
THE GENESIS OF THE SYMBOL OF THE “SOUL” IN LYRIC POETRY

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Abstract

This article discusses the use of symbols in the lyrical genre, with a particular focus on the historical development of the symbol “soul/heart”. Additionally, it provides information on the earliest sources in Uzbek and Turkic literature that feature the symbol of the soul/heart and the various terms used to denote it in these texts.

Keywords

Soul, symbol, source, history, spirit, heart, lyric, proverb, folk song, poem.

Literature is a field that allows one to reach into the human heart. Especially within literature, the lyrical genre holds an even broader sphere of influence in this regard. Lyricism serves as a genuine arena for expressing the heart’s sentiments. However, in literature, the soul/heart has been elevated to the level of a symbol or image, becoming one of the most fundamental symbols in lyricism. This is because, through the expression of this symbol, the creator conveys their own emotional experiences. When discussing a particular symbol or image, every reader initially strives to understand its origin and essence more deeply. This endeavour leads to a clearer understanding of the symbol. Therefore, we aim to explore the origin, essence, and genesis of the symbol of the soul/heart specifically within lyricism.

“Ko’ngil” (soul/heart) is one of the oldest and most widely used words in the lyrical genre of the Turkic language, dating back to ancient times. The unparalleled role of folk oral creativity in the establishment of the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) as a poetic image in literature, particularly in poetry, is undeniable. The word “ko’ngil” (heart) originally derives from Persian and Arabic languages and is synonymous with “dil” (soul), “qalb” (heart), and the pan-Turkic “yurak” (heart). Despite this, the poetic expression of the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) is significantly broader compared to its synonyms mentioned above. Our research has revealed that, compared to its synonyms, the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) itself has been used more frequently in the earliest written examples of Turkic literature.

This is one of the most significant aspects that attest to the distinctiveness of Turkic poetry. In dictionaries, *ko'ngil* (soul) is defined as the source of a person's emotions and feelings; *yurak*, *qalb*, *dil*, *xotir*, *yod*, *fikr*, *hayol*, *ixtiyor* har narsaning markazi, *o'rtasi*, (heart, soul, mind, memory, thought, imagination, will, the centre or core of anything).

A. Gulpinorli emphasizes that "Ko'ngil (soul) is the name given to a person's spiritual essence, vitality, love, hatred, trust - the entirety and expression of all good and bad feelings" .

When examining the historical roots of the word "*ko'ngil*" (soul/heart) , we cannot overlook the folk proverbs, which are oral samples of cultural heritage. As we continue our discussion, it is worth noting that in the realm of folk oral creativity, which is the foundation of the art of words, expressions such as "*ko'ngil bermoq*" (to love), "*ko'ngil ko'yi*" (desire, wish), and "*ko'ngil olmoq*" (to make happy) frequently appear. This widespread usage of the word "*ko'ngil*" in comparison to "*yurak*" (heart) and "*qalb*" (soul) highlights its broader application .

Proverbs are widely used among people and contain reflections aimed at drawing conclusions from events that lead people towards goodness. Specifically, the word "*ko'ngil*" (soul/heart) has been reflected in proverbs for centuries and has been passed down from language to language. Looking at examples, we encounter proverbs like "*Ko'ngil kirini yetti daryo yuvsam ham ketmas*" (The stain on the heart cannot be washed away by seven rivers), "*Ko'ngil toshdan qattiq, guldani nozik*" (The heart is harder than stone, more delicate than a flower), and "*Ko'ngilning qolishi shishaning sinishi*" (The breaking of the heart is like the breaking of glass). These proverbs show that for centuries, proverbs have acknowledged the heart as the most exalted thing. In proverbs like "*Ko'z ko'ngil oynasi*" (The eyes are the mirror of the heart) and "*Ko'ngil gulini sevgi suvi sug'oradi*" (The flower of the heart is watered by the waters of love), we can understand that the heart is compared to a mirror and a flower.

If we observe another form of folk oral creativity, the "*lapar*"s, we also encounter instances where the word "*ko'ngil*" (soul/heart) is used. Specifically:

"Oting bozor deganda, oting bozor,
Tol-tolgina sochingni taroq yozar.
Yaxshi bilan o'ynashsang, ko'ngling bozor,
Yomon bilan o'ynashsang, ko'ngling ozor" .

