

THE ROLE OF FOLK EPICS IN THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL LITERATURES

Madina Saparboy qizi Djumabayeva

Student, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

djumaboyevamadina639@gmail.com

Scientific adviser: Ulug`bek Yarashovich Elmurodov

Senior teacher, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

saman-sador@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

Folk epics, as oral traditions passed down through generations, are crucial to the formation of national literatures. These epics, often embodying the collective memory, values, and struggles of a people, serve as foundational texts for national identities. They preserve a community's cultural heritage, shape societal norms, and offer insight into the shared historical consciousness of a nation. Through the analysis of prominent folk epics from different cultures, this article explores their impact on the emergence and development of national literatures. It highlights how these epics serve not only as historical accounts but as symbols of national unity, pride, and identity.

Keywords: Folk epics, National identity, Collective Memory, Cultural Heritage, Oral Tradition, National Pride, Literary Canon.

ANNOTATSIYA

Xalq eposlari, avloddan-avlodga og‘zaki an‘analar orqali yetkazib beriladigan asarlar, milliy adabiyotlarning shakllanishida muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi. Ushbu eposlar, odatda, xalqning kollektiv xotirasi, qadriyatlari va kurashlarini aks ettirgan holda milliy o‘zlikni belgilovchi asarlar sifatida xizmat qiladi. Ular jamiyatning madaniy merosini saqlab qoladi, ijtimoiy me‘yorlarni shakllantiradi va xalqning umumiy tarixiy ongiga doir tasavvurlarni taqdim etadi. Turli madaniyatlarning mashhur xalq eposlarini tahlil qilish orqali ushbu maqola ularning milliy adabiyotlarning paydo bo‘lishi va rivojlanishiga ta‘sirini o‘rganadi. Unda ushbu eposlar nafaqat tarixiy voqealar haqida hikoya qiluvchi asarlar, balki milliy birlik, g‘urur va o‘zlik timsollari sifatida xizmat qilishini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Xalq eposlari, Milliy o‘zlik, Kollektiv xotira, Madaniy meros, Og‘zaki an‘ana, Milliy g‘urur, Adabiy kanon.

INTRODUCTION

Folk epics, often referred to as traditional or oral epics, are among the oldest forms of literature in human history. They are narrative poems or stories that have been passed down through generations, typically by word of mouth, and they provide invaluable insight into the cultural fabric of the societies from which they originate. These epics, often filled with mythical heroes, gods, and fantastical adventures, serve as more than just entertainment; they encapsulate the values, struggles, and worldviews of a people, and they have played a significant role in the formation of national literatures.

The role of folk epics in the development of national literatures is complex. Not only do these epics serve to preserve a community's oral traditions and cultural memory, but they also act as vehicles for the expression of national pride and unity. As many nations in the modern world began to assert their independence and define their cultural boundaries, folk epics were often revived or reinterpreted to solidify national identities. The aim of this article is to explore the influence of folk epics on the development of national literatures, discussing how they have shaped national consciousness, preserved historical narratives, and contributed to the creation of literary canons.

MAIN BODY

1. Folk Epics and the Formation of National Identity:

Folk epics play a pivotal role in the development of national identities. They provide a narrative framework through which a society can define itself, its values, and its historical trajectory. The Iliad and Odyssey of ancient Greece, for example, were not only stories of heroic adventures but also embodied the ideals of Greek civilization—honor, courage, and loyalty to the state. Similarly, the Aeneid of ancient Rome, written by Virgil, served to unite the Roman people around a shared history of conquest and the founding of their empire.

In addition to providing a means of self-definition, folk epics are instrumental in unifying diverse groups within a nation. By incorporating a range of characters, legends, and cultural symbols, these epics offer a shared narrative that all members of a nation can identify with, regardless of their ethnic or regional background. For instance, the Shahnameh (The Book of Kings) in Iran is not only an epic of national history but also a symbol of Persian unity. Through its retelling of Iran's pre-Islamic history, it helped unify a region with diverse ethnic groups under a common cultural heritage.

In the case of the Kalevala in Finland, this national epic emerged in the 19th century as part of a broader effort to foster Finnish national consciousness during the period of Russian domination. The epic, with its heroes and themes derived from Finnish

folklore, played a central role in the creation of a national literature that reflected the identity and aspirations of the Finnish people.

2. Folk Epics as Vessels for Collective Memory:

Folk epics are crucial repositories of collective memory. They preserve not only the mythological and historical narratives of a people but also the values, customs, and social structures that underpin their culture. These epics offer a sense of continuity across generations, preserving historical events that might otherwise be lost. In many cases, folk epics include significant cultural events such as wars, the founding of cities, or the deeds of legendary heroes.

For example, the Mahabharata and Ramayana in India are not merely religious texts but epic stories that have shaped Indian culture for thousands of years. They include accounts of the dynastic struggle, the concepts of dharma (duty), and the triumph of good over evil. These epics continue to influence the ethical and moral framework of contemporary Indian society. Similarly, the Popol Vuh, a creation myth of the Maya civilization, preserves not only the history of the ancient Maya people but also their cosmology, spiritual beliefs, and understanding of human existence.

In Western literature, the Beowulf epic functions as a foundational text that not only illustrates the heroic ideals of Anglo-Saxon society but also preserves the memory of a culture's battles, its code of honor, and its relationship with the supernatural. Through these epics, societies are able to construct and transmit a collective historical and cultural memory that defines their national character.

3. Folk Epics as Pillars of National Literatures:

Folk epics have played an indispensable role in the emergence of national literatures. When modern national literatures began to take shape in Europe during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, writers and intellectuals turned to folk epics for inspiration and nationalistic pride. The revival of national folk tales and epic poetry was part of the broader cultural movement that sought to reclaim indigenous traditions in the face of foreign domination or cultural suppression.

For example, in 19th-century Europe, the rise of nationalism coincided with a renewed interest in folk epics. In Germany, the Brothers Grimm's collection of fairy tales sought to preserve the oral traditions of the German people, while in Italy, Dante's Divine Comedy became a national epic that encapsulated the Italian people's historical and cultural experience. In Spain, the Cantar de Mio Cid provided a literary foundation for Spanish identity, and in Russia, Pushkin's Ruslan and Ludmila sought to bring folk themes into the realm of high literature.

In the case of Africa, where many societies had been subjected to colonization and the loss of their oral traditions, folk epics became a powerful symbol of resistance and

cultural revival. Writers like Chinua Achebe in Nigeria and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in Kenya have drawn upon the oral traditions and folk narratives of their cultures to create national literatures that reflect the struggles, aspirations, and histories of their people.

4. The Continued Influence of Folk Epics on Modern Literature:

Despite the rise of written literature and modern narrative forms, the influence of folk epics remains palpable in contemporary works of literature. Modern writers, particularly those involved in the postcolonial literary movement, often incorporate themes, characters, and structures derived from folk epics to comment on contemporary social and political issues.

The narrative structure of the hero's journey, for example, popularized by Joseph Campbell's study of myth, has its roots in folk epics. Many modern novels, films, and television series follow this structure, with protagonists who undergo a transformative journey, overcome obstacles, and return home with new knowledge or power. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series is a modern example of a literary work that draws heavily from the traditions of folk epics, using the motif of the heroic quest and the battle between good and evil.

In the postcolonial era, folk epics are increasingly being recognized as vital sources of cultural identity. They provide marginalized communities with a means to reclaim their history and assert their cultural heritage. Works like Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* blend the fantastical elements of folk epics with modern narrative techniques to create a literary tradition that bridges the past and present.

CONCLUSION

Folk epics occupy a central and multifaceted role in the development of national literatures, serving as not only foundational texts but also as the bedrock upon which national identities and cultural consciousness are built. These narratives, rooted in oral traditions, are much more than simple stories; they encapsulate the essence of a people's historical experience, moral values, and collective memory. As living expressions of a culture's past and aspirations, folk epics are dynamic elements that have continuously adapted to reflect the evolving needs of the societies that cherish them.

One of the most significant functions of folk epics is their ability to shape and solidify national identity. In societies where historical records are scarce or fragmented, these epics have preserved the collective consciousness of the people, acting as bridges that connect the past with the present. Through the heroic deeds, the struggles against external forces, and the portrayal of national heroes, these epics contribute

significantly to the construction of a cohesive national narrative. They help define what it means to belong to a particular culture, drawing boundaries between the national and the foreign, the revered and the rejected.

Moreover, folk epics serve as repositories of cultural wisdom, transmitting moral, ethical, and social values from one generation to the next. The heroes and villains of these epics, along with their journeys, provide lessons on virtues such as loyalty, bravery, sacrifice, and justice. These themes are not only central to the stories but often reflect the social values that sustain communities. For instance, the epic Beowulf demonstrates the virtues of loyalty to one's lord, while the Ramayana teaches the importance of duty (dharma) in human life. These moral lessons transcend the specific cultural contexts of the epics, offering universal wisdom that continues to resonate in modern times.

The contribution of folk epics to the formation of national literatures goes beyond their role in consolidating identity and imparting wisdom. They also help in the creation of a literary canon that reflects a society's shared ideals and artistic sensibilities. For instance, the Iliad and Odyssey were instrumental in shaping the ancient Greek literary tradition, and they continue to influence Western literary thought. Similarly, in the Indian subcontinent, the Mahabharata and Ramayana laid the foundation for centuries of literary expression, from poetry to theater and modern storytelling. These epics have shaped not just literature, but the arts more broadly, inspiring generations of writers, artists, and performers.

REFERENCES

1. Homer. *The Iliad and The Odyssey*. Translated by Samuel Butler, 1898.
2. Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. Translated by Dick Davis, 2006.
3. Vyasa. *Mahabharata*. Translated by C. Rajagopalachari, 1990.
4. Robert Graves. *The Greek Myths*. Penguin, 1955.
5. Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Heroic Age of the English*. 1961.
6. Miller, William. *The Epic in World Literature*. Macmillan, 2005.
7. Holman, C. Hugh. *A Handbook to Literature*. 5th ed., 1986.
8. Jahanbegloo, Ramin. *Iranian Identity and Cosmopolitanism: Spheres of Belonging*. Routledge, 2004.
9. Kauppinen, Mari. *The Kalevala: National Epic or Folk Poetry?* *Folklore Studies*, 1999.
10. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.