Teaching of Azerbaijani Language and Literature
2026 / Volume 72, Number 3 / 12–22
https://doi.org/10.48445/u4213-5093-3454-l

Socio-Moral Conflicts and Character Dynamics in the Novel "Olabo'Ji"

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ABSTRACT
This article analyzes Shukur Kholmirzaev's novel *"Olabo'ji", focusing on the socio-moral conflicts and the dynamics of character development presented in the work. The main objective of the study is to identify the complex social and ethical issues illustrated in the novel, as well as to deeply analyze the psychological state and transformation processes of the protagonists. The methodology is based on qualitative literary analysis and psychological approach, examining the plot structure, character relationships, and stylistic elements of the work. The findings reveal that "Olabo'ji" effectively conveys socio-moral contradictions within society through symbolic and philosophical expression. The protagonists' internal emotional states and their adaptation to external conditions contribute to a dynamic and vivid system of characterization. Furthermore, the novel holds a significant place in Uzbek prose as it artistically highlights social and spiritual issues through the lens of literary thinking. This research further illuminates the significance of "Olabo'ji" in Uzbek literature and affirms its contribution to contemporary literary thought.*

KEYWORDS
Olabo'ji, novel, socio-moral conflicts, character dynamics, literary analysis, Uzbek literature, psychological portrait, plot, philosophical thought, style, character traits, narrative progression, form and content, main idea, thematic scope, fate of characters

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received: 15.05.2026
Accepted: 22.08.2026

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Azərbaycan dili və ədəbiyyat tədrisi
2026 / Cild 72, Nömrə 3 / 12–22
https://doi.org/10.48445/u4213-5093-3454-l

“Olabo‘Ji” romanında sosial-mənəvi konfliktlər və xarakter dinamikası

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XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalədə Şükür Xolmirzəyevin “Olabo‘ji” romanı əsərdə təqdim olunan sosial-mənəvi konfliktlər və obrazların inkişaf dinamikası kontekstində təhlil edilir. Tədqiqatın əsas məqsədi romanda əks olunan mürəkkəb sosial və etik problemləri müəyyənləşdirmək, həmçinin baş qəhrəmanların psixoloji vəziyyətini və transformasiya proseslərini dərindən təhlil etməkdir. Tədqiqatın metodologiyası əsərin süjet quruluşunun, obrazlararası münasibətlərin və üslubi xüsusiyyətlərin öyrənilməsini əhatə edən keyfiyyət yönümlü ədəbi təhlilə və psixoloji yanaşmaya əsaslanır. Tədqiqatın nəticələri göstərir ki, “Olabo‘ji” romanı cəmiyyətdəki sosial-mənəvi ziddiyyətləri simvolik və fəlsəfi ifadə vasitəsilə səmərəli şəkildə əks etdirir. Baş qəhrəmanların daxili emosional vəziyyətləri və xarici şəraitə uyğunlaşma prosesləri dinamik və canlı obrazlar sisteminin formalaşmasına xidmət edir. Bundan əlavə, roman sosial və mənəvi problemləri ədəbi düşüncə prizmasından bədii şəkildə işıqlandıraraq özbək nəsrində mühüm yer tutur. Bu tədqiqat “Olabo‘ji” romanının özbək ədəbiyyatındakı əhəmiyyətini daha ətraflı şəkildə ortaya qoyur və onun müasir ədəbi düşüncəyə verdiyi töhfəni təsdiqləyir.

AÇAR SÖZLƏR

Olabo‘ji, roman, sosial-mənəvi konfliktlər, obrazların inkişaf dinamikası, ədəbi təhlil, özbək ədəbiyyatı, psixoloji portret, süjet, fəlsəfi düşüncə, üslub, obraz xüsusiyyətləri, nəqlin inkişafı, forma və məzmun, əsas ideya, tematik əhatə dairəsi, obrazların taleyi

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Göndərilib: 15.05.2026
Qəbul edilib: 22.08.2026

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Introduction

Since the 1960s, a generation of writers has made a significant contribution to the development of Uzbek literature, and many of them have continued to create prolifically in the 21st century. Among them, Shukur Xolmirzaev stands out as a particularly distinguished figure. This can clearly be seen in his novel *Olabo'ji*.

Shukur Xolmirzaev's *Olabo'ji* is one of the most profound works in Uzbek literature to explore contemporary social and spiritual issues. Through this novel, the author portrays the conflicts within society, the inner experiences of individuals, and their relationship with the surrounding environment. *Olabo'ji* holds an important place in the artistic and stylistic development of Uzbek prose, reflecting the complex relationship between the individual and society within the framework of artistic thought.

