

TRUTH, HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY, AND THE ETHICS OF ARTISTIC REALISM IN THE PROSE OF SHUKUR KHOLMIRZAEV

Boboqulova Dilbar Musurmon qizi

Termiz davlat universiteti talabasi

boboqulovadilbar16@gmail.com

Abstract. This article examines the artistic interpretation of truth and human psychology in the prose of Shukur Kholmiraev, one of the most influential representatives of twentieth-century Uzbek literature. The study aims to reveal how the writer constructs psychological depth not through abstract philosophical declaration, but through conflict, silence, moral hesitation, inner fracture, and the collision between individual conscience and social pressure. The research is based on the analysis of selected works commonly associated with Kholmiraev's mature prose, especially stories such as *Uzbek Character*, *Tabassum*, and *Ot egasi*, as well as the novel *Olabo'ji*. The article uses comparative-typological, psychological, and textual analysis to identify the dominant mechanisms of characterization and meaning production in these works. The results show that Kholmiraev's realism is not limited to social representation; it operates as a moral and psychological method aimed at exposing the unstable balance between dignity and weakness, loyalty and betrayal, instinct and self-control, truth and social convenience. His characters are not schematic embodiments of virtue or vice; rather, they are internally divided personalities whose actions disclose deeper laws of human nature. The study argues that Kholmiraev's prose occupies a special place in Uzbek literature because it transforms local life material into a universal artistic inquiry into freedom, responsibility, estrangement, and moral endurance. The article concludes that Kholmiraev's artistic legacy remains highly relevant for contemporary literary studies because it offers a powerful model of psychological realism grounded simultaneously in national character, ethical tension, and existential depth.

Keywords: Shukur Kholmiraev, Uzbek literature, psychological realism, artistic truth, human psychology, national character, moral conflict, prose studies, literary analysis, social determinism.

INTRODUCTION.

In the history of Uzbek prose, Shukur Kholmiraev occupies a singular position as a writer who brought the analysis of the human interior to an unusually high level of artistic seriousness. He did not write merely to narrate events, represent rural life, or preserve local color. His prose persistently sought the difficult point at which a human being confronts reality without protective masks. For that reason, the category of truth in Kholmiraev is never superficial. It is not reducible to factual accuracy, documentary detail, or ideological correctness. In his artistic system, truth emerges as a painful unveiling of the human condition: the exposure of pride, fear, selfishness, loyalty, moral courage, humiliation, desire, and spiritual resistance within the same personality. This makes his prose particularly important not only for literary history but also for the theory of artistic realism itself.

Kholmiraev's artistic world is inseparable from the symbolic and cultural space often described as the "Boysun world." Yet this space should not be understood narrowly as a regional background. In his prose, Boysun becomes an ethical and psychological landscape where national tradition, collective expectation, personal dignity, and existential loneliness intersect. It is precisely within such a setting that Kholmiraev is able to examine the inner life of the individual under pressure. His protagonists often appear at moments of crisis when the conventional forms of social behavior begin to fail, and

what remains visible is the stripped core of character. Such moments are central to his aesthetics because they allow him to test the human being against truth.

The relevance of this topic is especially high today. Contemporary literary criticism increasingly values texts that reveal the complexity of subjectivity, the fragility of moral choice, and the tension between identity and social order. Kholmiraev's prose addresses all these issues in forms that remain both nationally grounded and universally intelligible. Despite the considerable scholarship devoted to his oeuvre, the dialectic between truth and psychology in his works still requires deeper systematization. Many earlier studies focused either on his mastery of narration, his realism, or his contribution to national prose. Fewer studies have fully integrated these features into a single interpretive framework centered on the ethical function of psychological realism. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze how Kholmiraev artistically constructs truth through the disclosure of human psychology and how this process defines the philosophical and aesthetic originality of his prose [1–6].

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Uzbek literary scholarship has long recognized Kholmiraev as a writer of exceptional insight into national character and human contradiction. One major line of interpretation is associated with studies that emphasize his fidelity to life truth and his refusal to simplify human experience. In this regard, Matyoqub Qo'shjonov's works are important because they connect literary character with the deeper question of national identity and ethical temperament. Such an approach helps explain why Kholmiraev's heroes cannot be reduced to ideological labels: they embody the contradictory integrity of lived existence [5].

Another significant scholarly direction is represented by Umarali Normatov, who considered the development of modern Uzbek prose in relation to narrative tradition and artistic innovation. Through this lens, Kholmiraev appears not simply as a chronicler of village life, but as a prose writer who expanded the formal and psychological possibilities of the short story. Normatov's observations are particularly useful for understanding how ordinary situations in Kholmiraev's stories acquire dramatic moral intensity [6].

