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OZOD SHARAFIDDINOV – A PROMINENT FIGURE IN UZBEK LITERARY CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of Ozod Sharafiddinov, a prominent figure in Uzbek literary criticism, in the development of national literary and aesthetic thought, as well as the main directions of his critical activity and his scholarly and creative legacy. Particular attention is paid to the critic’s reliance on aesthetic criteria in evaluating literary works, his emphasis on the personality of the writer and questions of artistic craftsmanship, and his commitment to an objective approach to the literary process.

Keywords: Uzbek literary criticism, literary critic, literary studies, artistic thought, aesthetic criteria, critical thinking, writer’s personality, artistic craftsmanship, national literature, literary process, period of independence.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is an important social and spiritual phenomenon that reflects a nation’s spiritual life, historical memory, worldview, and aesthetic thinking. The development of literature is closely associated not only with the creation of literary works but also with their interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and the determination of their place within the literary process. In this respect, literary criticism is a scholarly and aesthetic activity that serves as a mediator between artistic creation and the reader’s intellectual world and plays an important role in determining the directions of literary development.

Throughout the development of Uzbek literary criticism, distinctive scholarly schools, principles of analysis, and aesthetic perspectives have emerged in different historical periods. In particular, it is difficult to imagine the development of Uzbek literary-critical thought in the second half of the twentieth century and during the period of independence without considering the work of Ozod Sharafiddinov. In his articles, reviews, literary portraits, essays, and research studies, he extensively explored such issues as the essence of fiction, the creative personality, artistic craftsmanship, the social function of literature, and the responsibility of literary critics.

One of the most significant features of Ozod Sharafiddinov’s work is that he did not limit literary criticism to merely listing the strengths and weaknesses of literary works. Instead, he sought to reveal the inner essence of literary phenomena, understand the aesthetic intentions of writers, and examine the role of literary works in human psychology and the spiritual life of society. For this reason, his critical articles remain important examples of observing, evaluating, and interpreting the literary process.

Ozod Sharafiddinov was a scholar, literary critic, translator, and public figure who made a substantial contribution to the development of Uzbek literary studies and criticism in the twentieth century. His creative and scholarly activities were closely connected with the complex stages of the Uzbek literary process. In his articles, the critic sought to raise pressing

issues of contemporary literature, determine the aesthetic value of literary works, support talented writers, and promote independent thinking within literary discourse.

Sharafiddinov's entry into the field of literary criticism was primarily associated with his interest in poetry and contemporary literary developments. Researchers regard his article *Reflections on Lyric Poetry* ("Lirika haqida mulohazalar") as one of his early significant works that attracted the attention of the wider literary community. His candidate dissertation entitled *Contemporary Uzbek Soviet Poems* ("Hozirgi o'zbek sovet poemalari") demonstrated his scholarly investigations into the analysis of poetic developments.

The critic's books, including *The Age, the Heart, and Poetry* ("Zamon, qalb, poeziya"), *Literary Studies* ("Adabiy etyudlar"), *Standard-Bearers* ("Bayroqdorlar"), *Lessons in Artistic Mastery* ("Mahorat saboqlari"), *The First Miracle* ("Birinchi mo'jiza"), *In Harmony with Life* ("Hayot bilan hamnafas"), and *The Happiness of Understanding Creativity* ("Ijodni anglash baxti"), occupy an important place in the history of Uzbek literary criticism. These works contain reflections on various literary genres, the individual styles of writers, the artistic possibilities of poetry, literary craftsmanship, and the developmental patterns of the literary process.

The distinctive character of Sharafiddinov's work is evident in his broad intellectual approach to literary phenomena. He sought to evaluate literary works not merely on the basis of the political or ideological requirements of a particular period, but also in terms of the intrinsic laws of art, their humanistic content, and their aesthetic impact. This approach contributed to establishing the primacy of artistic merit as a fundamental criterion in Uzbek literary criticism.

Several important criteria can be identified in Sharafiddinov's literary and aesthetic views. The first is **artistic truth**. A literary work should not be limited to simply recording events in life; rather, it should reveal the inner essence of reality, the contradictions within the human psyche, and the complexity of social relationships. Therefore, the critic pays particular attention to the work's connection with real life, the credibility of its characters, and the author's attitude towards reality.

The second criterion is **the writer's talent and artistic craftsmanship**. For Sharafiddinov, talent is one of the principal driving forces behind literary development. However, talent itself can only be fully manifested through continuous exploration, profound observation of life, artistic thinking, and creative effort. In works such as *The Radiance of Talent* ("Iste'dod jilolari") and *Lessons in Artistic Mastery* ("Mahorat saboqlari"), questions concerning the individual abilities of writers, their artistic explorations, and their craftsmanship occupy an important place.

The third criterion is **aesthetic impact**. A literary work should encourage readers to think, feel, and reflect on life and humanity. The value of literature is determined not only by what events are depicted but also by how those events are artistically interpreted. From this perspective, Sharafiddinov does not overlook such aspects of literary analysis as composition, the system of characters, psychological depiction, language, and style.

The fourth criterion is **the writer's humanistic and moral responsibility**. The critic interprets literature as a means of understanding human beings, enriching their spiritual world, and elevating the moral and aesthetic outlook of society. A writer should not remain indifferent to human destiny, social problems, and the contradictions of their time. However, this

responsibility should not take the form of empty moralizing or slogan-based writing that undermines artistic quality. Instead, it should be expressed through a portrayal that is both realistic and aesthetically convincing.

