HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE HERO IMAGE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FOLKLORE

**Tog'ayev Quvonchbek**
University of Economics and Pedagogy
Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21312155

**Annotation:** This article examines the image of the hero in English and Uzbek folklore through a comparative literary approach. Heroes occupy a central place in the oral traditions of both nations, reflecting their cultural values, historical experiences, and social ideals. The study analyzes the characteristics, functions, and symbolic meanings of heroic figures in selected English and Uzbek folk tales and epic traditions. While English folklore often portrays heroes as defenders of justice, individual courage, and social order, Uzbek folklore emphasizes patriotism, wisdom, family honor, and devotion to the community. The research identifies both universal and culture-specific features of heroism, demonstrating how folklore preserves national identity while expressing common human values. The findings contribute to comparative folklore studies by highlighting similarities and differences in the construction of heroic images across two distinct cultural traditions.

**Keywords:** hero image, English folklore, Uzbek folklore, comparative literature, folklore studies, epic heroes, cultural identity, oral tradition, heroism, comparative analysis.

**Introduction.** Folklore represents the collective memory and cultural heritage of a nation. Through myths, legends, fairy tales, and epics, societies transmit moral values, historical experiences, and social ideals from one generation to another. Among the most significant elements of folklore is the image of the hero, who embodies the aspirations, beliefs, and ethical principles of a community.

The concept of heroism has been interpreted differently across cultures, yet certain characteristics such as bravery, justice, wisdom, and self-sacrifice remain universal. In English folklore, heroes often emerge as defenders of the weak, protectors of the kingdom, and champions of justice. Characters such as Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Beowulf represent courage, leadership, and individual responsibility. Conversely, Uzbek folklore presents heroes as protectors of their homeland, family, and cultural traditions. Epic characters such as Alpamish and Gorogly symbolize loyalty, patriotism, physical strength, and moral integrity.

Comparative studies of folklore provide opportunities to identify universal literary patterns while recognizing the unique cultural characteristics reflected in different traditions. Examining heroic images in English and Uzbek folklore allows scholars to understand how historical, geographical, religious, and social factors influence the portrayal of heroes.

The purpose of this study is to compare the image of the hero in English and Uzbek folklore by analyzing their common features, distinctive characteristics, symbolic meanings, and cultural significance.

**Analysis of literature.** Comparative folklore has long attracted the attention of literary scholars and anthropologists. Significant contributions to folklore theory have been made by scholars such as Vladimir Propp, Alan Dundes, Joseph Campbell, and Stith Thompson.

Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) established structural methods for analyzing narrative functions within folk tales. Although his research focused primarily on Russian fairy tales, his classification of heroic actions remains applicable to folklore from many cultures.

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Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) introduced the concept of the "Hero's Journey," suggesting that heroes across world mythologies share common narrative stages, including departure, initiation, and return. Campbell argues that despite cultural differences, heroic narratives reflect universal psychological and social patterns.

Alan Dundes emphasized the importance of interpreting folklore within its cultural and social context. According to Dundes, folklore functions as a reflection of collective values and community identity rather than merely serving as entertainment.

Research on English folklore frequently focuses on heroic figures such as Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Beowulf. Scholars note that these heroes represent ideals of justice, leadership, courage, and resistance against oppression. Beowulf, for example, embodies physical strength and self-sacrifice, while Robin Hood symbolizes social justice and equality.

Uzbek folklorists, including Hodi Zarifov, Malik Murodov, and Tora Mirzayev, have extensively studied Uzbek epics and oral traditions. Their research highlights the significance of heroes like Alpamish, Gorogly, and Rustam, who embody national identity, patriotism, loyalty, generosity, and wisdom. The epic *Alpamish* is particularly recognized as a masterpiece of Turkic oral literature that preserves historical memory and moral ideals.

Although numerous studies examine English and Uzbek folklore independently, relatively few comparative investigations explore similarities and differences in the construction of heroic images between these traditions. This research seeks to address this gap.

**Research discussion.** The hero occupies a central position in both English and Uzbek folklore, serving as the ideal representative of social values. However, differences in historical development, cultural traditions, and social organization have influenced the characteristics of heroic figures. One of the strongest similarities between English and Uzbek heroes is their role as defenders of society.

