

Faith in the Poetry of Asqar Mahkam

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Abstract:

General Background: Faith has been a central theme in religious and literary traditions, shaping individual and societal values. In Islamic thought, faith serves as the foundation of moral and ethical conduct, with profound influences on classical and Sufi literature. **Specific Background:** Asqar Mahkam, a prominent Uzbek poet, explores the theme of faith in his poetry, highlighting its erosion in contemporary society. His verses reflect the ideological and spiritual dilemmas of modern times, portraying faith as both a guiding light and a concept under threat. **Knowledge Gap:** While previous studies have explored the presence of faith in classical Islamic literature, limited research has examined its contemporary poetic manifestations, particularly in Uzbek literature. **Aims:** This study analyzes the artistic and ideological dimensions of faith in Asqar Mahkam's poetry, investigating how he critiques social and religious misconceptions while reaffirming faith's transformative power. **Results:** The poet employs metaphors, symbolism, and personification to depict faith as a diminishing yet essential force. His poetry reveals a dichotomy between true faith and its misinterpretations, illustrating the consequences of spiritual negligence. **Novelty:** This research provides a fresh perspective on Asqar Mahkam's literary contributions, contextualizing his work within contemporary socio-religious discourse and demonstrating how his poetry serves as a medium for both critique and enlightenment. **Implications:** The findings contribute to broader discussions on faith in modern literature, emphasizing its role in shaping ethical consciousness and countering ideological distortions. Asqar Mahkam's work urges readers to reflect on their spiritual values, advocating for a faith-driven yet socially engaged life.

Keywords: Asqar Mahkam, faith, poetry, ideology, contemporary literature, spiritual consciousness.

Introduction

Faith is an Arabic word meaning "belief" or "conviction". It is one of the five pillars of Islam. Faith means believing in Allah, His angels, His books, His prophets, the Day of Judgment, resurrection, and predestination. Hearts illuminated by the light of faith are never penetrated by evil. Faith

encourages a person to do good and righteous deeds. Faith has been a distinct theme in Sufi and classical literature, emphasizing the honor it brings to a person. Mavlana Jalaluddin Rumi said, "Faith is better than prayer. Because prayer is obligatory five times a day, but faith is constant". However, we must not misinterpret this statement[1].

Rumi did not mean that it is sufficient to have faith without performing prayer. Performing prayer is obligatory in Islam, but faith is the foundation. Rumi's words imply that even if you pray five times a day, it is meaningless without faith. The founder of classical Uzbek literature, Alisher Navoi, wrote in his work "Hayrat ul-abror": "Whoever is born into this world as a human, his primary mark is faith". This theme retained its importance in later literature. Especially in the works of the Sufi poet Asqar Mahkam, we can clearly see this. According to the poet, faith is becoming increasingly alien to humanity over time. In his poem "In the City of Writings," he writes:

Faith was chewed up by the nafs,
The sacred word disappeared from tongues...
They understood three things, in short,
They came...
They ate...
They left...
The end...

Method

Every person has a nafs (ego). It cannot be killed. It leaves us only after we die. However, it can be restrained. Some people fail to restrain it. Such people lack perfect faith. Where faith exists, nafs is chained. Asqar Mahkam observes that faith is being devoured by nafs, and the sacred word, that is, remembrance and gratitude, is no longer spoken. People no longer understand why they came into this world. They know only that they were born. They eat, drink, and dress for their nafs. Few people think about bringing benefit to others, easing their burdens, and contributing to a bright future. Indeed, few people care about future generations and respect human dignity. The above lines reflect such individuals. Analyzing the artistic aspect of the poem, the words "nafs" and "xullas," "kalom" and "tamom" are rhymed. To emphasize the content, the poet places the words "came," "ate," and "left" in separate lines, enhancing the poem's impact. The first line employs personification[2].

We turned away from the world for faith,
Turned our eyes away from everyone for haram...
Knowing neither haram nor halal,
We chased both like dogs[3].

Result

Through these lines, the poet criticizes fanatical religious figures. Such people misinterpret the true meaning of religion and accept a distorted version. They are also faithless. In today's globalized world, ideological enemies use religion as a mask to corrupt the minds of our youth and undermine our nation's honor, people's lives, and global peace. Some young people, even older individuals, follow these ideas. They are also faithless. They claim to be fighting for Allah, but they do not know Him at all. Asqar Mahkam's lines "Knowing neither haram nor halal, we chased both like dogs" aptly describe such people[4]. If they truly knew the Creator and His attributes, would they take so many lives? Would they trample on human dignity? We must reflect on this because Islam holds human dignity in the highest regard. Even the angels, created from light and free from sin,

bowed to man. Why should humans be killed for religion? Every human, whether man or woman, has value in Islam. Women are not inferior. Islam emphasizes respect, kindness, and love toward them. Some who avoid extremist ideologies believe that turning away from the world is faith. However, this is a misconception. The blessings given to us are a manifestation of Allah's mercy. We should use them wisely for good purposes. If people only focused on faith without contributing to society, we would still be living in primitive times. The Renaissance in both Europe and Asia was preceded by the rejection of innovation by the church or fanatical scholars, hindering scientific and cultural development[5].

