

THE SOCIAL AND SUFI CONCEPT IN THE WORKS OF ISMOILXON FAQIRIY

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Abstract

This article examines the poetic interpretation of people's suffering and the artistic representation of the idea of justice in the works of Ismoilkhon Faqiriy from the perspective of a socio-Sufi conception. The study analyzes the close interrelation between social themes and Sufi thought in the poet's lyrics, focusing on the depiction of social injustice, oppression, poverty, and spiritual decline. It is argued that in Faqiriy's poetry, people's pain transcends individual emotion and becomes a generalized social phenomenon. Particular attention is paid to key notions such as faqr (spiritual poverty), patience, contentment, and justice, which the poet enriches with philosophical and mystical meanings and employs as instruments of artistic social critique.

Kalit so'zlar

ijtimoiy-tasavvufiy konsepsiya, xalq dardi, adolat g'oyasi, tasavvuf, ijtimoiy lirika, badiiy ijod, "faqir", "sabr", "qanoat", "adolat"

Ismoilxon Faqiriy, who lived and worked in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, stands out as one of the prominent representatives of Uzbek classical literature due to the distinctive educational, Sufi, mystical ('irfānī), and ideological dimensions of his творчество. His poetry reflects such fundamental themes as enlightenment, the significance of knowledge, patriotism, contentment, purity, moral conduct, and reflections on worldly life and the hereafter, all expressed through a deeply philosophical lens. Although Faqiriy's ghazals are composed in accordance with the traditional formal and semantic principles of classical literature, they also demonstrate a distinctive intellectual depth and artistic renewal shaped by the demands of his time. In recent years, the number of scholarly studies devoted to the in-depth investigation of Faqiriy's literary legacy has steadily increased. Nevertheless, the process through which Sufi concepts—such as faqr (spiritual poverty), patience (sabr), contentment (qanā'at), trust in God (tawakkul), and justice ('adl)—merge with social meaning in his poetry and become a means of expressing the real-life concerns of the people has not yet been fully explored from a scientific perspective.

This study aims to identify the social and Sufi sources of Faqiriy's creativity and to analyze the factors that influenced their formation. At the same time, one of the main objectives is to reveal the artistic modes of representing the people's suffering in the poet's works and to determine their poetic functions. Furthermore, special attention is paid to an in-depth analysis of the process by which Sufi notions—such as faqr, patience, contentment, and tawakkul—acquire social and philosophical significance in Faqiriy's poetry. The social-Sufi semantic load of symbols, images, and artistic details in Faqiriy's poetics is examined, and their ideological and aesthetic functions are elucidated. Faqiriy's literary heritage is among the classical works that



have been re-evaluated in the context of post-independence Uzbek literary studies. Researchers have analyzed his poetry from the perspectives of ideological content, poetic structure, the semantics of imagery, and Sufi terminology. In particular, the concept of faqr in Faqiriy's works is interpreted as an artistic criterion that simultaneously expresses social inequality and spiritual humility [3]. Theoretical studies on the relationship between Sufism and literature emphasize that Faqiriy's poetry is distinguished by its people-oriented poetic stance. In his works, the idea of justice is embodied not only in an ethical and didactic manner but also through a symbolic and figurative system. From this perspective, Faqiriy's oeuvre is recognized as a distinctive example of social-Sufi discourse within classical literature [11]. At the same time, existing research often addresses certain aspects of Faqiriy's creativity in a fragmented manner, and the interpretation of the people's suffering and the idea of justice as a unified conceptual system has not yet been sufficiently systematized. Using a comparative-typological method, the poet's views are examined in relation to the traditions of classical Sufi literature. In addition, through poetic analysis, the semantic layers of artistic images, symbols, and terms are revealed. Faqiriy does not limit justice merely to external social relations; rather, he associates it with the individual's inner spiritual perfection. Thus, in the poet's poetics, the idea of justice becomes a unifying concept that integrates social and metaphysical dimensions [12].

In Ismoilxon Faqiriy's creative worldview, Sufism is not interpreted as withdrawal from social life but as a means of moral reform within society. The concept of faqr does not signify material poverty; instead, it symbolizes liberation from egoistic desires and the courage to speak boldly in the name of justice. The ideal human model depicted by the poet is one who is not indifferent to the suffering of the people and who regards justice and truth as fundamental principles of life. Moreover, the harmony between people-centered ideas and realistic depictions of everyday life in Faqiriy's works endows his poetics with profound social and aesthetic significance.

Overall, Ismoilxon Faqiriy's creativity represents a major literary phenomenon in Uzbek classical literature, distinguished by the integration of the people's suffering and the idea of justice with Sufi thought. The poet's social-Sufi conception, shaped around such notions as faqr, 'adl (justice), and the perfect human being (al-insān al-kāmil), constitutes one of the most accomplished examples of people-oriented poetics. Below, one of his poetic works will be examined through detailed literary analysis.

If in this transient world you became a victorious king—so what?
If you ruled like Caesar or Jamshid—so what?
If you shone upon the world like the sun—so what?
If you became a celestial luminary—so what?
Whether you became earth or sky—so what?
Whether you were sorrowful or joyful—so what?

