

ANGELS AND DEMONS IN MYTHOLOGY, RELIGION, AND ENGLISH LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**Kuchiboyev Mansur Abdumurotovich**

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the representations of angels and demons in mythology, religious texts, and English literature. It explores the development of angelology and demonology, tracing their origins from ancient mythological beliefs, such as Germanic, Celtic, and Greek traditions, to their integration with Christian doctrine. The study also considers Islamic perspectives, highlighting the role of jinn and Shaytan in religious and literary contexts. By analyzing literary works, including *Beowulf* and medieval English texts, the article demonstrates how these figures reflect the dualism of good and evil, the interplay between order and chaos, and the moral and spiritual dimensions of human experience. The paper emphasizes the symbolic, moral, and cultural significance of angelic and demonic figures across different traditions, providing a comparative understanding of their evolution in literature and religious thought.

Keywords: Angels, Demons, Shaytan, Angelology, Demonology, Mythology, English Literature, Islamic Culture, Medieval Literature, Good and Evil.

Introduction

In English and Uzbek mythology and literature, mythological figures are classified into demonological and angelological characters from the perspective of good and evil. Within the system of demonological figures, Satan is regarded as the central character, whereas angels occupy the primary position in the system of angelological figures. In English cultural tradition, angels and archangels are significant figures in religious and mythological conceptions and are often depicted as intermediaries between God and humanity. The general characteristics of angels and archangels differ from one another. Angels are typically conceived as servants of God who carry out His will and act as protectors of humankind. They are often depicted with wings, symbolizing their ability to move between heaven and earth. Archangels, by contrast, are high-ranking angels who are usually endowed with special authority and specific duties. Among the most well-known archangels are Michael (the protector), Gabriel (the messenger), and Raphael (the healer).

According to the *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, an angel is defined as a supernatural being who carries out the commands of God in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and several other religions. Angels are innumerable, and each of them is assigned a specific duty. For example, in Islam, there are angels who record each person's good deeds and sins, angels who serve as gatekeepers of Paradise and Hell, angels who question the deceased in the grave (Munkar and Nakir), and angels who uphold the Throne of Allah in the heavens, among others who perform various divine services. Among these angels, four—Azrael, Gabriel, Michael, and Israfil—are regarded as the chief archangels. In mythology and fiction, the demonological figure that stands in opposition to the image of the angel is Satan. According to the doctrines of Islam, Christianity, and other religions, Satan is regarded as an evil spirit or the leader of evil spirits, the instigator of

worldly evils, and a force that leads humans into sin [1]. The concept of Satan entered Christian literature from Greek in the form *satanas* and subsequently spread into European languages; it was later adopted into Russian in the form *satana*.

According to the Qur'anic interpretation, Satan was created by Allah from fire; however, because he disobeyed the divine command, he was cursed and condemned as *rajīm* (Arabic for "accursed" or "stoned"). Nevertheless, Allah granted Satan respite in order to test His servants, allowing it to be determined whether they would succumb to or resist his temptations. Therefore, he seeks to lead all people astray. In the Qur'an, the term *Iblis* is also used as a synonym for *Shaytan* (Satan). Additionally, the word *shaytan* is employed metaphorically to describe deceitful and cunning individuals.

In European cultures, mythology is divided into certain hierarchical layers. Demonological figures belong to the lower strata of mythology. European lower mythology refers to the domain of mythological conceptions concerning demons, spirits, and other characters that do not possess divine status. The characters of European lower mythology originate from various traditions—such as ancient, Germanic, Slavic, and others—but have been absorbed into world folklore. These include vampires, werewolves, witches, gnomes, mermaids, incubi, succubi, fairies, lamiae, mara, undines, and others. According to sources on the earliest periods of mythology, demons are supernatural beings that occupy an intermediate position between humans and gods, often regarded as demi-gods or spirits. In the earliest sources, the distinction between the terms "demon" and "god" was not always clear, and demons were not necessarily associated exclusively with either evil or benevolent forces.

