

The Dynamics of The Story in Uzbek Literary Studies

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical interpretations, historical formation, and genre-specific features of the qissa (novella) in Uzbek literary studies. The semantic commonality of the terms qissa and povest, as well as scholarly views on interpreting them as separate genres, are critically evaluated. Drawing on examples from twentieth-century Uzbek qissachilik and the period of independence, the article examines the genre's evolution, the interplay between realism and modern artistic explorations, and substantiates the role of the qissa in the contemporary literary process.

Keywords: Qissa (novella), povest, genre evolution, Uzbek literary studies, realism, artistic thinking, epic genre, stylistic renewal.

Introduction: The qissa is a genre that has been actively present in Eastern literature since ancient times and has been interpreted in different ways across historical periods. In the medieval Muslim world, epic works about renowned warriors, as well as about prophets and saints who sacrificed themselves in the path of faith, were directly referred to as qissa. Written books that narrated epic works of oral folklore in prose form were also known by this name. In modern literature, however, the term qissa is used for works that recount events related to a specific period in the life of an individual.

In literary studies, there are differing views regarding the specific characteristics of the qissa genre and its relationship to the povest. Some scholars consider the qissa to be an independent genre distinct from the povest of Russian and European literature. For example, literary scholar S. Mirvaliev writes: "...judging by the internal scope of its content, the concept of the povest no longer seems capable of fully expressing the meaning of the qissa. As a result, the qissa remains an independent genre situated between the short story and the povest" [1.:277,88].

A. Abrorov also regarded the povest and the qissa as separate genres: "Within the framework of the povest

genre, a new prose genre qissachilik has emerged." Literary scholar Q. Ko'baev, in his article entitled "Povest va qissa," agrees with the views of the aforementioned scholars and divides what is essentially a single genre, known by two different terms, into two separate ones.

Another group of scholars, however, argues that both qissa and povest are two terms in different languages for the same genre, that is, qissa is an Eastern term, while povest is a Russian one. For instance, the authors of the Russian-Uzbek Explanatory Dictionary of Literary Terms write the following on this matter: "Such works (qissas are meant here F.R.) are identical to the povest genre in terms of their nature, genre possibilities, and artistic-descriptive principles and methods. Therefore, in contemporary prose, the term qissa should be understood as a synonym of the term povest" [2.:169-170].

These views raise the question of which of them is correct, since in science there cannot be two equally valid judgments about the same phenomenon. From this perspective, the second view that qissa and povest are synonymous terms appears closer to the truth. Q. Ko'baev cites V. Belinsky's opinion on the povest and attempts to prove that the povest is a distinct genre.

Later, he refers to B. Soyimov's idea that narration predominates in the povest, while depiction prevails in the qissa, and on this basis tries to forcibly separate the qissa from the povest. In fact, however, the meanings of both terms are identical. If povest is derived from the Russian word *povestvovat*, which means "to narrate" or "to recount," then the term qissa likewise originates from the Arabic word "kaes," meaning "to narrate" or "to recount" [3.:819].

Therefore, artificially separating two terms that express the same meaning and, on this basis, presenting a single genre as two independent genres will naturally lead to certain confusions in literary studies. Such theoretical inconsistencies are clearly observable in the article mentioned. One of its theoretical premises is the following: one of the main features of qissas is that the inner world of the characters their thoughts, dreams, and emotions is revealed not primarily through narration, but rather through psychological analysis. Accordingly, if the depiction of psychological states is dominant in qissas, narration is considered one of the principal features of the povest [4.:63-64].

In our view, however, any psychological analysis is realized precisely through narration, that is, through depiction. Consequently, there is no need to artificially distinguish between narration and depiction. From this perspective, any qissa may be examined, and in each of them the actions of the characters and their inner emotional experiences are revealed through narrative-descriptive means.

Uzbek qissas that emerged in the 1960s-1970s constitute realistic works created by individual authors. Thus, whereas in earlier literature the qissa genre was predominantly characterized by a romantic spirit, its later development continued in a realistic direction.

The dominance of individuality in artistic literature created the basis for the emergence of diverse and varied qissas differing from one another. It is true that in the 1930s-1950s Uzbek writers more frequently used the term *povest* instead of *qissa*. This occurred as a result of insufficient reflection on the terminological foundations of the genre. Moreover, during that period, the intensification of ideological pressure and the severe nature of political repression prevented Uzbek writers from boldly using national terms. For this reason, they employed the Russian synonym "*povest*" instead of the term *qissa*. This circumstance, however, does not justify the claim that *qissa* and *povest* are two separate and independent terms.