In the excerpt from the above "*lapar*", the primary emphasis is placed on the concepts of good and evil. However, in both ideas, the significance of the human heart is underscored. That is, if you choose to bond your destiny with a good

person, your heart will be like a bustling market. Conversely, if it is with a bad person, your heart will only suffer. This clearly illustrates that the heart is so exalted that it cannot be treated carelessly or with a wrong choice.

Or in another lapar (folk song):

“Qoshing qora qayloma,

Yorga ko’ngil boylama.

Yorga ko’ngil boylasang,

Tashlab ketsa yig’lama.”

In most folk songs like the one mentioned above, the protagonist's pain and sorrow are reflected. In such instances, it is not uncommon to encounter the symbols of the heart, soul, and spirit. This is because the protagonist expresses their emotions through these symbols.

As evident, in folk oral creativity, the symbol of the heart, which plays a central role in conveying human emotions, desires, and aspirations, evolved over centuries and adapted to the context and era. However, it did not develop to its fullest potential. Yet, once this symbol transitioned into written literature, it attained a significantly higher position in terms of both ideological and artistic value.

Some sources suggest that the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) frequently mentioned in examples of folk oral creativity and folk ceremonial songs, was actually used even earlier. Specifically, the oldest text in which the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) appears in written literature is considered to be the Orkhon-Enisey inscriptions, where it is found in forms such as “ko’ngulteki, “ko’ngulte”, “ko’nglung-cha”. These forms conveyed meanings related to desire, wish, and aspiration .

In Mahmud Kashgari’s “Devoni Lugotit Turk”, it is evident that the word “ko’ngil” (soul/heart) has evolved in form and meaning, becoming richer over time. He explains “ko’ngil” as follows: “Ko’nyl – heart, acumen, intelligence. The phrase “ko’nyllyk er” derives from this, meaning an intelligent and astute person” . Yusuf Khos Hajib’s epic “Kutadgu Bilig” also emphasizes the concept of “ko’ngil”. This can be understood through the dialogues of the four main characters in the epic. Additionally, the epic states an important notion: “Ko’ngil istaganini topmasa, kishi erksiz bo’lur” (If one’s heart does not find what it desires, the person becomes powerless). Furthermore, the epic contains wisdom attributed to the legendary Turkic mountain “Alp Er Tong”, referred to as ‘Alp Er”, “Tonga Alp Er”, and one of them says:

Et-ul bu kishi ko’ngli artar yidir,

Eti kad kadazgu e qilqi qadir.

(Kishi ko'ngli go'shtdir, hidla buzilur,

Go'shtni avaylagin, ey fe'li qodir).

In this context, the heart (ko'ngil) of a person is likened to a king, while the body and soul are considered its captives. It is said that a single word can either completely cool or warm it. As we know, Yusuf Khos Hajib's epic discusses how kings and khans should govern the state. The wisdom related to the heart is not mentioned arbitrarily by the author.

In another masterpiece of ancient Turkic literature, Ahmad Yugnaki's "Hibat ul-haqaiq", the concept of the heart is also discussed.

"Yig'ip ko'ngli to'ymaz ko'zi suq baxil,

Qul ul molga moli angar erklik ul."

Ko'zi och baxil kishi qancha mol to'plasa ham ko'ngli to'lmas, u mol dunyoning quli, davlati uning ustidan hukmron (A miser's heart is never satisfied no matter how much wealth he accumulates; he becomes a slave to his possessions, and his wealth dominates him). It is evident that a person attached to material wealth lacks peace of mind, while one who possesses inner tranquillity is distant from materialism. In this regard, Yahya ibn Muaz states, "My heart is superior to the worldly life and the hereafter. Because the world is a place of toil and blessings, but my heart is a place of knowledge. Thus, knowledge is superior to both the worldly life and the hereafter" .

It is evident that the earliest use of the symbol of the heart/soul (ko'ngil) traces back to the most exquisite masterpieces of Turkic literature. Additionally, the concept of the heart/soul is also referenced in Sufism. In Sufi teachings, the heart is held in high regard, with significant efforts made to analyze its role in a person's life and destiny. "In Sufism, there is a unique sanctuary that unites people of all religions, races, sects, and nations. This sanctuary is the source of Sufi life - the heart, referred to as the throne of Allah" .

Ghazali frequently discusses the soul, or the concept of the heart, in his works. Specifically, in his book "Ithou ulumid-din" (The Book of the Heart), he states: "The heart is such a thing that if a person knows it, indeed, he knows himself. If he knows himself, indeed, he knows his Lord. The heart is such a thing that if a person does not know it, he does not know himself, and if he does not know himself, he does not know his Lord. Whoever is ignorant of his heart is even more ignorant of others" .

