

THE IMAGE OF WOMAN AS MOTHER IN CONTEMPORARY UZBEK LITERATURE

Obidova Farangiz Akmalovna

Lecturer, Termez State Pedagogical Institute

Annotation: This article explores the portrayal of women as mothers in contemporary Uzbek literature. The analysis focuses on how maternal figures are depicted in literary works, reflecting cultural values, national identity, and the transformation of gender roles in modern society. Special attention is given to the emotional depth, moral strength, and social significance of motherhood as represented in the works of prominent Uzbek authors. The article also examines how contemporary writers balance traditional and modern views on motherhood, revealing the evolving role of women in Uzbek cultural narratives.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, motherhood, female image, contemporary prose, gender roles, cultural values, national identity

The image of women in literature has long served as a reflection of society's values, norms, and transformations. In Uzbek literature, particularly in its contemporary phase, the figure of the mother holds a special place, symbolizing not only familial devotion but also cultural identity, moral resilience, and the continuity of national traditions. The role of the mother transcends personal and domestic boundaries, becoming a central moral and emotional anchor in many literary narratives.

In the context of Uzbekistan's social and cultural development, the portrayal of motherhood in literature provides insight into the evolving understanding of gender roles, the preservation of traditional values, and the challenges of modernization. Contemporary Uzbek authors often depict mothers not merely as caretakers, but as figures of strength, sacrifice, and wisdom, who contribute actively to the social and spiritual life of the nation.

This article seeks to analyze how the concept of motherhood is represented in modern Uzbek literary works, focusing on thematic depth, character construction, and symbolic meaning. By examining selected texts, the study aims to reveal the nuanced and multifaceted portrayal of women as mothers and their role in shaping both family and national identity.

The depiction of women as mothers in contemporary Uzbek literature reflects a deep intertwining of cultural heritage, spiritual values, and the ongoing transformation of societal norms. In many modern literary works, the image of the mother goes far beyond the biological function of childbearing; she emerges as a symbol of endurance, moral authority, and the guardian of both family traditions and national identity.

In traditional Uzbek society, the mother has always been seen as the heart of the household — a figure who embodies compassion, patience, and unshakable strength. Contemporary authors often preserve this image but enrich it with new dimensions. For instance, the modern mother in literature is portrayed not only in the domestic sphere but also as a social participant, an educator, and even a voice of protest in the face of injustice or hardship. This evolution aligns with the growing acknowledgment of women's roles in public and intellectual life in modern Uzbekistan. Prominent Uzbek writers highlight the emotional and psychological depth of maternal characters. These women are often shown navigating complex social realities: economic struggles,

generational conflicts, migration, and even loss. Yet, despite adversity, they remain central pillars of stability and resilience. The maternal figure is also frequently a moral compass — a character whose decisions and worldview influence the development of other protagonists, especially the younger generation.

One notable trend in contemporary Uzbek prose is the juxtaposition of **traditional motherhood values** with **modern challenges**. This includes balancing work and family responsibilities, adapting to urban life, dealing with changing expectations around education and gender equality, and responding to the influence of globalization. Such themes are particularly visible in stories where the mother figure must reconcile her cultural upbringing with her children's exposure to new ideas and lifestyles.

The symbolic weight of motherhood also carries a **national dimension**. The mother is often linked metaphorically to the homeland — nurturing, suffering, and enduring. In this context, literature uses the maternal image to evoke emotional attachment to national identity, moral revival, and the preservation of cultural values amid the tides of change.

However, contemporary literature does not idealize or romanticize motherhood uncritically. Some writers present more complex or even critical portrayals, revealing internal conflicts, regrets, and limitations that mothers may experience. These representations encourage readers to view maternal roles with empathy and realism, recognizing the individuality and emotional struggles of women behind the revered title of "mother."

In conclusion, the image of the mother in modern Uzbek literature serves as a powerful lens through which we can observe both personal and societal transformation. Whether presented as a nurturing caregiver, a wise matriarch, a symbol of national spirit, or a woman facing the burdens of modern life, the mother remains a central and evolving figure in the literary imagination of Uzbekistan.

A close analysis of selected contemporary Uzbek literary works reveals several key patterns in the portrayal of women as mothers. The maternal figure is often central to the narrative structure and plays a decisive role in shaping the moral and emotional development of the main characters. In many cases, the mother character represents a bridge between generations, preserving cultural memory while also adapting to the demands of modern life.

For example, in the short stories and novels of modern Uzbek writers, the mother is frequently shown as a resilient figure who endures hardship—economic challenges, separation from children due to labor migration, or the pressures of modernization—yet remains emotionally and spiritually strong. This persistence is portrayed not as passive suffering but as active endurance and moral leadership.

The analysis further demonstrates that:

- **Maternal characters are depicted with emotional complexity**, often balancing traditional roles with modern realities. They are not one-dimensional; rather, they are reflective, intelligent, and capable of independent thought.
- **Literary mothers often symbolize the moral conscience** of the story, guiding other characters through ethical dilemmas and family conflicts.

- **The theme of sacrifice is central**, yet not always glorified. In some cases, authors question whether such sacrifice is sustainable or fair, subtly inviting discussions about gender equality and women's emotional well-being.
- **Symbolic associations with the motherland** are frequently used in poetry and prose, where the mother figure becomes a metaphor for Uzbekistan itself — nurturing, suffering, and steadfast in the face of change.

As a result of this literary trend, contemporary Uzbek literature not only preserves traditional ideals of motherhood but also expands them to include personal agency, inner conflict, and societal relevance. This reflects the broader transformation of women's roles in Uzbek society and contributes to a richer, more dynamic representation of the female experience.

In contemporary Uzbek literature, the image of the mother continues to hold a place of profound significance. As both a cultural symbol and a deeply human figure, the mother represents continuity, resilience, and emotional depth. Modern authors portray mothers not only within the traditional domestic sphere but also as active participants in the evolving social landscape, reflecting the broader transformation of gender roles in Uzbek society.

Through a nuanced combination of traditional values and modern realities, maternal characters embody a range of themes — love, sacrifice, strength, moral integrity, and cultural identity. These literary representations provide valuable insight into the emotional and psychological complexities of motherhood and emphasize the vital role women play in preserving family bonds and shaping societal values.

Ultimately, the study of motherhood in Uzbek literature enhances our understanding of the nation's cultural narrative and opens new perspectives on the role of women in literature and society. By acknowledging both the enduring and changing aspects of the maternal image, contemporary Uzbek literature offers a rich, empathetic, and evolving portrayal of womanhood.

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