INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND NATIONAL CHARACTER IN THE STORIES OF SHUKUR KHOLMIRZAYEV

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Аннотация: *В статье исследуется художественное воплощение человеческой психологии и национального характера в рассказах узбекского писателя Шукура Холмирзаева. Анализируются психологические приёмы автора, образы национального характера и их художественная функция в прозе второй половины XX века.*

Abstract: *This article examines the artistic representation of human psychology and national character in the short stories of Uzbek writer Shukur Kholmirzayev. It analyzes the author's psychological techniques, images of national character, and their literary function in the prose of the second half of the twentieth century.*

Ключевые слова: *Шукур Холмирзаев, узбекский рассказ, психология человека, национальный характер, внутренний мир, психологическая проза, литературный портрет, традиция и современность, духовная идентичность, узбекская литература*

Keywords: *Shukur Kholmirzayev, Uzbek short story, human psychology, national character, inner world, psychological prose, literary portrait, tradition and modernity, spiritual identity, Uzbek literature*

INTRODUCTION

Uzbek literature of the twentieth century experienced a profound transformation across multiple dimensions, shaped by the political, cultural, and intellectual forces that swept through Central Asia. Within this landscape, the short story emerged as one of the most dynamic and psychologically rich genres, capable of capturing the subtleties of human experience with remarkable depth and concentration. Among the writers who elevated the Uzbek short story to new artistic and philosophical heights, Shukur Kholmirzayev (1940–2005) occupies a singular and enduring position. His narratives, distinguished by their penetrating psychological insight, lyrical precision, and faithful rendering of national life, represent a cornerstone of modern Uzbek prose.

The significance of studying human psychology and national character in literature is inseparable from the broader project of national cultural self-understanding. In Uzbekistan, this understanding is enshrined in foundational legislative frameworks. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the State Language" (1989, revised 1995) affirmed the role of the Uzbek language as the primary medium for literary expression, providing a normative basis for the revitalization of national literature.[1]

Equally important is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Further Develop the National Culture" (2017), which explicitly identified the study and promotion of classical and contemporary Uzbek literature as a state priority. The decree called for systematic scholarly research into the works of prominent Uzbek writers and the integration of their literary heritage into educational and public life.[2] The

[1]O'zbekiston Respublikasining "Davlat tili haqida" Qonuni. 1989-yil 21-oktabr (1995-yilda yangi tahrirda qabul qilingan). Toshkent: O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy Kengashi, 1995.

[2]O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining "Milliy madaniyatni yanada rivojlantirish chora-tadbirlari to'g'risida" Farmoni. 2017-yil 17-may. Toshkent: O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti devoni, 2017.

Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Improvement of the Study of Uzbek Language and Literature in Educational Institutions" (No. 334, 2017) mandated the inclusion of significant works of Uzbek prose — including those of Kholmirzayev — in secondary and higher educational programs, recognizing their value for the moral and civic formation of the younger generation.[3] The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Articles 42 and 50) guarantees freedom of artistic creation and places obligations on citizens to safeguard historical and cultural heritage and to contribute to the flourishing of national culture. Within this constitutional framework, the study of Uzbek literary classics is not merely an academic pursuit but a civic responsibility. Kholmirzayev's stories, rooted in the psychological and moral complexities of Uzbek life, represent exactly the kind of cultural heritage that these legal provisions are designed to protect and promote.[4] The Decree of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev "On Measures for the Further Development of Uzbek Literature and Art" (UP-5147, 2017) provided a comprehensive framework for state support of literary research and creative activity, establishing institutional mechanisms for the publication, translation, and scholarly analysis of significant Uzbek literary works.[5] Scholarly attention to Kholmirzayev's work has grown substantially since the 1990s, reflecting both the intrinsic literary significance of his writings and the broader cultural context of Uzbekistan's post-independence engagement with its national literary heritage. Researchers such as N. Karimov, U. Normatov, B. To'raev, and M. Qo'shjonov have examined various aspects of his prose, including its

[3]O'zbekiston Respublikasi Vazirlar Mahkamasining "Ta'lim muassasalarida o'zbek tili va adabiyotini o'qitishni takomillashtirish to'g'risida" Qarori. № 334, 2017-yil 6-may. Toshkent: Vazirlar Mahkamasi, 2017.

