

## **SYMBOLIC IMAGERY OF HOMELAND IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT BURNS AND MUHAMMAD YUSUF**

Karimova Shakhnozakhon Karimovna,  
Doctor of Philosophy in Philological Sciences (PhD),  
Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute  
E-mail: karimovashakhnoz@gmail.com

Daminova Fotima Nurmamat qizi  
A Graduate Student of Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute  
e-mail: fotima.daminova97@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines the theme of symbolic imagery of homeland in the poetry of Robert Burns and Muhammad Yusuf. The purpose of the article is to analyze the symbolic techniques each poet uses to express their love and pride for their homeland. Through a study of several poems by Burns such as "My Heart's in the Highlands", "Scots wha hae" and Muhammad Yusuf's "My farmer ancestor", "Confession". This research identifies both shared and distinct approaches to expressing national identity. The results indicate that Burns's symbolic imagery reflects the resilience of Scotland and a deep connection to the Highlands, while Muhammad Yusuf's poetry conveys a harmonious bond with the nature of Uzbekistan. This study reveals common values through symbolic expressions of love for homeland.

**Keywords:** Symbolic imagery, Robert Burns, Muhammad Yusuf, homeland, Scottish poetry, Uzbek poetry, national identity, cultural symbolism, comparative literature.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature is an endless ocean, and poetry is a great tributary flowing fervently within that ocean. Be it foreign poetry or Uzbek poetry, all of it equally soothes the soul, drawing the reader into its rhythm, melody, and profound meanings. Poems written about one's homeland and native country are an ever-relevant theme, as every poet glorifies their land in a unique and innovative way. The topic we wish to discuss in this article revolves around two poets: Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland and an inseparable part of its literature, and Muhammad Yusuf, a beloved son of the Uzbek people whose verses resonate equally with both young and old readers. In their works, the theme of the homeland deserves special recognition. Symbolism is one of the significant literary devices that are used by a writer to represent something else. It is the use of an object, person, situation, or word to represent another thing, such as an idea, in literature.<sup>[1,3]</sup> The use of symbolic imagery in poetry contributes to its depth of meaning, making it appear more vividly in the reader's imagination, evoking emotions, and allowing for a broader understanding of the theme. Additionally, there is another significant aspect: through symbolic expression, the poet conveys to the reader an important meaning that points specifically to the unique culture of their people. Both Robert Burns and Muhammad Yusuf skillfully employed symbolic imagery in their poems to express their immense love for their homelands, which, in turn, helps to enhance a sense of national

pride in the minds of readers. This article explores the symbolic imagery of homeland in the poetry of Robert Burns and Muhammad Yusuf, highlighting their expressions of love for their respective nations and how cultural symbols manifest in their works. The symbolic imagery of homeland in the poetry of Robert Burns and Muhammad Yusuf highlights their profound emotional attachment to their native lands, reflecting universal themes of love, identity, and cultural pride, yet rooted in the distinct socio-cultural contexts of Scotland and Uzbekistan. Robert Burns, the Scottish national poet, often uses rich, pastoral imagery to symbolize his love for Scotland. His poems like "My Heart's in the Highlands" evoke the rugged beauty of the Scottish landscape, blending personal nostalgia with collective pride. Burns uses imagery of heather-clad hills, glens, and streams to portray Scotland as a sanctuary of natural beauty and freedom. His homeland often symbolizes resilience, loyalty, and the unbreakable bond between identity and place. Muhammad Yusuf, a celebrated Uzbek poet, paints the homeland with symbols deeply rooted in Uzbek traditions and the natural landscape. His poems often feature the imagery of cotton fields, mountains, and ancient cities, reflecting the spirit and history of Uzbekistan. His homeland is depicted as a maternal figure - nurturing, protective, and inseparable from his identity. Yusuf's poetry resonates with themes of gratitude and love for the land that shapes the soul of its people. For example, in his poem "Iqror" [7,94] (Confession), he writes:

Oh, my father's birthplace  
My lovely motherland,  
Let me lay my soul on your shade.  
Uzbekistan, You are the kindest,  
You are so great,  
For Rome - your clover-field -  
I cannot trade. [8]

Here, the homeland is personified as a nurturing mother, symbolizing love, a deep emotional and spiritual connection. This dual parental imagery (father's birthplace and motherland) emphasizes the homeland's role as both the origin and the caretaker of life.

## METHODS

In this article we want to use literary criticism to analyze the symbolic imagery in the poems by these two notorious poets. From different poems, we will make comparisons according to their approaches to symbolism related to homeland. Robert Burns wrote his poem "My Heart's in the Highlands" as a memory of his journey to the Highlands, and thus, the poem not only celebrates the beauty of nature but also conveys a sense of longing and profound pride in his homeland. In a broader sense, these verses can be seen as representing the voices of hundreds or even thousands of Scots who were forced to leave their native lands.[2,21] In this poem, the poet uses several symbolic images to depict his deep love for Scotland and its unique, inseparable natural beauty.

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,  
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth; [3,376]

From the very first verses, the poet glorifies his homeland as "the birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth" using the high mountains symbolically as his motherland – Scotland. The

repeated farewell carries the symbolic weight of separation and nostalgia. For Burns, leaving the Highlands represents a painful parting from his cultural roots and identity. It suggests a love that remains constant despite physical separation, symbolizing the enduring connection between people and their homeland. In the line “Farewell to the North” mentioning “the north” broadens the symbol of the Highlands to represent all of Scotland. It emphasizes the idea that Burns’s love is not limited to one location but extends to all parts of his country:

My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here,  
My heart’s in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;  
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart’s in the Highlands, wherever I go.

