268), provides the final philosophical formulation of this existential tragedy.

It can therefore be seen that, in the novel *Chinor*, Asqad Mukhtar skillfully projects the legend of the Tortoise onto Akbarali's fate, transforming the two into an inseparable artistic and philosophical whole. Through this technique, the writer reveals the psychological breakdown of the individual in extreme situations, submission, and crisis of conscience through mythopoetic and psychological frameworks. Akbarali's tragedy demonstrates that a person who abandons his masculine duty and social responsibility, even if he remains physically alive, is condemned by both nature and society to eternal solitude and a psychological "stone shell."

In both world and Uzbek literary studies, the investigation of literary works and short-form legends from mythopoetic and psychological perspectives is regarded as an important theoretical and methodological approach for revealing the subconscious experiences of individuals, the philosophical and symbolic layers of texts, and models of social gender. Mythopoetics is not merely the retelling of ancient plots; rather, it investigates how the characters, details, and chronotopes of a literary work are rooted in ancient archetypes and the collective unconscious. According to C. G. Jung's theory, the collective unconscious of humanity contains universal symbols that manifest themselves in different artistic forms across different historical periods and shape the social and psychological essence of human beings.

The legend of the "Realm of Love" under discussion is a work that embodies profound philosophical meaning within a relatively small narrative through its powerful mythopoetic symbols and archetypes. The author reveals the relationships within the story and the conflict between the individual's inner world and external reality not through ordinary everyday details, but through grand mythopoetic images—the boundless Realm of Love, the strict Guardian, the Playful Young Man, the Sorrowful Mother, and the ordinary Ant.

From the perspective of mythopoetics and gender studies, the "Realm of Love" in the legend represents the inner, idealistic, emotional, and vulnerable world of the individual, that is, a space of feminine (delicate and passionate) emotions. This space is as fragile as glass and cannot withstand the coarse intrusion of the external world. The fact that this realm exists "everywhere and nowhere" indicates that it is not a geographical but a purely existential chronotope.

The figure of the Guardian in the legend performs an exceptionally complex masculine and protective function. In gender studies, the image of a guardian may be interpreted as a barrier protecting against the dangers of the external world; here, however, the Guardian appears as a strict law—an internal principle that preserves the absolute purity of the world of love. The Guardian's equal rejection of both the Playful Young Man and the Sorrowful Mother carries profound significance. The Young Man's excessively fiery passion, as well as the Mother's appeal imbued with care and everyday concerns, contradict the very nature of the Realm of Love. Through this, the author artistically generalizes the idea that neither hatred nor evil, but even excessive concern and the practical demands of everyday life, can be accommodated within the world of genuine love. The Mother's anxiety, "I am afraid that my children will go hungry," and the Guardian's response, "They are well fed; they are nourished by love," demonstrate the sharp boundary between material reality and the realm of elevated emotions.

The most climactic and philosophically delicate moment of the legend is the unexpected fragmentation of the miraculous world. The entire realm is not destroyed by a great tragedy or an enemy attack, but by a small ant that crosses the boundary carrying a

single grain of wheat, motivated by the purely benevolent intention of caring for the lovers who “have gone hungry.”

Drawing on E. Fromm’s theories concerning psychological defenses and the philosophy of human relationships, it can be argued that the individual’s delicate inner psychological equilibrium and the pure world of love cannot withstand even the smallest pragmatic intrusion from the external world. The Ant symbolizes everyday concerns within human consciousness, the practical care of ordinary life, and a reduced form of rationality. Entering the Realm of Love through such mundane measurements shatters its fragile glass-like structure.

Thus, the legend demonstrates how exceptionally delicate and unconventional human relationships can be. As observed throughout Asqad Mukhtar’s works, this short legend also reveals, through mythopoetic and psychological approaches, the purity of the human psyche, emotional equilibrium, and the difficulty of preserving them. The idea that love must be protected not only from enemies but also from excessive mundane concern and the everyday pressures of practical life constitutes the central meaning of the work.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, in Asqad Mukhtar’s novel *Chinor*, mythopoetic details and symbols—the plane tree (*Chinor*), Sumbultomchi, the cutting of hair, and the legend of Farabi—are not merely artistic embellishments but fundamental cognitive instruments that carry the gender concept and socio-philosophical meaning of the work. The plane tree is interpreted as a masculine archetype representing stability, protection, and the continuity of familial lineage, while natural landscapes such as Sumbultomchi function as symbols of grace, memory, and feminine vitality within the human soul. The legends and religious-mythological allusions, in turn, connect the psychological worlds of the characters with the collective unconscious. Through these symbols and legends, the writer raises a distinctive artistic and mythological resistance to the erosion of human nature by a totalitarian society and emphasizes the necessity of preserving the authentic—natural and culturally rooted—essence of gender relations. This, in turn, determines the significant theoretical and scholarly importance of the novel not only within twentieth-century Uzbek literature but also within contemporary gender studies.

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