



## LINGUISTICS, LITERARY CRITICISM ენათმეცნიერება, ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობა

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### The Founder of Turkish Folk Poetry

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### Abstract

The uniqueness of Yunus Emre lies in the fact that he is a symbol of human values, humanism, and peace. Yunus Emre's work is also focused on the people. This great poet not only made a significant contribution to the development of the Turkish language with his poems, but also, through a philosophy based on universal human values, left humanity a message to live in peace, regardless of religion, language, or race.

**Keywords:** Yunus Emre's uniqueness, human values, humanism, outstanding, development of the Turkish language, peaceful living.

## **Introduction**

Yunus Emre's work reflects the influence of Islamic culture in the region, but his dervish worldview, the use of the understandable Turkish language, and most importantly, the folk poetry form he employed, all originated from national roots and are infused with Turkish national spirit. This is why Yunus Emre's poetry has enjoyed and continues to enjoy great popularity among the people, and he is considered the founder of both Ashugh and Dervish literature.

## **Methods**

The primary method employed in researching this topic was the analysis method, which is deemed essential for discussing a specific issue.

## **Results**

Yunus Emre was one of the most important literary figures of Turkish Anatolia, who embraced Islamic teachings and created a synthesis of Islamic core values and mystical folk poetry. His poetry emphasized the importance of human values and viewed Islam not through rigid formulas but from the perspective of freedom of conscience and fundamental ethics.

## **Discussion**

In 1991, UNESCO declared it the Year of Yunus Emre, honoring the founder of Turkish folk poetry. Over the course of history, Turkish literature has undergone significant and complete development, with one of the most honored places occupied by the greatest poet of the Middle Ages, Yunus Emre. In modern times, celebrating the 750th anniversary of Yunus Emre's birth is a notable event, espe-

cially given that for many years, the relationship between Turkey and Georgia was marked by negative, aggressive wars, rather than positive interactions between the two nations. Today, however, Turkey is a republic advancing toward European civilization, and the relationship between these two countries is evolving in new directions. Highlighting Yunus Emre's work could contribute to strengthening the economic and political relations between these two nations.

Yunus Emre's biography was studied after his death, and even today, many aspects of his life and work remain unclear and debated. Several legends exist about his life and poetry. Though legends are not considered factual evidence, they cannot be dismissed when studying the poet's life, work, and legacy (Javelidze, 1988: 87).

One such legend is the "Vilayetname," which was created in the late 15th century. It narrates the fantastic life of Haji Bektash, the founder of the Bektashi dervish order, and mentions Yunus Emre's name among the characters of the order.

According to the legend, Haji Bektash was a rich and influential figure who held councils at his palace and fulfilled the desires of the common people who visited him. Yunus Emre, a poor peasant living in the village of Sarikao, asked Haji Bektash for help when a drought destroyed his crops. Haji Bektash gave him a choice: a blessing or grain to survive. Yunus Emre chose the grain, but when he returned home and realized his mistake, the grain ran out early, but the blessing would remain until the end of life.

According to legend, Yunus Emre returned to Bektash and asked for his blessing. Knowing of Yunus Emre's poetic talent, the latter replied: "I have given the key to my fortress to Tashtuk Emre. Go to him and receive your destiny." These were prophetic words. Taptuk Emre appointed him as a forest keeper. After working as a forest keeper for a long time, the great master bestowed upon the poor peasant

the gift of song, allowing him to compose beautiful verses and become a great poet.

One of the legends also describes how Yunus Emre performed a miracle while gathering firewood in the forest. His rope was left at home, and when he tied the firewood, it was surrounded by snakes. The miracle became apparent when he returned home.

Another legend concerns the "Divni," the collection of poems attributed to Yunus Emre. According to the legend, Yunus Emre wrote 3,000 poems. After his death, his collection of poems fell into the hands of Molla Kasim, who initially opposed the poems for their supposed contradiction to Sharia law. He destroyed 100 of them, threw 1,000 into the lake, and kept 1,000. However, upon reading one of the remaining poems, which predicted that Molla Kasim would read and evaluate Yunus Emre's poetry, he realized his mistake and acknowledged Yunus Emre's poetic genius. He lifted the divan, kissed it, and placed it on his head as if it were a sacred book. The legend then tells us: A thousand burned verses are recited by angels in the heavens, a thousand verses cast into the water are read by the fish, and the remaining thousand bring joy to those of the present (Gordlevsky, 1961: 45).

In one of his poems, Yunus Emre addresses his readers: "As I became Yunus Emre, why is my name strange? Read my poems in the Divni, and you will know who I am, where I come from, and what I preach."

The distinguished Bulgarian scholar Rizi Molovi thoroughly analyzes Yunus Emre's work and considers him a humanist poet, expressing the interests and thoughts of the people.

The Turkish scholar Muhammad Fuad Kioprulio made significant contributions to studying Yunus Emre's biography and work, publishing a paper in 1918 titled "The First Mystics in Turkish Liter-

ature." He argued that Yunus Emre was a peasant born in the second half of the 13th century, and he considered him a folk poet, a wandering writer whose poetry was aimed at the people. The poet urged the people to firmly uphold the principles and teachings conveyed in the Quran. A researcher points out that Emre's poetry was meant for the people, and its influence reached everywhere. The researcher's main contribution was precisely defining the poet's folk essence (Kioprulo, 1918: 40-45).

In the research on Yunus Emre's biography and creative activities, significant contributions were made by the Turkish scholar Abdul Gölpinari, who published a monograph on "Yunus Emre and Sufism." He provided documentary material, which highlighted the poet's life and work, including chronological records that suggest Yunus Emre lived for 80 years, from 1240 or 1241 to 1320 or 1321 (Gölpinar, 1961: 26).

The researcher Halim Baki Kunter spent 30 years writing a book about Yunus Emre, utilizing previously unknown materials. According to the author, the poet was likely buried in Sarıköy, a village near the city of Sivrihisar. Turkish literary scholar Varfi Mahir Doğtaş suggests that the poet lived in the 14th century during the reign of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid (1389-1403). He placed great importance on the poet's mysticism while also highlighting the didactic and lyrical aspects of his work. He emphasized the "calm and transparent spirit" of Yunus Emre's poetry as well as its "refined and pleasant language."

According to Turkish folklorist Cahit Özteloğlu, the poet was likely from Eskişehir and became the successor of a sheikh, even building the Karaman Mosque. In his later years, Sheikh Yunus Emre was drawn into a struggle for power, during which he lost his life.

Among the common people, there was also a belief that Yunus Emre had been sent to the palace as a representative of the ordinary folk, actively participating in political conflicts and ultimately falling victim to courtly intrigues (Javelidze, 1985: 39).

### **Conclusion**

Based on all of the above, we can conclude that Yunus Emre was a wandering dervish who preached Sufi (a mystical Islamic direction that emerged in the 8th century) teachings and wrote lyrical poems. He frequently used folk forms of expression and created "guiding letters" addressing religious, ethical, and philosophical issues. His language was simple and easy to understand for the common people, which contributed to his widespread popularity.

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