The phrases “a-chasing the deer”, “following the roe” refers to the Highlanders and their effort to achieve freedom. Moreover, usage of present simple shows the permanent state of the poet’s heart. “My heart’s in the Highlands, wherever I go”: This line itself is a symbol of loyalty and emotional attachment. The image of the poet’s heart remaining in the Highlands even when he is far away symbolizes the inseparable bond between his soul and the Scottish landscape, illustrating how deeply embedded the homeland is in his identity.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza, the poet uses the repetition of “Farewell to...” with different concrete images of natural beauties of the Highlands – the mountains, the straths and green valleys, the forests, the torrents and loud-pouring floods, the hills of the Highlands. All of the words above emphasize the natural treasures of Scotland by which the reader believes that the writer’s homeland as of the most beautiful country. The overall meaning of this poem can be put in one sentence, “Although I cannot be in the Highlands, I am proud of my country, and my heart’s always be there”.

In Robert Burns’ another poem so-called “Scots wha hae” which has been Scotland’s unofficial national anthem for many years, there exist several symbolic images related to the homeland.

Scots, who have with Wallace bled,  
Scots, whom Bruce has often led [4, 164]

In the beginning of the poem, it references two iconic Scottish heroes, William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, who symbolize courage, resilience, and the fight for Scotland’s independence. They evoke a sense of national pride and serve as symbols of Scotland’s historical struggle against oppression. The repeated use of “Scots, wha hae” (meaning “Scots who have”) evokes a sense of unity among all Scots, symbolizing a collective identity and shared purpose. This brotherhood becomes a powerful image of national unity in the face of adversity.

Welcome to your gory bed  
Or to victory.

This line symbolizes the ultimate sacrifice for one’s homeland. The choice between dying honorably in battle or achieving freedom represents the bravery and commitment expected from Scots:

Who truly love their country.  
Who will be a traitor knave?  
Who will fill a coward’s grave?  
Who’s so base as be a slave?  
Let him turn, and flee.

Who for Scotland's King and Law  
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,  
Freeman stand or freeman fall,  
Let him follow me.

In these two stanzas, the contrast between slavery and freedom throughout the poem symbolizes the heart of the national identity Burns champions. Freedom represents the natural state of a proud, independent Scotland, while slavery represents oppression and loss of cultural pride and autonomy. Furthermore, while not named explicitly, the references to battle and sacrifice invoke the image of a Scottish battlefield, which becomes symbolic of the blood, struggle, and resilience of the Scottish people. It represents a place where patriotism and love for Scotland are tested to the fullest. Each of these elements adds layers of symbolic meaning, connecting the historical struggle for freedom to Scotland's national identity and Burns's love for his homeland. These symbols collectively strengthen the poem's patriotic message.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

“Muhammad Yusuf was a beloved and sincere poet of our people, a true patriot. You must strive to be worthy successors to him,” emphasized our president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, addressing the writers of our nation.[5,3] Yes, he is considered one of the leading figures in modern Uzbek literature. His works have inspired countless poets and remains a staple in Uzbek literary studies. Scholars have noted his skillful use of symbolism and metaphor, particularly in equating homeland with maternal love or the figure of a farmer. This unique style adds layers of meaning to his works, allowing for diverse interpretations. In the lines from the poem “My farmer ancestor”, the poet describes his homeland in this way:

The earth spins,  
The earth spins,  
It never stops running.  
Sweat keeps flowing  
From the sleeves of your tunic.  
Without your touch,  
Not a single plant would grow in this world.  
My tireless soul,  
My farmer, my ancestor. [6, 94]

The homeland is depicted as a tireless and devoted farmer whose life revolves around nurturing the land. The repetitive motion of the earth spinning and the unceasing flow of sweat from the farmer's sleeves reflect the cyclical nature of labor and life. This imagery elevates the farmer to a heroic figure, symbolizing the homeland's eternal vitality and dedication to sustaining its people. By referring to the farmer as “my tireless soul” and “my ancestor,” the poet expresses a deep emotional connection to the homeland. This language evokes a sense of gratitude, reverence, and love, portraying the homeland as a living entity deserving of devotion. In these lines, Muhammad Yusuf transforms the humble farmer into a powerful emblem of the homeland's perseverance, generosity, and unyielding commitment to its people, weaving a deeply patriotic and universally relatable image.

## **CONCLUSION**

The symbolic imagery of homeland in the poetry of Burns and Yusuf underscores their shared ability to connect the personal with the collective. Their works celebrate the beauty, resilience, and cultural richness of their native lands, offering timeless reflections on the human connection to place and identity. Both poets use nature as a central symbol of homeland: Burns draws on the Highlands' rugged beauty, while Yusuf emphasizes Uzbekistan's unique landscapes like cotton fields and mountains. Burns' imagery often reflects universal ideals of freedom and individuality, aligning with the Scottish Enlightenment. In contrast, Yusuf's symbols are more grounded in cultural heritage and collective identity. The tone in Burns' homeland poetry is nostalgic and celebratory, while Yusuf's is reverent and heartfelt, reflecting their respective contexts.

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