

ANALYSIS OF SHORT STORY “LUMINOUS PEAKS” BY ABDULLA QAHHOR

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20304301>

Abstract. Abdulla Qahhor, the outstanding representative of twentieth-century Uzbek prose writing, stands among the most luminous figures of our literary tradition - a writer who developed his own distinctive style and voice, and made an enduring contribution to the progress of Uzbek literature. The prolific creative work of this great writer has always occupied a central place in the attention of both scholars and readers alike. His works continue to captivate the consciousness and spirit of our people to this day

Key words: Abdulla Qahhor, short story, Venera, prolific master, folk proverbs, thematic scop, epigraph, enigma,

It is by no means coincidental that this prolific master of the short story genre has been celebrated as “the Chekhov of Uzbek literature.” Abdulla Qahhor’s short stories are distinguished, above all, by their sincerity, their closeness to the common people, and their rootedness in real life. The writer strove to craft his stories with economy and precision - concise and fluid - yet each word was placed with exquisite care. Their profound command of the vernacular and their deep respect for language is evident in the fact that not a single word is superfluous, and that every word and phraseological unit conceals layers of profound meaning. The writer Said Ahmad described it thus: “I tried, as an experiment, to remove sentences from the stories “Anor” (“The Pomegranate”), “Bemor” (“The Patient”), and “O‘g‘ri” (“The Thief”) - it did not work; it was as if a supporting pillar had been removed from a house.”

Abdulla Qahhor selected epigraphs for his short stories from folk proverbs, treasuries of wisdom, and the works of master writers. An epigraph foreshadows or alludes to the central idea and thematic direction of a work; it fulfils an aesthetic and artistic function, imparting artistry, charm, and poetic spirit to the text. In Qahhor’s epigraphs, one discerns the emotional mood of the work, its thematic scope, and at times even the author’s attitude toward society. The short story “Nurli cho‘qqilar” (“Luminous Peaks”), written in 1965, offers solutions not only to the social concerns of the era in which the writer lived, but also to the pressing problems of the present day.

For this story, the writer chose as epigraph the burning lines of the gifted poet Abdulla Oripov:

Sometimes, pondering the warmth of the earth,
The shadow of the gallows comes to mind.
A strange wisdom: a man, it seems, dies
Only when his feet are severed from the earth.

From the epigraph alone it becomes apparent that the story concerns such vices as arrogance, conceit, pride, and the habit of looking down upon others - in short, haughtiness - and the sorrowful consequences these bring.

The events of the story begin thus: “Zuhrakhon, a girl who was among the top students of



the ninth grade, had collected more scrap metal than anyone, whose name had been announced on the radio and who had received commendations from the school administration, suddenly disappeared..." Questions such as "Who is Zuhrahon? Why did she disappear?" involuntarily engage the reader's mind, and here the knot - the enigma - is formed.

Two twin daughters are raised within one family: Fotima and Zuhra are the principal characters of the story. In the literary work, Zuhra's portrait is rendered as follows: "Zuhra was extraordinarily pleasing to the eye; one who glanced at her would feel their gaze grow dim and wish to look again, particularly when she wore a 'khon atlas' dress and arranged her hair in a 'stork's nest' style - the word 'beautiful' in praise of her would at times seem too little, at others too old." This describes the girl's outward appearance; her character, however, is portrayed in altogether different terms: "Zuhra was capricious, fastidious, and haughty, and did not mix with her schoolmates."

The second character, Fotima, is described as follows: "...compared to the lively and spirited Zuhra, Fotima was somewhat quieter; if vivacity is the adornment of beauty, though the two were two halves of one apple, Fotima's appearance seemed paler beside Zuhra." Here, at this very point, conflict emerges - a mutual opposition between Fotima and Zuhra. This opposition continues throughout the development of events and becomes plainly visible. It can also be detected in Fotima's speech addressed to her mother: "Dear mother, do not heap all the blame upon me - after all, even your own words carried no weight with Zuhra, let alone mine! Have you forgotten that one day, when you rarely asked her anything, you said: 'My dear, just peel four onions for me,' and she turned away and replied: 'I am not your servant'? You said nothing even then. Ever since I can remember, I have been looking after you; I dream of taking all the household duties into my own hands and seating you upon seven layers of cushions! Is it really the case that a person who honours and serves their parents is a servant? All the fault lies with you - you spoiled Zuhra too much, saying 'let her study well'! You used to squeeze the onions yourself, saying: 'My daughter's hands will blister!'"

