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Leading Poetic Images in Usmon Azim's Poetry

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Abstract: This article examines the leading poetic images in Usmon Azim's poetry, highlighting how the poet illuminates the human psyche through these central images, and unflinchingly criticizes the vices that hinder the progress of the nation and society in his poems. The poet reflects on human emotions, joy and sorrow, and expresses a sense of pity toward the 'iron-hearted geniuses' who are indifferent to worldly struggles. In two of his works in particular, a structural harmony is observed. The form is quatrain. However, in both, the lines are noted to be 'broken' and analyzed in this context.

Keywords: sky, cloud, rain, firmament, shadow, horizon at sunset, twilight dawn, a life without light, an outstretched hand to a man, a wandering path, chirping.

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Introduction

The nature of poetry does not change. When a poet chooses words, they must refine them to ensure that they are meaningful, artistically appealing, and resonant. Words are important and significant in every creator's poetry when they transform into deep inner meanings and emotional-artistic imagery. Additionally, 'a poem created in exchange for genuine thoughts and sincere emotions, rooted in life's feelings'[1] can also fulfill a special role by providing the reader with spiritual nourishment and aesthetic pleasure. In artistic literature, changes in the inner world are expressed according to the laws of beauty, which does not happen automatically or casually. When a creative person deeply feels complex and conflicting psychological struggles and creative torments, he expresses his social-aesthetic attitude towards reality through images. The poet's work is guided by ideas of seeing the world and people with a new perspective and enriching it with a mystical worldview; in his poems, we see the "self" searching for its essence, attempting to understand the nature of the world, and trying to find its own solution to the logic between coming and going. Even if the theme is familiar to the reader, the main characteristic of his creativity is creating imagery through creative thinking, deep reflection, and new poetic discoveries to convey the essence of the poem.

[1] *Umarova G. Zulfiya's Artistic World and Poetic School: PhD (DSc) Dissertation in Philology – Samarkand, 2019. – p.16*

I have lived forty years straight in your world,

Every dawn they pierced my body.

My God! Tonight, too, in the darkness,

Cranes sat crying in sorrow.

I wandered sleepless – I asked for the morning,

“Go faster,” I said to the slow-moving night.

I hurried to look at the sky at daybreak –

My God! – there wasn’t a single crane there.

Show me the way of the cranes, let me go,

I will tell them my sorrow openly.

“Here is the way,” you pointed to the sky...

My God! Why is your path so narrow? (Page 252)

This short twelve-line poem, though small in size, provides immense meaning in stirring a person's views about life. Through the image of the 'I' – the poet's persona – it exaggerates the dream of a person who hopes for mercy from God while standing firm until the age of forty. The image of the crane is not included in the poem by chance. The crane symbolizes justice, long life, piety, and a compassionate soul. In Chinese tradition, the crane is a symbol of special spirits, immortal souls. For example, according to legend, a person named Wanzi Seo ascended to heaven in the form of a crane after achieving eternal life. Cranes live for a thousand years and breathe with their bowed necks, thereby renewing their breath. Daoists have used this symbolism. Cranes guide the deceased to heaven and carry angels. In Japan, porridge made from rice cultivated in the Kuru (Crane) district is consumed .The custom is widespread. This porridge is believed to grant the baby a long life and good health.[2] It was thought to drive away evil spirits from the child.

In some traditions, the crane is associated with rain and fertility. For example, the crane is a bird dedicated to the Greek agricultural 'god' Cronus. In Christianity, the crane is a symbol of a pious life and asceticism. As a figurative symbol of justice, it is depicted standing on one leg to represent vigilance and alertness, while holding a stone in the other leg. In Uzbek oral literature, the crane symbolizes a messenger or envoy. In this poem, the poet conveys the desire to wait for justice, standing upright even until the age of forty with vigilance, spending sleepless nights seeking the path of justice, and expressing his wish to tell his troubles to the cranes. The poet's image is compared to that of a lover striving for God and justice.