[4]O'zbekiston Respublikasi Konstitutsiyasi. Toshkent: O'zbekiston, 2023. 42, 50-moddalar.

[5]O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining "O'zbek adabiyoti va san'atini yanada rivojlantirish chora-tadbirlari to'g'risida" Farmoni. UP-5147, 2017-yil 3-avgust. Toshkent: O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti devoni, 2017.

stylistic innovations, thematic range, and contribution to the development of the Uzbek psychological short story.[6] The present study aims to analyze the specific techniques through which Kholmirzayev constructs psychological interiority in his short stories and to examine how these psychological portraits are connected to broader representations of Uzbek national character. Shukur Kholmirzayev entered Uzbek literature at a pivotal historical moment — the post-Stalinist thaw of the 1960s — when a generation of writers began to reassert the primacy of the individual over ideology and to explore the inner life of ordinary people with unprecedented frankness. His early stories, collected in volumes such as *Yulduzlar mangu yonadi* (Stars Burn Forever) and *Qo'rg'on* (The Fortress), immediately distinguished themselves by their intense focus on the psychology of rural Uzbek characters and their lyrical, meditative prose style.[7] The psychological dimension of Kholmirzayev's fiction operates on several interconnected levels. His stories are distinguished by their detailed and nuanced portrayal of individual consciousness. The writer employs a sophisticated repertoire of psychological techniques to render the inner lives of his characters, including sustained interior monologue, free indirect discourse, symbolic and associative thinking, and the careful use of silence and ellipsis to indicate states that resist direct articulation. In the story *Ot kishnashi* (The Neigh of a Horse), the protagonist's grief over the death of his father is conveyed not through direct statement but through the accumulation of sensory details — the smell of freshly turned earth, the sound of wind in the poplars, the weight of a familiar tool in his hand — that together create a rich psychological portrait without ever becoming sentimental or reductive.[8]

[6]Karimov N. Shukur Xolmirzaev ijodiyoti. Toshkent: Fan, 1998. B. 5–30.

[7]Xolmirzaev Sh. Yulduzlar mangu yonadi: Hikoyalar. Toshkent: Yosh gvardiya, 1965.

[8]Xolmirzaev Sh. Ot kishnashi // Tanlangan asarlar. 1-jild. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi nashriyot, 1990. B. 44–57.

The representation of psychological states in Kholmirzayev's fiction is inseparable from the broader cultural and social context in which his characters exist. His protagonists are not abstract psychological subjects but men and women formed by the specific traditions, values, and experiences of Uzbek rural and urban life. This grounding in cultural specificity is one of the defining features of his literary method and connects directly to his representation of national character. The concept of national character in his fiction is not a static or essentialized category but a dynamic and contested one, shaped by history, tradition, and the ongoing negotiation between individual desire and collective expectation.[9]

Among the most prominent features of Uzbek national character as rendered in Kholmirzayev's stories is the ethic of hospitality — *mehmonnavozlik* — which is not merely a social convention but a deeply ingrained moral value that shapes the psychology and self-understanding of his characters. In stories such as *Mehmon* (The Guest) and *Dasturxon* (The Table Setting), the ritual of welcoming a guest becomes the occasion for a profound exploration of dignity, generosity, and the relationship between the individual and the community. Kholmirzayev renders these rituals with an ethnographic precision that never shades into exoticism, presenting them instead as the natural expression of a particular way of being human.[10]

The relationship between nature and human psychology constitutes another major axis of Kholmirzayev's literary world. His stories are set in the landscapes of the Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions of southern Uzbekistan, and the natural environment functions in his fiction not merely as backdrop but as an active psychological presence. In *Tog'lar orasida* (Among the Mountains), the protagonist's journey through a mountain pass becomes

[9]Normatov U. Badiiy mahorat sirlari. Toshkent: Fan, 2002. B. 112–135.

