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THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC FUNCTIONS OF THE IMAGE OF NIGHT IN EASTERN AND WESTERN POETICS

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Abstract:

The image of night occupies an important place in both Eastern and Western literary poetics as a universal artistic and philosophical symbol. In literary discourse, night is not only a temporal phenomenon but also a multidimensional aesthetic category associated with loneliness, silence, fear, spiritual contemplation, metaphysical anxiety, and existential consciousness. This article examines the philosophical and aesthetic functions of the image of night through a comparative analysis of Eastern and Western poetic traditions.

Keywords: poetics of night, existentialism, Eastern literature, Western literature, philosophical aesthetics, loneliness, metaphysical contemplation, absurdity, literary symbolism, mythopoetics.

The image of night represents one of the oldest and most archetypal symbols in human cultural consciousness. Since ancient times, darkness has been connected with mystery, silence, uncertainty, fear, and spiritual transformation. In literature, night has evolved into a complex poetic structure capable of expressing psychological, philosophical, and metaphysical experiences. The semantic richness of nocturnal imagery allows writers and poets to explore the hidden dimensions of human consciousness and existence.

Within literary discourse, night often becomes a symbolic environment where individuals confront their inner selves. The silence and obscurity associated with



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darkness intensify emotional tension and encourage introspection. Consequently, night functions not only as a physical setting but also as a philosophical category reflecting humanity's existential concerns.

The philosophical significance of night became particularly prominent in modernist and existential literature. Existential philosophy emphasizes loneliness, freedom, absurdity, alienation, and the search for meaning within an unstable world. In this context, the image of night acquires new semantic possibilities and becomes a metaphor for ontological crisis and spiritual uncertainty.

In Eastern poetics, especially in classical and Sufi literature, night is interpreted as a sacred space of spiritual purification, mystical meditation, and divine contemplation. The works of Alisher Navoiy and Jaloliddin Rumi demonstrate that night symbolizes the inner journey of the human soul toward metaphysical truth and spiritual perfection. In this literary paradigm, darkness does not represent despair; instead, it creates an atmosphere for introspection and mystical unity with the Divine. Therefore, the aesthetic function of night in Eastern literature is closely connected with transcendence, spiritual awakening, and metaphysical harmony.

In contrast, Western literary poetics often associates night with existential loneliness, alienation, absurdity, and psychological crisis. Modernist and existential writers such as Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, and Fyodor Dostoevsky use nocturnal imagery to reflect the fragmented consciousness of the modern individual and the ontological instability of human existence. In Western existential discourse, night frequently becomes a metaphor for the silence of the universe and the individual's inability to discover absolute meaning within reality.

The article employs comparative literary analysis, mythopoetic interpretation, hermeneutic methodology, and existential philosophy in order to investigate the semantic and symbolic dimensions of night imagery. The study reveals that although both Eastern and Western literary traditions perceive night as a reflection of the inner



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human condition, their philosophical interpretations differ significantly. Eastern poetics tends to spiritualize night and connect it with metaphysical transcendence, whereas Western poetics emphasizes existential anxiety and ontological crisis.

The Mythopoetic Nature of Night Imagery

From a mythopoetic perspective, night functions as a liminal space between reality and transcendence, consciousness and subconsciousness, life and death. Mythological systems across civilizations associate darkness with primordial chaos, hidden truth, and spiritual transformation. Because of this archetypal foundation, the image of night appears repeatedly in literary texts as a universal symbolic structure.

According to archetypal criticism, night represents one of the collective symbols embedded in the human unconscious. The darkness of night often reflects hidden fears, existential uncertainty, and the unknown dimensions of human psychology. At the same time, night may also symbolize rebirth, purification, and inner awakening. This dual semantic nature explains the broad aesthetic and philosophical functions of nocturnal imagery in world literature.

The poetics of night is closely connected with silence and solitude. During the night, the external world becomes quieter, allowing individuals to encounter their internal realities more directly. Literature frequently uses this condition to portray moments of psychological conflict, spiritual crisis, or metaphysical revelation.