Methods and results

Demons could possess any nature, including a mixed nature, meaning they were capable of both evil and good. In the Christian tradition, as in Judaism, the term underwent further development, after which all supernatural beings and deities associated with pagan traditions came to be classified as demons. All harmful spirits were included in this category. Spirits not separated from God were regarded as angels. The Christian conception of angels who had lost the grace of the Creator also derives from this understanding. Demons are often considered inhabitants of Hell and stand in opposition to Heaven and the angels. One of the sources providing extensive information on mythological figures is the book *Myths of the Peoples of the World*. According to this work, the demon (Da(tsht)) in Greek mythology is often understood as an indeterminate and unformed divine force—usually malevolent, and only rarely benevolent—that determines the course of a person's life. It is a terrifying, fate-deciding power that appears in an instant and vanishes immediately. Its name cannot be invoked, nor can any form of communication be established with it. It strikes suddenly, performing an action with the speed of lightning, and then disappears without a trace. This figure clearly reflects the remnants of pre-animistic beliefs that emerge abruptly. The book also notes that, following the adoption of Islam by the peoples of Central and Inner Asia, Kazakhstan, the Caucasus, Crimea, and Western Siberia, ancient mythological systems were largely suppressed. Consequently, in the mythologies of these regions, there is no single, uniform portrayal of demonological characters.

English literature, drawing on Anglo-Saxon and Celtic mythologies, occupies a distinctive place in the cultural and spiritual worldview of Europe. In English literature, a system of religious and mythological figures has developed as the product of centuries of popular imagination, among which representations associated with angels and Satan are particularly prominent. These figures are so deeply ingrained in the cultural and spiritual consciousness of the English people that they occupy a significant place in every stage of literary history. The depictions evolved by integrating ancient Germanic and Celtic mythological worldviews with the

Christian doctrine that later entered the region, and subsequently entered literary expression. Therefore, when analyzing the mythological beings of the Middle Ages in English literature, these aspects must also be taken into account.

The Anglo-Saxon period occupies an important place in the development of English literature, during which the influence of Germanic mythology was particularly strong. This is especially evident in the literary interpretation of events and narratives. However, beginning in the 7th century, with the widespread adoption of Christianity in the British Isles, a process of integration within this mythological worldview began. In other words, the mythological concepts that had developed over centuries merged with Christian theology, giving rise to new interpretations. Without rejecting the old worldview, literary works began to incorporate the ideas of the new Christian religious perspective, resulting in novel representations of angels and demons in English literature. As in all religions, angels also held a significant place within Christian doctrine. Religious sources affirm that angels are created by God and lack a physical, material form. They carry out the will of God, convey specific divine messages to humans, provide warnings, and offer protection from various powers. In medieval Europe, under the strong influence of Christianity, the doctrine concerning angels developed into a comprehensive system, which not only held an important place in the worldview and thought of the people but also significantly influenced literature. In particular, the development of the hierarchy of angels by religious authorities provided a symbolic framework for literary works featuring various mythological figures. According to this Christian hierarchy, angels were classified into nine orders, which began to be employed in religious mysticism and poetry.

In Christianity, demonology developed in a distinctive manner, encompassing information about Satan and related evil forces, which stands in opposition to the views concerning angels. At this point, a difference between Western and Eastern worldviews regarding the description of Satan becomes evident. This difference is observed as follows: in Western conceptions, the notion of Satan is often expressed through the term “demon.” “Demon” (Greek *daimon* — spirit, god) refers to an imaginary being that embodies evil or “unclean” forces, such as Satan, Iblis, jinn, alvasti, and others. In Jewish and Christian traditions, demons were regarded as angels who had sinned, having refused to obey God. Occasionally, even the Olympian gods were referred to as demons. A demon acts directly upon humans, causing misfortune or leading them toward disastrous events. Similarly, in Greek mythology, a demon was often conceived as an abstract divine force that determined a person’s destiny.

