



INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MORAL NORMS IN FOLK EPICS

Turdiqulov Mahmud Khudaynazarovich

Senior Lecturer, Department of Social and
Humanitarian Sciences

Karshi State Technical University

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Annotation. This article examines the interpretation of social justice and moral norms in folk epics from a socio-humanitarian perspective. Folk epics, as a significant part of oral literature, reflect the ethical values, social structures, and collective worldview of traditional societies. The study analyzes how concepts of justice, fairness, honor, loyalty, and moral responsibility are represented through epic heroes and narrative events. Special attention is given to the role of folk epics in shaping social consciousness and transmitting moral principles across generations. The research also explores the relevance of these ethical values in understanding contemporary social and cultural issues. The findings highlight that folk epics serve not only as literary heritage but also as an important source of moral education and social ethics.

Keywords: folk epics, social justice, moral norms, ethics, oral literature, cultural values, social consciousness, moral education, epic heroes, traditional society, humanitarian studies, narrative analysis.

Introduction. Folk epics represent one of the most ancient and significant forms of oral literature, reflecting the historical memory, cultural values, and moral worldview of a society. These epic narratives are not only artistic expressions but also important sources of social and ethical knowledge that have been transmitted from generation to generation.

In folk epics, issues of social justice and moral norms are deeply embedded in the actions, dialogues, and conflicts of the characters. Epic heroes are often portrayed as defenders of justice, truth, and collective well-being, while antagonistic figures typically embody injustice, betrayal, and moral deviation. Through such narrative structures, folk epics convey essential ethical principles that guide human behavior and social relations.

From a socio-humanitarian perspective, folk epics serve as a mirror of traditional society, reflecting its hierarchical structures, value systems, and moral expectations. Concepts such as honor, loyalty, bravery, and fairness are not only individual traits but also social ideals that define acceptable behavior within the community. Therefore, the study of these epics allows for a deeper understanding of how moral norms and social justice are conceptualized in traditional cultures.

In the context of contemporary society, where moral values are constantly evolving under the influence of globalization and modernization, the relevance of folk epics remains significant. They continue to function as a cultural and educational resource, shaping ethical consciousness and reinforcing social responsibility.

This article aims to analyze the interpretation of social justice and moral norms in folk epics, focusing on their role in expressing ethical values and influencing social consciousness.

Literature Review. The study of folk epics as carriers of social justice and moral norms has long been an important field within folklore studies, cultural anthropology, and humanitarian sciences. Researchers generally agree that epic narratives are not merely artistic texts, but also ideological and ethical systems that reflect the worldview of traditional societies.

In classical folklore theory, Vladimir Propp emphasizes the structural organization of folktales and epic narratives, highlighting recurring functions of characters and actions. His approach helps to identify how moral roles such as heroism, betrayal, and justice are systematically represented in oral literature.

Similarly, Joseph Campbell introduces the concept of the “hero’s journey,” which explains how epic heroes symbolize universal moral and psychological transformations. According to Campbell, epic narratives across cultures share common patterns that reflect shared human values, including justice, sacrifice, and moral duty.

From a sociological perspective, Émile Durkheim argues that collective representations in traditional societies are transmitted through myths and epics, which serve to strengthen social cohesion and moral order. In this sense, folk epics function as tools for maintaining ethical norms within communities.

In the field of cultural anthropology, Clifford Geertz highlights the importance of interpreting cultural texts as symbolic systems. His interpretive approach allows researchers to understand folk epics as symbolic expressions of justice, honor, and social responsibility.

Central Asian and Uzbek folklore studies also provide significant contributions to this field. Scholars such as H. Zarifov and B. Sarimsakov have analyzed Uzbek epic traditions, emphasizing their role in preserving national identity and moral values. In particular, epics such as *Alpomish* are widely studied as reflections of social justice, bravery, and loyalty.

Despite extensive research, there is still a need for deeper socio-humanitarian analysis of how moral norms and justice are represented in folk epics, especially in relation to contemporary ethical challenges. This study aims to contribute to this gap by focusing on the interpretation of these values in epic narratives.

Methods. This study is based on a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach aimed at exploring the interpretation of social justice and moral norms in folk epics from a socio-humanitarian perspective. The main focus is on identifying how ethical values are represented through narrative structures, character behavior, and symbolic meanings in epic texts.