It should be particularly emphasized that both *qissa* and *povest* are two different designations of a single genre, and these two terms continue to be used side by

side in contemporary literary studies to ensure stylistic diversity. Logically, they are equivalent to each other. Both *qissa* and *povest* underwent various formal and semantic transformations throughout their historical development. This study also addresses the views of Russian literary scholars on the genre and narrative style of the *qissa*, and the following points are emphasized.

In Russian literary studies, numerous opinions have been expressed regarding the genre characteristics of the *povest*. The views of V. Kozhinov are particularly noteworthy in this respect. According to him, the *povest* is a prose epic genre that is smaller than the novel and larger than the novella [5.:844-846]. However, distinguishing the *povest* from the novel and the novella (short story) solely on the basis of length does not prove convincing. There are significant formal differences between the *povest*, the novel, and the short story: in the *povest*, narration of events or phenomena associated with a particular individual predominates rather than depiction or showing the *povest* gravitates toward a chronicle-like form. Unlike the novel, it does not possess a complex, fully developed plot structure. In the *povest*, the voice of the narrator, that is, the author, plays a leading role. It is the narrator who ensures the integrity of a work belonging to this genre. When Academician D. S. Likhachev wrote that "the *povest* must serve as a bearer of thought for both the author and the reader" [6.:3], he had in mind the distinctiveness, vividness, and dynamism of narration in qissas. V. M. Golovko, who studied Russian *povests*, writes that "all scenes of a *povest*, according to V. G. Belinsky, must breathe with a single idea" [7.:17].

There are also certain views in Uzbek literary studies regarding the formal and semantic distinctiveness of the *qissa*'s development. In particular, explanatory dictionaries of literary terms state the following: "...qissas in written literature and in oral folk tradition were recited orally, and improvisation played a leading role in them. In scholarly literature, they are referred to as folk books. In contemporary literature, works that are larger than a short story, smaller than a novel, and based on the adventures of a single protagonist are referred to as *qissa*" [8.:234].

It becomes clear that the terms *qissa* and *povest* are two different names for one and the same genre, that is, they are the designation of equivalent and identical phenomena by means of words belonging to two different languages. If *qissa* and *povest* are two names of a single genre, then what are the leading genre characteristics typical of the *qissa* (*povest*)? Unlike the novel and the short story, the *qissa* is based on the life experience and adventures of one person. More

precisely, in a qissa, a certain part of the life of one protagonist is selected, namely events rich in dramatic tension and inclined toward a lyrical interpretation. The qissas of Ch. Aytmatov, A. Qahhor's "Sinchalak," T. Murod's "Yulduzlar mangu yonadi," "Ot kishnagan oqshom," "Oydinda yurgan odamlar," as well as the qissas of O'. Umarbekov, Sh. Bo'tayev, E. A'zam, H. Sultonov, and S. Vafo have this character.

In general, delimiting the qissa from the standpoint of length, that is, stating that it must be smaller than a novel and larger than a short story, is not a scientific criterion of the genre. A qissa may be of different length depending on the author's ideological intention and artistic mastery. This is confirmed by the fact that Uzbek literature has also produced qissa-dialogiya (N. Aminov's qissas "Elvizak" and "Suvarak") and cycles of qissas, for example A. Muxtor's work "Chinor," which the author himself called a qissa.

The novel differs from the qissa by the scope of the issue posed, the breadth of epic depiction, the complexity and multi-layered nature of the plot, and the fact that it is based on events connected with several characters.

The qissa differs from the novel and other epic genres by its chronicle-like sequential depiction of the adventures of a single protagonist. The events of a qissa are mainly narrated either from the protagonist's point of view or by a separate narrator (the writer or another person). Another leading feature typical of the qissa is that, according to the requirements of this genre, the issue or problem placed at the center of the work is connected only with one person. With the resolution of that issue or problem, the plot of the work also comes to an end. In short, works that are based on the artistic resolution of problems related to a particular period in the life of one character and that are narrated through a plot inclined to chronicle-like sequence constitute the qissa (povest) genre.

In general, as a genre, the qissa has passed through long stages of historical development and, in accordance with the mode of literary-aesthetic thinking at each stage, has acquired affiliation with a particular creative method. In its classical examples created in the past, romantic depiction is predominant, whereas in the examples that emerged later, realistic depiction takes the lead. In the former, reality and the literary hero are interpreted on the basis of the creator's aesthetic ideal and elevated emotionality; in the latter, they are interpreted in terms of truthfulness and as real people of life. This criterion constitutes a measure of the essence of each method, and it indicates the affiliation of qissas with particular methods. At the same time, it is one of the regularities of artistic

creativity that within each leading method, elements of other methods and directions may operate in the form of tendencies; this is also characteristic of the relationship between the qissa and method.