This article analyzes the social and spiritual tensions within the novel, the development of its characters, and the dynamic relationships between them. The content of the article serves to provide a deeper understanding of the societal issues depicted in the work and the subtle aspects of the human psyche.

Methodology

Through the analysis of Shukur Xolmirzaev's novel *Olabo'ji*, this study examines the social and spiritual tensions and the dynamic development of characters based on the artistic text of the work. During the research process, the plot of the novel, the psychological states of the characters, and their interpersonal relationships are thoroughly explored.

The methodology is primarily based on literary-stylistic analysis, which allows for a detailed examination of the author's mastery in using artistic means of expression such as symbols, metaphors, and other stylistic devices. In addition, a psychological approach is employed to investigate the inner experiences of the characters and the process of their transformation.

The study also takes into account the socio-cultural context, analyzing the significance and place of the novel within society. This approach enables a deep and systematic investigation that aligns with the subject matter of the article.

Results and Discussion

Although the national sentiment is an eternal and timeless theme in Shukur Xolmirzayev's works, the central issue in his writings is always built around the mysteries and intricacies of human life. For instance, the writer's novel *Olabo'ji* is also aimed at exploring the human psyche and artistically interpreting its unique nature. Literary scholar Q. Yo'ldoshev, commenting on the novel *Olabo'ji*, noted that "it vividly reflects, through the example of

Ulton's complex fate, how difficult it is for a person with progressive views and behaviors–who is spiritually elevated and has strong faith—to live in society, when such a person becomes a 'pariah' not only in the eyes of strangers but also among their own close ones" (Yo'ldoshev, 2000, s. 3).

The author also attributes symbolic meaning to the novel's title. It seems as if through the protagonist, the tragedy of a person who does not fit into their era, who appears as 'not one of them' in everyone's eyes, and who has been alienated both from family and society, is vividly depicted before us. This is the initial impression, of course. In reality, the writer's purpose is to show the qualities of this "pariah" nature reflected in the character of a nation's individual and the spiritual factors in the social environment that gave rise to it.

The novel *Olabo'ji* is one of the last novels created in Uzbek literature before Uzbekistan's independence; it was written in 1991 and presented to readers in the 1992 issue of the *Sharq yulduzi* journal. The author himself refers to the work as a "novella larger than a novel." When asked why he called it this, he said, "*Olabo'ji* was published last year in the *Sharq yulduzi* journal. I defined its genre as a novella larger than a novel. I did this to deceive myself. If I called it a novel, it seemed the events would become too sprawling and scattered. If I called it a story, I thought I could restrain myself. Nevertheless, it turned out to be 400-500 pages anyway" (Xolmirzayev, 1993, s. 124).

In this novel, Shukur Xolmirzayev portrays life events and conflicts, expressing his own attitude toward them. Through small everyday scenes, he raises large and significant issues. He carefully selects the most delicate aspects and characteristic details of the events and incidents drawn from life, depicting them in depth and thus provides a profound artistic analysis of the relationships between the individual and society, and among people themselves. He vividly portrays human experiences, the conflicts between characters, and moral values in their entirety. As the primary factor ensuring the artistic quality of the work, the author writes about materials that interest him and with which he is well acquainted.

Through the events chosen as objects of depiction, the writer creates his own independent artistic conception of the spirit of the era. Every era has its own problems, conceptions, positions, and appearances. This condition affects not only the individual but also society's activities and determines its direction. It is known that every change in life does not happen without human activity. These changes and creations depend on human effort, worldview, and conception. As academician D. S. Likhachev noted, "An era cannot bypass the human being or create anything by itself. The era becomes an artistic element through humans and their goals. It affects everyone differently because the place of humans in society varies in different eras" (Likhachev, 1983, s. 37). It is impossible to imagine the achievements and shortcomings in this process, political, educational, and moral views without the turmoil, suffering, and spiritual world of the human heart. A human is a general concept. When we speak of a human, we primarily mean the universal, eternal aspects embodied in them. One

of these aspects, and the most important, is thinking. Without changes in human thinking, it is difficult for any social change to occur. Changes in human thought are naturally influenced by the changes in the era and society, and in turn, alongside determining the correct direction of society, reveal the individual's role and status in life and attract humanity's attention. This is reflected in Uzbek novels. Therefore, in these works, it is not events and incidents that lead, but the human being themselves–their thoughts, sufferings, agonies, psyche, and spiritual world–that are central, depicted, and revealed (Karimov, 2010, s. 224).