It becomes clear that two twin children growing up in the same family were raised in two entirely different ways. Here, a second type of conflict emerges - a contradiction in the characters of the personages. The writer also provides the cause of this opposition: "In truth, having been unable to study in her own time, and seeing in her lack of education the source of every hardship and shortcoming she had known in life, she had overlooked Zuhra's domestic failings - as great as an elephant - in the face of her slightest academic achievement." The path was inadvertently cleared within the family for Zuhra's descent into arrogance and the emergence of conceit. As a result, the school's top student and the family's most learned daughter sank so deeply into vanity that she came to regard others with complete contempt. Not even a trace of remorse is felt in the letter she wrote to her father and mother: "Following the bidding of our hearts, my husband and I have secured a firm place among the ranks of happy families and, borne along in the embrace of a blissful life, we are moving toward the luminous peaks of the future. You have lived in the oppressive embrace of feudalism; you do not know what love founded upon lofty ideals truly means, so do not be angry with us - the days on which you shall rejoice are drawing near." The arrival of Zuhra's letter and the "happy days" and "luminous peaks" it contained offered some small resolution to the first knot of the plot, brightening the hearts of her father and mother a little.

Rumours concerning the girl who had striven toward her "luminous peak" weighed heavily upon the old man and woman. Zuhra, who came nine days after her mother's passing, continued to present herself to those around her as proud and haughty, declared herself a proponent of free



love, and claimed that even Navoiy and Tolstoy had approved of it. She also looked down with contempt upon Fotima's work as a milkmaid on the farm. When asked about her own married life, another knot appeared in the plot line: "She had left her husband eleven months earlier." The culmination of events was now beginning to take shape.

In Zuhra's speech, one comes to understand that she had destroyed her own "luminous and blissful peak" with her own hands, through her arrogance. Her ego and her "self" had not abandoned her; she even mocked Fotima's future husband and looked down upon him: "The luminous peaks that I could not reach - you shall reach them riding upon a cow..."

Although Zuhra - as a consequence of this very arrogance - had been separated from her family, left her child fatherless, been deprived of her parents' blessing, and found herself in a helpless state, her pride and haughtiness remained strong. We continue to observe this as the events unfold.

A nursery worker brought home the little girl Venera, who had been forgotten by her mother. At this point, we turn our attention to the names chosen for the characters in the literary work. Although "Zuhra" is the name given to one of the twin girls, it is also the name given to the celestial body "Venus" - a star situated above all others, looking down upon those on earth from on high. The protagonist Zuhra, likewise, perceives herself as a "star" and considers herself superior to everyone else. If we pay attention to the name chosen for her little daughter - "Venera" - we find that Venus is an inner planet that never moves more than 48° from the Sun as seen from Earth's sky. Venus is the third brightest object in the sky. It has been known since ancient times as one of the planets, and in popular parlance it is called "Zuhra." The protagonist has given her daughter this very name, wishing that her daughter, too, might attain "luminous peaks" like herself. Thus the names chosen in the literary work are organically bound, to a significant degree, to the destiny of the characters and to their function within the work.

Venera, who had come to know her aunt Fotima four days before her own mother, chooses to go with Fotima. As Zuhra watches her daughter leave, a second Zuhra - one opposed to her former self - awakens within her, and an internal conflict begins. Within her, a heart full of regret and tears beat with heavy urgency. This internal conflict was also perceptible when Zuhra visited her parental home after her mother's passing. "When Fotima entered the house, Zuhra had still not slept; her eyes were swollen and reddened from weeping." At the story's end, the writer chose to leave the character alone with her own inner turmoil - for it is when a person is alone that they can truly examine themselves, seek out their errors, and in some sense take stock of their own worth.

Conclusion

To conclude: although the story was written in 1965, as noted above, it lays bare the vices that are among the most pressing issues of our own time, as well as their consequences. Within the family, primary attention must first be given to the upbringing of girls; alongside learning, the necessary domestic arts and skills must be taught to them as well. Every girl becomes the mistress of a household, someone's daughter-in-law, a companion to another, and a mother to children. Children must be taught to respect their elders. A girl who does not respect her own parents at home will, in time, treat her parents-in-law with the same disrespect. Through this story, we are once again reminded that whether or not the "luminous peak" of happiness one dreams of truly shines depends entirely upon oneself.



The conditions, opportunities, and freedom granted to Zuhra for the noble purpose of acquiring knowledge led her into arrogance. She sacrificed the honour and dignity of her parents for the sake of what she called “free love.” Our protagonist, having been deprived of her parents’ blessing, then destroyed even the happiness she had attained - through her arrogance, her vanity, and her idleness. Fleeing the prospect of being a “servant” if she helped her parents, or a “maid” if she worked in her married home, she ruined her own life and left her child fatherless. She had wished to ascend to the light she dreamed of easily and effortlessly. The proverb of our people - “You may take a large bite of bread, but do not speak large words” - has not been said without reason. The modern girls of the twenty-first century who read this story will, without doubt, be able to draw the lessons they need from it.

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