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# THE SYMBOL IN I.YUSUPOV'S POETRY AS A SIGN OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

**Abstract:**

This article examines the symbolic and conceptual representation of the tree in the poetry of Ibragim Yusupov, a prominent Karakalpak poet. The research focuses on the semantic and cultural functions of recurring natural images such as the qara tal (black poplar) and bayterek, which are deeply embedded in the national worldview and historical consciousness. These symbols reflect the poet's vision of the harmony between humanity and nature, the spiritual roots of the people, and the continuity between generations. Methodologically, the study employs poetic analysis within the framework of symbol and concept theory. Through close textual analysis, it reveals how the image of the tree serves not only as a literary device but also as a marker of ethnic identity, cultural memory, and collective historical experience. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how poetic imagery encodes national values and preserves intangible cultural heritage in Karakalpak literature.

**Keywords:** Ibragim Yusupov, poetic symbolism, tree concept, cultural memory, national identity, Karakalpak poetry, black poplar, bayterek

## 1. Introduction

In world literary studies today, special attention is paid to the study of the creative skills of writers and poets in the study of the aesthetic direction of literary works. Especially in poetic works, one of the important issues is the study of the poet's poetic skill, which reveals the uniqueness of the poet's artistic world through

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

metaphorical and symbolic images, and their analysis from the perspective of modern scientific and theoretical achievements.

Studying the work of I. Yusupov, a masterful representative of poetry reflecting the national spirit of our people, Hero of Uzbekistan, and People's Poet, based on new theoretical achievements in literary studies, is one of the tasks facing contemporary Karakalpak literature.

Considering that figurative thinking is the foundation of literature, especially poetry, which is considered its most active form, it becomes clear how necessary it is to study I. Yusupov's work in terms of the poetics of metaphorical images and symbols. Because without studying the nature and evolutionary development of images and symbols, it is impossible to determine the creative laboratory of any poet, and perhaps the aesthetic laws related to the artistic literature of a specific period, as well as the development trends of lyricism. The necessity of studying such characteristics necessary for literary studies confirms the relevance of this research topic.

## 2. Theoretical base

The scientific study of the issue of symbols and metaphors has always been considered important. The theoretical and practical study of symbols in the field of cultural studies and mythology is of great importance to us in the scientific works of Karl Jung [1], Umberto Eco [6], in the field of semiotics Ferdinand de Saussure [18] and Charles Saunders Pierce [18], Roland Barthes [5], Joseph Campbell [2], in the field of psychology Sigmund Freud [3], Jacques Lacan [4], Jacques Derrida [2], in the field of literary studies and poetics, linguistics M.M. Bakhtin [7], Yu. Lotman [14], N. Fry [17], Aza-taxo-Godi [8], A.F. Losev [9], A.A. Potebnya [3].

In Uzbek literary studies, the theoretical analysis of symbols and metaphors is reflected in the works of T. Boboev [50], Sh. Turdimov [79], and in Karakalpak literary studies, S. Akhmetov [76], K. Mambetov [79], K. Jarimbetov [80], K.Orazimbetov [84], B. Genjemuratov [81], Z. Bekbergenova [82], and A. Dosimbetova [83]. The artistic analysis of I. Yusupov's work and poetic works is

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

reflected in the scientific works of a number of scholars. However, the poetic analysis of symbols in the poet's work has not been specifically studied in a monographic volume.

The study of symbols in the field of literary studies is one of the important directions in a deep understanding of literary works, their themes, characters, and text. In ancient literature, symbols were used to convey religious and philosophical views. Homer and Virgil effectively used symbolic imagery in their epic works. In medieval literature, symbols played an important role in religious texts and allegories. Interest in classical literature during the Renaissance led to the use and comprehensive study of symbols in the works of Shakespeare and Dante. The Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung [30] proposed the concept of collective unconsciousness archetypes to science. His scientific works, titled "Archetype and Collective Unconsciousness" and "Transformation of Symbols," provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of symbols in literature, especially in mythology. He was one of the first to use the term "archetype" in literary studies. This term was first used in the works of German romantics in the 19th century, and later introduced to the public was the Swiss psychologist K. Jung (1875-1961). According to Jung, an archetype is a universal human image that is passed down unconsciously from generation to generation. Sigmund Freud [3] developed a method for interpreting symbols in human dreams and literature. Canadian literary critic and scholar Nortrop Fray [17] developed the theory of archetypal criticism, considering symbols as elements of mythological structure. French literary critic and semioticist Roland Barthes [5] analyzes symbols in the context of literature and culture, investigating how they acquire meaning. The Italian writer Umberto Eco studied symbols and signs in literature and culture. His research consists of attempting to explore the concept of the reader's role in text interpretation and the expression of meaning. The Russian philosopher and literary scholar M.M. Bakhtin [7] developed the concept of diologism and chronotope, which includes the analysis of symbols in a literary text. These researchers attempted to understand