[10]To'raev B. Xolmirzaev hikoyalarida milliy ruh // O'zbek tili va adabiyoti. 2001. № 3. B. 18–24.

simultaneously an inner journey of self-examination and moral reckoning. The harshness and grandeur of the landscape mirror the difficulty and depth of his psychological experience, and the resolution of the narrative is achieved as much through the protagonist's engagement with the natural world as through any purely social development.[11]

Kholmirzayev's treatment of the relationship between tradition and modernity is one of the most psychologically and philosophically rich aspects of his fiction. His stories are set in a period of rapid social transformation, and the psychological tensions generated by this transition are a central concern of his narratives. His characters frequently experience an acute conflict between the values and expectations of their elders on the one hand, and the new possibilities and demands of the modern world on the other. This conflict is rendered with great empathy and without ideological simplification: neither tradition nor modernity is presented as straightforwardly good or bad, but each is shown to have its own psychological costs and rewards.[12] The representation of elderly characters — particularly the figure of the wise elder or *oqsoqol* — is another significant dimension of Kholmirzayev's cultural portraiture. In Uzbek tradition, the oqsoqol is not merely a chronologically old person but the embodiment of accumulated wisdom, moral authority, and cultural memory. In *Bobo va nevara* (Grandfather and Grandson), the relationship between the two generations is rendered with great psychological subtlety, showing how the transmission of cultural values from one generation to the next is not a simple or automatic process but requires active effort, mutual respect, and genuine communication.[13] Gender and the psychology of women represent yet another important dimension of Kholmirzayev's literary world. While much of Uzbek

[11]Xolmirzaev Sh. Tog'lar orasida // Qo'rg'on: Hikoyalar. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi nashriyot, 1972. B. 88–105.

[12]Qo'shjonov M. Hayot va qahramon. Toshkent: Adabiyot va san'at, 1979. B. 56–78.

[13]Mirzayev T. Xolmirzaev nasrida avlodlar munosabati // Sharq yulduzi. 2003. № 2. B. 140–147.

literature of the Soviet period presented female characters in idealized or stereotypical terms, Kholmirzayev's women are complex psychological subjects whose inner lives are rendered with the same depth and attention as those of his male protagonists. In stories such as *Ayol* (Woman) and *Ona* (Mother), female characters confront experiences of loss, longing, sacrifice, and resilience that are at once deeply personal and broadly representative of the experiences of Uzbek women in the twentieth century.[14]

The theme of memory and its role in the constitution of personal and collective identity is central to many of Kholmirzayev's most important stories. In *Xotira* (Memory), the protagonist's return to his childhood village after many years of absence becomes an occasion for a profound meditation on the relationship between individual memory and collective history, on the ways in which a community's past is stored and transmitted through the memories of its individual members. The psychological experience of memory is rendered with great phenomenological precision: the involuntary rush of sensation produced by a familiar smell or sound, the distortions and lacunae of retrospective reconstruction, the emotional labor of reconciling what was with what is.[15] Kholmirzayev's fiction also engages deeply with the moral psychology of his characters — their capacity for ethical reflection, their experience of guilt and shame, their struggle to act in accordance with their values under conditions of social pressure and personal temptation. The experience of conscience — *vijdon* in Uzbek — is a recurring moral concern in his narratives, and the characters who achieve the greatest psychological depth and dignity are invariably those who take their moral responsibilities seriously and are willing to bear the psychological costs of ethical integrity.[16]

[14]Yo'ldoshev Q. Badiiy matn va uning lingvopoetik tahlili. Toshkent: Fan, 1997. B. 88–102.

[15]Xolmirzaev Sh. Xotira // Tanlangan asarlar. 1-jild. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi nashriyot, 1990. B. 200–215.

