



GAWHARSHAD BEGIM: THE IDEAL TIMURID PRINCESS AND THE SYMBOL OF THE “MOTHER FALCON”

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Annotation. This article examines the image of Gawharshad Begim, the central character of Primqul Qodirov's novel *The Farewell of the Mother Falcon*. It highlights her role in the politics of her era, public administration, and the development of science and education, as well as her significant contribution to the upbringing of her children and grandchildren as a devoted "mother falcon." Particular attention is paid to explaining the symbolic meaning behind the novel's title and the reasons why the work bears this name

Keywords. Historical novel, politics, science, enlightenment, the Timurids, literary image, princess, interpretation

INTRODUCTION. In “*The Farewell of the Mother Falcon*”, the historical novel by Primqul Qodirov, a distinguished master of historical fiction, the author portrays one of the most complex and critical periods in the history of the Timurid dynasty. The narrative spans the period from the death of Amir Temur to the accession of Husayn Bayqara to the throne [1, p. 6]. The novel features hundreds of characters whose personalities and inner worlds are portrayed with remarkable artistic skill. Alongside more than ten princes and rulers, the work also depicts thirteen Timurid princesses as well as Gulrukh Begim, the mother of Alisher Navoi.

Drawing upon historical facts while enriching them with artistic imagination, the author creates vivid portrayals of princes and princesses that provide readers not only with aesthetic appreciation but also with valuable historical insight. This quality stems not merely from the novel's historical nature but from the writer's individual approach to the interpretation of each character. In presenting his characters, Qodirov carefully



reveals their genealogy, family background, and even the events that shaped their personalities and determined their later destinies.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY. Turning directly to the interpretation of the princesses portrayed in the novel, it should be noted that, although thirteen royal women appear in the narrative, all compositional elements are unified around a single central figure—Gawharshad Begim. Including its concluding section, the novel consists of twenty-six chapters. These chapters are arranged in a carefully structured chronological sequence and are artistically interconnected like pearls threaded on a single string. The narrative follows Gawharshad Begim's life from the moment she entered Amir Temur's household as a young bride until her tragic execution. Although the title of the novel clearly indicates that the work is dedicated to this remarkable woman, symbolically referred to as the "Mother Falcon," the titles of the individual chapters also deserve particular attention. Chapter titles such as "The Queen Devoted to Kings," "The Grandson Who Plotted Against His Grandmother," "The Sufferings of a Mother and Her Son," and "In Memory of the Martyred Grandmother" demonstrate that the image of the Mother occupies the ideological and artistic center of the novel. At the same time, these titles emphasize that Gawharshad Begim's life was far from peaceful or prosperous; instead, it was marked by sacrifice, suffering, and profound personal tragedy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The central female character in *The Farewell of the Mother Falcon* is Gawharshad Begim, whom the author portrays not only as a historical figure but also as a symbol of moral integrity, intellectual maturity, and political wisdom. From the very beginning of the novel, she is introduced as a thoughtful and well-educated woman devoted to reading. Her contemplative gaze fixed upon the clouds drifting above the mountains reflects her inner world, her concerns about the future, and her reflections on the fate of the state. Through this artistic detail, the author harmoniously combines the landscape with the heroine's psychological state, creating a profound psychological portrait: "While reading a book on the veranda, Gawharshad



Begin occasionally lifted her eyes from its pages and thoughtfully gazed at the clouds gathering around the mountains" [1, p. 3].

Based on the novel, the image of Gawharshad Begin may be interpreted from several perspectives: her historical identity and noble origin; her embodiment of wisdom, foresight, and political leadership; the symbolic meaning of the "Mother Falcon" and her educational role; her patronage of science and learning; her contribution to culture and public development; her suffering caused by political crises as well as physical and emotional hardships; and finally, her artistic and symbolic function within the novel.

Gawharshad Begin was born into an aristocratic family. She was the daughter of Ghiyosiddin Tarkhan, a member of the Chagatai nobility, and was born in 1379. In 1393, she married Shahrukh, the fourth son of Amir Temur [2, p. 15]. Alongside her noble lineage, she possessed remarkable wisdom, refined taste, eloquence, determination, and exceptional beauty. In the opening chapter of the novel, she recalls the advice given to her by her mother-in-law, Bibi Khanum, on the day of her marriage—advice that she treasured throughout her life: "As Bibi Khanum placed the earrings on the young bride, she said, 'This gift carries a profound meaning. From now on, you must always listen to the head of the household and faithfully carry out his wishes'" [1, p. 4]. Throughout Shahrukh's lifetime, Gawharshad Begin remains a loyal and wise companion, and this memory illustrates her devotion as both an exemplary daughter-in-law and a faithful wife.