According to Ghazali, the first type of heart is extremely rare, while the most common is the second type, a heart filled with the desires of this transient world.

Although there are the third and fourth types of hearts, their numbers are not very large. At this point, it is also appropriate to clarify another truth: the source and manifestation of Sufi life is the heart.

In Sufi literature, the term “ko’ngil” (heart or soul) is frequently mentioned, often more so than “qalb” (soul) or “yurak” (heart). Numerous thoughts and reflections are expressed about the “ko’ngil”. So, what is the reason for this? The words in “Miftohul-qulub” provide a unique answer to this question: “The ko’ngil (soul) is within the heart. Its honour far exceeds that of the heart. To harm the heart distorts and destroys a person outwardly... Because the ko’ngil (soul) is nestled within the heart, deeply wounding the ko’ngil (soul) can devastate a person both outwardly and inwardly”. This is why reflections and considerations on the fate, condition, and truths of the ko’ngil (soul) hold a prominent place in Sufism. In fact, among Sufi terminology, words and terms explaining the states or truths of the heart and ko’ngil (soul) occupy a leading position. Without understanding these, it is impossible to accurately comprehend and interpret the essence and meaning of Sufi poetry. In Sufi teachings, the ko’ngil (soul) is likened to the “arsh” (throne), “ka’ba” (holy site), “ummon” (ocean), and “dengiz” (sea).

Later, in Turkic literature, particularly in the works of Ahmad Yassavi, who was a prominent figure in Sufi teachings, significant attention was given to the imagery of the “ko’ngil” (heart or soul). However, Ahmad Yassavi differed from other Sufi poets in that he began to compare the heart to a bird and a mirror.

Ko’zum tushti, ko’nglum ucti, Arshqa oshti.

Umrum kecti, nafsım qoçti, bahrim toshti.

Karvon ko’çti, manzil oshti, horib tushti,

Sir ulashti, netak bo’lg’ay holim mening.

(My eye fell, my soul soared, it rose to the Throne.

My life passed, my ego fled, and my sea overflowed.

The caravan moved, the destination advanced, it arrived weary,

Secrets were shared, what will become of my state?)

In this wisdom, Ahmad Yassavi describes the soul as aspiring to the Throne, free from worldly attachments, by stating “ko’nglum ucti” (my soul soared). In the above wisdom, particular emphasis is placed on the concept of the “nafs” (ego). The fleeing of the “nafs” (ego) enables the heart to yearn towards the Throne.

According to Nasiba Bozorova, “In Sufism, the cultivation of the soul is considered crucial. Therefore, Sufi poets have extensively discussed the state of the soul, the secrets of attaining spiritual perfection, and the importance of the soul in Sufi poetry. The significance of the soul in Sufi poetry is notable because it is poetry

that has dedicated considerable effort to drawing human attention to the soul, unveiling the mysteries of the heart and soul, and resolving the relationship between God and man through the path and needs of the heart. In Sufi poetry, the soul has acquired a fundamentally new essence. It has been elevated to the status of the divine throne of Arsh, the seat of God” .

In general, the significance and analysis of the heart in Sufi literature, especially in Sufi poetry, are deeply influenced by the holy book of Islam, “the Quran”. Specifically, certain verses of the Quran emphasize this: “Fear Allah! Verily, Allah is the Knower of the secrets of hearts” (Al-Maida: 7)”. “Know that Allah intervenes between a person and his heart” (Al-Anfal: 24).

This implies that even in sacred texts, the heart is depicted as the focal point of Allah’s gaze. In Hadiths, the heart is not only described as Allah’s throne but also emphasizes the importance of focusing on the heart rather than becoming enslaved by material wealth, desires, and discontent.

For instance, one Hadith states: “Wealth is not in the abundance of possessions, but (true) wealth is the wealth of the heart” .

According to history books, Uzbek literature ascended to a new stage of development starting from the 14th-15th centuries. The thematic scope of literature expanded significantly. The connections between oral folklore and written literature strengthened even further. During this period, poets primarily emphasized themes of love and romance in their poetry. Professor A. Hayitmetov also expressed similar views about the poetry of the 15th century. He stated, “Poets like Lutfi, Gadoi, Atoi, and Sakoki increasingly and seriously dedicated space to depicting the love, pain, desires, and aspirations of the lover. They not only praised the beauty of their beloved but also spoke loudly about their love, dreams, inner excitement, pain, and sorrow, as well as their dissatisfaction with unrequited love. This led to the emergence of more profound psychological depictions, and the portrayal of the human figure became more complete” .

