



Demonological Motifs In Uzbek Literature

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Abstract: This article explores the roots of the Satan (Iblis) figure in religious-mythological sources, its interpretations in world literature, and the stages of its formation in Uzbek literature. It examines the embodiment of Satan as a motif and character in fiction, along with its symbolic manifestations, from a diachronic perspective. Drawing on Tohir Malik's novel pentalogy *Shaytanat*, the study offers a focused analysis of political and philosophical interpretations of the Satan concept.

Keywords: Satan, Azazil, Lucifer, Mephistopheles, Uzbek prose.

Introduction: As long as human society exists, various forms of conflict will emerge on earth. In art, this condition is expressed through concepts such as good and evil, the virtuous and the wicked, white and black. In Eastern legends and narratives, as well as in examples of our classical literature, the devil (Iblis) is presented as the chief instigator of humankind's defiance of the Divine commandments and rebellion against God. This tendency does not so much aim to prove or question the theological existence of Satan as it opens the way to study him as a distinct literary image. In this article, we examine the stages in the formation of the Iblis figure in Uzbek literature.

Throughout human history, the concepts of evil and good have been depicted as opposing forces. One of the most frequent personifications of evil is the image of Satan. This image is interpreted in various ways across religious sources, folklore, fiction, and philosophical thought. Consequently, the figure of Satan is not merely a religious notion; it also holds significance as a cultural, moral, and aesthetic phenomenon.

The poetic expression of Satan exists in all forms of art and has developed across centuries in diverse shapes and modes. In ancient myths and legends, Satan

represents the power opposed to goodness; in contemporary art forms, he most often appears as an antihero and, in some instances, as a political figure.

I. The Figure of Satan in Religious and Mythological Sources

The earliest narratives about Satan are presented differently within the Abrahamic religions. In Muslim societies the Arabic terms *shayton* and *iblis* are used; in Christianity he is referred to as “Lucifer” or “the Devil,” and in Judaism as “Satan.” In the teachings of all three religions, Satan is portrayed as the principal enemy of goodness, the force that opposes divine truth. According to Islamic belief, he is described as “a driven-out jinn or angel created from fire” (cf. *ar-Rahman* 55:15).

In Christian and Jewish traditions, the term *satan*—used in essentially the same sense—derives from the Hebrew word meaning “adversary” or “enemy.”² A distinct field that studies this subject is known as Demonology. Under the influence of religion on human thought, various myths, legends, and tales concerning Satan emerged. As a result, humanity’s interest in the supernatural realm found expression in the arts as well. For example, the episode common to the three Abrahamic faiths in which Satan is cast down from heaven to earth bears a resemblance to ancient Greek myths about Prometheus and Icarus; in this sense, the myth of the tragic antihero who rebels out of pride finds one of its points of origin here.

II. The Image of Iblis in World Literature

In written literature, *Iblis* (Satan) is interpreted in various ways: at times as an enemy, and at times as a figure who urges people toward godless “freedom” and faithless “courage,” even presented as a “Angel of Liberty.” There are also places where the motifs of Satan’s rebellion against God and his pride toward humankind are employed. For example, Aeschylus’s tragedy *Prometheus Bound*—specifically the scene in which Prometheus steals fire and thereby defies gods whose rule lacks both morality and reason—is often compared with the devil’s rebellion against God.

Moreover, world literature has a tradition of approaching the Satan figure in diverse artistic forms. In John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, Goethe’s *Faust*, and Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, Satan appears not as a merely rebellious and embittered entity but as an intellectualized figure. This subject was studied in 2007 by Professor Aron (Aaron) Edwards of the University of Chester.

III. The Concept of Satan in Classical Eastern Literature

Classical Eastern literature—suffused with religious

and spiritual perspectives—is fundamentally built on themes such as good and evil, the carnal self (*nafs*) and purity, obedience to God, and deliverance from satanic temptation. The notion of Satan in classical Eastern literature is widely interpreted on the basis of religious sources. He is portrayed as a constant testing force in a person’s spiritual life. By employing the Satan image, poets call on people to embrace purity, piety, and fidelity to divine truth.

