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SYMBOLISM IN THE SHORT STORIES OF ULUGBEK HAMDAM

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Abstract: This article examines the concepts of symbol and symbolism and analyzes the use of symbolism in the short stories of Ulugbek Hamdam, a prominent representative of contemporary Uzbek prose. Drawing on the writer's stories "Tosh" ("The Stone") and "Bir piyola suv" ("A Cup of Water"), it explores the meanings of literary symbols and their philosophical role in revealing the central ideas of a work. It also considers the influence of these symbols on the human psyche. The article argues that, in Ulugbek Hamdam's creative work, symbolism is not merely a formal device of representation, but a fundamental mode of artistic thought through which the writer seeks to understand the world and human existence.
Keywords: symbol, symbolism, Ulugbek Hamdam, short story, "The Stone", "A Cup of Water".

Аннотация: В данной статье раскрывается сущность понятий символа и символики, а также анализируются особенности символики в рассказах Улугбека Хамдама, одного из видных представителей современной узбекской прозы. На примере рассказов писателя "Tosh" ("Камень") и "Bir piyola suv" ("Пиала воды") раскрываются значения художественных символов и определяется их философская роль в раскрытии идейного содержания произведений. Освещается также влияние символов, используемых в произведениях, на внутренний мир человека. Обосновывается, что в творчестве Улугбека Хамдама символика является не просто формальным средством художественного изображения, а представляет собой ведущий способ художественного мышления писателя, посредством которого он осмысливает мир и человеческое бытие.
Ключевые слова: символ, символика, Улугбек Хамдам, рассказ, "Камень", "Пиала воды".

In fiction, the problem of the symbol and symbolism is considered one of the most complex theoretical issues. A symbol is a means of expressing a particular concept, idea, quality, or reality through an object, image, or sign, whereas symbolism is a way of representing events not directly, but through hidden meanings and figurative images.

"A symbol (from Arabic: gesture, sign, indication) is a symbol; one of the types of trope, a word or phrase that acquires a figurative meaning conventionally and only within the context of a particular text; a type of imagery." [5, p. 245]

Symbols and symbolism are among the artistic devices that have long been used in Uzbek prose. From oral literature to contemporary works, symbols have served to express various figurative and metaphorical meanings. In modern Uzbek prose, particularly in the works of Ulugbek Hamdam, a symbol is not merely a descriptive device or ornament; rather, it is an expression of the writer's artistic skill in fully revealing the central idea of a work. Through the symbols in his short stories, the writer offers artistic interpretations of complex realities and human experiences.

In Ulugbek Hamdam's short stories "Tosh" ("The Stone") and "Bir piyola suv" ("A Cup of Water"), symbolism forms a central structural element of the works. The writer's use of symbols to portray the human spiritual world, inner life, and surrounding events gives the stories philosophical depth. In "The Stone," the image of the "stone" is interpreted as a symbol of spiritual depression and evil. The writer depicts the growing despair in the heart of a character who

is gradually turning into stone as an expression of evil, sorrow, and alienation from society and other people. Hamdam compares sorrow to a stone because sorrow is hard like stone: it wounds the heart and, while existing within a person, freezes it. Another image in the story—the stone used to strike a fish on the head—serves as an instrument of evil and cruelty. When the seller strikes the fish on the head with a stone, the woman's indifference and her "blood-red-looking lips" emerge as signs of this cruelty. The image of "red lips" is presented as a symbol of the evil in the human heart, taking pleasure in the suffering of others, and moral degradation. The scene in which people stone the sun and other people in a dream signifies how evil rooted in the heart turns into an aggressive attitude toward goodness, virtue, and the sun as the source of life. Through the image of the "stone" in the dream, the story symbolically conveys that, unless a person overcomes the evil within, it can become a force that threatens the outside world. The evil in the human heart is compared to the hardness and weight of a stone. Through this image, the writer artistically depicts the emergence and intensification of evil within the human heart.

The short story "A Cup of Water" is about the human lifespan. Through this work, the writer uses symbols to portray how people spend their lives on trivial and ultimately pointless pursuits. A number of details in the story acquire symbolic meanings. The "cart and its load" are interpreted as human life and the responsibilities placed upon a person. The duties a person assumes throughout life are compared to the load carried on a cart. In the article's interpretation, this image is associated with fulfilling one's responsibilities in life and one's divine duty. The "scorching desert and heat" represent the difficult journey through a world full of trials and hardships. Every person encounters various trials in life, and the story's "scorching heat" serves as an image of life's difficulties. The "cup of water" represents a transient worldly blessing, a small comfort or pleasure, and something that distracts a person from their true purpose. In the article's interpretation, material wealth, positions, and money are associated with the symbol of "a cup of water." People, in turn, may become willing to spend their entire lives pursuing these fleeting benefits. The image of the "mysterious queue at the caravanserai" symbolizes how people chase after worldly pleasures and insignificant goals, forget their responsibilities, and ultimately lose their lives. In real life, too, people remain unaware of how they sacrifice years of their lives for a moment of pleasure, pursuing minor and insignificant concerns while losing their time, youth, and strength. In the story, the protagonist's long wait to pay for the water—and the fact that he grows old while waiting—reveals the tragedy of a life wasted in vain. The image of the "beautiful girl at the entrance" is interpreted as the world's attractive yet deceptive appearance. Sometimes people do not understand why they have come into this world or what their purpose is, and they are deceived by the world's beautiful outward appearance. The image of water flowing from the jug on the cart conveys how a person may fail to recognize the treasure already in their possession, search for the same thing elsewhere, and thereby waste their life. The protagonist reaches the end of his life without realizing that the treasure he has sought all his life has actually been beside him. The writer reveals this tragedy through the symbolic images in the story. Thus, in "A Cup of Water," human life is given a philosophical interpretation through symbolic imagery.

In conclusion, the symbols in Ulugbek Hamdam's short stories "The Stone" and "A Cup of Water" contribute to the full раскрытие of the works' central ideas. The writer makes effective use of the artistic potential of symbols and gives them philosophical meaning. The symbols in "The Stone" encourage readers to reflect on the evil within the human heart and on inner spiritual transformation. In "A Cup of Water," figurative images illuminate the transience of human life and the question of life's purpose. Overall, Hamdam's skillful use of artistic symbols and metaphorical imagery enriches the semantic and philosophical layers of his short stories. This demonstrates the expanding possibilities of artistic thought and representation in contemporary Uzbek prose.

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