

The Depiction Of Social Reality And The Human Spirit In Usmon Azim's Poetry During The Independence Period

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Abstract: This article analyzes the artistic interpretation of human psychology, social life, freedom, moral responsibility, and national identity in Usmon Azim's poetry written during the years of Uzbekistan's independence. Using key poems from his collection *Saylanma* ("Selected Works")—such as "Ko'nglim qolgan yorug' olamdan" ("I've Lost Faith in the Bright World"), "Kolumb", "Vatan haqida she'r" ("A Poem about the Motherland"), "Boychechak" ("Snowdrop"), and "Insonni tushunish kerak" ("One Must Understand a Human")—the article explores the spiritual transformations, moral awakening, and philosophical reflection that emerged in post-independence Uzbek society. It also examines how the poet replaced the ironic tone of his earlier style with a more open and reflective philosophical language filled with symbols, parables, and human emotion.

Keywords: Usmon Azim, independence period, social psychology, freedom, human spirit, national thought, symbol, metaphor, poetic thinking, philosophical lyricism.

Introduction: After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, a new era began in literature. For writers, this was not only a time of political but also of spiritual and moral freedom. Literature was no longer a "tool of propaganda" but became a space for exploring the depths of the human soul. Within this context, Usmon Azim's creativity rose to a new stage. In his collection *Saylanma* (Tashkent, 1995), the poet moved away from the Aesopian language, hidden irony, and symbolic speech typical of the Soviet period and turned toward a direct yet deeply philosophical poetic tone.

Usmon Azim interprets independence not merely as political freedom but as an ethical and spiritual responsibility. In his poetry, he depicts the individual's inner freedom, conscience, and the necessity of breaking the silence. The poet does not create a "new man" of his time, but rather a new spiritual state.

Unlike the coded symbolic system of the Soviet era, his independent-period poetry manifests an open and philosophical tone. In "Kolumb" (*Saylanma*, p. 18), Usmon Azim expresses humanity's quest for discovery and self-realization in a symbolic way:

Kolumb, bu dunyodan odamlar o'tar,
Kolumb, odamlaridan o'tmoqda dunyo.

In these two lines lies the philosophy of an entire era: man changes the world, yet the world also changes man. The essence of the independence period is this transformation—the renewal of identity and rediscovery of national spirit.

Through the image of Columbus, the poet conveys humanity's thirst for renewal, its striving for truth through suffering, and the idea that "people pass through the world, but the world also passes through them." This expresses the balance between man and history and the individual's role in social change.

Independence brought external freedom to the individual, yet it also introduced problems of inner emptiness, psychological exhaustion, and moral loss. Usmon Azim delicately captures this through philosophical lyricism. In "Ko'nglim qolgan yorug' olamdan" (*Saylanma*, p. 41), he portrays spiritual fatigue and alienation from one's essence:

Men ishga boraman, ishdan qaytaman,

Men yo'q, meni hech kim bilmaydi...

These lines express the alienation of man from himself—the state of “living, yet not truly living.” The poet exposes the spiritual inertia and inner emptiness of post-independence society.

For Usmon Azim, the human soul is constant movement, anguish, and inquiry. His lyrical “I” symbolizes the shared inner condition of humanity.

The dominant feature of independence-era poetry is alertness of conscience. Usmon Azim observes societal changes from within. In “Vatan haqida she'r” (Saylanma, p. 49), the Homeland is not just a geographical space but a moral and spiritual testing ground:

Opa, Vatan ulug' dard!

Opa, Vatan bog' bo'lsin!

Here, the poet equates love of country with “great pain,” suggesting that true patriotism is both suffering and moral accountability.

Similarly, in “Opa, esingizdaku...” (Saylanma, p. 47), through images of war, history, and human tragedy, he awakens national consciousness:

Opa, urushlar ketdi, lekin...

Qon hidi hali yerda.

The poet warns against forgetting history. Through such works, Usmon Azim shapes the moral philosophy of the independence era.

In “Boychechak” (Saylanma, p. 52), nature becomes a symbolic mirror of the human spirit. For the poet, nature is a means of returning to innocence and rediscovering purity:

Opa-uka izlaymiz dala-dashtda boychechak...

Odamlar kulsa kulsin — bir kun bo'lamiz go'dak.

The snowdrop symbolizes purity, awakening, and spiritual rebirth. The main spiritual trend of the independence period is this “inner renaissance.”

Through natural imagery, Usmon Azim calls humanity from artificiality to authenticity, from false joy to moral cleanliness.

Moral responsibility is central in Usmon Azim's poetic worldview. In “Insonni tushunish kerak” (Saylanma, p. 32), he explores the balance between guilt and forgiveness:

Insonni tushunish kerak...

Kimdir oriq, qaltiroq qo'llari bilan cho'ntagini ag'darar.

