

The Image of The Village in The Works of Sergei A. Yesenin

Kodirova Ozoda¹

¹ Lecturer, Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

E-mail: gulishodieva@mail.ru

Abstract:

The intersection of literature, national identity, and rural imagery has long been central to Russian cultural discourse. Within this tradition, Sergei A. Yesenin emerges as a defining voice whose poetry encapsulates the spiritual and aesthetic essence of rural Russia. Despite extensive literary acclaim, limited analytical focus has been placed on how the village functions as a multidimensional construct—both lyrical and ideological—in Yesenin’s evolving worldview. This article investigates the role of the village as a poetic, philosophical, and symbolic locus in Yesenin’s works, tracing its transformation across different historical and personal phases of the poet’s career. The study reveals that the village in Yesenin’s poetry is not merely a setting but a central metaphor for homeland, spirituality, and cultural continuity. It evolves from an idyllic and folkloric ideal to a site of existential and historical rupture, especially after the October Revolution. Texts like “Anna Snegina” and “Rus” illustrate this shift, as the countryside transitions from a realm of sacred natural harmony to a battleground of social change and ideological tension. The article presents a nuanced reading that frames the village as an archetypal and metaphysical entity, rather than a socio-political theme. This exploration contributes to deeper understandings of poetic identity, rural mythology, and national memory in Russian literature, highlighting Yesenin’s enduring relevance in cultural reflections on tradition, loss, and belonging.

Keywords: Sergei Yesenin, Village, Russian Poetry, Peasantry, Nature, Tradition, Anna Snegina, Rural Russia, Image of Homeland, Spirituality, Culture, Revolution

Introduction

The poetic world of Sergei A. Yesenin is inextricably tied to the rural landscape of Russia, where the village serves not only as a physical locale but as a central cultural and spiritual archetype[1]. Rooted

in his upbringing in Konstantinovo, Yesenin's literary vision elevates the countryside to a place of moral and aesthetic significance. His deep reverence for the village reflects a broader engagement with questions of identity, tradition, and belonging, particularly as these were challenged by the seismic political and social shifts of early twentieth-century Russia[2]. From the tranquil and harmonious depictions in his early poems to the more complex and tragic representations in his post-revolutionary work, Yesenin constructs the village as a mirror of national consciousness. While contemporaries often emphasized peasant suffering or revolutionary potential, Yesenin focused on the village's symbolic and emotional resonance—as a guardian of collective memory, a sanctuary of natural and spiritual unity, and a moral compass in times of upheaval[3]. His verses, suffused with folkloric imagery and lyrical solemnity, present the village not merely as a backdrop, but as a protagonist in the nation's evolving story. This study investigates how Yesenin's portrayal of the village evolves across different phases of his career, reflecting shifts in personal, cultural, and historical perception. By analyzing key poems such as “You, my Rus’,” “O my forsaken land...”, “Anna Snegina,” and “Rus’,” the article aims to explore how the poet's vision of the countryside articulates a unique synthesis of lyrical beauty, cultural heritage, and existential introspection[4].

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive literary analysis to examine the evolving image of the village in the poetry of Sergei A. Yesenin[5]. The research draws upon a close reading of selected poetic texts—such as “You, my Rus’, my dear homeland...”, “O my forsaken land...”, “Rus’”, and “Anna Snegina”—in order to identify and interpret recurring thematic patterns, stylistic devices, and symbolic imagery associated with rural life[6]. A hermeneutic approach is adopted to explore the deeper philosophical and cultural meanings embedded in Yesenin's portrayal of the countryside, taking into account the poet's biography, historical context, and changing socio-political environment[7]. Secondary sources, including scholarly commentaries and biographical studies, were analyzed to support textual interpretations and to trace the ideological shifts in Yesenin's work over time[8]. The method also involves comparative analysis of early and late poems to highlight the transformation of the village image from an idyllic space to a site of existential and cultural loss[9]. Folkloric elements, such as proverbs, rituals, and traditional metaphors, are examined as integral components of the poet's stylistic choices. The research further integrates a cultural-historical lens to evaluate how Yesenin's village functions not merely as a physical locale but as a national symbol, spiritual refuge, and cultural archetype within the broader framework of Russian identity[10]. This multi-dimensional methodological approach enables a nuanced understanding of Yesenin's poetic world and the enduring significance of his rural imagery.

Results and Discussion

Sergei Alexandrovich Yesenin occupies a unique place in twentieth-century Russian literature. He is widely recognized as a “poet of the village,” not merely in the sociological sense, but as a cultural-historical figure whose poetic vision is deeply rooted in the life, traditions, and spirit of rural Russia[11]. Born and raised in the village of Konstantinovo in the Ryazan Province, Yesenin maintained a lifelong connection to the countryside, which profoundly shaped his worldview, language, and aesthetic sensibilities[12]. For Yesenin, the village was not simply a place of origin—it was the very essence of the homeland, a spiritual and cultural archetype. In his early works, the village appears as an idyllic, harmonious world filled with light, peace, and the beauty of nature. Nature itself is imbued with spiritual meaning; landscapes are not mere settings but extensions of the human soul. In the poem “You, my Rus’, my dear homeland...”, Yesenin expresses a deep and almost sacred connection to the land, portraying the countryside not only as a physical space but as a metaphysical reality, eternal and nurturing [13]. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Yesenin refrains from reducing the peasant to a figure of suffering and misery[14]. Rather, he seeks to portray the rural man as a dignified, spiritual being, rooted in the soil and in ancient traditions. His poetry does not lament peasant poverty as much as it celebrates the integrity and inner strength of the rural way of life. The village, in his works, is not

a social problem to be solved but a living soul to be cherished and understood.