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

symbols in literature by presenting various theoretical views and analysis methods. Their scientific work continues to influence literary criticism and theory, helps to a deeper understanding of symbolic structures in texts.

The symbol is first mentioned in Plato's treatises. However, this was used only in the literal sense, that is, in the sense of a sign. Similar views are found in Aristotle. However, Aristotle did not explicitly address the concept of symbol. Almost, in the literature of ancient times, this word did not have the meaning of the modern term. The scholar Azo-Taxo-Godi, a researcher of Greek myths and symbols, explains this as follows: "After studying all the materials, we were surprised by an important fact in Greek literature where the word 'symbol' was used. In Greek archaic times, and even in the Hellenistic period, until the 3rd century BC, that is, before the emergence of Neoplatonism, the word "symbol" was very rare, and even where it was found, it was not in a terminological quality [11].

Only towards the end of antiquity, when faith in myth declined, the symbolic interpretation of myth begin. Porphyry, a representative of Neoplatonism, stated that Homer's myths had mystical symbolism. After this, his followers, representatives of Neoplatonism, paid more attention to this issue. They consider myth to be a symbolic construction of the universe and a philosophical method of understanding it. Simultaneously, it is said that symbolic knowledge leads the learner to understanding. That is, formal logical knowledge, by outlining its development, gives freedom to symbolism. There are debates about the importance of knowledge during the period of development in the symbolic process.

Furthermore, in symbolism, eternity is viewed as a method that connects space with temporality. The symbol always speaks of the presence of something archaic. It is said that every culture needs a layer of texts performing archaic functions, and the adoption of symbols in this way is not accidental; their main group truly has a deeply archaic nature and dates back to the pre-written period. At the same time, the very broad and meaningful texts behind the symbol are metaphorically preserved, and its most interesting and archaic aspect is that the

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

symbol embodies complete text. In this respect, it has semantic and structural characteristics. The symbols, while preserving the memory of culture, remind us that they will not allow these memories to disappear within the isolated and dangerous borders of culture.

### 3. Symbols in I. Yusupov's Poetry

The poet's poetry has been studied from a literary and linguistic perspective in a number of works. It should be noted that the connection of I. Yusupov's poetry with Western and Eastern poetry [12], the poet's poems and their folklore sources [13], and from a linguistic perspective, the adjectives in the poet's works [14], as well as the linguopoetic analysis of his poems [15], have been specifically studied. At the same time, several articles and books were published, which were studied within the framework of separate studies. However, we see that the symbols and metaphors used in the poet's works have not become a separate object of study within the framework of the latest achievements of literary studies. This scientific work, in turn, allows for a deeper understanding of the true meaning of the poet's works, as well as determining the role and artistic function of symbols and metaphors in the composition of the work.

Every nation and cultural stratum has created its own system of symbols. Symbols occupy a central place in poetry as a means of conveying emotional states, cultural values, and complex ideas. In I. Yusupov's poetry, symbols are considered one of the important elements in conveying how the author perceives life and conveys it with artistic thought. I. Yusupov's poetry is valuable to us for its artistic reflection of the cultural and historical traditions of the era. Therefore, the poet's poetry is rich in symbols that depict the author's relationship with their environment and their inner experiences. In the process of analyzing symbols in the context of literary works, their classification contributes to the clarity of our ongoing scientific work. The classification of symbols is one of the most important issues in the field of literary studies and cultural studies. Scientists propose their classification based on the meanings of symbols and various aspects of their

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

application. E. Casirrer, in his book "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," classifies symbols based on their function in culture. It is divided into symbols of language, myth, art, science, and religion [16]. K. Jung classifies symbols as archetypal, cultural, and personal [17]. Ch.S. Peirce, the founder of semiotics, proposed a triadic model of signs, and included icons, indexes, and symbols. [18] Based on the scholars' methods of classifying symbols, we have deemed it appropriate to categorize the symbols in I. Yusupov's lyrical works as: natural symbols, cultural mythological symbols, and philosophical symbols.

