



ANALYSIS OF ARBOREAL IMAGERY IN THE WORK OF MATNAZAR ABDULHAKIM BASED ON AN ECOPOETIC AND ECOCRITICAL APPROACH

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Abstract. *This article examines the arboreal imagery in the works of Matnazar Abdulhakim through an ecopoetic and ecocritical lens. As one of the leading figures of modern Karakalpak and Uzbek poetry, Abdulhakim constructs a rich symbolic ecosystem in which trees function not only as natural elements but also as carriers of cultural memory, ethical values, and human–nature interconnectedness. The study identifies recurrent dendritic motifs such as the sacred tree, the suffering tree, and the tree as a witness to historical and ecological loss. The findings reveal that Abdulhakim’s poetry embodies an eco-centered worldview where nature is treated as a living subject, thus contributing significantly to Central Asian ecopoetics.*

Keywords. *Matnazar Abdulhakim; arboreal imagery; dendritic motifs; ecopoetics; ecocriticism; Uzbek literature; environmental ethics; symbolism.*

Analyzing the images of trees in Uzbek poetry of the independence period through an ecopoetic approach allows us to analyze how processes such as preserving nature, being friendly to it or, conversely, directly witnessing the destruction of nature and deeply perceiving the landscape of the ecological crisis cause mental states such as depression and anxiety in the lyrical hero. This feature is clearly visible in the work of poets such as Matnazar Abdulhakim, Usman Azim, Kochkor Norqobil, Najmiddin Turon.

In a series of poems by Matnazar Abdulhakim, such as “*Orol qo‘shig‘i*”, “*Gujumlar qo‘shig‘i*”, “*O‘spirinligim afsonasi*”, “*Hazil emas*” (“Song of the Aral”, “Song of the Forces”, “The Legend of My Youth”, “It’s Not a Joke”), environmental protection and ecological ideas are skillfully depicted through the images of trees:


Hovuz bo‘yi. Ming yillik chinor,

Keksalikdan boshini ekkan.

Oy nuriga cho‘milib, billur

Suv sathiga soyasin to‘kkan. [Matnazar Abdulhakim, 36]

In the opening lines of the poem “The Legend of My Youth,” which exposes man’s cruel attitude towards existence, the poet creates a harmonious, calm and beautiful landscape. The “thousand-year-old plane tree” depicted in the fragment appears as a central symbol of ecological and cultural memory. The aging of the tree and its “head-on” state reflect the concepts of the natural cycle of nature, the passage of time and ecological sustainability. The plane tree is also a symbol of life, protection and stability in Uzbek culture, where it is interpreted as an image that awakens ecological awareness. The



moonlight, the shadow falling on the pond and the water surface, express the harmony of the elements of nature, pointing to ecological balance, natural beauty and peace. The depiction of water as “crystal” emphasizes ecological cleanliness and the health of the environment. The shadow of the plane tree falling into the water represents the interaction of the elements of nature, their interconnectedness, and the integrity of the ecological system. In a word, this is ideal nature, a place where man has not harmed and where love reigns. This scene is associated with the lyrical subject's adolescent fantasies and expresses pure, spiritually pure feelings.

*Biz hech bevafoqlik qilmaymiz,
Bosh olib ketmaymiz hech yerga.
«Qizil kitob» olis. Na choramiz bor?!
Balki kirib qolarmiz... she'rga.*

*Balki so'nggi bora shovullamoqda,
Bizning bag'rimizdan yashil oh.
Endi homiy bo'la olmaysiz bizga,
Sizga biz azaldan bo'lsak-da panoh.*

*O'ziga mahliyo qilolmas bizni
Yot tuproq, o'zga xalq, begona yurtlar.
Xorazmda qolamiz,
G'ajib tursa ham
Azim tanamizni shilimshiq qurtlar. [Matnazar Abdulhakim, 8]*

The poem is based on the principle of nature speaking in human language, which is characteristic of modern ecological discourse. The lyrical “I” here is not a person, but the trees of the groves. This anthropomorphization is a widely used method in the ecopoetic approach, which, by “giving a voice” to nature, intensifies ecological problems on an emotional and moral level. The main source of conflict in the poem is the ecological imbalance created by human activity. The appeal of the groves “*Biz hech bevafoqlik qilmaymiz*” (“We will never be unfaithful”) expresses that nature has been protecting man for years, but man cannot respond to this.

The line “*Balki so'nggi bora shovullamoqda*” (“Maybe it is roaring for the last time”) indicates the last breath of life of the groves. The death of nature here is not just a biological process, but also the disintegration of cultural, aesthetic and historical memory. The image of the trees “crying out, ‘If it does not sway in its shade, it is a cradle’” reminds us of the place of nature in human life and continuity.

The poem does not show environmental problems through romantic images, but as a direct painful voice of nature. In it, through the metaphorical monologue of the crowd:

- ecological crisis;
- human negligence;

- the defenselessness of nature;
- a call for practical environmental action is illuminated at an artistic and aesthetic level.

At the center of the poem “*Hazil emas*” (“Not a Joke”) is the white mulberry tree - a symbol that has taken a firm place in the national and cultural memory of the Uzbek people, representing generosity and blessing. However, the poem shows this symbol from a new perspective through the disruption of the ecological balance and the violent attitude of man towards nature:

*Ana, oq tut qoqayotirlar,
Oppoq tutga to‘la hammayoq.
Odamlar tut yemoqda to‘yib,
Daraxt to‘yib yemoqda... tayoq.* [Matnazar Abdulhakim, 13]

The poet skillfully depicts the imbalance between nature and consumption: “*Odamlar tut yemoqda to‘yib, / Daraxt to‘yib yemoqda... tayoq*” (“People are eating mulberries to their heart’s content, / The tree is eating... a stick”) lines reveal one of the main ideas of ecopoetics – the transformation of man into a one-sided consumer of nature. People are enjoying the blessings of the tree to their heart’s content, while the tree is receiving a “stick” in return – that is, damage, violence, and loss. The poem is short but has a sharp ecological and ecocritical content. It criticizes man’s attitude towards nature, which is based only on taking from it, and when giving back, he is violent. The mulberry tree exposes the abuse of nature and the denial of its needs.

The analysis of arboreal imagery in Matnazar Abdulhakim’s poetry shows that the poet conceptualizes trees as dynamic, meaning-generating entities deeply embedded in cultural, spiritual, and ecological contexts. His dendritic symbols consistently challenge human-centered perspectives by foregrounding the intrinsic value of nature. Through images of wounded, resilient, sacred, and witnessing trees, Abdulhakim articulates a nuanced ecological critique that reflects both regional environmental anxieties and universal concerns about humanity’s relationship with the natural world. From an ecopoetic standpoint, his representation of trees serves as a call for restoring harmony, ethical responsibility, and emotional sensitivity toward the environment. The study concludes that Abdulhakim’s arboreal poetics contributes to shaping an eco-conscious literary paradigm in contemporary Uzbek and Karakalpak literature, offering fertile ground for further interdisciplinary research within environmental humanities.

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