ABDULLA QAHHOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO UZBEK LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines the profound and multifaceted contribution of Abdulla Qahhor to the development of Uzbek literature. As one of the most distinguished figures in 20th-century Uzbek prose, Qahhor is widely regarded as the founder of the modern Uzbek short story and a master of psychological realism. The study explores his role in transforming the short story genre, his reform of the Uzbek literary language, his mastery of satire and psychological analysis, his contributions as a translator, and his enduring legacy in Uzbek and world literature. Drawing on a range of scholarly sources and literary criticism, this article argues that Qahhor's contribution extends beyond genre innovation to encompass the enrichment of the Uzbek literary language, the preservation of folklore, the establishment of a critical realist tradition, and the training of subsequent generations of writers. His works continue to serve as a bridge between Eastern and Western literary traditions, cementing his status as a literary giant whose influence transcends national boundaries.

Keywords: Abdulla Qahhor, Uzbek literature, short story, psychological realism, satire, literary language, Soviet Uzbek literature, translation, storytelling.

Introduction: Abdulla Qahhor occupies a central and enduring place in the pantheon of Uzbek literature. A novelist, short story writer, poet, playwright, and literary translator, he is widely celebrated as one of the finest Uzbek prose writers of the 20th century. His literary legacy is so significant that he has been called the "Chekhov of the Uzbeks", a testament to his mastery of the short story form and his profound psychological insight. Qahhor's contributions to the art of storytelling have enriched the fabric of Uzbek literature and cemented his legacy as a literary giant. The present study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Abdulla Qahhor's contribution to Uzbek literature, examining his role in shaping the modern Uzbek short story, his reform of the literary language, his thematic and stylistic innovations, his work as a translator, and his lasting influence on subsequent generations of writers. The article draws on scholarly sources, literary criticism, and Qahhor's own works to present a nuanced understanding of his literary significance.

Qahhor's literary career was marked by both prolific output and significant recognition. He worked as an editor and translator at various Uzbek publishing houses from 1939 onwards. His first poem, "Oy kuyganda" (When the Moon Burns), was published in the satirical journal "Mushtum". Over the years, he gained a loyal following and became a well-respected figure in Uzbek literature. Throughout his long career in Soviet letters, Qahhor referred to the lessons he had learned from Anton Chekhov, the Russian writer he called "ustod" (master or teacher). Over the 1930s and 1940s, Qahhor survived Stalin's Great Terror (1936-1938) to become a celebrated writer of short stories and satirical comedies. Qahhor's contributions were formally recognized with numerous prestigious awards. He received the Stalin Prize in 1952, the State Hamza Prize in 1966, and was named a National Writer of the Uzbek SSR in 1967. In 2000, he was posthumously awarded the Order of Outstanding Merit (Buyuk xizmatlari uchun), one of independent Uzbekistan's most prestigious awards.

Qahhor's literary legacy encompasses a wide range of genres, including short stories, novellas, novels, plays, and translations. Qahhor is best known as the author of the 1951 novel *Qo'shchinor chiroqlari* (The Lights of Kushchinar) and the 1958 novella *Sinchalak* (The Skeleton). His 1965 work *O'tmishdan ertaklar* (Tales from the Past) serves as a literary autobiography and, according to the author and his readers at the time, "unmasks" the evils of pre-Soviet Central Asia in order to justify the post-revolutionary Soviet state. His novels *Sarob* (Mirage) and *Qo'shchinor chiroqlari*, as well as his novellas *Sinchalak* and *O'tmishdan ertaklar*, hold a special place in the development of Uzbek literary prose.

Among his most famous short stories are "O'g'ri" (The Thief), "Anor" (The Pomegranate), "Dahshat" (Horror), "Mayiz yemagan hotin" (The Woman Who Didn't Eat Raisins), "Adabiyot muallimi" (The Teacher of Literature), "To'yda aza"(Funeral at a Wedding Party), and "Mahalla" (The Neighborhood).

Abdulla Qahhor is universally recognized as the founder of the modern Uzbek short story. Before Qahhor, Uzbek prose was dominated by long narratives, epic poems, and traditional oral tales. The short story as a distinct genre with a compact structure, a single central conflict, and a focused theme did not exist in Uzbek literature in a fully developed form. Qahhor transformed the genre by borrowing from the European and Russian short story traditions particularly Chekhov and Gogol while adapting them to the Uzbek cultural and linguistic context.

Qahhor's short stories are characterized by several distinctive features that set them apart from the works of his contemporaries:

Conciseness and precision. Qahhor skillfully employed brevity to convey deep meanings, making every word count. Through his narratives, he not only enriched Uzbek literature but also contributed to the preservation of folklore and oral traditions in Uzbekistan.

Psychological depth. He delved into the inner worlds of his characters, revealing their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. In Qahhor's stories, the concept of the heroes harmonizes with the national features of realism, providing a profound artistic expression of the Uzbek people's spiritual world. His novel *Sarob* presents a strikingly deep psychological study of a man's disillusionment and moral decline.

Satirical sharpness. Satirical and humorous aspects occupy a leading place in Qahhor's stories. Many of his stories contain biting satire aimed at social vices, hypocrisy, and injustice. He criticized various flaws in life and human nature—stinginess, ignorance, greed, pride, arrogance, and other vices.