In the poem, Usmon Azim's innate sharpness, correct understanding of life, and sense of justice that lead and elevate a person to perfection are hinted at through the line “Ana yo’l” – pointing to the sky... and that not everyone can walk that path, My God! Why is Your path so narrow? This is expressed through the verse. In this poem, symbolic meanings are represented through landscape details such as the world, fabric, night, darkness, crane, dawn, night, sky, pain, path, as well as traditional poetic symbols like living upright, piercing the body, passing life in tears, praying without sleep, revealing one’s pain, and the narrow path. Usmon Azim’s unique poetic devices, such as “Yolvordim uxlamay – tongni so’radim” (I prayed without sleeping – asked the dawn) and “sust qadam tun” (the night with slow steps), poetically shape the sufferings and experiences of contemporary people. In his poems, Usmon Azim attempts to embed his aesthetic ideal into the layer of lyrical experience by ironically addressing the universal human issue – the relationship

[2] *Mingboyeva Dilrabo. The Code of Symbols. – Tashkent: Adabiyot, 2022. – p. 143.*

between man and the world. In particular, the poet's inner experiences, his “lyrical self,” are also reflected in his following poem:

Leaning on my poem like a heather,

With the hands that still carry your scent (p. 84)

In the poem, details such as heather, hands, the Earth, life, the poem, and mulberry have become symbolic, reflecting the poet's unique nature, his relationship with the poetic image, as well as how a creator's desires and aspirations clash with reality. As a result, one or more poetic images in the poem merge together, ensuring the continuity of emotions. Usmon Azim's distinctive poetic inventions, such as "Let it cling to the neck of life, both my hands like mulberry!" in the poem, also expand the impact of the emotional experience. In the following poem “Poets,” the image of the poet is also portrayed:

Poets are born early,

Like the first flower of spring — a buttercup.

Poets die with longing,

Like the first flower of spring — a buttercup (p. 93).

In the poem, the image of the poet is compared to a buttercup. The comparison between the poet and the buttercup serves to interpret experiences such as separation, longing, and anguish that arise during the unanswered questions of the lyrical hero. The intensity of the emotion in the poem is such that the regret, pain, and sorrow in it involuntarily spread to the reader. In this context, “only when feelings are deep can a true work arise — the golden rule of artistic literature”[3] is once again proven. In the poetry of the Independence period, creative freedom began to reveal its diverse forms. Instead of conclusions derived from reason, poetry came to include new content enriched with creative imagination. The flow of layered emotions in expression intensified, and the density of meaning manifested clearly in the compactness of form. This laid the groundwork for the renewal of meanings in traditional poetic images and formal explorations in Usmon Azim's work. In his poems, philosophical content is presented through symbolism and figurative imagery, evoking a high aesthetic pleasure in the reader. In his collection “Saylanma,” the poet expresses his ironic attitude toward social realities through allegorical images such as oxen, wild grapes, ants, elephants, dogs, antelopes, and horses. When studying the leading poetic images in Usmon Azim's poetry, we witnessed that the poet illuminated the human psyche through these prominent poetic images. In his poems, poetic images such as humans, trees, stones, fire, wind, mountains, birds, and flowers frequently appear:

Do not play with the sky be afraid,

Do not shed tears, do not boast about love.

The mighty army of the age is yet to come

The entire Mount Qaf will rise... (“On the Writing of the First Poem” Ballad, p. 152)

In this poem by the poet, “On the Writing of the First Poem” Ballad, the distinctive world present in the human intellect and imagination fully encompasses the images. The grandeur of the mountain is depicted. We know that an image has the characteristic of multiple meanings. Accordingly, a creator tries to reveal an event or phenomenon through another reality. In this, emotional reflection plays a more important role than intellectual activity. Because “a true artist’s gaze is directed at the essence; it does not focus on the external similarity between objects and events but captures the hidden internal resemblance from our perspective. In their poems, they

[3] *Yoldosheva M. The Eternity of Updates. – Tashkent: Adib, 2011. – P.16*

artisticize the pangs of love, intense feelings, and emotions through powerful lyricism. In the creator's poems, symbols like a swan, river, fish, and crow serve to enhance emotional philosophical depth, abstract reality, intensify closeness in context, and increase symbolism in expression. They have a unique style in expressing the world through poetic symbols. He primarily appears as a figure of a person trying to understand his own inner world. As the poet artisticizes reality, he creates imagery with unexpected metaphors. In his poems, there are landscape details such as the sky, clouds, rain, firmament, shadow, skyline, and the dawn; traditional poetic symbols like a lifeless life, a hand stretched towards freedom, a wandering path, and a scythe; and unique poetic inventions such as "the first day of spring," "the melting of the ice of life," "the hopeful eye of longing," "heavy as anger, helpless like sorrow," and "a world whose stones have turned to soil," which poetically depict the sufferings and experiences of contemporary people. I need a stone as vast as the sky,

As heavy as anger, as helpless as sorrow...