In this connection, it should be noted that the view that modern Uzbek realistic qissachilik emerged in the 1930s of the twentieth century is disputable. In particular, the claim that works such as M. Shermuhammedov's "Befarzand Ochilidiboy," Cho'lpion's "Do'xtir Muhammadiyor," and S. Ayniy's "Odina" are the earliest examples of Uzbek realistic qissas [9.:13] seems to require clarification. Before this period, too, there were attempts to depict reality in an epic mode. A vivid example of this is Hamza's "Yangi saodat" or "Milliy roman" asaridir. Although this work, published in lithographic print in 1915, was called a "roman" by the author (it is also referred to as a "yirik hikoya"), it has the principal feature typical of the qissa: the consistent artistic narration of events from a certain period of life concentrated around one protagonist (Olimjon), and its volume is narrower than that of a novel. For this reason, this work provides grounds to say that realistic qissachilik began to take shape in the 1910s of the last century. The subsequent years became the period of its gradual development.

Naturally, since the qissa is a historical category, it continued to change. This is because "any genre, while preserving the features that keep it stable, is renewed and transformed from within, first, according to the specific laws of literary types and genres, and second, in close connection with the socio-historical environment and the literary process" [10.:6]. This process, which began in the twentieth century, is undergoing a new, higher stage in the period of independence.

In the present literary process, where the horizons of literary-artistic thinking are expanding, creative freedom is growing, and corresponding creative individuality is becoming more diverse and refined, within realism one can observe the synthesis of mytho-epic, romantic, modernist, conditional-allegorical, and religious-enlightenment forms of depiction. As the prominent literary scholar O. Sharafiddinov acknowledged, "our literature has existed for barely a century (twentieth-century literature is meant here - F.R.). Perhaps within this time only one out of the ten flowers of realism has blossomed" [11.:244].

The "buds" of realism in the scholar's figurative words began to open from the mid-1980s, and socio-economic and spiritual renewals created the basis for this; as creative freedom was established, semantic depth and formal diversity became clearly visible in all literary genres. A new stage of this process was the

period of independence. In this period, on the one hand, the vitality, scale, and breadth of traditional realism became manifest, while on the other hand, space was opened for various creative aesthetic currents, views, directions, and styles. Most importantly, in the epic and lyric-romantic genres within traditional realism, particularly in qissachilik, modern thinking and the deep artistic study of the inner world of the individual on the basis of symbolic and allegorical interpretations intensified, and the possibilities of realism proved useful for this.

Literary scholar U. Normatov, observing this process in depth, comes to the following conclusion: "Indeed, we still have many unexplored potentials and unopened possibilities of traditional realism. The ways of artistically studying the individual in connection with society, social life, politics, and ideology have not become outdated, and realistic literature has managed to absorb many innovations, as can be seen in the novels "Adolat manzili" (The abode of justice) and "Otamdan qolgan dalalar" (The fields inherited from my father) [12.:217]. This feature is also clearly reflected in qissas created in later years. In a number of qissas, realism is appearing in synthesis with national literary traditions, realistic depiction, and new modern interpretation. The qissas of E. A'zam, S. Vafo, X. Do'stmuhammad, and Sh. Bo'tayev can serve as evidence of this: first, in our literature, including qissachilik, the thematic scope is expanding and psychological analysis of the human being is coming to the fore; second, in qissachilik, diversity has emerged not only in content but also in form and style, giving rise to types such as the cinematic qissa and the dramatic qissa. The drama-like conflict in E. A'zam's qissas, the lyrical tones, nature depiction, and elevated mood in N. Norqobilov's qissas testify to this. Also, in qissas created on historical themes, the principle of an objective approach, on the basis of the ideology of independence, to problems of the concept of a historical person, the relationship between the historical period and the individual, is increasingly expanding (Xurshid Davron's "Sohibqiron nabirasi yoxud mitti yulduz qissasi," Alisher Ibodinov's "Qo'rishi Madaminbek," Xayriddin Sulton's "Saodat sohili," Erkin Samandar's "Pahlavon Mahmud Piryoraliy qissasi," Nabijon Boqiy's "Qotilnama," Sa'dulla Siyoev's "Bir chora zamon istab," Poyon Ravshanov's "Tutqin malika," and other qissas). Here, too, it is evident that the realist principle of truthfully depicting the problems of the time and the individual can harmonize with new approaches.