Qozoqboy Yo'ldoshev's literary-critical writings further deepen the discussion by focusing on the interpretive richness of artistic texts and the hidden logic of character behavior. His remarks on Kholmiraev's larger prose forms, especially *Olabo'ji*, suggest that the writer's conflict structures are rooted in a struggle between the individual's inner freedom and the coercive patterns of social existence [7]. This is a crucial point, because Kholmiraev's realism becomes fully visible only when one sees that his social conflicts are simultaneously inward conflicts.

Other Uzbek scholars such as B. Karimov, A. Rasulov, I. Sultonov, O. Sharafiddinov, and N. Jabborov have also contributed useful methodological tools for the present study. Their works on artistic mastery, criteria of literary analysis, the theory of literature, and the relation between literature and national spirituality make it possible to approach Kholmiraev not only historically, but also theoretically [8–12]. What emerges from this body of scholarship is broad agreement on his importance, but less consensus on how exactly his realism functions. Some studies foreground his social sensitivity, others his national worldview, and others his narrative craftsmanship. The gap lies in insufficiently integrating these dimensions into a psychologically oriented reading of truth. This article addresses that gap by treating psychological realism as the central mechanism through which Kholmiraev converts local material into universal literary significance.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.

The analysis of Kholmiraev's selected prose demonstrates that his artistic method rests on a persistent movement from external event to internal fracture. He does not begin with a thesis and then invent a character to illustrate it. Instead, he constructs situations in which a character's hidden structure gradually reveals itself. This disclosure is often abrupt, morally uncomfortable, and resistant to easy judgment. As a result, the reader is not guided toward sentimental identification or ideological certainty. The reader is placed before a difficult human truth.

In *Uzbek Character*, the central issue is not simply courage or stubbornness as fixed traits. The story is important because it shows how dignity may contain both ethical strength and destructive rigidity. The protagonist's pride is not merely personal temperament; it is culturally coded, socially reinforced, and psychologically costly. Kholmiraev's achievement lies in showing that what appears outwardly as firmness may inwardly be a burden of selfhood. Thus, "national character" in his prose never functions as decorative folklore. It becomes a field of tension where values are tested in action [1; 5].

In *Tabassum*, Kholmiraev turns toward another aspect of truth: the discrepancy between social gesture and inner intention. The apparent smile, sympathy, or communal reaction does not necessarily correspond to authentic human feeling. Here the writer exposes concealed selfishness, emotional indifference, and the mechanisms of moral posing. What is especially striking is that he does not expose these traits through authorial accusation. Instead, he allows the contradiction between situation and response to produce its own ethical evidence. This is a defining feature of his realism: truth is dramatized, not announced. The result is a psychologically dense prose in which the most ordinary human behavior can disclose disturbing layers of self-interest and insincerity [2; 6].

Ot egasi introduces a related but distinct problem: fidelity, trust, and betrayal. By organizing the narrative around a relationship that exceeds simple utilitarian logic, Kholmiraev reveals how the human being becomes visible through his treatment of loyalty. The moral center of the story does not depend on abstract preaching. It is built through contrast between authentic attachment and the erosion of responsibility. The story shows that betrayal is not only a social act; it is a wound within the person who commits it. In this sense, Kholmiraev treats ethics psychologically. Human actions alter not only external relations but also the internal architecture of the self [1; 3].

The most philosophically complex material appears in *Olabo'ji*. Here Kholmiraev develops the conflict between individual freedom and imposed social patterns on a wider narrative scale. The protagonist's estrangement should not be read as simple rebellion, romantic isolation, or rejection of society in the abstract. Rather, it is a response to falsity, standardization, and the moral exhaustion produced by collective forms of hypocrisy. Kholmiraev is particularly effective in showing that social belonging is not automatically a moral value. A community may preserve life, but it may also distort the person. The hero's withdrawal therefore carries an ambiguous meaning: it is at once a symptom of crisis and an act of inward defense. This ambiguity is one of the strongest results of the analysis. Kholmiraev does not idealize alienation, but he recognizes it as a possible condition of moral self-preservation [1; 4; 7].