Here, “turning out one's pockets” is not a sin but a symbol of need and compulsion. The poet does not condemn—he calls for understanding.

For Usmon Azim, man is a being undergoing moral trial.

He condemns not sin but silence in the face of wrongdoing. In the lines:

Aybsizligim — bir o'limga teng,

Men uchun ham jallod, dor hurgin,

Hamma gunoh qildi — ko'rdim men,

Hamma gunoh qildi — jim turdim. (Saylanma, p. 13)

the poet proclaims silence as a crime and indifference as death. This thought introduced a new stage of conscience poetry in Uzbek literature.

In his post-independence poetry, Usmon Azim abandons Soviet-era Aesopian irony for open philosophical reflection and social critique. He now speaks the “truth through words” instead of the “cry within silence.” The motif of “I am absent, yet I live” in “Ko'nglim qolgan yorug' olamdan”, the spirit of exploration in “Kolumb”, and the purity of “Boychechak” collectively mark the poet's spiritual evolution—from propaganda verse to moral-philosophical poetry.

His symbolic system is rich and complex:

- Boychechak (snowdrop): purity, spiritual renewal.
- Sky: freedom, aspiration, transcendence.
- Eye: perception, awareness, truth.
- Silence: inner pain, indifference, patience.
- Word: truth, conscience, moral accountability.
- Gallows / executioner: punishment of conscience, self-blame.
- Child / childhood: innocence, moral purity, roots of selfhood.

Through these symbols, the poet analyzes not external reality but inner states. Hence, in his poetry, psychological condition outweighs external events.

Usmon Azim's poetry during the independence period represents a dialogue between the individual and society. He establishes this dialogue on a philosophical foundation: man attains freedom through self-recognition. The poet's transition from “silence to truth” marks one of the most significant transformations in modern Uzbek literature.

His works focus not merely on “saying words” but on “understanding oneself through words.” In doing so, Usmon Azim restores the moral power of language and revives the poetic voice of conscience in Uzbek poetry.

In Usmon Azim's poetry, the “silence” of society is not interpreted as a deliberate or contemplative stillness, but rather as a symbol of fear and indifference. The poet presents the individual as a source of active resistance against these passive states within society.

The following poem by Usmon Azim reflects a unique combination of beauty and philosophical depth:

O, the gardens have blossomed,
The wind has grown mild.
Turn your shoulder to the rain—grow, O heart.
How good you are—
Behold, at ease,
You revolve and revolve,
O firmament.

This poem primarily conveys the themes of nature's awakening, the growth of the human heart, and philosophical reflections on goodness and beauty in life. Through the blossoming of gardens, the poet evokes the beginning of a new life cycle; natural phenomena such as wind and rain are linked to the human heart. The poet calls upon the heart to grow and renew itself. The process of renewal and growth in life is portrayed as something as beautiful and natural as the transformations of nature itself. Just as the earth blossoms after rain, the human heart, when opened to life's trials and blessings, can also flourish.

The line "O, the gardens have blossomed" symbolizes the awakening of nature, the arrival of spring, and the beginning of a new life. The blossoming gardens represent renewal, joy, and hope—an image through which the poet compares natural beauty to the state of the human soul. The phrase "the wind grows mild" expresses warmth, lightness, and inner peace. The wind here symbolizes the force that brings renewal into life, sweeping away what is old and burdensome. It is the emblem of spiritual refreshment and purification.

The command "Turn your shoulder to the rain—grow, O heart" may be understood as "stand bare before the rain." The heart must remain pure, sincere, and unguarded—ready to receive both the trials and the blessings of existence. Rain, as a vital and cleansing element, becomes a metaphor for growth, purification, and openness to new experiences.

The line "How good you are" conveys admiration and wonder for the heart's capacity for kindness and beauty. It reflects the fullness of human life, strength, and compassion. The word "At ease" (bemalol) implies freedom and openness without constraint, suggesting that life and the heart should exist without restriction or fear.

The repetition "revolve and revolve" evokes continual motion, the passage of time, and the perpetual change inherent in life. It also adds a rhythmic, musical quality to the poem, reinforcing the cyclical nature of existence. The final phrase "O firmament" (falak) symbolizes the sky, the universe, and cosmic order. By

invoking it, the poet elevates the human heart and the life of the spirit to a cosmic dimension—portraying them as vast, eternal, and sublime. The constant rotation of the heavens mirrors the unending process of transformation and renewal within life itself.

The central themes of his post-independence works—self-discovery, resistance to indifference, the passage from silence to speech—reflect the evolution of the human spirit. Through "Kolumb", "Ko'nglim qolgan yorug' olamdan", "Boychechak", and "Aybsizligim bir o'limga teng", he immortalizes the moral journey of the modern human being. Usmon Azim thus remains one of the poets who reestablished the ethical essence of the Word and gave new life to the moral voice of conscience in contemporary Uzbek poetry.

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