



Fire From The Standpoint Of Mythology And Culture Of Different Nations

Mirjalilova Madina Jamshid qizi

mirjalilovaman@gmail.com

UZSWLU

Abstract

Fire is one of the most ancient symbolic concepts in human thought, which manifests itself as one of the main signs of holiness, change and existence in various religious systems. This article deals with the study of the essence of fire in the mythology and culture of nations who inhabited in Central Asia and ancient Great Britain. Furthermore, the role of fire in antique mythology of Greek is also studied in the article. Based on the analysis, it can be seen that fire holds dual nature.

Key words: mythology, culture, fire, duality, creation, destruction, folklore, Islamic world, Celtic traditions, Zoroastrianism

Dating back from antique period, fire has been playing a tremendous role in the lives, working conditions, literature, traditions and rituals of nations over the world. It is one of the natural elements which are regarded to have dual character as being both abstract and concrete object. In many cultures, it can hold both life giving and destructive features. Besides being the source of warmth, heat, supply, it also may take lives, ruin the nature, can serve as the cause of extinction. From literary point of view, various writers use fire as a symbol of bravery, agony, wrath, love and redemption. All these features of fire represent its dual nature which to some extent will be analyzed further.

Fire plays a significant role in the cultures of the nations all over the globe being a symbol of interconnection between physical and spiritual worlds. Firstly, it represents the concept of creation. For instance, in the Hinduism philosophy, fire in connection with other elements served in the creation of the universe. Another stance can be shown in the antique Greek mythology in which fire was considered to be one of the elements used to create manhood. Based on the myths, Greek god Hephaestus was a great craftsman who with the help of fire made up different tools, weapons and other belongings for the Gods. According to Homer, he had twenty bellows that ran on their own power. These magical automatons allowed him to create works unlike any others in history. In some versions of the story, it was Hephaestus who crafted Pandora under Zeus's orders to punish mankind. She was given a box by Zeus and told never to open it. Curiosity got the better of her, and when she opened the box, she released all the evils and miseries of the world, such as sickness, death, and sorrow. As Pandora was also crafted with the help of fire by Hephaestus, fire can be seen as the symbol of destruction and curiosity.

One more mythology is connected with Greek god Prometheus, who was accustomed to scheming, planned by his own efforts to bring back the fire that had been taken from men by Zeus (*Pseudo-Hyginus, Astronomica 2. 15 (trans. Grant) (Roman mythographer C2nd A.D.)*) Prometheus, who was always sympathetic toward humans, saw how terrible this punishment really was for mankind. He knew that humans relied on fire for more than cooking.

His race to save men from the cold and darkness was later commemorated through an annual ceremony in Athens. Runners would form a relay, passing a torch until the last runner used it to light a sacrificial fire to Athena. This relay lives on today in the tradition of the Olympic torch. The Athenian tradition spread throughout Greece with the original Olympiad and today the torch circles the globe. Here, the torch with fire is the representation of victory and sacrifice.

In the English folklore system, fire is not seen as a natural phenomenon, but as a complex cultural phenomenon with symbolic and mythological meanings. It is often associated with the spirit world, moral standards, concepts of danger and protection (Briggs, 1976). For example, Stray Flames (Will-o'-the-wisp), in English and Celtic folklore, the mysterious lights that appear in swamps are called "will-o'-The-wisp". This phenomenon has been interpreted in the people's imagination as a



supernatural force that seduces a person. According to Briggs, these lights are often associated with spirits or deceptive powers (Briggs, 1976). Besides, among the sailors, the light that appears on the ship is called "St. Elmo's Fire". In historical sources, this phenomenon was interpreted as a sign of divine protection during a Storm (Encyclopedia Britannica). The element of fire shows destructive and catastrophic character in these samples.

In the Celtic tradition, great campfires were burnt at the ceremony named Beltane where these fires were used for the purpose of purification and protection from evil forces (Simpson, 1980). In English folk traditions, the hearth was considered a center of family stability and spiritual protection. Fire in the furnace is associated with ancestral spirit and family continuity (Thomas, 1971). These features of fire represent the positive cultural attitude of English nation towards the element.