Symbols in I. Yusupov's poetry are considered one of the important tools in determining the ideological direction of a work and enhancing its emotionality. Especially, nature symbols such as trees and birds are important in expressing the concepts of life and time. Similarly, we will attempt to analyze the metaphors in the poet's lyrical works thematically.

The tree symbol, with its very ancient history, is considered one of the eternal images used in the works of many wordsmiths. Considered a product of the views and beliefs of our ancient ancestors, it has existed as a literary image for centuries. This image was also frequently used in the works of the poet I. Yusupov and has its own stages of development, mainly, the poet effectively used this image to depict humanity and the homeland figuratively, and since it has occupied a place in his works throughout his creative career, he has developed a symbolic quality within himself. Therefore, in order to study this image more deeply, we considered it appropriate to consider the symbol of the tree used in the poet's works as a concept.

To date, a number of scientific works have been published on the "tree" concept. Specifically, we know that the renowned scholar L.V. Borisova conducted research titled "The Tree Concept as a Linguocultural Code" [19], and N.A. Krass, Candidate of Philological Sciences, "The Tree Concept in the Lexico-Phraseological Semantics of the Russian Language: Using the Examples of Mythology, Folklore, and Poetry Materials" [20].

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

In recent years, in the humanitarian sphere of scientific knowledge, increased attention has been paid to the issues of the relationship between language and culture, language and national mentality, language and national consciousness.

Since ancient times, beliefs related to trees have emerged among people. Their origins trace back to the totemistic beliefs that emerged from the earliest periods of humanity. Because humans have always considered themselves a part of nature, that is, most perspectives on the origin of the universe and humanity are related to trees. Ancient people believed they descended from certain animals, plants, or trees. Such views gave rise to totemism. The terms "totemism" and "totem" are multifaceted; in science, they understood people whose cultural level had not yet fully formed not as one another, but rather as some animal, plant, or tree as their ancestors, blood relatives, or kin.

In the mythology of the Turkic peoples, the tree is recognized as a means of connecting reality. A.K. Bisembayev, describing the views of the Turkic peoples on creation, writes: "The Baiterek tree is not just a mighty tree; generations grow on it like leaves. When the time comes, the children's souls will fly to the other world - the world of people - in the form of stars. The springs of life flow in the roots of the great tree, they supply water to great rivers. A river flowing north carries the souls of dead people to a dark and cold world [21]. According to cultural scholars, the Bay qayıń (rich birch) is considered an analogue of the Tree of Life among the Turkic peoples. In the worldview of the Turkic peoples, the tree was closely connected with the lives of tribal members. That is, the tree was considered to have divine power as a symbol of life and offspring. The renowned 19th-century ethnographer and traveler F.A. Fielstrupa, while studying the traditions of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz peoples, notes that the tree was viewed as a living being in the lives of these nomadic peoples [56].

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

## 4. National subtext of symbols

The themes of poet I. Yusupov's poetry are distinguished by their vitality. In particular, we recognize the poet as a master of words who, by incorporating the event or idea he depicts into the composition of his work, enriches the reader's spiritual world, and deeply embodies the centuries-old cultural consciousness, beliefs, and worldview of our people in his artistic works. This phenomenon can be observed in almost all of the poet's works. In the poet's works, we encounter a number of symbolic images, such as "Bayterek," «shıbıq», «shaqa», «qara tal», «daraq», «shınar», «nartlar».

