

ANALYSIS OF METAPHORICAL AND SYMBOLIC LAYERS IN FOLKLORE TEXTS**Sharipova Malikakhon Qahramon kizi.**

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Abstract: This article investigates the role of metaphor and symbolism as central mechanisms in the construction of meaning in literary texts, with a particular focus on Uzbek folktales. It explores how these figurative devices function not only as aesthetic and stylistic tools but also as cognitive instruments that enable authors to convey complex ideas, emotions, and cultural norms. By analyzing selected narratives, the study demonstrates how metaphors and symbols encode communal values, ethical principles, and social ideologies, thereby enriching narrative structure and guiding reader interpretation. Furthermore, the article examines the ways in which figurative language preserves cultural memory, fosters moral education, and contributes to the aesthetic and intellectual depth of folklore. Through this analysis, the research highlights the integral function of metaphor and symbolism in sustaining the narrative richness and cultural significance of Uzbek oral traditions.

Keywords: metaphor, symbol, folklore, folktale, folk literature, symbolism, cognitive linguistics, structuralism,

Metaphors function as cognitive and communicative devices that facilitate conceptual mapping between disparate domains of experience. According to Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors allow abstract notions to be understood through concrete experiential frameworks. Symbolism, closely related to metaphor, operates by attributing layered meanings to objects, actions, or characters, transforming seemingly mundane elements into carriers of ethical, social, or existential significance. In folklore, these devices serve multiple functions: they enhance narrative aesthetics, reinforce moral instruction, and encode communal ideologies.

Structuralist and anthropological perspectives further illuminate the function of metaphor and symbolism in folktales. Lévi-Strauss argued that myths and folktales structure meaning through binary oppositions contrasting concepts such as good and evil, weakness and strength, or individual versus community. These oppositions are often materialized through symbolic elements that reflect societal norms, hierarchy, and collective values. Folktales, therefore, operate as cultural models in which imaginative storytelling and ethical instruction converge.

The ocean frequently appears as a metaphor for human consciousness, encompassing both the vastness of existential experience and the depths of emotion. Similarly, animals serve as symbolic mirrors of human traits. For instance, a fox may represent cunning or deception, while a dog signifies loyalty and devotion. These metaphorical associations allow readers to interpret human behaviors within a symbolic framework, providing moral and psychological insight while retaining narrative engagement.

Natural imagery and color symbolism further contribute to the depth of folklore. Colors convey emotional and psychological nuances red often symbolizes passion, blue denotes introspection or melancholy while elements of the natural world, such as storms or seasonal changes, become metaphors for universal themes like creation and decay. These associations guide reader interpretation, evoke specific affective responses, and enrich the aesthetic fabric of the narrative. Allegorical structures enable authors to extend symbolic representation to philosophical, ethical, or political discourse. Characters, settings, and events function as embodiments of abstract concepts, providing readers with interpretive frameworks for understanding moral and societal

complexities. In folklore, allegory often intersects with metaphor and symbolism to produce multilayered meanings that resonate across generations.

In *The Lame Wolf*, physical lameness functions as a metaphor for moral weakness, illustrating the consequences of unethical behavior. Symbolically, the wolf represents social danger, deception, and the disruption of communal order. The narrative conveys a cautionary lesson: external impairments mirror internal ethical deficiencies, reinforcing cultural expectations for ethical conduct and vigilance.

Tuxumboy and Buyrakboy -The characters Tuxumboy and Buyrakboy embody contrasting human qualities: strategic intelligence and moral resilience, respectively. Their physical representations egg and kidney symbolize vulnerability, kinship dependence, and the organic unity of community. These symbolic forms communicate the principle that ethical and social strength arises from cooperation and collective responsibility. Narrative conflicts, whether interpersonal disputes or moral trials, serve as metaphors for rites of passage, social integration, and the negotiation of power within traditional clan structures.

The Giant Turnip-The *Giant Turnip* narratively emphasizes collective effort. The turnip functions as a metaphor for challenges that surpass individual capacity and as a symbol of agricultural abundance, communal labor, and social cohesion. Each character's participation reflects the gradual accumulation of communal strength, illustrating the principle that societal well-being relies on collective contribution. Unlike the individualized heroism of Tuxumboy and Buyrakboy, the tale foregrounds egalitarian collaboration, offering a universal model of social harmony and shared responsibility.

Applying structuralist analysis, these three tales reveal recurrent binary oppositions: individual versus collective, moral virtue versus vice, and ethical responsibility versus negligence. Symbolic imagery materializes these contrasts, guiding readers toward culturally encoded moral frameworks. Anthropologically, bodily and material representations physical lameness, organic forms, or communal objects mediate social norms and ethical principles. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the experiential grounding of moral concepts in physical metaphors, demonstrating how bodily conditions can serve as conceptual anchors for ethical interpretation.

Tuxumboy and Buyrakboy prioritize moral heroism and the cultivation of personal virtue, reflecting clan-specific values, leadership expectations, and ritualized social structures. The *Giant Turnip*, conversely, celebrates collective labor and egalitarian participation, conveying universal lessons on cooperation and social harmony. Together, these tales illustrate the dual mechanisms through which folklore communicates ethical, social, and cultural knowledge: through individualized heroism and communal interdependence.

Metaphor and symbolism in folklore constitute powerful tools for conveying complex moral, social, and existential meanings. Through figurative language, recurring motifs, and allegorical structures, folktales encode communal values, promote ethical reflection, and foster cultural continuity. In the Uzbek narrative tradition, tales such as *The Lame Wolf*, *Tuxumboy and Buyrakboy*, and *The Giant Turnip* exemplify the integration of metaphorical and symbolic layers to create narratives that are intellectually stimulating, emotionally resonant, and culturally instructive. By analyzing these layers, scholars gain insight into the narrative strategies that sustain folklore as both an artistic and ethical medium, affirming its enduring role in transmitting collective wisdom across generations.

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