You couldn't find me a stone you,

In a world where stones have turned to dust ("The Dream of Inscribed Stones" p. 149).

In his poems, he powerfully expresses lyrical emotions by using the motif of the stone with irony. The poet deeply understands social reality the independence of the motherland, personal freedom, the liberation of the nation through artistic reflection. Through images such as a corner, cotton fields, a hut, a bride, a farmer, a child, and detailed symbols like a white dress, a candle, a swing, he depicts the experiences of a patriotic individual who is the lyrical persona. In Usmon Azim's poems, the vices that hinder the progress of the nation and society are mercilessly criticized. The poet looks at human emotions joys and sorrows and at the conflict of the world with a sense of pity for the 'iron-hearted geniuses' who are alien to such feelings. Particularly in two of his poems, a formal balance is observed. The form is quatrains. However, in both of them, the lines are 'broken'. Through this, the poet achieves a stronger meaning and a deeper understanding of the content. In Usmon Azim's poetry, regardless of the theme, the expression of the national spirit takes precedence. Timeless customs, beneficial traditions, and invaluable values that embody the spirit of the nation are expressed uniquely in the poet's lyrical works. The nation's ability to critically reflect on itself is interpreted in its entirety. Achieving a perfect harmony between poetic content and form is a result of the poet's high skill. In interpreting the national spirit, the function of the poetic form lies in its significance in expressing nationality is being studied.

"Anthology" compiles a number of fine poems that were published in the years preceding this publication. Its main distinctive feature is also this: it includes selected poems from the poet's notable collections such as "Lesson", "Fragments of Speed", "Second April", "Bakhshiyona", "The Agony of Awakening", and "Anger".

The following publication description is given for "Anthology": "The famous poet Usmon Azim's book collects his finest poems. The main theme characteristic of the poet's work in this collection is: A person who lived with the dream of seeing the world and humanity in its perfection is embodied in all the scope of their longing, contradictions, tragedies and joys, regrets, and hopes. The poet writes the world sincerely. The poet's poetry is very close to the perception of the world felt by the reader, and at the same time, it is somehow illuminated, helping the heart and soul.

Even without paying special attention, it is not difficult to notice, from the 'Selected Works,' the gradual development of the poet's craft, the refinement of their uniqueness, and the perfection of their style. The poems included in each book, when viewed from the perspective of our present-day views, seem to have maintained their relevance, which indicates that the past efforts related to these works were not in vain and that all the poems are free from distracting ideas, objectionable compromises, or flattery. Even if one does not deliberately pay attention, it is not difficult to sense the progression of poetry, the perfection of individuality, and the refinement of style in 'Selected

Works.' Even when the poems included from any book are observed from the perspective of our present-day views, they appear to have retained their standing, which indicates that the past efforts related to these works have not gone to waste, and that all the poems are free from distracting ideas, undesirable compromise, and flattery. Indeed, poetry is, first and foremost, to be understood as an art that poetically conveys the truth, expressively communicates all sorrows and joys, and directs one to the true essence of the concept of goodness, and only then is it appropriate for it to come to fruition. Faulty results surely lead to regret, divert creative efforts from correct paths, and render labor wasted. A total of 73 poems from the "Lesson" collection have been included in the anthology, covering a variety of topics. Among them, there are poems dedicated to friends, famous individuals, and heroes[4].

I will plant a garden in the heart of the wind –

My wall seems non-existent,

I tried shaking the tambourines –

My dust seems to be nothing...

My Nigor, come, take a look,

At my blessed autumn,

Before it becomes fire,

It seems no motto of mine exists.

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