The novel depicts how the existing socio-political system is being eroded both from within and from outside. It highlights Uzbekistan's occupation by Russia, similar to other allied republics, resulting in its status as a dependent and colonial territory under Russian control. Due to the excessive growth of economic enterprises, a new type of leadership emerged, which became a terrifying symbol of the collapse of the totalitarian regime. The social "Unity Movement" initially aimed to serve the interests of the people, the Uzbek language was granted the status of State language, and struggles for independence and the national awakening movement gained momentum. Under the banner of women's liberation, spiritual degradation prevailed. The author puts forward ideas such as the "National Liberation Movement as a natural process" (Xolmirzayev, 1991, s. 5). These ideas are deeply embedded in the psychology and fate of the characters and the events portrayed in the work. They are so thoroughly woven in that even without the author's explicit references, readers arrive at the same conclusions as the author. The work vividly reveals the horrors of yesterday: the moral and ethical decline of people, ecological degradation, and the powerlessness and indifference of our nation. Importantly, the novel portrays the spiritual deterioration within human consciousness.

In the novel *Olabo'ji*, the artistic means of depiction primarily focus on revealing the straightforward and sincere character of a person who grew up in the mountains and accepted their fate as intertwined with the destiny of nature.

The events in the story take place in one of the villages in the Olatog' district of Surkhandarya. The characters are ordinary people whom we encounter in real life.

Through the interpretation and analysis of the novel's characters–To'qliboy Qo'chqarov, Ulton Sultonov, Bahor, Bo'taboy So'pi, Tarakanov, Maxfirat Egamqulova, Dunyo, Sulton bobo, and others–Shukur Xolmirzayev attempts to find answers to the questions that have long troubled us. In doing so, he examines the behavior and spirit of our contemporaries with whom we lived and continue to live.

In the novel, we encounter various destinies and events from different aspects of our lives. As a result, we feel ourselves participating in the unfolding story as ordinary people. All the characters in the novel—Ulton, Bahor, To'qliboy Qo'chqarov, Bo'taboy So'pi, Sulton bobo, Maxfirat Egamqulova, Dunyo, Ashim, Hurram, Nabilar—come to life before our

eyes as vivid, living individuals. Through these characters, the fate of our national heroes, like Tangriberdi Dodhode, also deeply affects us emotionally.

One of the main protagonists of the novel is Ulton Sultonov, a simple village teacher and a notable writer. The author depicts this character's life full of severe suffering in such a way that the reader naturally feels pity for Ulton and develops hatred towards the society that destroyed the young man and turned him into an "Olabo'ji," as well as towards the leaders who play a major role in that society.

The events and actions in the work are closely connected with the fate of the main character, Ulton Sultonov. Ulton is portrayed as a free-thinking, simple person who loves nature deeply and wholeheartedly, a writer who fights against oppression and environmental degradation. He always desires to live naturally, like nature itself. According to him, every action in life should be natural, selfless, and free from cunning and deceitful tricks.

The author extensively uses psychological analysis in creating the character of Ulton. Not only Ulton, but also other characters are depicted with rich psychological depth, which helped the work gain popularity and appreciation among readers.

Literary scholar Hakimjon Karimov also notes the distinct nature of the novel's characters: "Shukur Xolmirzayev's novel *Olabo'ji* is based on the conflict between the worlds of good and evil. The world of good is represented by Ulton, Ashim (Qoraboy), Hurram, Tursuntosh (Tursunoy), Abduqayum, Dunyo, and Qobillar, while the world of wickedness is embodied in the actions of To'qliboy Qo'chqarov, Bahor, Bo'taboy So'piyev, Tarakanov, and Mahfirat Egamqulov. The novel has a polyphonic nature. It reveals all the negative traits and vices of the totalitarian social system. This condition continues from the very first page of the novel until the end" (Karimov, 2020, s. 78).

