

Episodic Characters in Alisher Navoi's Layli And Majnun Epic

Turdiyeva Maftuna Abdurahmonovna

Basic doctoral student at Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: In Alisher Navoi's Layli and Majnun epic poem, he enriched the system of existing characters typical of the khamsa tradition by introducing supporting figures such as Layli's nurse, Layli's two maidservants, a physician, Zayd, a shepherd, Navfal's daughter, a gazelle beloved by Majnun, and a dog. These characters played unique roles in the development of the plot and in revealing the emotional states of the main protagonists. This article analyzes these episodic characters.

Keywords: Layli, Majnun, character, predecessor, lover, episode.

Introduction: The supporting characters in Alisher Navoi's Layli and Majnun have been analyzed in studies by S. Narzullayeva and T. Ahmedov. However, since these analyses approached the work based on the standards and views characteristic of their times, the functions assigned to these characters were not fully illuminated. When comparing the episodic characters in Navoi's poem with those in the works of his predecessors, it becomes evident that they possess distinctive ideological and artistic features. To identify Navoi's mastery and innovation in character creation, it is necessary to compare his Layli and Majnun with the works of his predecessors—Nizami, Dehlavi, and his mentor Jami.

METHOD

In a literary work, each character and personality is assigned a specific role through which the author conveys his overall purpose. Therefore, each character moves the plot forward not only through general traits but also through their unique characteristics. In Navoi's Layli and Majnun, the episodic characters served not only to reveal the protagonists' personalities but also to express the poet's ideological intentions.

It is known that in classical Eastern literature, particularly in Navoi's works, the image of the nurse holds a special place. This can also be observed in Navoi's Farhod and Shirin and Sab'ai Sayyor epics. In Layli and Majnun, the nurse acts as a confidante and

helper to the lovers. Unlike Navoi, the predecessors Nizami, Dehlavi, and Jami do not depict a nurse figure in their Layli and Majnun. "The poet introduced the figure of the nurse to enhance the realism of the events and ensure their logical continuity." The nurse also carries symbolic meaning: while Majnun's love is innate and does not require spiritual guidance, Layli needs assistance when facing the torments of love, with the nurse serving as a supportive figure or even a spiritual guide for her.

The roles of Layli's maidservants are primarily visible in the episode where Layli and Majnun faint upon seeing each other. They discreetly bring Layli back home, thereby protecting her. Such characters are almost absent in the predecessors' works because their depictions of the lovers' meetings differ significantly.

The physician's figure traces back to Abul Faraj Isfahani's Kitab al-Aghani (Book of Songs), where Majnun's relatives seek doctors to heal his madness, although unsuccessfully. In that narrative, charms and spells are applied, but it is noted that only Layli's presence could cure him.

The gazelle beloved by Majnun is a common motif in khamsa versions of Layli and Majnun, where Majnun compares Layli's eyes to the gazelle's. In Navoi's version, the gazelle becomes a solace and companion for Majnun:

He was a companion among the beasts,

A gazelle was his dearest friend.

The madman's companion and confidant,

His only comfort, his pillow in sleep.

While Nizami and Dehlavi describe Majnun's rescue of animals from hunters and his admiration of their beauty, Navoi and Jami go further, portraying a deeper bond between Majnun and the animals.

The shepherd character in Navoi's epic, absent from Nizami and Dehlavi's versions but present in Jami's, is a friend who sympathizes with Majnun. The shepherd recognizes Majnun from their childhood and offers his help. In a memorable scene, Majnun, disguised in a sheepskin, meets Layli, leading to an emotional collapse of both lovers.

Navfal's daughter appears in Navoi's epic, inspired by Dehlavi's Layli and Majnun, where she is called Khadija. However, Navoi reinterprets her role, turning her into a means of testing Majnun's loyalty and highlighting the spiritual purity of his love. Although Majnun marries her under pressure, he abandons her, affirming his devotion to Layli.

In the 14th chapter of Navoi's epic, the figure of the dog appears. The dog symbolizes loyalty and devotion. Majnun feels that even the dog is closer to Layli than he is, lamenting that he cannot even match the dog's faithfulness:

You are beyond me in loyalty,

Beyond me in sincerity and purity.

The dog's resilience, unlike Majnun's, underscores Majnun's internal suffering and despair. Jami also depicts Majnun's conversation with a dog, but this scene is absent in Nizami and Dehlavi's works.

Zayd, another character, represents the oppressed and the suffering. Majnun aids him wholeheartedly. Originally appearing in the concluding story "Zayd and Zaynab" in Nizami's epic, Zayd symbolizes pure, unselfish love. Although Navoi did not directly adapt the entire story, Zayd's presence influences the emotional depth of Majnun's relationship with Layli.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The article analyzed supporting characters such as Layli's nurse, her two maidservants, the physician, Zayd, the shepherd, Navfal's daughter, the gazelle loved by Majnun, and the dog. Their roles in revealing the emotional states of the protagonists were examined. The genealogy of these characters and their transformation across different versions of the Layli and Majnun story were also explored.

CONCLUSION

Drawing creatively from his predecessors' epics, Navoi

synthesized and reshaped supporting characters, thereby introducing innovative approaches within the Layli and Majnun tradition.

"Each figure in the epic is crafted with masterful artistry, and Navoi assigned every character and every detail a specific artistic and social role."

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