I. Yusupov is the author of the anthem of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. In the verses of the anthem, he depicts the entire Karakalpak people through the symbol of a tree, saying, “Túbi bir shaqası mıń bolar demek” ("They have one root, thousand branches)." From the first stanzas of our anthem, which begins with the line «Jayxun jaǵasında ósken Bayterek» ("Bayterek, which grew on the banks of the Jayhun)," we envision our ancestors who settled on the banks of the Amu Darya and lived by this water.

The Bayterek, used in the poet's poetry, undoubtedly finds its reflection as a symbol of the Karakalpak people. What kind of tree is this that uses the image of a wordsmith in a line of poetry, comparing the Karakalpak people and depicting the image of an entire nation?! At this point, which tree can we call Bayterek? We know that black willow, white willow, elm, white poplar, poplar, and other trees grow in our local area. However, we cannot single out a specific tree as Bayterek. Therefore, we will examine how the poet uses the symbolic image of Bayterek with profound knowledge and sharp intellect.

We know that many myths about Bayterek are widespread among the Turkic peoples. Bayterek is a symbol of the tree of life of the Turkic peoples, that is, the mythological tree of the desert peoples. Regarding myth and symbols, G. Shelogurova provides valuable information about myth in contemporary philology.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

1) Myth is recognized as a social literary creation.

2) Myth is considered a universal model for the symbol.

3) Myths are plots in all periods of literary development and is considered the primary source of images;

**4)** We believe that the author's view that a new reality created based on the laws of artistic reality can also be a myth, modeled on the principles of the product of old thought [23], plays a role in understanding the nature of our research work.

## 5. Results and discussion

Researcher R. Bart provides the following information about myth and symbol: "Mythological elements are not limited to mythological characters. Only mythical structure distinguishes it from all other fruits of human imagination. Therefore, it is the structure, that is, the construction that determines the mythological nature of some elements of the work. The renowned scholar M. Meletinsky, considering the humanization of nature and all inanimate objects among mythological elements, portraying past generations in mythological images with the attributes of animals, and evaluating this as a unique manifestation of mythopoetic thought, writes: "The myth used by the writer represents a new perspective and meaning. The author's thinking, combined with mythopoetic thinking, creates a new myth that differs significantly from its prototype. The difference between these two myths is revealed in the author's attempt to convey them using mythological form. The author's understanding of the content and meaning depends on how they depict the mythological element in the work [24].

As we mentioned above, the image of Bayterek embodies both symbolic and mythological concepts. In the poem "Ana tilime (To My Mother Tongue)" by the talented poet I. Yusupov: In the lines

Baytereksең ósken góne tamırdan,
Dilwarlıǵıń qıl suwırǵan qamırdan [62]
You are Bayterek, grown from old roots.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

"Your eloquence is as the dough you've drained",

they skillfully use the Bayterek symbol to describe our mother tongue, which is considered a symbol of our nation, comparing the roots of our language to a deep Bayterek tree and our people who speak this language to a master of words and eloquent speakers.

In the ideology, themes, content, and overall structure of the poetry of I. Yusupov, we see that the concept of the tree is reflected as one of the main motifs, a symbolic image closely connected with the Motherland, the people, the native land, and the living world of our people. For example, in the song "Qara tal" (Black Willow):

Anam saǵan baylap meniń átkónshegimdi,
Terbeltkende ırǵalǵansań hayalap sen de [62]
My mother, tying my swing to you,
“When she swayed, you also swayed lullabying," [62], - these lines are included. According to the beliefs of the Turkic peoples, the "átkónshek" or «altın átkónshek» (swing) hanging on a tree, is a symbol of the chain of generations and the continuity of generations. The poet masterfully depicted these views in the national and folk spirit in his poem "Qara tal" (Black Willow). According to legends: "During a time of war, a young mother placed her child on a swing, placed them in the branches of a birch tree so that water flowed from the tree into the child's mouth, and ran away. Someone found the child. Now they say he will be of birch descent." That is, the conclusion drawn from this legend: it is said that in difficult situations, no matter what tree, it helped save a person's life. Thus, the details of the swing in the poet's poem, the lines about our mothers swinging it by tying it to a tree do not appear by chance; we witness that they have reached our time as a symbol of life and growth, from the earliest times of human existence.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

In turn, scholar K. Jarimbetov wrote about the symbolic image of the black willow: "When I. Yusupov sang the Black Willow, the tall black willow, visible in the distance, was depicted as a symbol of the native land" [80].