Linguistic richness. He masterfully used the expressive potential of the Uzbek language, incorporating colloquialisms, proverbs, and idioms to create authentic characters and scenes. He makes good use of artistic image tools such as simile, comparison, irony, exaggeration, and phraseological expressions.

Socio-critical content. Qahhor's stories often depict the suffering of the people from poverty and address societal issues with remarkable honesty. His works address themes such as forced marriage, family violence, moral decline, and social inequality.

Dialogue-driven narrative. Qahhor's use of dialogue is masterful, advancing the plot and revealing character through authentic, colloquial speech.

Unexpected endings. His stories often begin with a seemingly ordinary situation that unfolds into a conflict, culminating in an unexpected but logical conclusion. Qahhor's stories are imbued with humanistic values, exploring universal themes of love, betrayal, loyalty, and fate. His works reflect the life, inner world, and moral landscape of the Uzbek people. The emergence, formation, and interpretation of humanism in his literary works are analyzed through his stories, highlighting his commitment to portraying the highest moral and ethical virtues characteristic of humanity. Qahhor played a pivotal role in modernizing the Uzbek

literary language. At the time, the Uzbek literary language was heavily influenced by classical Chagatai and Persian and was often far removed from everyday spoken language. Qahhor brought the language closer to the people by accurately reproducing the dialects, idioms, and rhythms of everyday speech of various social groups—peasants, workers, intellectuals, and officials. His dialogues are considered masterpieces of linguistic authenticity. He enriched his prose with proverbs, sayings, folk songs, and riddles, making his narratives deeply rooted in Uzbek oral tradition. This not only gave his works a national colour but also helped preserve elements of folk culture that were disappearing. Qahhor's stories are imbued with timeless themes and masterful techniques that showcase his storytelling prowess.

Qahhor creatively expanded the lexicon of Uzbek, inventing new words and expressions to capture modern realities and psychological states, while keeping the language accessible. His prose is known for its clarity, avoiding unnecessary ornamentation while remaining deeply evocative. He proved that literary language can be both simple and profoundly artistic. The lexical and grammatical features of his stories have been the subject of scholarly analysis. Qahhor introduced psychological realism into Uzbek prose, a departure from the more didactic and allegorical traditions that preceded him. His characters are not mere types; they are complex individuals with inner lives. He explores the conflict between public persona and private self, the tension between social expectations and personal desires, and the inner struggles of people caught between tradition and modernity. The mental and psychological states in his stories conform to the national way of life, transforming the reality of life into an artistic reality.

Satire occupies a central place in Qahhor's literary method. He used humour, irony, and sarcasm to expose social vices, hypocrisy, and injustice. His satire is sharp but never crude; it is grounded in a deep understanding of human nature and social dynamics. Qahhor's stories depict various flaws in human nature and social life—stinginess, ignorance, greed, pride, arrogance, and other vices that, as long as mankind exists, will certainly persist. He criticized the social injustices of the past, the misdeeds of certain officials, sometimes through humour, sometimes through events that shake the reader's soul.

In his stories, Qahhor created a host of memorable negative characters who represent the culmination of his creative success. Through these characters, he revealed major social problems, such as the rise to power through contempt and slander, the destruction of righteous people, and the use of death as a tool for the sake of prestige. Qahhor was also an effective translator. He skillfully translated the works of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gogol, and Chekhov into Uzbek. In particular, he translated Chekhov's works with special interest and experience. He translated numerous works by Russian writers, including Alexander Pushkin, Anton Chekhov, and Nikolai Gogol, into the Uzbek language. Through his translations, Qahhor introduced Uzbek readers to the best of Russian and Western European literature, while also enriching the Uzbek literary language with new expressive possibilities. His translations served as a bridge between Eastern and Western literary traditions, contributing to the development of Uzbek literary prose. Qahhor's legacy has had a profound impact on subsequent generations of Uzbek writers. His mastery of the short story form served as a model for writers such as Said Ahmad, Nazar Eshonqul, O'tkir Hoshimov, and others who continued to develop the genre. His linguistic innovations, particularly his ability to capture the nuances of colloquial Uzbek speech, have influenced the development of the modern Uzbek literary language. His works are studied in schools and universities, and his name is synonymous with the short story genre in Uzbek literature. Qahhor is considered one of the best Uzbek writers of the 20th century.

Abdulla Qahhor's contribution to Uzbek literature is multifaceted and enduring: he founded the modern short story, reformed the literary language, introduced psychological

realism, and used satire to critique social injustice. His works continue to be read, studied, and admired for their artistic excellence, their moral depth, and their authentic portrayal of the Uzbek people and their culture. Qahhor successfully blended the narrative traditions of the East with Western realism and psychological depth. He was deeply influenced by Russian writers like Chekhov and Gogol, but he never imitated them; instead, he creatively adapted their techniques to an Uzbek context. This synthesis created a unique voice that is both modern and deeply national. His legacy is not merely historical but remains vibrantly alive in contemporary Uzbek literature and culture. Through his storytelling, Qahhor not only enriched Uzbek literature but also contributed to the preservation of folklore and oral traditions in Uzbekistan. As a translator, he built bridges between cultures; as a writer, he gave voice to the hopes, struggles, and aspirations of the Uzbek people. He is, without question, one of the giants of Uzbek literature whose influence will continue to be felt for generations to come.

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