

ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF PLOT CONSTRUCTION IN SHUKUR KHOLMIRZAYEV'S STORIES

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Abstract. *This article is mainly about the artistic interpretation of plot structure in short stories of Shukur Kholmirzayev. Extracts from his short stories are given in order to support with explanations and examples as well.*

Key words: *plot, interpretation, manner of speech, nurturing human character*

Introduction

The Laureate of the Hamza State Prize of the Republic, and recipient of the Order of “Labor Glory,” Shukur Xolmirzayev is a distinguished literary figure who made a profound contribution to the flourishing and advancement of contemporary Uzbek literature through his diverse and substantial creative oeuvre. It is difficult to envision the development of Uzbek prose in the post-1960–70s period without reference to the works of this uniquely talented writer.

The emergence, formation, and distinctive manifestation of the principles of artistic depiction in Xolmirzayev’s oeuvre are, first and foremost, associated with the richness, diversity, and originality of the life material introduced into literature. It has been observed that Shukur Xolmirzayev “introduced into literature the Surkhan colour — the landscapes of the Boysun mountains where he was born and raised, the life and customs of Surkhandarya people, their unique manner of speech — the local dialect” [1]. This feature is most evident in his short stories imbued with a strong sense of national and regional colour. The originality and uniqueness of the

writer's creative output, especially his short stories, derive largely from these factors.

During the formative stage of Xolmirzayev's short story writing — the 1960s — themes centred predominantly on the relationship between nature and the human being. This was not accidental, for the writer, whose childhood was spent in the bosom of nature, felt a deep affinity for this theme. In the short stories produced during this period, he demonstrates the intrinsic interconnectedness of human beings with the animal and plant worlds, their mutual dependence, and the influence they exert upon one another, as well as the role of nature in shaping and nurturing human character — thereby successfully attaining his artistic objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

A considerable body of scholarly articles and research has been devoted to the literary legacy of Shukur Xolmirzayev. Among them are H. Karimov's monograph "Shukur Xolmirzayev's Creative Portrait" and academician B. Nazarov's work entitled "Shukur Xolmirzayev," both of which present comprehensive creative portraits of the writer. In addition to these, numerous studies have been published on Xolmirzayev's short stories by U. Normatov, S. Mamajonov, Q. Yo'ldoshev, H. Boltaboev, O. Otaxonov, and R. Qo'chqorov; on his novellas by M. Qo'shjonov, A. Rasulov, and M. Olimov; and on his novels by U. Normatov, O. Tog'aev, I. G'afurov, S. Sodiqov, and other literary scholars. However, these studies and articles have tended to illuminate only certain aspects of Xolmirzayev's creative oeuvre.

Scholarly research has also been conducted on Xolmirzayev's craftsmanship in short story writing, his mastery of artistic expression, and his narrative techniques. Notably, literary scholars such as G. N. Tavaldieva (2001) and Sh. Doniyorova (2001) have drawn scientific conclusions concerning the writer's distinctive artistic style, as well as his principles of aesthetic perception and representation of reality in fiction.

Furthermore, the collection "Shukur Xolmirzayev in the Memories of His Contemporaries" (2010) compiles rare recollections of numerous contemporary scholars who reflect on various aspects of the writer's artistic mastery and literary

maturity. In O. Toshboev's book "An Eternal Contemporary" (2018), discussions are presented concerning the genesis of Xolmirzayev's works, the motivations underlying their creation, and insights into his personality.

In Uzbek literature, works that distinctly foreground the theme of the relationship between nature and the human being are relatively rare. What makes Xolmirzayev unique is that a significant portion of his creative output is devoted to this theme. Accordingly, the artistic exploration of nature and the individual in his works provides a basis for drawing scholarly conclusions regarding the distinctive facets of his literary creativity

DISCUSSION

Shukur Xolmirzayev devoted a significant part of his literary career to the artistic exploration of the relationship between nature and the human being. The writer's own reflections confirm this inclination, as evidenced in his confessional statement: "I was born in the Boysun district. Boysun is a mountainous place. At the age of twelve, I would go hunting alone with a rifle on my shoulder. Later—there is no need to conceal it—I was somewhat headstrong... Yet there was one thing I truly loved: understanding the essence of a matter."^[2]

These words indicate that in the early 1970s—when his creative principles had not yet fully matured—the young writer began to explore ways of aesthetically perceiving and artistically interpreting reality. He regarded human life, human existence, and the essence of eternal vitality as inseparable from nature, existing in harmony, interconnectedness, and unity with it. He arrived at this conclusion while observing the lifestyles of the ancient Bactrians—the distant ancestors of today's Surkhan people. He came to realize that the earliest indigenous inhabitants of this region revered nature, worshipped it, and valued it as a supreme blessing.