Beyond being an ideal spouse, Gawharshad Begin is portrayed as a wise stateswoman, a patron of scholarship, and a compassionate mother. Shahrukh Mirza's habit of consulting her on matters of state demonstrates that she possessed authority extending far beyond the traditional role of a queen. Following the assassination attempt on Shahrukh, when he became bedridden, she assumed an active role in governing the state and sought to resolve conflicts among the Timurid princes. Her political foresight is particularly evident in the episode where she advises Mirzo Ulugh Beg not to release



Abdulatif from the Ikhtiyoriddin Fortress, warning him of the prince's future rebellion and the grave consequences that might follow. Ulugh Beg, however, ignores her advice, and history ultimately unfolds as she had foreseen when he is executed by his own son, remembered as a patricide.

Gawharshad Begim's aspiration to end wars, reduce the size of the army, and redirect state resources toward science and education reflects her profoundly humanistic worldview [3, p. 5].

She is also portrayed as a distinguished patron of madrasas and scholarship. By allocating substantial financial support to Mirzo Ulugh Beg's madrasa, the novel artistically interprets her genuine historical contribution to the advancement of education and learning [4, p. 6].

Particular attention is given to the symbolic meaning of the "Mother Falcon" and its educational significance. Throughout the novel, Shahrukh Mirza explains that the first "Mother Falcon" of the Timurid dynasty was Bibi Khanum, whom Amir Timur himself honored with this title. He then entrusts Gawharshad Begim with continuing this noble mission: "My late father called Bibi Khanum the 'Mother Falcon.' He would say, 'Raise my descendants so that they may soar like falcons.' ... But now you have become Bibi Khanum's successor. Today, you are the matriarch of the Timurid household. It is now your duty to teach our young falcons how to fly. If we fail to protect them from the intrigues of ambitious nobles and courtiers, we shall regret it in the future" [1, p. 25].

The primary symbolic meaning of the "Mother Falcon" lies in the fact that a falcon carefully nurtures its young from hatching until they are capable of flight. Likewise, Gawharshad Begim embodies the indispensable role of a mother in shaping future generations. Although conflicts later arose among her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, none of the children raised by Gawharshad Begim and Shahrukh Mirza ever turned against one another or rebelled against their parents. During their reign, the unity and stability of the Timurid state were largely preserved. The author emphasizes this idea through the following passage: "Shahrukh Mirza and Gawharshad Begim raised



their sons in the spirit of creativity and state-building, providing each of them with opportunities for scholarly and intellectual pursuits... Consequently, neither Ulugh Beg, Ibrahim, Baysunghur, nor Juqi Mirza became enemies of one another or rebelled against their parents" [1, p. 23].

In addition to being portrayed as a compassionate mother, Gawharshad Begim is also presented as an outstanding patron of science and scholarship. Historical sources likewise emphasize her profound respect for knowledge, scholars, and students [5, p. 3]. This characteristic is consistently reflected throughout the novel. While residing in Herat, she generously financed the madrasa that bore her name, covering the salaries of its teachers, the expenses of its students, and the institution's operational needs. She was deeply concerned that her grandsons' military successes might distract them from intellectual pursuits. In one of her conversations with Shahrukh Mirza, she advocates reducing military expenditures and investing the remaining resources in education and enlightenment. Furthermore, she played an important role not only in supporting Mirzo Ulugh Beg's scholarly achievements but also in encouraging the future literary genius of Alisher Navoi. She provided financial assistance to his family, presented the young Navoi with a gold-bound notebook for composing poetry, and prayed that he would one day become a great poet.

The entire population revered Gawharshad Begim, honoring her with the title "Mahdi Ulya." As the novel states: "Everywhere Gawharshad Begim was respected as 'Mahdi Ulya.' Women, in particular, sought to receive her blessing; after touching her garments, they would raise their hands to their eyes and kiss them" [1, p. 39]. The renowned poet Lutfi, known by the honorary title "Malik al-Kalam" ("Master of the Word"), likewise compares Gawharshad Begim to the legendary Phoenix (Qaqnus), emphasizing her greatness as a mother, a patron of scholarship, and a woman who constantly strove for goodness: "But for the people of learning, you are like the Phoenix that rises alive from the flames," said Mawlana Lutfi [1, p. 166].



From the opening chapters of the novel, Gawharshad Begim finds herself surrounded by political conflicts and court intrigues, leaving her with very few peaceful or happy moments. Unlike the other Timurid princesses portrayed in the work, she endures every hardship with remarkable patience and dignity. Readers remember her as a devoted mother, a wise stateswoman, a patron of science and education, and a symbol of endurance. Her execution at the age of eighty while observing the fast leaves a particularly profound emotional impact.

Nearly every chapter presents a new trial in her life. In the section "Endless Struggles" she stands beside her husband as he fights to preserve the unity of the Timurid state following Amir Timur's death, encouraging him through her wisdom and compassion. In the chapter "The Queen Devoted to Kings," she remains at the bedside of Shahrukh Mirza after the assassination attempt against him, actively participates in state affairs, and stays with him until his final breath. Shahrukh dies in her arms.