During that period, Persian literature saw the influence of poets such as Ferdowsi, Saadi, Hafez, Attar, Nizami, and Khayyam, whose works impacted the literatures of many countries. Poets writing in both Turkish and Persian predominantly focused on the theme of love. In poems featuring themes of love and romance, the state of the lyrical hero's heart is inevitably depicted.

Ko‘nglim bu – hayronim mening shaydoyu sayroning sening,
Shaydoyu sayroning sening ko‘nglim bu – hayronim mening .
“My heart is bewildered, for I am your wanderer and admirer,
Your wanderer and admirer, my heart is bewildered”.

In the excerpt from a ghazal attributed to Hafez, it is said that the heart is bewildered by the beloved's love, and the bewildered heart is infatuated with the beloved.

Bir g'arib ko'nglini qila olsang shod,
Yaxshidir yer yuzin qilgandan obod,
Lutning-la bir dilni qul qila olsang,
Afzaldir yuz qulni qilmoqdan ozod .
"If you can gladden a single lonely heart,
It is better than making the whole world prosperous.
If with your kindness you can enslave a heart,
It is better than freeing a hundred slaves".

The following quatrain by Khayyam also revolves around the theme of love for the beloved. The poet describes the state of a heart that has become estranged in the pursuit of love.

From the poems of the two creators mentioned above, it can be understood that the symbol of the soul/heart (ko'ngil) appears either as an intermediary to achieve love or as a confidant and friend when suffering from love. Similarly, almost all representatives of Persian literature depict the symbol of the heart in this way in their poems.

When examining the works of Turkish literature creators, the elements found in Persian literature are distinctly noticeable. This is especially evident in the depiction of the heart symbol.

Tortaram yuz ming jafo ko'nglum elindin, koshki
Bergay erdi haq ko'ngul, berguncha sangi xoraye .

"I would endure a hundred thousand torments from the beloved's hand, if only The Divine had given a heart, instead of giving me a stone".

In the excerpt from Lutfiy's ghazal, attention is drawn to both inner and outer love.

Ey ko'ngul, bu yo'lda ne g'amdur senga
Kim, xayoli yor hamdamdur senga.
Sevdung o'z haddingdin ortuq yorni,
Gar seni kuydursalar, kamdur senga .
"Oh heart, what sorrow is there for you on this path,
For the beloved's thought is your companion.
You have loved beyond your limits,
If they burn you, it is not enough for you."

In the following quatrain, the poet's love for the beloved is expressed. Lutfiy describes the sorrow that has come to his heart in the path of love, yet he continues to live with the thought of the beloved. He illustrates that even if his heart burns from love, it is not enough for him.

Ko'nglum kuyarindin sanga men pand berurmen,

Ey mahrami jonu jigarim, netti, ne bo'ldi ?

My heart burns from your love, and I offer you my advice,

Oh confidant of my soul and my liver, what has happened, what has become?

In another excerpt from the ghazal with the refrain "Ne bo'ldi" by the Turkic poet Atoi, the poet describes the state of his heart, tormented to know the condition of his beloved.

From the excerpts analyzed above, drawn from the works of Persian and Turkic poets, it becomes evident that as literature has developed, the range of themes embodied by its characters and symbols has also expanded. The soul/heart (ko'ngil) symbol, in particular, has been variously interpreted in both Persian and Turkic literatures through didactic poems, romantic verses, and those reflecting Sufi teachings, shifting its connotations with time and context. This symbol has persisted through the ages because the heart is considered the most precious gift bestowed by God to humanity. Hence, regardless of the theme in which the heart symbol appears, it invariably manifests the connection between human emotions and the individual.

This indicates that in any literary genre or type, when the human figure is presented, the depiction of the heart is inevitably included. Here, a bond is formed between the creator's heart and the heart of their literary character. As it is said, "The enjoyment of an artwork lies in engaging with the artist's heart..." .

Overall, the symbol of the soul/heart (ko'ngil) in classical literature was directly shaped by the verses of the Quran, Hadiths, and especially the thoughts of prominent Sufis regarding the spiritual perfection of God and humanity. Later, the refinement of these ideas by great Sufis over the centuries and their artistic elaboration in the works of great wordsmiths served the spiritual development of humanity, turning the heart symbol into a central theme in classical literature.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the unique interpretation related to analyzing the role of the human being and their destiny is a fundamental aesthetic expression in the lyrics of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur.