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QUR'ANIC MOTIFS AND WINGED EXPRESSIONS IN RUSSIAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

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Abstract: This article examines the role and significance of winged expressions derived from the Qur'an and the Hadiths in Russian literature. Particular attention is devoted to the artistic, ethical, and cultural functions of Qur'anic motifs in the works of such Russian classical writers as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, and Ivan Bunin. The study explores the phenomenon of the *Muslim text* in Russian literature, its continuity in contemporary literary discourse, and the semantic transformation of Qur'anic expressions within the Russian cultural context. The analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic winged expressions have evolved beyond their original religious function to become universal cultural symbols conveying moral values, philosophical reflection, and intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: Qur'an, Hadiths, winged expressions, Russian literature, Islamic motifs, Oriental text, Alexander Pushkin, intercultural dialogue.

Introduction

Russian literature has traditionally been open to the spiritual heritage of different civilizations. Among the numerous cultural influences that have shaped its development, the literary tradition commonly referred to as the *Oriental text* occupies a distinctive place. Within this tradition, the Qur'an has served Russian writers not merely as a sacred religious scripture but also as a source of poetic inspiration, philosophical depth, and expressive imagery.

In Russian literary culture, numerous expressions originating from the Qur'an and the Hadiths have gradually acquired the status of winged expressions and literary aphorisms. Rather than functioning as religious dogma, these expressions became artistic devices through which writers conveyed universal ideas concerning mercy, the transience of human existence, moral responsibility, and the equality of all people before the Creator. Expressions such as *the path of truth* and *peace be upon the world*—the latter representing an allusion to the traditional Islamic greeting—have become markers of elevated literary style, imparting solemnity and spiritual significance to literary texts.

The Muslim East has occupied a stable and influential position throughout the history of Russian literature, giving rise to a distinctive cultural phenomenon that many scholars, including P. V. Alekseev, have defined as the *Muslim text*. Within this framework, the Qur'an functions as one of the fundamental cultural codes underlying Russian literary Orientalism.

Particular interest in the Qur'an emerged during the nineteenth century. Following Alexander Pushkin's engagement with the sacred text of Islam, numerous Russian poets—including Yakov Polonsky, Lev Yakubovich, Nikolai Grekov, and others—turned to Qur'anic themes in their own creative work. This literary movement eventually gave rise to what may be described as *Qur'anic poetry*, a poetic tradition inspired by Qur'anic narratives, imagery, stylistic devices, and ethical concepts.

The present study aims to investigate how Qur'anic winged expressions and symbolic motifs were incorporated into Russian classical literature, how their meanings were transformed within a different cultural environment, and how they contributed to the formation of an intercultural literary dialogue between Islamic and Russian civilizations.

Qur'anic Motifs in Russian Classical Literature

One of the most representative examples of nineteenth-century Qur'anic poetry is Lev Yakubovich's poem **"From the Qur'an (Surah XCI)"**, which constitutes a poetic adaptation of Surah *Ash-Shams* ("The Sun"). Of particular significance in this work is the motif of the oath, one of the most characteristic rhetorical devices of Qur'anic discourse. Oaths appear throughout the Qur'an, and fifteen of its 114 surahs begin with solemn invocations. By repeatedly opening his poem with the anaphoric expression *"I swear"*, which occurs five times, Yakubovich deliberately reproduces the stylistic structure of the Qur'anic original.

The distinguished orientalist Ignaty Krachkovsky regarded this rhetorical device as one of the most evident manifestations of Qur'anic influence on Arabic literary tradition. Yakubovich not only adopts the thematic content of the Qur'an but also reproduces its stylistic architecture, thereby bringing Russian poetic language closer to the expressive power and solemnity of the sacred text.

It should also be noted that Russian literary works contain numerous examples in which passages from the Qur'an appear either as direct quotations functioning as winged expressions or as implicit allusions integrated into the artistic fabric of the text. This observation suggests that religious texts themselves frequently performed the function of winged expressions, transmitting stable ethical concepts and symbolic meanings beyond their original theological context.

During the eighteenth century, the Qur'an was primarily perceived in Russia as an exotic monument of Eastern eloquence. The earliest translations and the scholarly interests of Mikhail Lomonosov introduced Russian readers to the rhetorical richness and stylistic elegance of Islamic scripture. Subsequently, however, Russian writers moved beyond literal translation toward creative literary reinterpretation. Pushkin and Lermontov discovered in the Qur'an a source of powerful imagery, elevated language, and the symbolic figure of the prophet as a spiritual guide and moral reformer. Through the tradition of literary imitation, Russian poetry succeeded in incorporating both Biblical and Qur'anic stylistic features into its own artistic language.

Alexander Pushkin adopted not only individual Qur'anic images—such as the Angel Gabriel (Jibril)—but also the solemn, imperative, and rhythmically concise style characteristic of Qur'anic discourse. A well-known example is the line:

"Be courageous, despise deception, and steadfastly follow the path of truth."

This poetic formulation reflects the Qur'anic concept of **As-Sirat al-Mustaqim**—the Straight Path. Over time, the phrase acquired independent aphoristic status within Russian culture and became a symbolic expression of spiritual perseverance and moral integrity. Pushkin successfully transformed the Qur'anic image of the Straight Path into a universal ethical principle that encourages fidelity to one's convictions and life's true purpose despite adversity.

Mikhail Alekseev observes that Mikhail Lomonosov, while composing his *Ode on the Capture of Khotin* (1739) and developing the theory of the high literary style, drew inspiration from Eastern imagery, which at that time was largely associated with Latin and French translations of the Qur'an. Thus, elements of Qur'anic poetics gradually became incorporated into the stylistic foundations of Russian classical literature.

For Mikhail Lermontov, the Qur'an represented not merely a literary monument but an integral component of the living culture of the peoples of the Caucasus. Consequently, concepts such as *prophet*, *Allah*, and *houri* became essential elements of his Romantic poetic vocabulary, enriching his works with philosophical depth and Oriental symbolism.

Among twentieth-century Russian writers, Ivan Bunin may be regarded as the author whose poetry most profoundly reflects Qur'anic inspiration. Poems such as **"The Green Banner"**, which alludes to the *Shahada*, and **"The Night of al-Qadr"** embody central Islamic concepts of divine eternity, humility before the Creator, and spiritual illumination.

Leo Tolstoy approached Islam primarily from an ethical perspective. His compilation of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the influence of Islamic ideals of moral purity, simplicity, and justice on his later prose testify to his deep appreciation of the ethical teachings of Islam. Rather than emphasizing doctrinal differences, Tolstoy regarded Islamic wisdom as part of humanity's common moral heritage.

Table 1

QUR'ANIC WINGED EXPRESSIONS IN RUSSIAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

No.	Qur'anic Winged Expression / Concept	Literary Example	Linguocultural Interpretation
1	**The Path of Truth (The Straight Path – As-Sirat al-Mustaqim)**	*"Be courageous, despise deception, and steadfastly follow the path of truth..."* (A. Pushkin)	The Qur'anic concept of the Straight Path is transformed into a universal ethical principle. In Russian literature, it symbolizes honesty, moral integrity, and fidelity to one's vocation rather than solely religious guidance.
2	**The Seal of the Prophets (Khatam an-Nabiyyin)**	*"You came into the world with the Qur'an; upon you rests the Seal of the Prophets."* (L. Yakubovich)	Represents the completion of Divine Revelation and the highest prophetic mission. In literary discourse, it frequently emphasizes the uniqueness, spiritual authority, and exceptional destiny of a literary hero.
3	**The Night of al-Qadr (The Night of Decree)**	*"On the Night of al-Qadr the Qur'an descended... Above the earth the moon stood motionless and radiant."* (I. Bunin)	Symbolizes mystical enlightenment, silence, divine grace, and spiritual revelation. The image is employed to depict moments of profound truth and inner transformation.
4	**Everything Is in God's Hands (Divine Decree / Predestination)**	*"No, the words 'It was destined' can never replace true wisdom."* (M. Lermontov,	Reflects the Eastern concept of destiny and submission to Divine Will. In Russian literature,

		conceptually related to *Mektub*)	however, this idea often becomes a philosophical dialogue between human free will and fate, rather than an unquestioned acceptance of predestination.

The examples presented in Table 1 illustrate the principal mechanisms through which Qur'anic concepts were incorporated into Russian classical literature. Rather than functioning as direct religious quotations, these expressions underwent semantic reinterpretation and acquired broader philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic meanings within Russian literary discourse.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

First, Qur'anic concepts frequently transcend their original theological framework. For example, Pushkin transforms the concept of **As-Sirat al-Mustaqim** into *the path of truth*, thereby converting a specifically religious notion into a universal ethical ideal representing honesty, fidelity to one's calling, and moral responsibility.

Second, Russian writers employ Church Slavonic vocabulary—including words such as *path (stezya)*, *countenance*, *utterance*, and *Creator*—to reproduce the elevated style characteristic of Qur'anic discourse. This stylistic strategy creates a unique synthesis in which Eastern imagery becomes fully integrated into the Russian literary language, transforming culturally foreign elements into an organic component of national literary expression.

Third, each writer develops an individual approach to the interpretation of Qur'anic imagery. Pushkin primarily emphasizes philosophical and civic ideals; Lermontov employs Qur'anic symbolism within the framework of Romantic aesthetics; Bunin explores its spiritual and metaphysical dimensions; while Tolstoy focuses on its ethical and moral significance. These diverse interpretations demonstrate the remarkable adaptability of Qur'anic motifs within Russian literary tradition.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic winged expressions in Russian literature frequently undergo a process of semantic transformation, evolving from literal translations of Islamic concepts into universal ethical and philosophical formulas. For instance, the Qur'anic concept of **As-Sirat al-Mustaqim** (the Straight Path) is reinterpreted in Pushkin's poetry as **the path of truth**, a metaphor that transcends its original religious meaning and comes to symbolize moral integrity, fidelity to one's vocation, and the pursuit of truth. Consequently, such expressions can function in literary contexts entirely unrelated to religion, including civic poetry, philosophical reflection, and even political discourse.

Many of these expressions attained the status of winged expressions owing to the stylistic mastery of Russian classical writers. Pushkin's celebrated exhortation, *"Be courageous, despise deception..."*, for example, is widely perceived as an independent aphorism while simultaneously preserving the rhetorical energy and ethical message of its Qur'anic prototype. This illustrates how literary adaptation enables sacred expressions to become an integral part of national cultural memory.

Another important characteristic is the interaction between Islamic and Christian traditions within Russian culture. Numerous Qur'anic concepts find semantic parallels in Biblical imagery, facilitating their assimilation into Russian literary discourse. The expression **the Seal of the Prophets**,

for example, gradually acquired a broader metaphorical meaning, symbolizing ultimate truth, spiritual authority, and the completion of a historical or moral mission. As a result, it became understandable to educated readers regardless of their religious affiliation.

Particular attention should also be paid to the stylistic function of Qur'anic winged expressions. Within Russian literary tradition they almost invariably belong to the sphere of elevated discourse. Writers employ them when seeking to emphasize the solemnity of an event, the universality of moral truth, or the philosophical significance of a particular idea. Their presence enhances the emotional intensity of the narrative while simultaneously enriching its symbolic structure.

In contemporary Russian literature, however, this phenomenon has undergone further development. Whereas nineteenth-century writers approached the Qur'an primarily from Romantic, philosophical, or ethical perspectives, modern authors increasingly employ Qur'anic allusions to examine intercultural interaction, questions of identity, migration, globalization, and cultural conflict. Consequently, the functions of Qur'anic winged expressions have expanded beyond purely aesthetic purposes to include broader sociocultural and ideological dimensions.

Moreover, many Islamic expressions have become part of everyday linguistic practice. Phrases such as *Insha'Allah* and *Bismillah* frequently appear in contemporary literary texts not merely as religious quotations but as authentic markers of spoken language that reflect the multicultural character of modern Russian society. Their usage illustrates the continuing integration of Islamic cultural elements into contemporary Russian linguistic and literary space.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that the presence of winged expressions derived from the Qur'an and the Hadiths in Russian literature represents a remarkable example of sustained intercultural dialogue. From the earliest translations of the eighteenth century to the postmodern literary works of the twenty-first century, the Islamic cultural code has gradually become an integral component of Russian literary consciousness and cultural memory.

Qur'anic expressions in Russian literature should therefore be viewed not simply as lexical borrowings but as evidence of profound spiritual and cultural interaction. The consistent engagement of Russian classical writers with the Qur'an reveals their aspiration to articulate universal moral truths that transcend religious, national, and cultural boundaries. Pushkin's **path of truth**, Lermontov's philosophical reflections on destiny, Bunin's spiritual imagery, and Tolstoy's admiration for the ethical teachings of the Prophet Muhammad all testify to the search for a common moral foundation shared by humanity.

Ultimately, the continuing presence of these winged expressions in contemporary literature demonstrates their enduring cultural relevance. They function as symbolic bridges connecting different civilizations and promoting mutual understanding, respect, and dialogue between peoples. In an era characterized by globalization and increasing intercultural communication, Qur'anic winged expressions continue to enrich Russian literary language while simultaneously preserving the ethical and philosophical values embedded within Islamic civilization.

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