Satan is broadly used as a symbol that leads a person astray and into moral weakness. In the Qur’an, the figure of *Iblis*—who refused to bow to Adam (peace be upon him) and vowed to mislead humankind until the Day of Judgment (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:34)—is depicted as an evil force. Thus, the Holy Qur’an served as the principal source for shaping the Satan image in Eastern literature. In classical Turkic literature, Satan is often compared with the *nafs* (the lower self).

In Ahmad Yassawi’s *Hikmats*, the image of Satan is expressed as a symbol of carnal weakness, greed, and love of the worldly life. Alisher Navoi, in his works, interprets Satan as the root of vices such as doubt, whisperings (temptations), and arrogance within the human heart. In particular, the motif of Farhad’s struggle against his own *nafs* and against Satan in Farhad and Shirin—one of the poems within the *Khamsa*—is a vivid example. In Sufi poetry, Satan is often mentioned as “the enemy who fills a person’s heart with impurities,” a view grounded in the Qur’anic verse: “Indeed, he (Satan) is a clear enemy to you.”

IV. The Symbol of Satan in Jadid Literature

At the beginning of the 20th century, Uzbek literature developed in the spirit of national awakening and enlightenment. In this period, renewal occurred both in genre and in theme, and as a result a tendency emerged to approach the Satan image within the context of world literature.

The Jadid writers—Abdulla Avloni, Mahmudxo’ja Behbudi, Munavvarqori Abdurashidxonov, Fitrat, and others—made it their chief goal to save the people from ignorance and to call them to knowledge and learning. For this reason, the image of Satan was interpreted not as a purely religious-mythological figure, but as a symbol of ignorance, superstition, and evil habits.

Avloni’s *Turkiy Guliston yoxud Axloq* (“The Turkic Gulistan, or Ethics”) is an example of moralistic-publicistic prose, in which Satan is interpreted as a symbol of “bad habit,” “ignorance,” and “arrogance.” According to him, a person’s greatest enemy is not an external devil, but the *nafs* and ignorance within one’s own heart.

Although the Satan figure does not appear as a

character in Behbudi's drama Padarkush ("Parricide"), we can see that ignorance and illiteracy are equated with satanic force.

Abdurauf Fitrat's drama Shaytonning Tangriga Isyoni ("Satan's Rebellion Against God") is devoted entirely to this theme. The drama is based on the motif that, out of pride, Satan refused to bow to man and rebelled against God.

In Fitrat's short story Qiyomat ("Doomsday"), drawing on reports from the Holy Qur'an, an imaginative scene of the Day of Judgment is brought to life, and Satan moves to the forefront of the narrative.

Abdulla Qodiriy's mystically inclined short story Jinlar Bazmi ("The Banquet of Jinns/Demons") can likewise be included among works on demonological themes.

V. The Satan Motif in Uzbek Literature of the Soviet Era

Under Soviet ideology, the introduction of religious images—among them the symbol of Satan—into literary works was restricted. Since the Soviet state was built upon the doctrine of atheism—godlessness—it took shape, in effect, on a foundation of satanic spirit and desires.

For this reason, writers employed the image of Satan not as an overtly religious symbol, but allegorically—as a sign of evil, tyranny, deceit, vice, and social problems.

In Abdulla Qahhor's short stories, the word "Satan" is used more as a tool of irony and sarcasm. For example, when speaking about characters addicted to bad habits, one finds figurative expressions like "he ended up following his devil." Everyday vices such as drunkenness, lying, bribery, selfishness, and hypocrisy are portrayed as satanic deeds.

In his stories such as "O'g'ri" ("The Thief") and "Daxshat" ("Horror/Terror"), as well as in plays like Tobutdan Tovush ("A Voice from the Coffin") and Og'riq Tishlar ("Aching Teeth"), Satan is interpreted as a symbol of the evil, egotism, and greed within human beings.