The tree symbol is used as a "universal symbol" in humanity's spiritual culture. Such phenomena not only define the artistic merit of I. Yusupov's works but are also brought to life by the poet and portrayed as a divine phenomenon. Like humans, a tree grows, changes, and grows larger and wiser with each passing year. As it grows, so increases its opportunities. This idea can be observed through the poet's following lines:

...Seniń úniń, tursań gúwlep aldında tamnıń,
Janıma únles ertegindey áziz anamnıń.
...Samal tursa, sen bir tegis ırǵalıp oyshań,
Saldamlıraq oy oylawdı úyrettiń maǵan,
...Qulaǵımnan ketpes ele, tuwısqan talım,
«Shayır bol» dep maǵan talay sıbırlaǵanıń [62].
...Your voice, when you roar before the wall,
Like my dear mother's fairy tale, resonating with my soul.
...When the wind blows, you sway steadily, lost in thought,
You taught me to think more seriously,
...It won't leave my ears yet, my kindred willow,
You whispered to me many times, "Become a poet."

In the poem "Qara tal" (Black Willow), we understand the close connection between the tree and the human spiritual world. The tree depicted by the poet resonates with the wind, its swaying, like a mother's fairy tale, urging us to think thoughtfully, whispering in our ears, "Become a poet," and sending him on the path of great life.

In the poet's works, we observe that the issue of the connection between a tree and a person is becoming increasingly prominent.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

...Gúllene ber tallı jaǵıs, paxtalı dalam,
Men seniń bir nart shıbıǵıń, men seniń balań! [62],
...Bloom, willow meadow, cotton field,
I am your willow branch, I am your child! [62],

- In these lines, the poet intends to convey himself through figurative lines like "I was born from a tree of my homeland," or "the tree is my mother."

For the ancient Huns (Beryoza - birch), it served as a zoomorphic gongon, meaning sacrifices were made in its honor as a defender of the homeland [30].

In the mythology of the Turkic peoples, there was a God in the world. God first created Gudal, then Sosna (pine). It is believed that from every branch of a tree created by God, a person grows, and they become the ancestors of every tribe

In his research on toponyms, A.S. Taptigov states the following: ..." Speaking of the "Tree of Life" and "Tree of the World," we witness the reverence for the tree in the poems "Oguznama" and "Korkut ata." At the same time, this scholar, addressing the meaning of the mythotoponym associated with the tree cult, expressed the following thoughts: "Aǵacári is the aranym of the Tovuz district in Azerbaijan. The name of the mountain. This term is said to have originated from the name of a Turkic tribe [31].

Regarding this issue, another scholar, B. Ogel, mentioned in his research the existence of geographical terms such as Bay aǵac, Ala aǵac, Qara aǵac and others in Central Asia [32].

However, F. Schumer interprets this ethnonym as: aǵacári - "tree man" (mujchina derevo). According to the scholar, this means a person born from a tree, derived from the words aǵac "tree" and ári "man" [33].

In the poem Noǵaylarǵa ("To the Nogais") by the poet I. Yusupov:

Bir shaqadan búrtik jarǵan aǵayin,
Quwan dostım, baxıtlı xalıq noǵayım! [62],
A relative who has sprouted buds from one branch,
Rejoice, my friend, my happy Nogai people! [62],

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

- thus expressing the idea that the entire Nogai people are born from the buds of a single tree branch and relative nation with common root.

Thus, in the verses sung by I. Yusupov, "Bayterek," the swing under the willow tree, offspring branch, the branch, and other detailed descriptions depict humans directly linked to the symbol of the tree. Through this, the poet aims to convey to all humanity that humans are an inseparable part of nature, its soul and body, and that knowingly or unknowingly harming actions is undoubtedly harmful to themselves or humanity.

