

THE MOTIF OF GREED IN UZBEK LITERATURE

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Annotation: Since the beginning of time, the world has been a place of constant dualities—good and evil, generosity and greed, bravery and cowardice. These opposing qualities are not only found in real life but are also vividly reflected in literature. In Uzbek literature, too, we encounter both positive and negative characters. In particular, greed is often the subject of serious critique in many literary works. This article explores the concept of the greed motif using examples from notable works of Uzbek literature.

Keywords: motif, greed, literary work, Uzbek literature, characters.

The prominent critic and writer Ozod Sharafiddinov once noted: "In the 20th century, we created a literature that meets the highest global standards. We can confidently say that we produced great literary works—not only in storytelling, novellas, and novels, but also in poetry and drama." Indeed, the 20th century was a significant period for Uzbek literature. The strengths of the works produced during this time far outweighed their shortcomings. Particularly noteworthy were the plots of literary works, the unique traits and inner conflicts of their characters, and the intense climaxes that moved readers to their core.

Additionally, the concept of a **greed motif** exists in literature, but before delving into that, it is important to understand the meaning of the term motif.

The word motif originates from the Latin word *moveo*, meaning "to move," and is considered the most basic component of a plot.

If the plot is the system of events that makes up the content of a literary work, then the **motif** is the key element that brings these events to life. In other words, one cannot imagine the structure of an epic work without motifs. Scholars have differing views on the motif in epic literature, but many rely on the theories of Russian scholar A.N. Veselovsky, who emphasized that **motifs are the essential building blocks of a plot**. B. Putilov also stated: "A motif is the essence of the plot."

The origins of motifs can be traced back to oral folk traditions, where they are clearly visible in tales, myths, epics, and proverbs. Motifs of greed, in particular, appear frequently in ancient genres such as proverbs. For example, consider these wise sayings from Uzbek folklore:

- "When a greedy man finds something, he hides it; when a generous man finds something, he shares it with everyone."

This means a greedy person, being selfish and dark-hearted, hoards everything, while a generous person gives to all, even if he has little.

- "Do not be greedy, be generous—generosity is the path to growth."

This proverb encourages people to be generous rather than greedy, stating that those with generosity will always rise.

- "A greedy man always says 'I have nothing';
A generous man, even with nothing, feels content."

This implies that a miser always claims to lack, fearing the loss of wealth, while the generous are content even in hardship.

Furthermore, the **motif of greed** also appears in Turkic mythology. One example is the legend of “The Moon and Shirin”, where the Moon ascends to the sky due to her greed towards a girl named Shirin and never returns to earth. Another example is the legend of “The Red Flower”, which explores the link between love and greed. Here, the red flower symbolizes both love and greed.

Greed and its consequences are also a major theme in folk tales. A notable example is the tale “The Golden Melon”, one of the most famous Uzbek folk tales. In it, a poor but generous farmer is rewarded with prosperity and happiness, while a rich, selfish, and greedy man receives the punishment he deserves.

When we define the concept of the **greed motif**, we find that it has always been viewed negatively—portrayed as one of the worst vices. The Holy Qur’an and Hadiths also condemn greed as the root of all forbidden and immoral behavior, urging people to be generous, charitable, and kind-hearted.

For instance, in a hadith recorded by Imam Tirmidhi, narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“The generous person is close to Allah, close to Paradise, close to people, and far from Hell. The greedy person is far from Allah, far from Paradise, far from people, and close to Hell. Indeed, a generous sinner is more beloved to Allah than a greedy worshipper.”

According to this hadith, a person who helps relatives and those in need is close to God’s mercy and to people’s hearts, and stays far from actions that lead to Hell. In contrast, the greedy person distances himself from both God and people, and walks a path toward damnation. Hence, we must strive to be generous and kind-hearted.

When speaking of generosity, we should also consider **classical Uzbek literature**, where the consequences of greed and selfishness are often powerfully depicted. A prominent example is Alisher Navoi’s world-renowned “Khamasa”, particularly the first masnavi “Hayrat ul-abror” (“Wonder of the Righteous”), written in the style of moral counsel. The fifth chapter (maqola) is devoted entirely to the theme of generosity and charity.

Greed is also subtly criticized in modern literature, such as in G’afur G’ulom’s “Shum Bola” (“The Mischievous Boy”), where, even within a humorous subplot, the ugly trait of greed is exposed and ridiculed. The presence of the **greed motif** in a literary work often enhances its social and moral significance. Through greedy characters, authors effectively convey the destructive consequences of miserliness and self-centeredness. These portrayals serve as a moral lesson, urging readers to cultivate generosity, empathy, and communal spirit.