

## **ZULAYHO OBRAZINING MA'NAVIY-ADABIY EVOLYUTSIYASINI O'RGANISH**

Ruxsora Murodova Ismatilla qizi  
Chirchiq davlat pedagogika universiteti o'qituvchisi

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada “Yusuf va Zulayho” qissasining Sharq adabiy an'analari kontekstida tadqiq etilib, Zulayho obrazining insoniy ehtiros timsolidan ilohiy ishq timsoliga aylanishiga e'tibor qaratiladi. Qur'on manbalari, mumtoz tafsir adabiyoti va so'fiylik falsafasiga tayangan holda, tadqiqot hikoyaning fors va turkiy adabiy meros bo'ylab tematik va ramziy rivojlanishini kuzatadi. Maqolada qiyosiy va talqiniy tahlil orqali Firdavsiy, Jomiy, Navoiy, Devona kabi har bir davr va shoirlar hikoyani o'zlarining falsafiy-estetik dunyoqarashiga mos ravishda qayta talqin qilganliklari yoritilgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Yusuf va Zulayho, Sharq adabiyoti, so'fiylik, Mirzo Olim Devona, ilohiy ishq, ma'naviy o'zgarishlar, klassik poetika.

## **ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ДУХОВНОЙ И ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЙ ЭВОЛЮЦИИ ОБРАЗА ЗУЛАЙХО**

Рухсора Муродова  
Преподаватель Чирчикского государственного педагогического  
университета

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается история «Юсуф и Зулейха» в контексте восточных литературных традиций, уделяя особое внимание трансформации образа Зулейхи из символа человеческой страсти в символ божественной любви. Опираясь на коранические источники, классическую экзегетическую литературу и суфийскую философию, исследование прослеживает тематическое и символическое развитие истории в персидском и тюркском литературном наследии. С помощью сравнительно-интерпретационного анализа в статье рассматривается, как каждая эпоха и поэт, такие как Фирдоуси, Джами, Навои и Девана, переосмысливали историю в соответствии со своим философским и эстетическим мировоззрением.

**Ключевые слова:** Юсуф и Зулейха, восточная литература, суфизм, Мирзо Алим Девана, божественная любовь, духовные трансформации, классическая поэтика.

## **A STUDY OF THE SPIRITUAL AND LITERARY EVOLUTION OF THE CHARACTER OF ZULAYKHA**

Ruxsora Murodova Ismatilla qizi  
Lecturer at Chirchik State Pedagogical University

**Annotation.** This article examines the evolution of the “Yusuf and Zulaykha” narrative in the context of Eastern literary tradition, focusing on the transformation of the character of Zulaykha from a figure of human passion to a symbol of divine love. Drawing upon Qur’anic sources, classical tafsir literature, and Sufi philosophy, the study traces the thematic and symbolic development of the story across Persian and Turkic literary heritage. Particular attention is given to Mirzo Olim Devona’s Ravzayi Asrār, which elevates the character of Zulaykha to a metaphysical level, representing the human soul’s spiritual journey toward union with the Divine. Through comparative and interpretive analysis, the paper highlights how each era and poet—such as Firdawsi, Jami, Navoi, and Devona—reinterpreted the narrative in accordance with their philosophical and aesthetic worldview.

**Key words:** Yusuf and Zulaykha, Eastern literature, Sufism, Mirzo Olim Devona, divine love, spiritual transformation, classical poetics.

In the history of Eastern literature, the “Yusuf and Zulaykha” narrative stands as one of the most frequently reinterpreted and artistically refined religious-epic stories endowed with profound spiritual dimensions. This legend is closely intertwined not only with Islamic culture but also with the literary thought of ancient civilizations.

In literary studies, the term “Yusuf and Zulaykha” cycle refers to a corpus of works in which the Prophet Yusuf symbolizes patience, chastity, and fidelity, while Zulaykha represents the transformation of human love into divine love. The storyline has been reinterpreted by prominent poets such as Nizami, Firdawsi, Khusraw Dehlavi, Jami, Alisher Navoi, and Mirzo Olim Devona, each reflecting the philosophical and aesthetic worldview of their respective eras.

According to textual and source-based research, the origins of the character of Zulaykha trace back to ancient Egyptian literature, specifically to “The Tale of the Two Brothers,” which dates to the 13th century BCE. In this tale, the younger brother Bata is falsely accused by his master’s wife and punished despite his innocence—a motif that was later imbued with new religious and moral meanings in the “Yusuf and Zulaykha” narrative.

The earliest source of the Yusuf story appears in sacred scriptures, particularly in the Book of Genesis (chapters 37–50) of the Torah. It recounts Yusuf’s being cast into a well, sold into slavery in Egypt, and his encounter with the wife of Pharaoh—known in Islamic tradition as Zulaykha. Yusuf’s purity and steadfastness are interpreted in this version as the central moral and ethical ideals of the story.