Continuing our opinion, let's consider the realization of the issue of humanity and nature in the poet's works, especially through the concept of the tree and the symbol of the tree, using the example of the poem «Plaxa izlep» ("In Search of Plakha"): This poem was dedicated to the novel "Plakha" by the famous Kyrgyz writer Ch. Aitmatov. If we pay attention to these lines in the poem:

Kóp tartıstan keyin shıqtıq aralap,
Aǵash tuqımı bar hámme jaqlardı.
**Livan kedrlerin** qırqtıq jarǵılap,
Savannada ullı **baobaplardı.**
**Tayǵa qaraǵayın** biyigin saylap,
**Áydik emenlerdi** qıyratıp shıqtıq,
Túbine záhárli izey suw aydap,
**Sayalı gújimdi** quwratıp jıqtıq [62].
After a long argument, we went around.
Everywhere there are tree seeds.
Cut **the Lebanese cedars,**
In the Savannah, great **baobabs.**
Choose the height of **the pine tree** ,
We destroyed **the bear oaks** ,
Driving poisonous muddy water to the bottom.
We dried up the shady elm tree.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

The tree names mentioned in the poem are folk symbols adapted to each nation's climate, lifestyle, and soil. For example, the cedar tree is embedded as a symbol in the national flag of Lebanon. However, the lifespan of baobabs is still unknown to science, they are drought-resistant, and are widely used by the local population as food. Thus, we witness the deepening of the meaning of the tree symbol, the concept of the tree, which the poet is referring to. Because we know that Sh. Aitmatov symbolically called the title of the novel "Plakha." It is known that the work reflects the positive and negative relationships between man and nature. We witness the deepening of these perspectives in the poet's verses. For example:

... Al, ol dúńke aǵash ólim shaqırıp,
Mudam qanǵa shóllep turar desedi,
Biraq sel jamǵırlar ómir shaqırıp,
Ol aǵashtan **nart shıbıqlar** ósedi [62].
... And that dried-up tree, calling for death,
They say he's always thirsty for blood.
But the torrential rains call for life,
Offspring branches grow from a tree.

Here, the "offspring branches" growing from the base of a dried-up tree are a symbol of a new life, vitality, or more precisely, a new generation.

Researcher N.O. Tadisheva, in her research titled "Tree Cult among Altai Peoples," expresses the following thoughts: "According to Altai legends, people lived in Altai long ago, and they were called Torgauts." However, one day a new tree appeared - this is a needle-leaved tree (listvennica), and the Torgauts draw attention to the legend that everything will change and a new era will come, and they will give up their place to another people [37]. We see these thoughts and concepts in the following poem lines by the talented poet I. Yusupov:

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https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

awızlıqtıń múlki sol **dúńke aǵash**,
Múmkin, **nartlap daraq** bolar qaytadan,
Aqıl aspanında nur shashıp quyash,
Ullı haqıyqatqa jol tabar insan! .... [62]
The property of evil is that **dried-up wood**,
Perhaps, **a tree** will be pruned again,
The sun shines in the sky of wise,
A person finds way to the great truth! [62]

## 6. Conclusion

Considering the importance of symbolic imagery in the poet's works, we gain the opportunity to evaluate the symbol not only as a means of depiction but also as the primary means of conveying the author's idea. Most of the scholars mentioned above speak of a deep dialectical connection between myth and symbol. Representatives of the literary movement called symbolists called the symbol the basis or core of the myth. They conclude that the majority of myths are based on symbolic principles and mention poets like S.V. Maksimov, Balmont, and S. Gordetsky, who considered their poetry to be mythocreation.

In addition, the poet has a number of symbolic works, such as «Seksewil», «Úmit aǵashı», «Kreshatik kashtanları», «Magnoliya», «Narciss»."

Thus, it is noteworthy that in the works of the talented folk poet I. Yusupov, mythological and symbolic concepts found in the centuries-old mythology of the Turkic peoples were processed and transformed in the poet's philosophy of thought, becoming a means of artistic, aesthetic, national, and vivid depiction in the composition of his works.

Most importantly, we come to the conclusion that the concept of the tree in the poet's poetry reflects depending on its national origins, the national identity of the place, country, place, and people where it lived, its spiritual understanding and cultural life, and its living conditions. In the poet's poetry, the concept of a tree is

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 30.01.2026

an artistic image symbolized and depicted as the unity of homeland, motherland, environment, nature, and humanity.

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