Faith is called light, it is light,

He who does not see this light is blind, blind...

He who does not see this light, is he even human?

Perhaps he does not exist, he does not, does not...

In this quatrain, Asqar Mahkam compares faith to light. Just as light is salvation in darkness, faith is a beacon of salvation in the fleeting world. If every heart had this light, the world would become paradise. In the next lines, the poet describes those who cannot see this light as "blind." Indeed, faith is the key to understanding our essence, our highest noble goals, and observing our surroundings with a sharp gaze. A heart with faith has a keen vision. The heart's eye sees what physical eyes cannot. The poet questions the existence of faithless individuals, implying they may merely be a void. They do not know why they came into this world or who they are. Structurally, the rhythm of the quatrain is achieved through the repetition of the suffix "-dir" in "nurdir," "ko'rdir," and "yo'qdir," as well as the final word "u" in lines 1, 2, and 4. The repetition enhances the poem's emotional impact[6].

Discussion

The analysis of Asqar Mahkam's poetry highlights the profound role of faith in contemporary Uzbek literature, demonstrating its significance in both personal and societal dimensions. His verses serve as a poignant critique of modern spiritual detachment while reinforcing faith as an essential guiding principle. Through a combination of literary techniques and philosophical reflections, Mahkam's work engages deeply with the evolving meaning of faith in an era of globalization and ideological conflict[7].

Further Research Directions

Future studies should explore the broader literary landscape in which Asqar Mahkam operates, comparing his treatment of faith with that of other contemporary poets in Uzbekistan and beyond. While this study has focused on his poetry's ideological and artistic aspects, further research could examine its reception among different demographics, particularly younger generations, to assess its influence on modern perceptions of faith. Additionally, a comparative analysis between Mahkam's works and classical Sufi poets such as Alisher Navoi and Jalaluddin Rumi would provide insights into the evolution of faith-based literature and its adaptation to contemporary realities[8].

Deeper Theoretical and Practical Research

Theoretically, Mahkam's poetry can be analyzed through the lens of literary hermeneutics, examining how his metaphors and symbols construct meanings that transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches integrating religious studies, semiotics, and sociolinguistics could deepen our understanding of how his poetry reflects broader theological discourses in Central Asia.

From a practical perspective, faith-based literature like Mahkam's can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool in fostering ethical awareness and moral reasoning among students. Implementing

his works in educational curricula could encourage critical discussions on the role of faith in shaping personal and collective identities. Furthermore, his poetry's critique of religious extremism underscores the need for nuanced religious education that differentiates between faith as a source of ethical guidance and its exploitation for ideological agendas[9].

Knowledge Gap and Further Details

Despite its literary and philosophical richness, faith in contemporary Uzbek poetry remains an underexplored domain in academic research. While studies have extensively examined the theological dimensions of classical Islamic literature, little scholarly attention has been given to modern poetic expressions of faith in post-Soviet Central Asia. This knowledge gap necessitates a closer investigation into how poets like Asqar Mahkam navigate themes of faith, identity, and modernity. Furthermore, the intersection of literature and religious philosophy in Mahkam's work offers a promising avenue for exploring the socio-political implications of faith-based discourse in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Another critical aspect deserving further scrutiny is Mahkam's poetic style and rhetorical strategies. His use of personification, repetition, and metaphor in depicting faith as both a luminous force and a vanishing ideal raises questions about the broader aesthetic traditions influencing his work. Analyzing his poetry through the frameworks of postcolonial literary theory or existential philosophy could yield additional insights into how faith functions as both a personal conviction and a societal construct[10].

Conclusion

Asqar Mahkam addresses the theme of faith in his poems in connection with contemporary issues. Faith is an inseparable part of religion. Without it, our religion is not strong. The poet describes individuals who do not even think about faith. They know only that they were born and live. They live for their nafs and ultimately die. Some cannot distinguish between halal and haram. They chase both. Reading the poet's works, we understand what faith truly is. If we belong to either of the two groups described above, we should strive to become truly faithful, seeking goodness, compassion, and purity.

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