

COMPARISON OF CHARACTERS IN RUSSIAN AND UZBEK FOLKLORE

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Abstract

The article examines the similarities and differences between fairy-tale characters in Russian and Uzbek folklore. The analysis is conducted using the most typical figures: the folk simpleton-hero, the wise elder, the magical helper, and the antagonist. Particular attention is paid to shared archetypes, plot models, and cultural features shaped by historical, social, and worldview factors. The article is intended for students, literature teachers, and everyone interested in comparative folklore studies.

Keywords

folklore, fairy tale, archetype, Russian folklore, Uzbek folklore, fairy-tale characters, comparative analysis.

Introduction

Folklore is one of the most important components of the spiritual culture of any nation. Through fairy tales, legends, and myths, not only artistic images are transmitted, but also life values, notions of good and evil, ideals of behavior, and moral norms. Despite their national distinctiveness, the folklore of different peoples of the world demonstrates a striking similarity of plots and characters. This can be explained both by universal human archetypes and by centuries-old cultural contacts.

Russian and Uzbek folklore developed under different natural-geographical and historical conditions; however, many common features can be identified between them. This is particularly evident in the system of fairy-tale characters. A comparison of these images makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the worldview of the peoples, their attitudes toward labor, power, family, and destiny.

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze similar types of fairy-tale characters in Russian and Uzbek folklore, demonstrating both universal and nationally specific features of their images.

Theoretical Foundations of Comparative Folklore Analysis

Comparative folklore studies rely on the concept of the archetype— a stable image or behavioral model that recurs in myths and fairy tales of different peoples. Archetypes such as the “hero,” “sage,” “trickster,” and “villain” are encountered almost universally.

The fairy tale as a genre has a stable structure: exposition, trial, assistance, climax, and reward. Within this structure, characters perform specific functions. It is precisely the functional

similarity of characters that makes comparative analysis possible, even when their external forms differ.

The Image of the Folk Simpleton-Hero

Ivan the Fool in Russian Folklore

One of the most famous characters of Russian folk tales is Ivan the Fool. He is often depicted as lazy, naïve, and not very intelligent, yet at the same time kind and sincere. The paradox of this image lies in the fact that it is Ivan the Fool who ultimately achieves success, gains a kingdom, and marries a princess.

This character embodies the folk notion of justice: not cunning or physical strength, but purity of soul and kindness lead to victory. Ivan the Fool also symbolizes the hidden wisdom of the people, which is not always expressed through rational actions.

Kelejak or Aldar-Kose in Uzbek Folklore

In Uzbek folklore, a character close in function is Aldar-Kose—a clever and resourceful hero who pretends to be a simpleton but in reality surpasses his opponents in wit. Unlike Ivan the Fool, Aldar-Kose acts more consciously and uses ingenuity to achieve his goals.

The similarity between these characters lies in their “low” social status and their opposition to power and wealth. Both heroes express popular protest against injustice and social inequality.

The Wise Elder and Mentor

The Russian Image of the Elder

In Russian fairy tales, the image of an elder often appears as a wise helper who guides the hero, gives advice, or presents a magical object. This may be an old man, a hermit, or a mysterious wanderer. He rarely intervenes directly, but his counsel proves decisive.

The Uzbek Aksakal

In Uzbek folklore, a similar role is played by the aksakal—a respected elder symbolizing life experience and collective wisdom. The aksakal not only assists the hero but also represents traditional values: respect for elders, justice, and responsibility to the community.

Both images emphasize the importance of generational continuity and respect for life experience.

Magical Helpers

In Russian Folklore

Magical helpers in Russian fairy tales include the Gray Wolf, the Little Humpbacked Horse, talking animals, or magical objects. They help the hero overcome trials and often act as bearers of supernatural power.

In Uzbek Fairy Tales

In Uzbek fairy tales, magical helpers are also widely represented: these may include peri, jinn, talking animals, or miraculous objects. As in Russian folklore, they assist only a worthy hero, emphasizing the moral foundation of the fairy-tale world.

The similarity of these images points to the ancient mythological roots of fairy tales and belief in the harmony between humans and nature.

Images of Antagonists

In both folklore traditions, negative characters occupy an important place. In Russian fairy tales, these include Koschei the Deathless, the Dragon (Zmey Gorynych), and greedy boyars. In Uzbek tales, they are evil khans, greedy rich men, and treacherous divs.

Antagonists embody the fears and social problems of the people. Their defeat symbolizes the triumph of justice and the restoration of harmony.

National Specificity of the Images

Despite shared archetypes, Russian and Uzbek fairy-tale characters possess a distinct national coloring. In Russian folklore, themes of fate and patience are particularly strong, while in Uzbek folklore emphasis is placed on ingenuity, respect for traditions, and communal values.

These differences are обусловлены by the ways of life of the peoples: sedentary agricultural and nomadic pasts, climatic conditions, and historical experience.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of Russian and Uzbek fairy-tale characters demonstrates that folklore, despite national differences, is based on universal human values. Simpleton-heroes, wise mentors, magical helpers, and villains perform similar functions, reflecting shared conceptions of the world.

The study of such parallels contributes to the development of intercultural dialogue, deepens understanding of the spiritual heritage of peoples, and confirms the idea of the unity of human culture.

References

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