[16]Ashrapov A. Milliy xarakter va adabiyot. Toshkent: O'qituvchi, 1995. B. 44–60.

Comparative analysis situates Kholmirzayev's achievement within the broader tradition of psychological realism in world literature. His debt to Russian literary culture — particularly to Chekhov's mastery of psychological compression and symbolic detail — is evident but never imitative, as he consistently translates borrowed techniques into a distinctly Uzbek literary idiom. His affinities with the classical literature of Alisher Navoi and Babur connect his modern psychological realism to a much longer tradition of literary engagement with the inner life. These multiple cultural and literary affiliations give his stories their characteristic richness and depth, making them simultaneously local and universal.[17] The political and social context of Soviet Uzbekistan inevitably shaped the conditions under which Kholmirzayev wrote and published. His fiction is remarkable for the subtlety with which it manages to explore areas of human experience — individual consciousness, traditional culture, moral complexity — that were in tension with the official literary doctrine of socialist realism, doing so not through overt confrontation but through the quiet insistence of artistic form and the unassailable integrity of psychological portraiture. This combination of artistic courage and strategic discretion is itself a manifestation of the psychological resilience and cultural intelligence that he portrayed so memorably in his characters.[18]

Since Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, Kholmirzayev's literary stature has continued to grow, as new generations of readers and scholars have approached his work from the perspective of a newly sovereign national culture and have found in it an inexhaustible source of psychological and cultural insight. The state's increasing investment in the promotion of national literary heritage, as reflected in the legislative and policy frameworks discussed in the introduction, has provided new institutional support for the study and

[17]Karimov N. XX asr o'zbek adabiyoti tarixi. Toshkent: Fan, 2008. B. 310–345.

[18]Imomnazarov I. Sovyet davri o'zbek hikoyachiligi. Toshkent: Fan, 1987. B. 88–120.

dissemination of his work. The ongoing relevance of his prose to new historical circumstances and new psychological and cultural questions attests to its lasting vitality.[19]

CONCLUSION

The analysis undertaken in this article has demonstrated the exceptional depth and complexity of Shukur Kholmirzayev's engagement with human psychology and national character in his short stories. His literary achievement rests on the masterful integration of psychological precision, cultural specificity, and artistic form, producing a body of work that renders the inner lives of Uzbek characters with unprecedented depth and nuance. Through the deployment of a sophisticated repertoire of psychological techniques — interior monologue, symbolic imagery, the expressive use of nature, the rendering of silence and gesture — he has created a gallery of characters whose psychological reality is inseparable from their cultural identity.

Kholmirzayev's representation of national character is distinguished above all by its dialectical complexity. He refuses both the idealization of tradition and the uncritical embrace of modernity, presenting instead a vision of Uzbek national identity as a living, contested, and evolving reality whose strength lies in its capacity for psychological depth and moral reflection. His characters embody the values of hospitality, industriousness, respect for elders, and moral integrity not as static attributes but as dynamic psychological achievements, hard-won in the context of the specific historical and social pressures of their time. In the context of contemporary Uzbekistan's project of national cultural renewal, as reflected in the legislative and policy frameworks surveyed in this article, Kholmirzayev's stories constitute an invaluable resource for the psychological and cultural self-understanding of the nation. His work demonstrates the capacity of literature to serve as a medium of national

[19]Hamidov A. Istiqlol va milliy adabiyot. Toshkent: Adabiyot va san'at, 2000. B. 67–90.

self-knowledge — a mirror in which a people can recognize both the continuity of its deepest values and the transformations wrought by history — and thereby affirms the vital importance of serious literary scholarship and education as components of national cultural life. Future research in this area should undertake a more systematic comparative analysis of Kholmirzayev's work in relation to other traditions of psychological realism in world literature, as well as a more detailed examination of the reception of his stories across different historical and cultural contexts. The ongoing digitization and publication of archival materials related to his life and work will provide scholars with new resources for deepening our understanding of one of the great achievements of Uzbek literary culture.

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