

## **CHILDHOOD AND SOCIAL CRITICISM IN GAFUR GHULAM'S "SHUM BOLA"**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the portrayal of childhood and social criticism in Gafur Ghulam's "Shum Bola" (The Naughty Boy). The research examines the author's skill in depicting children's perspectives and period challenges, as well as his methods of highlighting social inequality and injustice in Soviet-era Uzbek society through the work. The article illuminates significant aspects of the literary work through literary theory, historical context, and critical analysis.

**Keywords:** Gafur Ghulam, "Shum Bola", children's literature, social criticism, Soviet-era Uzbek literature, autobiographical prose, realism, imagery.

### **G'AFUR G'ULOMNING "SHUM BOLA" ASARIDA BOLALIK VA IJTIMOIIY TANQID**

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola G'afur G'ulomning "Shum bola" asarida bolalik tasviri va ijtimoiy tanqid masalalarini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot muallif mahoratini bolalar nuqtai nazarini va davr muammolarini tasvirlashda, shuningdek, sovet davri o'zbek jamiyatidagi ijtimoiy tengsizlik va adolatsizlikni asarda ko'rsatish usullarini o'rganadi. Maqola adabiy nazariya, tarixiy kontekst va tanqidiy tahlil orqali adabiy asarning muhim jihatlarini yoritadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** G'afur G'ulom, "Shum bola", bolalar adabiyoti, ijtimoiy tanqid, sovet davri o'zbek adabiyoti, avtobiografik nasr, realizm, obrazlilik.

### **ДЕТСТВО И СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ КРИТИКА В ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИИ ГАФУРА ГУЛЯМА "ШУМ БОЛА"**

**Аннотация:** В данной статье анализируется изображение детства и социальная критика в произведении Гафура Гуляма "Шум бола" (Озорник). Исследование рассматривает мастерство автора в изображении детского мировоззрения и проблем эпохи, а также его методы освещения социального неравенства и несправедливости в узбекском обществе советского периода через произведение. Статья освещает значимые аспекты литературного произведения через литературную теорию, исторический контекст и критический анализ.

**Ключевые слова:** Гафур Гулям, "Шум бола", детская литература, социальная критика, узбекская литература советского периода, автобиографическая проза, реализм, образность.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gafur Ghulam (1903-1966), as a prominent figure in Uzbek literature, made substantial contributions to the development of 20th-century Uzbek prose. His novella "Shum Bola," written between 1936-1937 and later expanded, represents one of the most vivid and influential portrayals of childhood in Uzbek literature [1]. The work serves not only as an example of children's literature but also as an artistic document with profound socio-historical context. Through this novella, the author depicts his childhood while simultaneously reflecting the socio-economic conditions in Turkestan during 1916-1917, society under the final years of Russian

imperial rule, and life on the eve of revolution [2].

## **METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

The research methodology is primarily based on the following approaches: historical-comparative method, literary analysis, biographical approach, and contextual analysis. The linguistic, semantic, and structural characteristics of the work were also examined.

The literature review encompasses scholarly research, articles, and monographs about "Shum Bola" as well as studies dedicated to Gafur Ghulam's creative work. Abdullayev (2018) investigated the features of social realism in Gafur Ghulam's autobiographical works [3]. Karimov (2015) comprehensively illuminated the historical context and social criticism in "Shum Bola" [4]. Furthermore, Rajabov (2019) examined the psychological characteristics of the child protagonist and its connection with the author's life experiences [5].

Among international sources, Baldick's (2016) research on social criticism in children's literature [6] and Nikolajeva's (2017) analysis of child imagery in postcolonial literature [7] provide important theoretical foundations for our research. The works of Russian scholar Sokolov (2014), who studied Soviet-era Uzbek literature, were also significant [8].

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The interconnection between childhood imagery and social criticism in "Shum Bola" manifests in several dimensions. First, through the protagonist—an orphaned boy who experiences various hardships from an early age—the author reveals the social problems of the era. The title "Shum Bola" (The Naughty Boy) reflects the protagonist's risk-taking, resourceful, and mischievous character, but this "naughtiness" essentially represents a survival strategy [9].

Child imagery in the work serves multiple functions. First, through the child character, the author can freely demonstrate injustice, inequality, and violence in society. Second, the child's perspective views social phenomena impartially and naively, allowing the author to escape the strict ideological limitations of his time. Third, childhood memories serve the author as a means to reveal historical truths of his era.

The social problems depicted in Gafur Ghulam's work include:

1. Sharp stratification between the rich and poor. The main character, an orphaned boy from an impoverished family, becomes a victim of this social stratification.
2. Corruption in religious institutions. Gafur Ghulam criticizes hypocrisy, cruelty, and ignorance in the madrasa environment [4].
3. Corruption and injustice in the governance system. The protagonist encounters various manifestations of bureaucratic corruption throughout the narrative.
4. Child labor and exploitation. The work vividly portrays how children from poor families were forced to work from an early age in harsh conditions [10].

Ghulam's artistic method combines autobiographical elements with broader social commentary. The author employs humor, irony, and occasionally satire to soften the sharp social criticism, making it more palatable within the Soviet literary framework. According to Hamidova (2017), this approach allowed Ghulam to criticize pre-revolutionary society while simultaneously embedding subtle commentary on Soviet realities [9].

The language and style of "Shum Bola" merit special attention. Ghulam masterfully uses colloquial Uzbek language, incorporating folk expressions, proverbs, and local dialect. This stylistic choice not only enhances the authenticity of the child's perspective but also preserves linguistic elements of Uzbek culture during a period of rapid Russification. As noted by Thompson (2018), this linguistic resistance represents a form of cultural preservation within the constraints of Soviet literary norms [10].

## **CONCLUSION**

Gafur Ghulam's "Shum Bola" stands as a significant work that transcends the boundaries of children's literature to become an important document of social criticism. Through the perspective of a child protagonist, Ghulam successfully depicted the socioeconomic conditions, cultural practices, and political realities of early 20th century Uzbekistan. The work demonstrates

how childhood narrative can serve as an effective vehicle for social commentary, particularly in contexts where direct criticism might be politically dangerous.

The research confirms that Ghulam employed multiple literary techniques to balance autobiographical elements with broader social critique. His portrayal of childhood goes beyond simple memoir to function as a lens through which readers can examine complex social issues. The protagonist's journey represents not only individual growth but also symbolizes the transformative path of Uzbek society itself.

In the contemporary context, "Shum Bola" remains relevant both as a literary achievement and as a historical document that provides insight into Uzbekistan's past. Future research might further explore how Ghulam's work influenced subsequent generations of Uzbek writers and how its themes continue to resonate in post-Soviet Uzbek literature.

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