

Artistic Embodiment of Social Motifs in Contemporary Uzbek Poetry

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Abstract: The article examines the expression of social issues in modern Uzbek poetry. It analyzes sociality not as a direct reflection of social problems, but as a complex aesthetic category realized through poetic imagery, metaphor, symbol, irony, lyrical experience, and cultural codes. The study relies on the theoretical views of V. Belinsky, M. Bakhtin, R. Williams, Y. Lotman, T. Eagleton, and Y. Tynyanov. Special attention is paid to the interpretation of social problems in Jontemir Jondor's poem "Kartina", where everyday scenes reveal deeper issues such as consumerism, alienation, the weakening of national values, and spiritual crisis. The article concludes that sociality in modern Uzbek poetry functions as an important element of poetic thinking and requires a systematic literary analysis.

Keywords: Modern Uzbek poetry, sociality, social problems, lyrical hero, poetic image, metaphor, symbol, cultural code, Jontemir Jondor, "Kartina".

Introduction: Literature cannot develop independently of social progress and social reality. Every literary work emerges in close connection with the historical conditions, spiritual values, social environment, and aesthetic views of its time. Therefore, literature reflects not only the inner world of the individual but also interprets the moral, ethical, and social processes taking place in society through artistic cognition. In poetry in particular, social meaning is manifested not through the direct depiction of events but through symbolic images, metaphorical expressions, poetic tone, lyrical experience, and mechanisms of aesthetic evaluation. Consequently, the analysis of social issues in modern Uzbek poetry requires treating them not merely as thematic elements but as complex and multilayered manifestations of artistic thought.

In literary studies, the category of sociality is regarded as a broad scholarly concept. Its essence is not limited to depicting social problems or reproducing historical events in literary texts. Rather, sociality represents the aesthetic interpretation of the relationship between the individual and society, the interaction of human beings with their historical era, and the artistic

reflection of changes in moral norms and systems of values. From this perspective, social meaning in a literary text does not appear as a direct reproduction of reality but as an aesthetic model transformed through the author's artistic consciousness and the inner experiences of the lyrical protagonist.

In world literary scholarship, the social nature of literature, its relationship with society, and its social functions have been extensively explored within various theoretical frameworks. These studies have focused not only on the influence of literature on society but also on the impact of historical, political, and cultural processes on the development of literary creativity. One of the leading representatives of the Russian school of literary criticism, Vissarion G. Belinsky, regarded literary works as phenomena inseparably connected with the spirit of the age, the life of the people, and social progress. His critical and theoretical writings emphasize the social mission of literature, the writer's responsibility toward society, and the moral and educational influence of artistic expression. In this regard, Belinsky considered sociality one of the fundamental theoretical categories for understanding the literary process. In particular, in his

article *A Survey of Russian Literature in 1847*, he stated: "No national literature can be studied separately from the development of the society to which it belongs. This is especially true of Russian literature." This statement clearly demonstrates his conviction that literature is inseparably linked with social development.

In twentieth-century literary theory, the concept of sociality was reinterpreted through new methodological approaches. In particular, Mikhail M. Bakhtin viewed the literary text not as the product of an isolated author's consciousness but as a dialogic space in which multiple social voices and discursive positions intersect. According to Bakhtin, "Language lies on the borderline between oneself and the other; half of the word belongs to someone else." This theoretical perspective provides an important methodological foundation for understanding the nature of sociality in lyric poetry. Indeed, within a lyrical text, the poet's individual experiences are constantly engaged in dialogue with the system of social values, cultural stereotypes, social evaluations, and diverse discursive positions that exist within society. As a result, poetic discourse functions not merely as an expression of personal emotion but as the outcome of the interaction between individual consciousness and social consciousness.