Across these works, several stable artistic patterns emerge. First, Kholmiraev's characters are internally divided. They are not pure embodiments of virtue or vice. Even their strongest qualities contain danger. Second, the decisive moments in his prose occur when social language ceases to protect the individual, and a deeper truth breaks through. Third, his realism is ethical because it reveals consequences, not slogans. Human beings in his prose pay inwardly for concealment,

compromise, cowardice, vanity, and betrayal. Fourth, his narratives repeatedly stage the conflict between instinct, conscience, and social form. This explains why his prose often feels psychologically sharper than conventional social realism. He is less interested in describing society as an external structure than in tracing how social pressure reorganizes the interior of the person.

The results of this study therefore show that Kholmirzaev's prose should be understood as a form of psychological realism grounded in moral tension. His literary truth is not a photographic reproduction of life, but a rigorous artistic revelation of what human beings become under pressure. The selected texts confirm that the writer's deeper subject is the struggle for inner integrity in a world shaped by compromise, habit, and expectation.

DISCUSSION.

The findings of this study make it possible to reconsider Kholmirzaev's place not only within Uzbek prose, but within broader discussions of literary realism. In many literary traditions, realism has often been interpreted primarily as the accurate representation of social life. That definition is too narrow for Kholmirzaev. His prose certainly contains concrete settings, recognizably national material, and socially embedded characters, yet its deeper energy lies in psychological excavation. He works from the premise that external life becomes artistically meaningful only when it reveals an inner law of being. Therefore, the real subject of realism in his prose is not environment alone, but the moral and psychic instability of the human subject.

This helps explain why Kholmirzaev's work remains contemporary. Modern readers are less persuaded by rigid positive heroes, schematic morality, or purely descriptive prose. They seek complexity, contradiction, and ethically serious ambiguity. Kholmirzaev provides exactly that. His protagonists often resist final closure because he understands that human beings do not coincide fully with either their actions or their social roles. This resistance to simplification is a mark of artistic maturity.

A second important implication concerns the relation between national literature and universal meaning. Kholmirzaev's prose is deeply rooted in Uzbek life, especially in the ethical atmosphere of rural communities, masculine honor codes, collective memory, and local symbolic spaces. Yet the conflicts he stages exceed their immediate setting. Questions of selfhood, humiliation, truthfulness, loyalty, inner freedom, and social hypocrisy are not regionally limited. This is why his prose can and should be read comparatively alongside major traditions of psychological and existential prose. The point is not to dissolve his national specificity into global abstraction, but to show that strong national literature reaches universality precisely through the depth of its local truth.

A third implication concerns literary pedagogy and criticism. Kholmirzaev should not be taught merely as a "realist writer" in the conventional sense. Such a label is correct but insufficient. He should be studied as a writer who developed an ethics of representation: he refuses embellishment, sentimental excuse, and ideological comfort. His prose demands interpretive discipline because it often speaks most powerfully through understatement, silence, contradiction, and the moral weight of circumstance. Future research would benefit from deeper comparative study of his stories and novels, closer narratological analysis of voice and focalization, and broader engagement with the philosophical dimensions of his character construction.

CONCLUSION.

The conducted analysis confirms that Shukur Kholmirzaev's prose is built around a profound artistic investigation of truth and human psychology. His significance lies not only in thematic originality or

narrative mastery, but in the creation of a distinctive model of psychological realism within Uzbek literature. In this model, truth appears as the unveiling of the person under ethical and social stress. Characters are forced into situations where their protective identities collapse, and what emerges is a deeper, often painful reality about conscience, pride, weakness, fidelity, fear, and selfhood.

The study has shown that Kholmiraev's selected works consistently develop several interconnected principles: the inseparability of outer conflict and inner fracture; the transformation of national character into a psychologically dynamic category; the exposure of hypocrisy through dramatic rather than declarative means; and the representation of freedom as an inward moral struggle rather than a slogan. These features distinguish him from flatter forms of social prose and place him among those writers for whom realism is inseparable from ethical seriousness.

The article also demonstrates that Kholmiraev's artistic world remains highly relevant for contemporary literary scholarship. His prose offers a rich field for studies of subjectivity, moral psychology, narrative tension, and the relation between social life and existential experience. Most importantly, it proves that literature becomes durable when it does not flatter the reader with easy certainty. Kholmiraev's achievement is precisely this: he compels the reader to encounter human beings without simplification. That is why his prose continues to matter. It preserves not only the atmosphere of an *эпоха* or a region, but the deeper drama of the human soul seeking dignity amid pressure, compromise, and estrangement. In this sense, Kholmiraev's legacy should be regarded as one of the highest achievements of modern Uzbek prose and as an enduring resource for future literary criticism.

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