The central idea of this ghazal is grounded in the transience of worldly status and outward success, as well as the evaluation of human life according to spiritual and moral criteria. In each line, the poet enumerates high ranks, power, fame, and various existential states, yet subjects all of them to doubt and negation through the recurring rhetorical question "so what?" (na bo'lding?). This technique embodies the Sufi dichotomy of the outward (zāhir) and the inward (bāṭin). From a Sufi perspective, kingship, sovereignty, solar fame, or celestial elevation do not constitute true spiritual perfection. By listing these notions sequentially, the poet emphasizes that human beings should not console themselves with worldly titles and transient achievements. The concept of dahr (time, the ephemeral world) plays a crucial role in the poem, as it is interpreted



in Sufism as a space of trial where the true essence of the human being is revealed. The opposition between “earth” and “sky” symbolically encompasses the lowest and the highest states of human existence. However, both ultimately confront the same fundamental question: has one attained spiritual perfection or not? Thus, the ghazal implicitly advances the Sufi concepts of enlightenment (maʿrifa), annihilation (fanāʾ), and ultimate truth (ḥaqīqa). The contrast between sorrow (ḥazīn) and joy (shādmān) further reflects the instability of emotional states. In Sufi interpretation, such states are bound to the ego (nafs) and do not bring the individual closer to the Divine. Through this, the poet asserts that true happiness and perfection emerge solely through spiritual purification. In Ismoilxon Faqiriy’s poetry, the tension between worldly status and spiritual perfection emerges as a central theme. For instance, in the following verses, the poet asks:

Did you attain intellect and wisdom like Plato through knowledge?
Did you reach perfection in science like Ibn Sina?
Did your throne stand firm like that of Solomon?
Did you gain honor, or did you suffer humiliation?

These verses reveal the worldly–spiritual contradictions of human life from a Sufi perspective. Through references to Plato and Ibn Sina, the poet highlights the aspiration toward spiritual perfection through knowledge and wisdom, while the image of Solomon’s throne symbolizes the limitations of worldly power and authority. The interrogative form of these lines exemplifies the rhetorical device of *istifhām inkārī* (negative rhetorical questioning), which does not demand an answer but instead invites contemplation, urging the reader to evaluate their own spiritual and worldly condition. The poetic device of antithesis (*tazād*) is also prominently employed. The contrasts of “earth–sky” and “sorrow–joy” symbolically represent the sharp dichotomies of life—material wealth versus high status, happiness versus grief—thereby exposing the difference between worldly brilliance and spiritual eternity. Simile (*tashbīh*) and allusion (*talmeh*) are effectively utilized as well.

If you became earth—what benefit? If you became sky—what benefit?
If you were sorrowful—what benefit? If you were joyful—what benefit?

The simile “wise like Plato” and the allusion to Ibn Sina connect historical figures to the poet’s philosophical outlook. Likewise, the symbol of Solomon’s throne represents political power and worldly fame, emphasizing their impermanence in contrast to the enduring nature of spiritual perfection attained through true faith. The repeated phrase “what benefit?” (*ne foyda?*) serves as an example of repetition (*takrīr*), reinforcing the central idea, enhancing rhythmic harmony, and deepening the philosophical content of the verses. As the main *radif*, this phrase unifies all lines around a single existential question. The rhyme scheme follows the classical *aa* pattern, ensuring both rhythmic and semantic coherence. Overall, these verses poetically articulate the contradiction between worldly ambition and spiritual maturity, express Sufi philosophy through historical figures and symbols, and transform the ghazal into an ideologically and aesthetically integrated work through the use of artistic devices such as antithesis, simile, allusion, repetition, and a refined rhyme–*radif* system. Ismoilxon Faqiriy occupies a distinctive place in Uzbek classical poetry through his unique artistic style and educational–Sufi worldview. His poetry glorifies knowledge and enlightenment, calls for moral purification, and promotes the ideals of spiritual perfection rooted in Sufi philosophy. His *dīvān* possesses not only literary and aesthetic value but also profound philosophical, ethical, and



socio-spiritual significance. Classical ghazal elements—such as the beloved (yor), lover (‘āshiq), rival (raqīb), cupbearer (sāqī), mosque, and tavern—are endowed with specific semantic functions. Faqiriy enriches these traditional images with deep philosophical meaning. For example, the image of the beloved transcends earthly love and becomes a symbol of divine love and the path toward Truth. Stylistically, Faqiriy’s ghazals are marked by simplicity, fluency, and effectiveness. While strictly adhering to the rules of ‘arūd meter, he incorporates folk expressions and national linguistic elements, reflecting the richness of the Uzbek language.

Literary devices such as metaphor, simile, allegory, and antithesis play a dominant role, expanding the semantic depth of the text and guiding the reader toward profound conceptual reflection[15]. The analysis demonstrates that the originality of Ismoilxon Faqiriy’s ghazals is revealed through several key components. First, his thematic choices and ideological structure are deeply rooted in Sufi philosophy, distinguishing his work from conventional ghazal repertoires. Second, the semantic layers of his imagery function not merely as symbols but as philosophical concepts.

Third, despite the simplicity of his poetic language, his imagery offers a rich aesthetic experience. Thus, Faqiriy’s ghazals should be regarded not only as exemplary works of classical poetry but also as manifestations of individual poetic thought. They contribute significantly to the aesthetic and conceptual development of nineteenth-century Uzbek poetry. In conclusion, Ismoilxon Faqiriy’s ghazals reveal both the traditional and individual artistic potential of Uzbek classical literature. By harmonizing classical Sufi love concepts with his own philosophical vision, the poet elevates the ghazal genre to new semantic and poetic dimensions. His legacy remains a vital scholarly source for contemporary literary studies, offering enduring theoretical and practical significance in the exploration of enlightenment, morality, justice, and spiritual consciousness.

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