The plot of the novel is built around events that take place over a very short period—about one week to ten days—with the background information about the character's recent past provided to explain what kind of person Ulton is. We see that Ulton has given up pursuing a scholarly career focused on ancient history and instead wants to do something useful for the current life of society. However, his artificially limited role at the regional newspaper does not satisfy him. Therefore, he resigns himself to working as an ordinary teacher at the school in his own village, where he once studied. Ulton desires to live freely without being subordinate to anyone, and to live a natural life, like nature itself. Repeating the phrase "I am a free man" frequently, Ulton, through his ascetic lifestyle, uniquely rebels against the life of oppression and servitude in society. However, as the novel progresses, we realize that in a society that is not free, no matter how ascetic a life one leads, a person still cannot fully achieve freedom and liberty.

Through the characters of Ulton and Hurram, Shukur Xolmirzayev creates the image of the progressive intellectuals of that era. The author reveals the idea that "The National Liberation Movement is a natural process" specifically through Ulton and Hurram's characters.

Ulton's realization of the necessity of national independence does not happen spontaneously. This process, Shukur Xolmirzayev, as a realist writer, convincingly shows, took place gradually under the influence of social and historical conditions. The most important aspect of the social conditions that raised Ulton to the stage of understanding the necessity of national freedom was social-economic and ecological decline. The writer reflects many problems that led to this great decline in the novel.

Overall, the artistry of characters in Shukur Xolmirzayev's novels plays a crucial role in revealing the deep and subtle layers of the human psyche. Each character is not merely a collection of outward appearances or actions, but a complex personality enriched with profound psychological and social meaning. The novel's protagonists develop through their relationships, inner experiences, and life trials, which enhances the artistic realism of the work. Moreover, the artistic quality of the characters in the author's novels stands out vividly through their individual traits, the spirit of nationality, and harmony with modernity. This artistry captivates the reader, evoking a deep emotional and intellectual impact. As a result, the artistry of characters in the author's novels holds an important place in the development of Uzbek literature and is valued as a rich source of contemporary artistic thought.

The novel *Olaboʻji* is a work that deeply and profoundly explores social and spiritual contradictions. Through the relationships among the characters and their inner worlds, the conflicts within society, spiritual crises, and processes of change are portrayed realistically. The dynamics of the characters emphasize their psychological transformations, decision-making processes, and development under the influence of the social environment.

These characters are shaped against the backdrop of contradictions, internal struggles, and external social pressures, which enhances the artistic power of the work. As a result, the novel *Olaboʻji* holds an important place in Uzbek literature for addressing social and spiritual issues and depicting the dynamic development of its characters.

"Shukur Kholmizayev did not just write poetry," says literary scholar Qozokboy Yoʻldoshev. "Perhaps he wrote some in his youth, but he was prolific in genres such as short stories, novellas, dramas, and novels, reflecting diverse themes. Through his creative work, the writer vividly and simply showed how the sense of Uzbek identity manifests itself. From the perspective of understanding people, he was a truly great creator. This can be seen in the novel *Olaboʻji*, where the problem of the individual and society is clearly revealed" (Yoʻldoshev, 2020, s. 3).

During the process of reading the work, the reader witnesses the trampling of national identity, the violation of ancient values inherent to our people, and the humiliation of the faith of the nation's individuals. The writer vividly and convincingly depicts how deeply the destruction of mosques, the desecration of pilgrimage sites, and the denunciation of customs such as wedding and funeral prayers as outdated have wounded people's hearts.Additionally,

the trampling of natural monuments, the plundering of underground resources by opportunists, and the ruthless extermination of living beings are among the painful points of the work.

The novel exposes the misdeeds of a group of officials and wealthy women who trample on the national identity. It sheds light on the reasons behind the terrible afflictions that have befallen the nation, including the harmful practice of falsifying historical records. The artistic portrayal of this social reality is entrusted to the character Ulton. He desires the authentic interpretation of our ancestors' history, the study and rehabilitation of the legacy of unjustly repressed creators, and the revelation of the true purposes of the Afghan war.

It appears that Ulton cannot completely free himself from the influence of the regime he lives under. His ascetic lifestyle also indicates that the environment's system has imposed its will on him, like a leaf floating along the current. However, unlike many others, he is intellectually awake and spiritually pure, and it is precisely this purity and clarity that leads him to choose an ascetic way of life. Much like hunters who build a four-legged hut, he begins to live in that modest shelter rather than in his father's newly constructed luxurious mansion. He is not interested in wealth, position, or status at all. He spends most of his time reading books about nature, writing articles and essays on the subject, and reflecting on the relationship between nature and humans, as well as the essence of society and humanity.