Xolmirzayev also perceived profound meaning in the ancient legends he heard during his childhood, recognizing the symbolic representation of harmony between humanity and nature:

"I later attempted to comprehend the meaning hidden in the fairy tale my grandmother used to tell about Tiniqoy..."^[2]

After this, my attitude toward nature — toward animals, birds, and even wild beasts — underwent a profound transformation, and I began to regard them as a kind of kin. The essence of the matter lies in the fact that primitive people did not perceive themselves as separate from nature; rather, they viewed themselves as an inseparable, integral part of it. Therefore, they believed that every herb and every living creature possessed a tongue, and that they resembled human beings. For this reason, legends were created about animals helping humans or about the friendship between humans and animals.” Sh. Xolmirzayev notes that the lamenting song of Tiniqoy about her “bear husband” also reflects the closeness between human beings and nature.

Shukur Xolmirzayev, standing among the ranks of world-renowned writers, produced distinctive and unparalleled works on the theme of nature that position him alongside the great literary masters of world literature. This is one of the most striking and defining facets of his literary creativity. Owing to his rich personal observations, he possessed thorough knowledge of the laws of nature, the habits of animals, and the unique characteristics of every herb and plant. In this regard, the influence of the works of J. London, E. Hemingway, and S. Thompson on his creative development is quite notable.

Literary critic U. Normatov, in his article “We Live on Earth, We Think of Earth,” remarks on this characteristic feature of Xolmirzayev’s writing:

“The relationship between the human and nature has become the leading leitmotif of Xolmirzayev’s short stories. What is especially noteworthy is that although nearly all of the writer’s short stories of recent years revolve around this theme, they do not repeat one another. Each time, the author discovers a new aspect of the issue, creates a new character, and reveals yet another dimension of the character’s inner world...”

From this perspective, when examining the writer’s short stories devoted to the theme of the human–nature relationship, one observes the complexity of human character, and how this complexity manifests even in one’s attitude toward nature. For instance, in the short story “The One Who Laughed and the One Who Made Others Laugh” (1972), Xolmirzayev raises the issue that concerns people who

genuinely love the beauty and abundance of their homeland and its nature — the protection of natural resources. He reveals the essence of this theme through the depiction of a seemingly simple event.

In “The One Who Laughed and the One Who Made Others Laugh,” the protagonist worries about the partridges in the mountains, not merely about a few birds, but about saving all the birds in the region from the severe frost. In “The Man Who Fell into the Gorge,” a filmmaker — who intends to produce a documentary promoting the protection of nature — kills an entire bear and leaves its two cubs orphaned. As a result, he is punished not by official authorities, but by an ordinary lover of nature, who enacts a merciless retribution.

In such works, the writer reflects the anguish of the people by voicing concerns over the consequences of arbitrariness: hundreds of mountain villages being resettled into oases; once-flourishing landscapes turning into ruins; centuries-old historical monuments falling into neglect; and the land and water — vital to the future of the nation — being wasted. Explaining this principle of approaching nature, Xolmirzayev states:

“...The point is this: if the honourable task before us is to protect nature, to enrich it, to preserve its treasures and pass them on to future generations, then everyone must act in unity... Only then will the beauty of the priceless mountains not fade, and their beauty and wealth remain intact...”

In a number of Xolmirzayev’s short stories devoted to the human–nature theme, the enchanting beauty of nature is depicted; whereas in others, the ruthless attitude towards nature and its exploitation are strongly condemned. In these latter stories, the writer deliberately employs “cold imagery” drawn from natural phenomena to convey a specific artistic idea. For example, the harshness of the weather, the low-hanging black clouds covering the sky, the howling wind, the chirping of sparrows, the wolf’s howl, snowflakes tapping against the windowpane, a whirlwind scattering snow, and the “storm licking and sweeping away the thick snowy slopes” all create a gloomy atmosphere that adversely affects the human mood. These descriptions serve merely as artistic devices to reveal the inner essence of the characters.