In G'afur G'ulom's satiric pieces—such as Hasan Kayfiy, Hiylai Shar'iy ("Legalistic Ruse"), and Afandi O'lmaydigon Bo'ldi ("Efendi Turned Out to Be Immortal")—one can detect a satirical approach to the Satan image.

VI. The Image of Satan in Uzbek Literature of the Independence Period

In Uzbek literature after independence, there has been a tendency to make broader use of religious motifs. In lyric genres, the image of Satan is often used metaphorically and interpreted as a force that leads a person onto base paths such as deception and lust. One of the writers who has extensively analyzed the

Satan image in Uzbek poetry is Abdulla Oripov; in his oeuvre there are nearly a dozen poems whose titles include "Satan." His poem titled "The Story of Man and Satan" is narrative in character, based on the legend in which Adam and Eve roast and eat the devil's child; through this, the poet casts a lyrical gaze on the origins of the relationship between Satan and humanity.

In the poet's other works on this theme, his deep reflections on understanding and explaining Satan's visage take on a distinctive, novel tone. In addition, the relationship between Satan and human beings and the negative impact of Satan on human society are skillfully rendered in the poetry of authors such as Usmon Azim, Asqar Mahkam, and Azam O'ktam.

VII. The Demonological Concept in Tohir Malik's Works

Contemporary Uzbek prose frequently turns to symbolic images in its artistic investigation of social life, human psychology, and moral problems. One of the most striking of these is the image of Satan. While from ancient times he has symbolized evil, temptation, and the lower self (nafs), in modern prose the Satan image has acquired new philosophical and social meanings. Today, the Iblis concept in Uzbek prose is reinterpreted as a symbolic, social, and psychological figure. As examples, one can point to Tohir Malik's novels Shaytanat ("Satanate"), Talvasa ("Agony"), Samum ("Simoom"), and the novella Iblis Devori ("The Devil's Wall"). One of the central themes in Tohir Malik's works written in the independence period is the relationship between man and Satan. The author's novel pentalogy Shaytanat undertakes an artistic inquiry into Satan, power, society, and human problems.

The word Shaytanat is the pluralized form of "Satan" and signifies a world ruled by devils. From the prologue to the conclusion of the novel, this meaning gradually finds its poetic resolution. Satan does not appear in a typical, personified form in the novel; rather, he is interpreted as the root of all evils. There is scarcely a single character in the work who is not influenced by Satan. In this context, the manifestation of Satan as a political figure—mentioned earlier—appears in the novel in the guise of the Soviet state. An empire of oppression founded on satanic principles gives rise to smaller regimes based on devilish ideas akin to itself. Many figures in the work—such as Asadbek, Hosil the nouveau riche, and Kesak the strongman—act upon ideas of godless "freedom" and faithless "courage" that Satan has planted in the human heart.

It is no secret that the devil, to some extent, infringes upon a person's will and freedom of choice. In the novel, this state is beautifully depicted through the characters Zaynab and Anvar: as a result of the injustices inflicted upon them by devil-like people, we witness in both a

common outcome—a suicidal scene involving satanic interference. In addition, the novel portrays how the material power established by Satan runs in parallel, not in harmony, with moral-ethical principles. In other works belonging to the cycle “The Varied World of Shaytanat,” the devil is likewise seen as a destroyer of our national values and beautiful customs.

The study shows that the image of Satan in Uzbek literature has taken shape not only as a religious symbol but also as a moral, social, and philosophical phenomenon, and in the modern era it has acquired new meanings. From religious sources through classical Eastern literature, Jadid literature, the period under Soviet rule, and into the independence era, the Satan image has been interpreted in diverse ways. It has formed in direct connection with humanity’s spiritual world, ethical choices, and social problems. In the independence period, the Satan concept has gained new content as a social, political, and philosophical image, and in today’s literary process it is employed as an important symbol in the artistic exploration of human psychology and the problems of society.

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