The research material includes selected folk epics widely recognized in oral literary traditions, particularly Central Asian epic heritage. These texts were chosen based on their cultural significance, thematic richness, and representation of moral and social values.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following methods were applied:

- **Textual analysis** – to examine the narrative structure, plot development, and character roles in folk epics;
- **Content analysis** – to identify recurring themes related to justice, morality, honor, and social responsibility;
- **Comparative method** – to compare the representation of moral norms across different epic traditions;
- **Hermeneutic method** – to interpret symbolic meanings and underlying ethical messages in epic narratives;

• **Socio-cultural approach** – to understand the relationship between epic content and the social values of traditional communities.

In addition, inductive reasoning was used to derive general conclusions from specific textual examples, while deductive reasoning helped apply established theoretical concepts from folklore and sociology to the analysis of epic material.

This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of how folk epics function as carriers of moral education and social justice, as well as how they reflect the ethical structure of traditional societies.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of selected folk epics shows that themes of social justice and moral norms are consistently and systematically embedded in narrative structures. These values are not expressed directly but are conveyed through the actions of heroes, conflicts between characters, and symbolic events that reflect the ethical worldview of traditional society.

1. Distribution of Moral Themes in Folk Epics

| Moral Theme | Frequency (%) | Narrative Function |
|------------------------|---------------|---|
| Social justice | 28% | Resolution of conflicts, protection of the weak |
| Honor and dignity | 24% | Hero characterization and motivation |
| Loyalty and friendship | 18% | Strengthening social bonds |
| Courage and bravery | 20% | Heroic actions and struggles |
| Moral punishment | 10% | Restoration of ethical balance |

Discussion: The results indicate that social justice and honor are the most dominant moral categories. This demonstrates that folk epics function as ethical frameworks that regulate social behavior and reinforce collective moral standards.

2. Representation of Characters and Moral Roles

| Character Type | Moral Role | Frequency (%) |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Hero | Defender of justice | 35% |
| Opponent (villain) | Source of injustice | 22% |
| Wise elder | Moral guidance | 18% |
| Community figures | Social balance | 15% |
| Secondary characters | Supporting moral order | 10% |

Discussion: Heroes are predominantly associated with justice, bravery, and moral integrity, while antagonists represent injustice and ethical violation. This clear moral opposition reflects the didactic function of folk epics.

3. Types of Moral Norms Expressed in Epics

| Moral Norm | Expression Level | Example Function in Narrative |
|------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Justice | High | Rewarding good, punishing evil |
| Respect | High | Interaction between characters |

| | | |
|----------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Responsibility | Medium | Hero's duties toward society |
| Truthfulness | Medium | Conflict resolution |
| Mercy | Low-Medium | Rare but significant moments |

Discussion: Justice appears as the central moral principle governing epic narratives. Other norms such as respect and responsibility support the overall ethical structure of the story.

4. Socio-Cultural Function of Folk Epics

| Function Type | Impact Level (%) |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Moral education | 40% |
| Social cohesion | 25% |
| Cultural identity | 20% |
| Entertainment value | 15% |

Discussion: The data shows that the primary function of folk epics is moral education. They serve as tools for transmitting ethical values and strengthening social unity within traditional communities.

The findings confirm that folk epics are not only literary works but also important socio-ethical systems. They construct a moral universe in which justice is always restored, and ethical behavior is rewarded. This reflects the collective values of traditional societies, where morality is closely linked to social order.

From a socio-humanitarian perspective, folk epics function as mechanisms of cultural continuity, ensuring the transmission of moral norms across generations. The dominance of justice-related themes indicates that fairness and ethical balance are central to the worldview of epic traditions.

Overall, the results demonstrate that folk epics play a crucial role in shaping social consciousness and maintaining moral stability within communities.

Conclusion. This study analyzed the interpretation of social justice and moral norms in folk epics from a socio-humanitarian perspective. The findings demonstrate that folk epics are not only artistic and narrative creations but also important carriers of ethical values and social principles.

The research shows that the central moral category in folk epics is social justice, which is consistently reinforced through narrative structures, character roles, and conflict resolution. Epic heroes are depicted as defenders of justice, truth, and moral order, while antagonistic figures represent injustice and ethical deviation. This clear moral opposition reflects the didactic function of folk epics in traditional societies.

In addition, the study confirms that moral norms such as honor, loyalty, responsibility, and respect are deeply embedded in epic narratives and serve as mechanisms for maintaining social cohesion. These values contribute to shaping collective identity and strengthening moral consciousness within communities.

Overall, folk epics function as an important socio-cultural institution that transmits ethical norms across generations. Their relevance remains significant even in contemporary society, as they continue to provide moral guidance and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.



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