The depictions in such stories carry a certain coldness, for — as the writer himself once remarked — there is cruelty in the landscape: “there is a cold, merciless beauty. In its mountains, its paths, its junipers... It nurtures and cultivates the human soul.” “Regardless of which natural phenomenon or state the author takes as material, he first approaches it as a naturalist, deriving from its objective essence and skilfully directing it toward his ideological purpose. Each natural phenomenon is refined in the author’s mind and emotional world, and in a somewhat exaggerated or interpretive form becomes a plot that vividly reveals the concepts and issues he seeks to raise.”[3]

This observation becomes evident when reading works such as “Lost beneath the Ravine,” “The Lame Crane,” “A New Breed,” “The Primrose has Bloomed,” “The Language of Birds,” and others.

RESULTS

Shukur Xolmirzayev’s literary legacy represents a major school within modern Uzbek short story writing.

In his works addressing the interrelation between nature and the human being, Xolmirzayev glorifies the natural environment of his homeland and shows a particular affinity for individuals who cherish and protect it. Conversely, he exposes the tragedy of those who, having been endowed with nature’s abundance, exploit it irrationally and treat it with cruelty. Through depicting the relationship between nature and humanity, the writer articulates the following life truths:

- the unique and incomparable beauty of nature provides human beings with aesthetic pleasure, spiritual strength, and inner vitality;
- drawing closer to nature awakens compassion, diligence, and a desire for meaningful life and work within the human heart; it inspires creativity, intellect, and moral elevation;
- human beings derive spiritual nourishment from nature, whereas estrangement from it deprives them of natural sensitivities, turning them harsh-hearted and indifferent.

Thus, it becomes evident that, in Xolmirzayev’s narratives, those who treat nature merely as “prey” eventually become “prey” themselves amidst the whirlpool of

events. Characters who betray the natural order for personal gain ultimately fall victim to that very betrayal. In Xolmirzayev's stories, nature constitutes an independent world in its own right. Human intervention may either enrich this world or, on the contrary, cause the destruction of particular aspects of its integrity. Human dignity, too, is reflected in one's ability to preserve nature as a unified whole. In the author's short stories, descriptions of nature fulfill a specific aesthetic function. Nature is not depicted merely as a fragment of the external world, but as a poetic device that influences the formation of a character's worldview and moral beauty. The problem of human–nature relations is not a seasonal or incidental theme in Xolmirzayev's writing. Within this system of interaction, the author successfully interprets the roles, functions, and logical place of both the human being and nature—within the artistic work and society at large.

CONCLUSION

The analysis allows us to conclude that, in the early stages of his career, Shukur Xolmirzayev—by his own admission—followed the classical traditions and was significantly influenced by them. However, Xolmirzayev was not a mere imitator of J. London, R. Tagore, A. Chekhov, or A. Qahhor; rather, he sought to enrich the art of literary expression within a national context. While adhering to traditional narrative form, he created thematically innovative characters.

A reader who becomes acquainted with Xolmirzayev's works and then visits the Surkhan oasis, the Boysun mountains, or its vast steppes, will vividly perceive the scenery, the multicolored landscape, and the distinctive sounds of the region. One strongly senses that all these depictions emerge directly from the “warm” bosom of a nature teeming with life.

Shukur Xolmirzayev was a writer who deeply understood life and intuitively sensed changes in the human psyche. Therefore, in his works he adhered to the laws of nature, consistently emphasizing that these natural laws must never be violated; if violated, they may lead to great calamities and human tragedy.

Xolmirzayev introduced into Uzbek literature the unique colour, atmosphere, and spirit of Surkhan. Moreover, he conveyed it with an inimitable stylistic charm. As a result, he established a distinctive and enduring summit within Uzbek short story

writing. In particular, his story “Zov ostida adashuv” may rightfully be regarded as a refined work of literary art. Additionally, through stories such as “Omon ovchining o‘limi”, “Bandi burgut”, and “Ot o‘g‘risi”, Shukur Xolmirzayev founded a unique school in Uzbek short story literature.

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