The Image of Night in Eastern Poetics

In Eastern literary traditions, especially within Sufi poetry, night possesses profound spiritual and metaphysical meanings. Classical Eastern poets interpret night as a sacred period of contemplation during which the human soul approaches divine truth. The silence and darkness of night create conditions for mystical meditation and spiritual purification.



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The works of Alisher Navoiy illustrate how nocturnal imagery functions within Eastern poetic discourse. In many of his lyrical poems, night symbolizes separation, longing, and spiritual suffering. However, this suffering does not lead to existential despair; instead, it becomes a pathway toward spiritual perfection and metaphysical enlightenment. Night therefore acquires a transcendental dimension in Eastern poetics. Similarly, Jaloliddin Rumi interprets darkness as a mystical state in which the soul detaches itself from material reality and seeks unity with the Divine. In Sufi philosophy, loneliness experienced during the night is not perceived negatively. Rather, solitude allows the individual to transcend worldly distractions and discover spiritual truth. Eastern poetic discourse often spiritualizes darkness. Night becomes an aesthetic environment where metaphysical contemplation and emotional refinement occur simultaneously. Consequently, the philosophical function of night in Eastern literature is deeply connected with transcendence, sacred love, and mystical consciousness.

The Image of Night in Western Poetics

Western literary traditions, particularly modernist and existential literature, frequently present night as a symbol of alienation, fear, absurdity, and ontological instability. The social and intellectual crises of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries significantly influenced the representation of darkness in Western literature.

In the works of Franz Kafka, nocturnal settings intensify feelings of helplessness and estrangement. Darkness reflects the fragmentation of modern consciousness and the individual's inability to establish meaningful communication with society or reality. Kafka's protagonists often appear trapped within obscure and oppressive environments, where night symbolizes existential anxiety and psychological isolation.

Similarly, Albert Camus associates night with absurdity and metaphysical silence. Existentialist philosophy argues that human beings search for meaning in a universe that



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remains indifferent to their suffering. In Camus' literary world, darkness becomes a metaphor for the silent and irrational nature of existence.

The novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky also employ night imagery to deepen psychological and moral conflict. Nocturnal scenes frequently coincide with moments of guilt, confession, fear, and spiritual breakdown. Through darkness, Dostoevsky explores the contradictions and fragmentation of the human soul.

Thus, Western poetics often interprets night through existential and psychological frameworks. Unlike Eastern literature, which tends to spiritualize darkness, Western literary thought frequently associates it with ontological crisis and emotional disintegration.

Philosophical and Aesthetic Functions of Night

The image of night performs several important philosophical and aesthetic functions in literary discourse.

First, night intensifies emotional atmosphere. Darkness creates a sense of mystery, fear, tension, and introspection that deepens the psychological complexity of literary texts.

Second, night functions as a symbolic representation of existential consciousness. It allows writers to explore loneliness, alienation, mortality, and metaphysical anxiety. Through nocturnal imagery, literature reflects humanity's confrontation with uncertainty and the unknown.

Third, night serves as a poetic mechanism for revealing hidden dimensions of human psychology. The silence associated with darkness often encourages internal dialogue, self-reflection, and emotional revelation.

Fourth, night possesses mythopoetic significance. It connects literary discourse with archetypal structures embedded in collective cultural consciousness. Through these symbolic associations, night acquires universal philosophical meaning.



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Finally, the aesthetic function of night lies in its ability to create symbolic and emotional depth. Darkness transforms ordinary reality into a metaphysical and psychological landscape where philosophical questions about existence become central.

In conclusion, the poetics of night represents one of the most productive symbolic systems in world literature. The philosophical and aesthetic functions of night reveal not only cultural differences between Eastern and Western literary thought but also humanity's universal attempt to understand existence, loneliness, spirituality, and the meaning of life through artistic expression.

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