Her suffering, however, does not end there. Driven by his ambition for power, Abdulatif imprisons Gawharshad Begim: "Gawharshad Begim was locked together with Shahrukh's coffin in a damp and foul-smelling chamber... Weakened by imprisonment and bent over from severe back pain caused by the dampness, she was brought to the gate, supported on both sides" [1, p. 65]. At that time, she was already seventy years old. These events are narrated in the chapter "The Grandson Who Plotted Against His Grandmother."

Throughout the novel, Gawharshad Begim's personality is revealed gradually through her actions, decisions, and moral character. Unlike the other Timurid princesses, her portrayal is comprehensive and psychologically profound. Significantly, the author never provides a detailed physical description of her appearance. Instead, readers come to know her through her inner qualities, moral strength, and spiritual greatness rather than her outward beauty. In my view, this constitutes the most distinctive feature of her artistic portrayal in the novel [6, p. 8]. In the chapter "The Falcon Whose Nest Produced a Snake," another symbolic dimension of the "Mother Falcon" is revealed. In addition



to serving as a devoted educator, the Mother Falcon also symbolizes a parent who suffers because of her own descendants. While writing a letter to Mirzo Ulugh Beg, Gawharshad Begim recounts the story that represents the ideological climax of the novel. In this allegorical episode, the queen is identified with the Mother Falcon, whereas Abdulatif and Alauddawla are compared to venomous snakes. Just as the falcon lovingly raises her young only to suffer because of them, Gawharshad Begim, despite showing boundless affection to all of her grandchildren, ultimately becomes a victim of their cruelty and ingratitude. Her lament over the deeds of these "poisonous snakes" symbolizes a moral tragedy that shakes the entire world. Throughout the subsequent chapters, the author repeatedly returns to the image of Gawharshad Begim as the Mother Falcon.

The chapter "Burned Wings" further demonstrates that Gawharshad Begim was devoted not only to the upbringing of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren but also to the education and moral guidance of such outstanding historical figures as Alisher Navoi and Shah Ghazi Husayn Bayqara. She supported them materially and spiritually, expressed confidence in their future, and even predicted that Navoi would become a great figure comparable to Mirzo Ulugh Beg [7, p. 9].

Every episode of the novel and every action undertaken by Gawharshad Begim offers an important moral lesson for the reader. This is particularly evident in the chapters "The Misfortune Brought by Unworthy Great-Grandchildren" and "Shame Is Worse Than Death." Even while confined to house arrest, she refuses to flatter her great-grandson, who had ascended the throne. When Sultan Abu Sa'id attempts to enhance his reputation by spreading false information among the people, Gawharshad Begim firmly rejects hypocrisy and declares that death is preferable to dishonor. Through this episode, the author emphasizes her unwavering integrity and commitment to truth even when faced with death.

As noted earlier, the execution of the Mother Falcon at the age of eighty while observing the fast deeply moves the reader. Although fully aware that death is imminent,



she never begs mercy from the tyrants. Instead, she foresees the future misfortunes awaiting Turan and Khurasan and urges the rulers to change their political course.

Throughout the novel, Gawharshad Begim is consistently associated with the symbolic image of the Mother Falcon. Through this metaphor, the author presents her as the educator of generations, the guardian of her lineage, and the spiritual pillar of the nation. Just as a falcon prepares her young to fly, Gawharshad Begim raises her sons, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in the spirit of justice, integrity, and scholarship. In particular, the fact that Ulugh Beg, Baysunghur, and the other Timurid princes did not engage in internal conflict is interpreted as the direct result of the wise upbringing provided by both Gawharshad Begim and Shahrukh Mirza [8, p. 4].

At the same time, Gawharshad Begim's character is marked by profound tragedy. The humiliation inflicted upon her by her grandson Abdulatif, her imprisonment in a damp dungeon, and ultimately her execution at the age of eighty on the orders of Sultan Abu Sa'id further deepen the tragic dimension of her life [1, p. 150]. Nevertheless, the author portrays her not as a defeated victim but as a great queen who confronted suffering with extraordinary moral dignity. Even in her final moments, her thoughts remain focused on the future of Turan and Khurasan, revealing her genuine patriotism, political wisdom, and unwavering devotion to her people [9, p. 6].

CONCLUSION. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the portrayal of the Timurid princesses in Primkul Qodirov's novel *The Farewell of the Mother Falcon* represents an artistic interpretation firmly grounded in historical authenticity. Every character within the novel's system of images fulfills a distinct artistic and ideological function, contributing to the realization of the author's overall conception.

Among all the royal women depicted in the novel, Gawharshad Begim occupies a unique and central position, with the entire narrative revolving around her character. Distinguished by her remarkable individuality, she stands second only to Saray Mulk Khanum in terms of her historical and artistic significance among the Timurid princesses. The author portrays Gawharshad Begim as a wise daughter-in-law, a devoted



mother, an outstanding stateswoman, a skilled politician, a faithful wife, and a caring grandmother who educates future generations. Above all, she fulfills the symbolic role of the “Mother Falcon,” protecting, guiding, and nurturing her children and grandchildren, thereby serving as the moral and spiritual pillar of the Timurid dynasty.

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