These criteria constitute the scholarly and aesthetic foundations of Sharafiddinov's literary criticism. They define his approach to literary phenomena as one that seeks to uncover their essence rather than offer superficial judgments.

One of the factors that determines Ozod Sharafiddinov's distinctive position in Uzbek literary criticism is his commitment to objectivity and independent thought. The purpose of literary criticism is neither to praise nor to reject a writer. A critic must reveal the artistic essence of a literary work, identify its strengths and weaknesses through well-grounded arguments, and advance ideas capable of influencing the development of the literary process.

In the literary environment of the Soviet period, artistic creation was often evaluated in accordance with the prevailing ideological views. Under such circumstances, strict requirements were imposed not only on the aesthetic characteristics of literary works but also on their ideological orientation. As a result, certain works and writers were subjected to one-sided interpretations. The fact that Sharafiddinov's creative and critical activities unfolded under such complex historical conditions is an important factor in assessing his critical position.

The critic sought to understand the limitations of approaching literature exclusively through ideological criteria. In evaluating literary works, he tended to prioritize humanistic content, the truthfulness of artistic representation, aesthetic impact, and the writer's craftsmanship. In this respect, his critical articles contributed to strengthening independent thought and aesthetic responsibility in literary evaluation.

The principle of objectivity requires a critic to adopt a critical attitude not only towards the works of others but also towards their own views. In Sharafiddinov's later works, one can also observe instances of reconsidering his previous opinions and reassessing the literary process of earlier periods through new criteria. This characteristic makes it possible to understand literary criticism not as a collection of predetermined judgments but as a continuous process of inquiry, comprehension, and intellectual reflection.

Following Uzbekistan's independence, new opportunities emerged in literary studies and literary criticism, as they did in all other spheres of social and spiritual life. There was a growing need to study national history, literary heritage, the Jadid movement, and the works of writers whose contributions had previously been interpreted one-sidedly for ideological reasons. In this process, Ozod Sharafiddinov's activities acquired particular significance.

One of the major tasks facing literary criticism during the period of independence was to renew attitudes towards literary heritage, study writers' personalities in connection with their historical and national circumstances, and analyze literary works free from ideological constraints. These issues also became one of the leading directions in Sharafiddinov's literary-critical activities.

The critic paid considerable attention to developing a deeper understanding of national literary history, revisiting the creative heritage of Jadid writers, and connecting issues of national identity and historical memory with literary thought. The reassessment of the literary legacy of such writers as Fitrat, Cho'lpon, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Behbudiy according

to new scholarly and aesthetic criteria became one of the important directions of literary studies during the independence period.

Sharafiddinov's works *The Happiness of Understanding Creativity* ("Ijodni anglash baxti") and *Let Us Speak the Same Language* ("Bir tilda gaplashaylik") are important sources for studying his literary, aesthetic, and spiritual views during the independence period. These works explore, from various perspectives, the relationship between the writer and society, the role of literature in human life, national thought, spiritual values, and the nature of artistic creation.

During the independence period, the responsibility of literary critics was no longer limited to evaluating newly published works. They were also expected to contribute to the restoration of historical justice, reveal the complex layers of literary heritage, demonstrate continuity in the development of national literature, and cultivate readers' aesthetic sensibilities. The fact that these responsibilities are closely interconnected in Sharafiddinov's activities further strengthens his position in Uzbek literary criticism.

One of the important characteristics of Ozod Sharafiddinov's critical articles is the combination of scholarly reflection and journalistic expressiveness. In his analyses, complex literary and aesthetic issues are presented in a clear, fluent, and logically structured manner that is accessible to a broad readership. This makes his scholarly conclusions valuable not only to specialists but also to the wider public interested in literature.

In Sharafiddinov's critical style, there is a consistent effort to examine the artistic features of a particular work or writer before arriving at a general judgment, analyze relevant evidence, and substantiate conclusions. He considers a literary work's subject matter, system of characters, composition, language, style, and authorial position in their interrelationship. Consequently, his articles are characterized by a comprehensive rather than one-sided approach to literary phenomena.

In his critical activities, Sharafiddinov employed various literary-critical genres, including literary portraits, reviews, essays, problem-oriented articles, and theoretical reflections. Despite the diversity of genres, his works share a common objective: to understand the artistic and spiritual potential of literature, reveal the creative talent of writers, and identify significant tendencies in the literary process.

His translation activities were also closely connected with his literary and aesthetic views. Introducing Uzbek readers to masterpieces of world literature and familiarizing them with different literary experiences contributed to broadening the horizons of national literary thought. This aspect demonstrates that Sharafiddinov regarded literature not merely as a national phenomenon but also as an integral part of universal artistic thought.

The study of the critic's scholarly legacy remains relevant to contemporary literary studies. His views on artistic truth, creative craftsmanship, aesthetic objectivity, and the responsibility of literary critics are of methodological significance for analyzing contemporary literary developments. In particular, at a time when the need to avoid subjective attitudes, superficial evaluations, and unsupported judgments in literary criticism is becoming increasingly important, Sharafiddinov's analytical approach deserves considerable attention.

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