In most literary works, a demon is interpreted as a “fallen angel.” According to the *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, Satan is defined as follows: “Shaytan (Arabic) — according to the teachings of Islam, Christianity, and other religions, an evil spirit or the leader of evil spirits, the cause of worldly evils, and a force that leads humans into sin. The concept of Satan entered Christian literature from Greek in the form *satanas*, later spreading to European languages and into Russian as *satana*.” According to Qur’anic interpretation, Satan was created by Allah from fire; however, because he disobeyed the divine command, he was cursed as *rajīm* (Arabic for “accursed” or “stoned”). Nevertheless, Allah granted Satan respite to test His servants, allowing it to be determined whether they would succumb to or resist his temptations. Consequently, he seeks to lead all people astray. In the Qur’an, the term *Iblis* is also used as a synonym for *Shaytan*. The term *Shaytan* is also used metaphorically to describe deceitful and cunning individuals.

In Uzbek religious sources, the concept of Shaytan is understood in a broad sense. According to these sources, anyone who leads a person away from obedience to Allah and incites them to sin is considered a “Shaytan.” Shaytans can belong to the category of jinn as well as to the category of humans. What unites them is a single purpose: to spread oppression and

injustice on earth. Shaytans of the jinn category have gone astray, turning to rebellion and inciting disbelief. Shaytans of the human category share the same objective as those of the jinn. Therefore, when defining Shaytan, we are not referring to a specific being but rather to its nature. Anyone who incites disbelief, polytheism, or rebellion is considered a Shaytan.

Conclusion. Since the emergence of humanity, people have sought to understand the essence of natural phenomena. Consequently, from primitive communities to more developed societies, the spiritual and religious perception of reality, as well as its artistic interpretation, evolved in a distinctive manner. This process was directed toward comprehending the nature of the opposition between good and evil, benevolence and malevolence, as well as the interplay between order based on certain rules and chaos. Such a complex endeavor laid the foundation for the creation of numerous mythological concepts, myths, and mythological figures.

In this process, the concepts of demonology and angelology were of central importance, encompassing the evolution of human understanding from primitive, simplistic ideas to the formation of a mythological worldview, its development, and ultimately its elevation to the level of religious doctrine. Thus, the notions of demonology and angelology emerged within mythological perspectives. Demonology refers to the body of teachings or beliefs concerning evil spirits, jinn, devils, demons, and harmful metaphysical beings, whereas angelology denotes the system of ideas regarding angels, heavenly messengers, divine lights, and pure spiritual beings. Although these two concepts occupy opposing poles, they are simultaneously interconnected, each presupposing the other, and together they express the cosmic dualism of good and evil.

Although demonological and angelological depictions in English literature primarily relied on Christian doctrine, they also incorporated elements of ancient Germanic and Celtic mythologies. English literature drew inspiration from the mythologies of these peoples, and the elements of ancient Germanic and Celtic traditions were not entirely lost but instead merged with Christian ideas. In the earliest examples of Old English literature, such as the epic *Beowulf*, monstrous creatures like the dragon Grendel and his mother are depicted. These figures are not purely representations of the Christian Satan but rather a distinctive blend of malevolent spirits from Germanic mythology. With the spread of Christianity in England, literary works began to incorporate depictions of demons and angels from the Bible. In Islamic culture, demonology is characterized by a more structured system. Although there is no specific formal doctrine dedicated solely to their study, the Qur'an contains numerous references to jinn and Shaytans. Jinn are created as beings with free will, similar to humans, and they include both faithful and disbelieving types. Shaytan, on the other hand, serves as the central symbol of temptation, spiritual corruption, and forces that lead humans astray, appearing in literature in various forms. In Sufi sources, demonological figures often acquire metaphorical meanings, representing a person's own ego, ignorance, inner darkness, and spiritual obstacles.

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