In the cultural region of Central Asia, this symbol developed on the basis of ancient ecclesiastical views and the integration of Islamic Thought, which was formed later. According to the concept of Mircea Eliade, holiness is often manifested through material forms, and fire is one such form (Eliade, 1959). In ancient religious systems, fire was understood as an integral element of cosmic order. Especially within Zoroastrianism, it is directly linked to reality and purity. It is interpreted as a symbol of goodness, purity, truth and divine light. Zoroastrians do not worship the fire itself, but consider it the embodiment of the wisdom and light of God.

The sacred fire is constantly lit in temples. Such masques are called "fire temples". The extinguishing of the fire was perceived as a bad omen. The main sacred text in Zoroastrianism, the Avesta, mentions fire as a purifying force. He was seen as an element that cured man of sin and evil. In some ancient rituals associated with Nowruz, people jumped over the bonfire. The ritual was considered a symbol of evil and purification from disease. In some folk traditions of Central Asia, traces of this tradition are still preserved (Boyce, M. (1979). This type of purification has also been seen in Celtic traditions. When analyzing traditions and cultures of nations of Central Asia, we must also go through the Islamic world view towards fire. In Islam, fire is not sanctified and worship is strictly rejected. According to Islamic belief, all power belongs only to God. Therefore, fire is not an object of worship, but one of the elements created by God. In the Quran, fire is found in several meanings:

- symbol of the punishment of hell;
- light and guide source;
- useful blessing in human life;
- the basis of the creation of demons.

In a story about Prophet Moses, he sees a fire in the mountain of Tur from a distance and approaches it, where he encounters a vision of God. Here the fire comes as a symbol of guidance and divine call (Thomas, 1971) According to Islamic belief, Demons were created from the "bare flame of fire". It shows the difference between human and demonic nature.

Another interesting story is connected with the Prophet Abraham. Abraham is thrown into a huge bonfire by his enemies. But by the command of God, the fire will not harm him and will remain "cool". This event is interpreted as a symbol of God's power.

There are also cases in the folk beliefs of Central Asia where Islamic and ancient Zoroastrian elements were added:

- keeping the baby from the evil eye by "turning fire";
- carrying the bride and groom around the bonfire;
- driving evil spirits with incense;
- canonization of the hearth.

These practices are not purely religious creeds, but are manifestations of ancient beliefs preserved in folk culture.

To draw a conclusion, it should be mentioned that fire has long been regarded in human thought as a sacred element. From the antique mythology till these days, from east to west culture, in different religions, fire represents dual nature. It has both constructive and destructive characters; people have both negative and positive attitudes towards this object. As it has been shown, In English folklore,



fire is a multi-layered symbol that combines meanings such as danger, protection, punishment, and penance. In Zoroastrianism, fire is the central symbol of divine purity and goodness, while in Islam it is interpreted as an element created by God and applied mainly in the meanings of punishment, warning and light. Nevertheless, both religions show fire as a powerful symbol associated with the human psyche and moral life.

The list of used literature

1. Boyce, M. (1979). *Zoroastrians: Their religious beliefs and practices*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
2. Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The nature of religion*. Harcourt.
3. Jo'rayev, M. (2000). *O'zbek xalq og'zaki ijodi*. O'qituvchi.
4. Sarimsoqov, B. (1998). *O'zbek folklori masalalari*. Fan.
5. Shodmonov, Sh. (2007). *Dinshunoslik asoslari*. Toshkent Islom Universiteti Nashriyoti.
6. Snesev, G. P. (1969). *Relikty domusulmanskikh verovaniy i obryadov u uzbekov Khorezma*. Nauka.
7. Snesev, G. P. (1969). *Relikty domusulmanskikh verovaniy i obryadov u uzbekov Khorezma*. Nauka.
8. Thomas, K. (1971). *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Scribner.