At the same time, Ulton has reached a definitive judgment about the regime he lives under. Having given up hope for its reform, he seems to strive to protect his mind and heart from the depressive thoughts about society as much as possible. A clear example of this is his attitude toward Qobil, the janitor: "After returning from Afghanistan as one unit, a twenty-two-year-old young man, still wearing his green uniform with messy hair, took up the broom and started working as a janitor here... Ulton 'cannot stand' to see this young man: it breaks his heart and confuses his mind"(Xolmirzayev, 1992, s. 23).

At this point, it is necessary to especially emphasize Shukur Kholmizayev's skill as a realist writer. The author, by providing just a single detail related to Qobil the janitor, immediately draws attention to the character's attitude toward the Afghan war and the Soviet regime's policy of internationalism based on violence. This war proved extremely costly not only for the Afghan people but also for the children of our own nation. The novel powerfully reveals this reality through the fate of Qobil the janitor and Rasul Bobo's son, whose coffin returned from Afghanistan.

Ulton's attitude toward the regime is especially evident in his statements about internationalism. He points out that there are two kinds of internationalism, and that the one characterized by the suppression of one nation for the benefit of another is typical of the Soviets. He says: "Personally, I consider the main culprit here to be the Soviet government and its national policy." This shows that no matter how much Ulton tries to distance himself from society, he cannot completely disconnect from the pressing problems that increasingly demand resolution. Initially working at the district newspaper, Ulton soon realizes that it is

impossible to write the whole truth there and begins to limit himself to articles about nature conservation. As a simple school teacher, he cannot remain indifferent to the establishment of a military training ground in Oqsuv, the destruction of the mosque, the exploitation of child labor, and the trampling of nature. However, unable to prevent these actions, he puts his hopes in his former teacher, now the secretary of the district party committee, Toqliboy Qo‘chqorov. At the same time, Ulton is not so naïve as to trust his former teacher blindly. Throughout the process of reading and analyzing the novel, Ulton’s reflections on “a crow cannot poke out another crow’s eye” urge him to be cautious in his attitude toward Toqliboy Qo‘chqorov.

After Ulton was sent to the madrasa (people called it so because the mental hospital building had once been a madrasa), Ashim received news about him once or twice. On one occasion, when he brought thick clothes for Ulton, the doctor Berdi said, “You don’t need to come anymore.”Yet one thing puzzled people greatly: a bear-like humanoid creature appeared in Yetimcho‘qqi. Its manner of walking was exactly like a bear’s — stooping, roaring, and growling as it moved. From time to time, it would come close to the town and sit on top of a cave…Now, when young children misbehave, mothers frighten them with just one phrase: *“Olabo‘ji is coming!”* (Xolmirzayev, 2023, s, 604).

During the analysis of the novel *Olaboji*, it was revealed that social and spiritual conflicts are artistically expressed in a deep and subtle manner. Through the characters of the novel, complex social changes in society, moral choices of individuals, and their inner psychological struggles are reflected. The inner experiences of the protagonists and their attitudes towards external circumstances enrich the philosophical meaning of the work.

Shukur Kholmirzayev skillfully used symbolic images and metaphors in the novel, which ensures the dynamism of the plot and characters. For example, the changes in the characters are closely connected with the contradictions in their social status and personal lives, making these characters more vivid and believable.

As emphasized above, the novel *Olaboji* not only highlights personal but also societal problems, opening new directions for the artistic analysis of social and spiritual conflicts in Uzbek literature. At the same time, the work holds an important place within the framework of modern Uzbek prose's philosophical and psychological reflection.

Overall, research findings show that the novel *Olaboji* deeply reveals contemporary social and spiritual issues from an artistic perspective and, through the dynamic development of its characters and symbolic expressions, leaves a strong impression on the reader.

Conclusion

This article has analyzed the social and spiritual conflicts as well as the character dynamics in Shukur Xolmirzayev's novel *"Olabo'ji."* The research findings demonstrate that the author reveals the complex social and moral issues of society in a deep and artistic manner through literary means. The inner experiences of the characters and their interpersonal relationships reflect the real challenges of contemporary Uzbek society.

"Olabo'ji" is a unique work in Uzbek prose that artistically expresses themes such as humanity, moral choice, and social conflict at a high level. The author's use of symbolic and metaphorical language, along with the dynamic development of characters, adds philosophical depth and artistic strength to the novel.

As a result, *"Olabo'ji"* serves as an important source for studying socio-spiritual issues in modern Uzbek literature and reveals new dimensions of literary thinking. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the artistic and stylistic features of the work and its relevance within the context of societal life.

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