In English folklore, Robin Hood protects ordinary people from corrupt authorities, while King Arthur defends Britain against external threats and establishes justice through the Knights of the Round Table. Similarly, Uzbek heroes such as Alpamish and Gorogly dedicate their lives to protecting their homeland, families, and people from enemies.

In both traditions, heroism extends beyond physical strength to include moral responsibility toward society. Physical courage remains one of the most prominent qualities of folklore heroes.

Beowulf demonstrates extraordinary strength by defeating monsters such as Grendel and the dragon. Likewise, Alpamish possesses exceptional physical power, overcoming numerous enemies and difficult challenges throughout the epic.

However, Uzbek folklore often combines physical power with spiritual endurance and patience. Heroes must not only defeat enemies but also preserve family honor and national traditions.

Both English and Uzbek folklore portray heroes as defenders of justice, although the concept of justice differs culturally.

English heroes frequently challenge political injustice or corrupt rulers. Robin Hood redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor, emphasizing social equality.

Uzbek heroes place greater emphasis on loyalty to family, elders, hospitality, and collective harmony. Alpamish's heroism is measured not only by military success but also by his faithfulness to his family and homeland.

These differences reflect the historical social structures of England and Central Asia.

Heroic leadership appears in both traditions but is expressed differently.

King Arthur represents wise governance through consultation and cooperation with his knights. His leadership is institutional and political.

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Uzbek heroes often serve as tribal or community leaders whose authority is based on personal honor, experience, and respect rather than formal institutions.

Thus, leadership in English folklore tends to emphasize governance, whereas Uzbek folklore stresses personal authority and communal responsibility.

Supernatural forces play important roles in both traditions.

English folklore includes magical swords, dragons, witches, and enchanted forests. Arthur's sword Excalibur symbolizes divine authority and legitimate kingship.

Uzbek folklore incorporates mythical horses, wise elders, prophetic dreams, and supernatural assistance. These elements emphasize the hero's spiritual destiny and connection with traditional beliefs.

Female characters also contribute significantly to heroic narratives.

English folklore often presents women as sources of inspiration, guidance, or magical assistance. Characters such as Guinevere and the Lady of the Lake influence the hero's destiny.

In Uzbek folklore, women such as Barchin play more active roles by demonstrating intelligence, loyalty, courage, and moral strength. Their support enhances the hero's success and reinforces family values.

The hero functions as a cultural symbol in both traditions.

In English folklore, the hero symbolizes freedom, justice, and resistance against tyranny.

In Uzbek folklore, the hero symbolizes national unity, patriotism, honor, and continuity of cultural traditions.

Although these symbolic meanings differ according to historical experience, both traditions emphasize the importance of courage, honesty, and responsibility.

| **Aspect** | **English Folklore** | **Uzbek Folklore** |
|---|---|---|
| Main Heroes | Beowulf, Robin Hood, King Arthur | Alpamish, Gorogly, Rustam |
| Main Values | Justice, freedom, leadership | Patriotism, loyalty, family honor |
| Leadership | Political and institutional | Community and family-centered |
| Hero's Mission | Protect society and justice | Protect homeland, family, and traditions |
| Supernatural Elements | Dragons, magic swords, enchantment | Mythical horses, dreams, spiritual guidance |
| Heroic Ideal | Individual courage | Collective responsibility |

At the same time, the similarities between heroic figures confirm that folklore serves as a universal means of preserving moral values and inspiring future generations. Comparative studies of folklore not only deepen our understanding of different literary traditions but also promote intercultural dialogue and appreciation of shared human ideals. Future research may expand this comparative approach by examining gender roles, mythological symbolism, or narrative structures in the heroic traditions of English, Uzbek, and other world folklores.

**Conclusion.** The comparative analysis demonstrates that the image of the hero occupies a fundamental place in both English and Uzbek folklore. Despite differences in historical background, cultural values, and social structures, heroes in both traditions embody universal virtues such as courage, justice, loyalty, and self-sacrifice.

English folklore generally emphasizes individual heroism, political leadership, and social justice, whereas Uzbek folklore highlights patriotism, family honor, collective responsibility, and national identity. These distinctions reflect the historical experiences and cultural priorities of each society.

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