The British cultural theorist and literary critic Raymond Williams interprets sociality in literature from the perspective of the aesthetic formation of social experience. He argues that social reality in literature is expressed not through direct ideological statements or political discourse but through the emotional atmosphere, way of life, lived experience, and structures of feeling characteristic of a particular historical period. Williams conceptualizes this phenomenon through his notion of the "structure of feeling." This concept provides an important theoretical framework for explaining how social reality is transformed into aesthetic form within literary discourse. According to Williams, a structure of feeling represents the emergent emotional and experiential qualities of a particular generation or historical period—qualities that have not yet been fully articulated in ideological or institutional forms but are already perceptible in social consciousness. Consequently, the ideas developed in his work *Marxism and Literature* offer a significant methodological basis for understanding the nature of sociality in contemporary poetry. In lyrical texts, social issues are rarely presented through explicit ideological statements or direct publicistic discourse; instead, they are artistically embodied through inner suffering, anxiety, hope, protest, fear, irony, and metaphorical imagery. The mechanisms through which sociality is

represented in literary texts can also be explained through the theoretical views of Yuri M. Lotman, a leading representative of the Tartu–Moscow School of Semiotics. Lotman conceptualizes the literary text as a complex semiotic system in which every element functions as a meaning-generating unit. His statement, "A literary text is a complexly constructed meaning. All of its elements are meaningful elements," suggests that art and literature should not be regarded merely as means of reflecting reality but rather as secondary modeling systems that create, preserve, and reproduce cultural meanings. This theoretical approach makes it possible to interpret social themes in poetry not simply as direct representations of social problems but as artistic models constructed through symbols, signs, semantic oppositions, and cultural codes. Accordingly, social meaning in poetic discourse does not appear as a straightforward reflection of reality; instead, it emerges as an aesthetic construct articulated through a complex system of poetic signs.

The British literary theorist Terry Eagleton likewise interprets literature as a cultural phenomenon that cannot be separated from historical and social processes. According to his theory, literary works are shaped by the ideological, cultural, and social relations of a particular historical period and develop in close interaction with these factors. Eagleton argues that "Literature does not exist as a body of works endowed with inherent, unchanging, and absolute value." In other words, the value of a literary work is determined not solely by its formal or aesthetic qualities. The ways in which a text is interpreted, evaluated, and recognized as "literature" are also directly influenced by historical circumstances, dominant systems of values, and the aesthetic consciousness of society. From this perspective, the study of sociality in modern Uzbek poetry requires viewing literary texts not merely as products of an author's individual worldview but as aesthetic phenomena closely connected with the ideology, cultural values, and social consciousness of their historical period.

Eagleton's theoretical insights provide an important methodological foundation for the analysis of social themes in contemporary Uzbek poetry. In particular, they demonstrate the necessity of examining lyrical works produced in the era of globalization not only as expressions of the poet's personal emotions and experiences but also in relation to their historical context, the spirit of the age, social consciousness, and the system of national values.

In Uzbek literary scholarship, the relationship between literature and society, as well as the artistic interpretation of social issues in literary texts, has long been regarded as one of the central subjects of

scholarly inquiry. Literary scholars and writers such as Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, Oybek, Izzat Sultan, Mahmud Qo'shjonov, Umar Normatov, Naim Karimov, Qozoqboy Yo'ldoshev, Yo'ldosh Solijonov, Bahodir Karim, Dilmurod Qur'onov, Zebo Qobilova, and Gulchehra Oripova have, at different historical stages, advanced significant theoretical perspectives on the socio-aesthetic nature of literature, its relationship to the development of national thought, and its role in representing the interaction between the individual and society. Consequently, the category of sociality has become one of the principal theoretical frameworks for the study of Jadid literature, Soviet Uzbek literature, Independence-era literature, and contemporary literary discourse in Uzbek literary criticism.

Yury Tynyanov's views on poetic language are particularly important for understanding the distinctive ways in which social meaning is expressed in poetic discourse. Tynyanov argues that in poetic language, words perform not only their ordinary communicative function but also acquire additional semantic and aesthetic significance. In his work *The Problem of Poetic Language*, he maintains that intelligibility and defamiliarization in poetic discourse are not mutually exclusive; rather, they exist in a dialectical relationship. As a result, poetic language differs from everyday communication by intensifying semantic tension, enhancing imagery, and creating multiple layers of meaning. This theoretical approach is especially valuable for the analysis of the lyrical protagonist's discourse. The lyrical speaker represents social reality not through direct narration or factual description but through condensed poetic language, symbolic imagery, and figurative expression. For example, in Jontemir Jondor's poem *Kartina* (The Picture), the lyrical protagonist conveys the social problems that trouble him not through straightforward description but by means of symbolic and poetic imagery:

Although the café scene depicted in the poem appears, at first glance, to represent only an ordinary and fleeting moment of everyday life, its underlying meaning invites the reader to deeper reflection. The description of a rainy week and the delicate, sensitive mood of the sky initially creates an atmosphere of tranquil natural beauty. However, the poet does not limit himself to portraying this landscape. Instead, he unexpectedly redirects the reader's attention to a situation charged with social significance. By referring to the people who venture outside without umbrellas despite anticipating the rain as "naive," the lyrical protagonist gradually enters into their inner thoughts and emotional world.

The unexpected image employed in this reflection becomes the central poetic device through which the

poem's social message is revealed. The lines, "The umbrella-less (naive) people / Were ridden by a street bus," deliberately violate ordinary logic. In reality, people ride vehicles; in the poem, however, the vehicle is portrayed as if it were riding the people. Through this illogical inversion, the poet shifts the reader's focus from external reality to the social and material aspirations embedded in human consciousness. Behind the image of people boarding a vehicle to escape the rain lies their growing desire to own a car themselves. Thus, instead of enjoying the generosity and beauty of nature, individuals are portrayed as being overwhelmed by everyday concerns and material needs. Through this artistic contrast, the lyrical protagonist exposes one of the significant social problems of contemporary society – the dominance of material aspirations over spiritual and aesthetic values.

In the following lines, the lyrical protagonist guides the reader into the setting of a crowded café. The first detail that attracts attention in this space is the sound of a foreign song. The lyrical speaker interprets this element not merely as background music but as a symbolic sign of the gradual decline of the national language and national spirit in the consciousness of young people. On the one hand, the foreign song suggests the displacement of the mother tongue from everyday cultural life; on the other, it reflects the growing alienation of the younger generation's emotions, particularly their perception of love.

The final lines of the stanza further illuminate this socio-spiritual problem through the contrasting attitudes of two lovers toward love itself. For one of them, love is regarded as a sacred and divine gift, whereas for the other it is reduced to something trivial, ordinary, and no more valuable than an everyday object. Through this contrast, the poet artistically demonstrates how the genuine spiritual essence of love is gradually being replaced by superficial and artificial values among contemporary youth.

Sociality constitutes one of the essential components of artistic thinking in modern Uzbek poetry. In lyrical works, social issues are rarely presented through direct publicistic discourse; instead, they are aesthetically interpreted by means of symbols, metaphors, poetic details, irony, and the inner experiences of the lyrical protagonist. Consequently, poetic discourse serves as a distinctive artistic medium for interpreting the moral, ethical, and social transformations taking place within society.

The present study demonstrates that the theoretical concepts developed by Vissarion G. Belinsky, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Raymond Williams, Yuri M. Lotman, Terry Eagleton, and Yury Tynyanov provide an important

methodological foundation for interpreting sociality in modern Uzbek poetry. Their theories substantiate that social meaning in literary texts is constructed not directly but through poetic structures, semiotic signs, dialogic relationships, and cultural codes.

The analysis of Jontemir Jondor's poem *Kartina* (The Picture) reveals that the poet addresses such contemporary social problems as consumerism, the erosion of national values, alienation, and spiritual crisis not through straightforward description of reality but through poetic imagery, symbolic representation, and illogical (alogical) expression. Through the perspective of the lyrical protagonist, ordinary details of everyday life acquire profound socio-philosophical significance, encouraging readers to reflect upon the spiritual condition of contemporary human beings. Thus, sociality in modern Uzbek poetry should not be understood merely as a thematic category but as an aesthetic principle that determines the internal logic of poetic thinking. Its comprehensive investigation requires an integrated analysis of the semantic, linguopoetic, and linguocultural dimensions of literary texts, which remains one of the significant tasks of contemporary literary scholarship.

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