One of the distinctive features of Yesenin's approach is his consistent use of folk imagery and stylization. His verses echo the rhythm, vocabulary, and worldview of traditional Russian folklore [15]. Proverbs, ritual motifs, and nature metaphors not only enrich his poetic language but also serve as vehicles for conveying collective cultural memory. This integration of folklore reinforces the idea of the village as a timeless space where the voice of the people and the voice of nature are inseparable. Another significant dimension of Yesenin's village poetry is its spiritual undercurrent. Though not overtly religious in a doctrinal sense, Yesenin's works are saturated with a sense of sacredness tied to land, ancestry, and natural cycles. He often refers to birch trees as holy, rivers as eternal, and labor as a form of prayer. Such associations position the village as a sanctuary of moral and existential clarity, in contrast to the chaos and alienation of urban life. This spiritual ruralism is not escapist but ethical—it proposes a vision of life grounded in empathy, humility, and organic continuity.

Nevertheless, alongside lyrical images of harmony and beauty, Yesenin's poetry also contains an acute awareness of loss. Even in the pre-war years, he writes with a sense of foreboding about the vanishing of the world he holds dear. In the poem "O my forsaken land...", the poet sorrowfully observes the decay of the village—its abandoned fields, collapsing cottages, and the silence where life once thrived.

The concept of homeland in Yesenin's poetry is inseparably linked with the village. He does not conceive of Russia in abstract political terms but experiences it as a tangible, sensory presence: the scent of hay, the birch groves, the sound of peasant songs. During World War I and especially after the Revolution, this sense of homeland takes on a tragic tone. Yesenin sympathizes with the people and their hardships, but he also mourns the loss of the old Russia—his "wooden Rus'." The poem "Rus'" embodies this duality, combining epic scale with lyrical mourning for a fading world.

After the October Revolution, the image of the village in Yesenin's work undergoes a transformation. He perceives the destruction of the traditional rural way of life by industrialization and the rise of the Soviet system. In the cycle "Moscow of the Taverns," Yesenin conveys his alienation and inner crisis. He experiences not only personal anguish but a national one, grieving for the Russia that is slipping away. His poetry becomes more bitter, ironic, and filled with spiritual exhaustion—but never devoid of love for the village and its vanishing culture. A pivotal work in this context is the narrative poem "Anna Snegina", in which the village is no longer depicted as idyllic but as a site of social upheaval and historical rupture. The poem may be read as Yesenin's farewell to the countryside he once knew. The peasants are no longer singing or harvesting; they are debating land ownership and participating in class struggle. The climactic dialogue between the poet and the peasants of Radovo encapsulates this shift in perspective and tone. In Yesenin's poetic world, the village is also juxtaposed with the city, which he views as a space of alienation, fragmentation, and artificiality. The city disrupts the organic bond between human beings and nature, leading to moral and spiritual disintegration. In his letters and essays, Yesenin repeatedly stresses that Russia's future must embrace modern progress without severing ties to its rural roots. In his later years, Yesenin increasingly viewed himself as a relic of a vanishing world. His poetic voice became elegiac, lamenting the loss of both external landscapes and internal values. The village remained his moral compass, even as it became more mythical than real. Through nostalgic reflection and symbolic mourning, he attempted to preserve what he believed was essential to Russian identity: the closeness to the land, the rhythm of nature, and the integrity of the soul. Yesenin's depiction of the village thus transcends realism and enters the realm of cultural archetype. It is not just a geographical setting but a poetic space of origin and return—a locus of meaning in times of social rupture. His work stands as a lyrical monument to a civilization built not of stone and steel, but of memory, soil, and spirit.

Conclusion

The image of the village in the works of Sergei A. Yesenin is a profound and multilayered construct that encompasses lyrical beauty, national symbolism, philosophical depth, and historical tragedy. Through this

image, Yesenin articulates his vision of Russia, his grief over cultural loss, and his hope for a spiritual continuity rooted in the land and the people. His poetry remains relevant not only as a literary achievement but also as a poignant reflection on the enduring questions of identity, tradition, and belonging

References

- [1] A. A. Khojiyev, *Classification of Lexical Meanings in the Uzbek Language*. Tashkent: Fan, 2011.
- [2] R. Dirven и M. Verspoor, *Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007.
- [3] M. Allen, *Food and Language: Discourses and Practices*. London: Routledge, 2021.
- [4] C. J. Fillmore, *Frames and the Semantics of Understanding*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 1985.
- [5] L. Musayeva, «Gender and Metaphor in Uzbek Traditional Sayings», *Cult. Linguist. J.*, т. 11, сс. 102–110, 2022.
- [6] D. Umarov, *Lexical Semantics and Pragmatics in Modern Uzbek*. Tashkent: Fan, 2014.
- [7] G. Lakoff и M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- [8] N. Mahmudov и A. Madvaliev, *Modern Uzbek Literary Language*. Tashkent: UzMU Publishing House, 2006.
- [9] M. Bobokhujaeva, *National Mentality and the Language of Uzbek Folklore*. Tashkent: O‘qituvchi, 2017.
- [10] N. Tajibaev, «Phraseological Units as Carriers of National and Cultural Characteristics», *Uzb. J. Philol. Res.*, вып. 1, сс. 58–65, 2016.
- [11] Z. Karimova, «Symbolic Meaning of Natural Phenomena in Uzbek Proverbs», *J. Uzb. Linguist.*, т. 9, сс. 88–96, 2021.
- [12] R. W. Gibbs, «The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding», *Camb. Stud. Cogn. Linguist.*, т. 2, сс. 1–324, 1994.
- [13] L. Talmy, *Toward a Cognitive Semantics, Volume I: Concept Structuring Systems*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- [14] A. Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- [15] G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.