Third, in qissas being created within the modern direction, the tendency to creatively use certain elements of traditional realism and to employ syncretic

combinations of diverse expressive forms within one work is increasing. In this respect, the works of qissa writers such as Nazar Eshonqul, Xurshid Do'stmuhammad, Murod Muhammad Do'st, Shodiqul Hamro, and Ulug'bek Hamdam stand out.

In contemporary qissachilik, the distinctive features of genre development are also seen in the following:

- Qissas, first of all, as an active genre of the epic mode, are characterized by being oriented toward artistically discovering the spirit of the new era, the pathos of the time, and socio-psychological processes in people's consciousness, and by expressing life material in terms of deep content, truthfulness, and high artistic quality of form.

- Thematically, it can be said that there is almost no "unexplored field" or unaddressed problem left. In the reflections on the past, present, and future found in nearly twenty qissas created each year, new interpretations of traditional themes and protagonists, as well as qualities such as selfhood, spiritual maturation, and a sense of national pride, occupy a central place.

- The social-aesthetic "burden" carried by the qissa is steadily increasing. This is clearly seen in the qissa's synthesis with elements of other genres, especially in its rapprochement with the novel.

Some qissas that are relatively larger in size and broader in content are (often at the author's discretion) called "romans." Although S. Vafo's work "Ovoraning ko'rgan kechirganlari" is recognized in literary studies as a novel, the genre features typical of the qissa predominate in it. Indeed, calling it a novel or a qissa does not change its essence. However, it is appropriate to take into account the fundamental characteristics and specificity of the genre. After all, "the issue is not the greatness or smallness of the genre. The main matter is artistic mastery, creating a work in the chosen genre with true craftsmanship" [13.:193].

The current stage of stylistic development in Uzbek qissachilik is a component of renewal and advancement in national prose; within it, traditional and modern style, publicistic interpretation, psychological analysis, each writer's talent, artistic perception, and individuality in will and manner are manifest, and the principle of analyzing and examining the individual from a spiritual-moral perspective is deepening. At the same time, the possibilities of realism are generating new features and forms within the structure of certain genres and styles. From this standpoint, in today's qissas one can observe the following new internal types:

1. Cinematic qissa - "Suv yoqalab" (Along the

riverbank), “Zabarjad” (Zabarjad), “Piyoda” (On foot) (E. A’zam)

2. Dramatic qissa - “Jannat o’zi qaydadir” (Paradise is somewhere else) (E. A’zam)
3. Monologue-psychological qissa - “Tun panjaralar” (Bars of the night), “Qora kitob” (The black book) (N. Eshonqul); “Yolg’izlik” (Loneliness) (Ulug’bek Hamdam)
4. Humorous qissa – “Mehmon ovi” (Hunting the guest) (M. Xudoyqulov)
5. Essay qissa - “U kishi - ustoz, men - shogird” (He is the teacher, I am the student) (Sh. Xolmirzaev)
6. Adventure-detective qissa - “Shaytanat” (Realm of evil), “So’nggi o’q” (The last bullet) (T. Malik); “Katta o’yin” (The great game) (A. Yo’ldosh)
7. Spiritual-religious qissa -“Farishta tashrifi” (The angel’s visit) (H. Shayxov); “Taqdiri azal” (Predestined fate) (E. Usmonov)
8. Epistolary qissa - “Yozg’it bitigi” (The written testament) (A. Abdiev, “Sharq yulduzi” (Star of the East), 2008, No. 4)

These works, created on various themes within one genre, show that the ideological content and expressive forms of our contemporary qissachilik are steadily expanding, that writers’ stylistic individuality is becoming more diverse, and that the syncretic character of diverse directions indicates the globalization of the scale of approaches to artistic creativity. Such a phenomenon of renewal in contemporary artistic-aesthetic thinking, including in the development of particular genres, is explained, as literary scholar N. Rahimjonov notes, by the fact that “approaching, mastering, and drawing generalized conclusions from the perspective of the unity of form and content, genre manifestations, as well as artistic language and expressive means (simile, metaphor, image, symbols) has become a natural need and necessity of the literary-historical process” [14.:169]. Indeed, the gradual development of literary-artistic thinking and the evolution of directions in the chain of qissa style help to envision more broadly certain aspects of the outcome of this aesthetic need.

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