In the Qur’an and Islamic exegesis, the story of Yusuf is portrayed as “the most beautiful of stories.” The Surah Yusuf is presented in the Qur’an as a

complete and independent narrative consisting of 111 verses. Although Zulaykha's name is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, she is referred to as "the wife of al-'Aziz." In classical tafsir sources such as those by Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari, and al-Baydawi, this woman is identified as Zulaykha, and her love for Yusuf is interpreted as a divine trial – a spiritual test bestowed by God.

Within Sufi thought, Zulaykha's love is perceived as "the school of human love leading to divine love." In other words, her passion symbolizes the soul's journey toward union with the Divine.

In Persian and Turkic literature, the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" tradition became even more elaborated and widespread. Among the earliest writers to introduce this theme into Persian-Tajik literature was Firdawsi, whose "Yusuf and Zulaykha" narrative represents one of the oldest artistic treatments of the Yusuf motif. However, the most renowned author to compose "Yusuf and Zulaykha" as an independent masnavi is Abdurrahman Jami. Jami's "Yusuf and Zulaykha" poem is rich in Sufi symbolism, in which Yusuf represents "divine beauty," while Zulaykha embodies "the soul's yearning for God."

In Turkic literature, this tradition began to take shape from the 11th century onward. By the 13th century, poets such as Nurmammad Andalib and Qul Ali, and later in the 15th century, Durbek and Alisher Navoi, reinterpreted the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" narrative in a moral and philosophical spirit.

Mirzo Olim Devona's "Rawzayi Asrār" (The Garden of Mysteries) represents a later stage in the evolution of the "Yusuf and Zulaykha" cycle. In this work, the story of Yusuf and Zulaykha is depicted not merely as an allegory of earthly love, but as a symbol of spiritual perfection. At the core of the poem lies Zulaykha's process of inner transformation. Initially, she appears as a captive of physical beauty and sensual desire. However, through the influence of Yusuf's patience, faithfulness, and piety, she evolves from "external love" (zāhirī muhabbat) to "inner love" (bātinī muhabbat) - that is, divine love. This transformation corresponds to the Sufi concept of "muhabbat sulūkī," the spiritual path toward perfection through love for God.

Mulla Olim Devona portrays Zulaykha through the following symbolic images:

Tears – a sign of repentance and purification;

Love for the Beloved – a manifestation of the Divine Beauty;

Zulaykha's palace – a metaphor for the human heart filled with desires and temptations;

The light of Yusuf – a symbol of divine truth, awakening the soul.

While in Jami's interpretation Zulaykha attains divine beauty through the suffering of love and eventual union with Yusuf, in Navoi's rendition she is viewed primarily as a moral exemplar and a source of ethical reflection.

In his poem *Ravzayi Asrār* (The Garden of Mysteries), Mirzo Olim Devona reinterprets the traditional “Yusuf and Zulaykha” narrative within a Sufi framework, elevating the image of Zulaykha to a new spiritual and philosophical dimension. In this work, Yusuf symbolizes divine beauty -the manifestation of God’s perfection (*jamāl-i Haqq*), while Zulaykha embodies the human soul’s inner longing to attain the Divine.

Zulaykha’s love is no longer worldly; rather, it represents the soul’s arduous, patient, and painful journey toward union with the Creator. Along this path, she transcends the physical shell of love, undergoes purification, moves toward perfection, and attains truth (*ḥaqīqat*) through love (‘*ishq*).

In Devona’s portrayal, Zulaykha’s suffering symbolizes the inner struggle against the self (*nafs*), and her long years of separation from Yusuf become a spiritual trial through which she rediscovers her true essence by means of patience and repentance. Zulaykha no longer seeks Yusuf himself, but seeks the Divine through Yusuf.

This idea represents the highest Sufi ideal - the mystical journey from metaphor (*majāz*) to truth (*ḥaqīqat*). In Sufism, true love (‘*ishq-i ṣādiq*) signifies reaching the Creator, finding Him, and ultimately annihilating the self (*fanā*) in the beauty of His presence.

Thus, the “Yusuf and Zulaykha” narrative in Eastern literature evolved beyond a mere tale of love; it became a profound allegory of the soul’s journey toward perfection and the subtle connection between the human being and the Divine. Each century and each author revitalized this story through the lens of their own spiritual and social worldview, breathing new life into its timeless essence.

Most importantly, the enduring power of this narrative lies in its ability to awaken both hearts and minds. The “Yusuf and Zulaykha” theme remains one of the most ancient yet perpetually renewed motifs in Eastern literary tradition. Although its origins reach back to ancient Egyptian literature, under the influence of the Qur’an, Sufi philosophy, and classical literary thought, it acquired a distinctly spiritual and philosophical character.

Throughout its historical evolution, the image of Zulaykha transformed from that of a woman driven by human passion into a symbol of divine love. Mirzo Olim Devona’s *Ravzayi Asrār* represents the most philosophical, symbolic, and spiritual stage of this transformation, elevating the figure of Zulaykha to a new Sufi dimension. In this work, Zulaykha personifies the human soul’s suffering, purification, and enlightenment on its path toward recognizing and uniting with the Creator.

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