

ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE OF THE FATHER IN MODERN UZBEK  
LITERATURE

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*The image of the father holds a significant place in world literature. Numerous works across global literary traditions have explored this theme. The present article provides a thorough literary analysis of Ota ("Father"), a novel by the prominent Uzbek writer Ulug'bek Hamdam.*

In modern Uzbek literature, the image of the father is often portrayed with complex nuances, reflecting the changing social and cultural landscape. While traditional respect for elders and the father figure is a prominent theme, writers also explore the father's evolving role within the family and society, including the impact of historical events like war and societal shifts.

Here's a more detailed analysis:

1. Traditional Values and Respect: Uzbek literature traditionally emphasizes the importance of respecting elders, particularly fathers, and this is reflected in various literary works. Writers often depict the father as a source of wisdom, guidance, and authority within the family. The father's role in upholding family traditions and values is also a recurring theme.

2. The Impact of Historical Events: The 20th century, particularly the periods of war and Soviet rule, significantly impacted the image of the father. Writers explored the psychological impact of fathers being absent due to war or political circumstances, leaving a void in the family and shaping the children's understanding of their fathers. Some works also critique the negative aspects of Soviet rule, such as "two-facedness" and corruption, and their impact on family dynamics and the father's role.

3. Evolving Social Roles: Modern Uzbek literature also portrays fathers in various social contexts, reflecting the changing roles of men in society. Writers explore the challenges faced by fathers in adapting to new social norms and expectations. The father's psychological state and his relationship with his children, as well as with society, are often examined in depth.

4. Psychological and Spiritual Dimensions: Some writers delve into the psychological aspects of fatherhood, exploring the father's inner world and his emotions. The father's search for meaning and purpose in life, and his connection to national values and traditions, are also explored. The use of symbolism and imagery in depicting the father figure allows for deeper interpretations of his character and his role in the larger context of Uzbek society.

5. Examples in Uzbek Literature: Ulugbek Hamdam's "Ota" (Father): This novel is cited as an example of how national values are reflected in the image of the father in a new interpretation, within the context of Uzbek literature. Exploration of moral issues: Writers use the father figure to explore moral issues and social problems, often contrasting the father's actions with the purity of a child's perspective.

In Uzbek literature, works focusing on the image of the father are relatively scarce. The maternal figure is predominantly emphasized in most fictional works. For instance, in O'tkir Hoshimov's novella *Dunyoning ishlari* (The Affairs of the World), the mother is portrayed as a symbolic embodiment of national values and spiritual strength. In contrast, Ulug'bek Hamdam's *Ota* offers a rare and profound portrayal of the father figure, elevating him to a central symbolic role. This novel fills a noticeable gap in Uzbek fiction, where previously the paternal image had not been as distinctly or extensively developed.

The representation of fathers in world literature is also extensive. Notable examples include Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*, Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, and Honoré de Balzac's *Father Goriot*, each of which approaches the theme from different cultural and philosophical perspectives. Within this context, Ulug'bek Hamdam's *Ota* has been described as a revitalizing contribution to the Uzbek novel tradition:

"In the current literary climate, where our fiction—particularly the novel genre—has fallen into stagnation, this work has breathed new life into the form." [1]

The novel invites readers to reflect on the essence of fatherhood, presenting a deeply emotional and psychologically nuanced portrait of paternal responsibility and sacrifice. As illustrated in the protagonist Polat's internal monologue:

"If only," Polat thought bitterly along the road, "if only life itself would always soothe Sevinch's pain! If only tears of sorrow would never fall from my daughter's innocent eyes!... If only..."

The theme of fatherhood is deeply rooted not only in written literature but also in oral traditions and folklore. Proverbs such as "If the father is pleased, God is pleased" and traditional tales—like the advice given by a father to his sons in the folk story *The Three*

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Brave Friends—emphasize the father’s role in moral upbringing and social identity. Such elements are reflected in the novel, aligning it with national cultural values and oral heritage.

The novel’s emotional impact lies in its authentic depiction of Uzbek fathers. For example, in a moment of introspection, Polat laments “My daughter! Am I truly a father now? I prayed to God for you, and when He granted me that blessing, I allowed myself to become absorbed in worldly matters. Was this necessary? We were not in want. If we had everything we needed, why did I let work distract me? Could it be that we have lost you?... No, my daughter—life without you is not worth living.”

Polat, the central character, experiences a dramatic transformation as a result of war. The narrative emphasizes the psychological conflict between his patriotic duty and personal attachments: “The damned war caught Polat in its grip. What was he to do? One part of him wanted to take up arms and defend his homeland, while the other could not bear to be separated, even for a moment, from his land, his mother, and his beloved Yog‘du.”

In addition to exploring familial relationships, the novel pays particular attention to the theme of friendship. The bond between Polat and Nikita, forged during wartime, is portrayed with emotional depth and realism, adding another layer to the novel’s humanistic narrative.

The writer captures this profound friendship with a single poignant line: "Even a man’s own shadow cannot stay with him as faithfully as Nikita and Polat do with one another." Within the story, Father Polat's love for his daughter Sevinch — as deep as it is conflicted — is laid bare. It is a love that burns and blesses, nourishes and condemns. In one of the most emotionally charged monologues, his torment erupts: "But I am a father — a father! Wasn’t this world once held in the firm hands of fathers? Or did it slip away because of me? No, no — I cannot let that happen. If fathers fail to stand their ground when it matters, the world itself begins to crumble. Look at me — I loved you too much. I wanted your face to burn, but not your heart. I sheltered you, spoiled you, wrapped you in softness. And what became of it? You brought a child home from the streets! They call such a child a bastard... a child without name or lineage! Oh, God, how could You let this happen? How will I endure it now? Will my grandchild walk into my home as someone born in disgrace?! No — that is unthinkable! If I accept this today, others will follow tomorrow. I will not let this become a path for others to walk. To tear from people’s minds the very idea that a child can be brought into the world this way, I will do what a father must! Sevinch — until now, you’ve known your father’s love. Now, behold his wrath. Cursed be the fate that forced me into this moment. Cursed be the daughter who made me raise my hand to destroy what I once nurtured!" And yet, this is the same father who once poured his soul into raising his daughter — never letting her feel the pang of want, never allowing the world to make her feel less than others. His love is woven into the very fabric of her childhood, revealed in this

tender reflection: "Whatever Sevinch wished for — her parents, her grandparents — they made it all appear as if by magic. All the world's goodness was poured at her feet. And still, that wasn't enough. She stood at the center of every gaze, every attention, like a princess plucked from a Russian fairytale — a living Cinderella, cherished beyond measure." But life, as always, is a master of irony. There come moments when, no matter how deeply a child is loved, circumstances arise that force a parent to let go — not out of hatred, but out of helplessness. We like to believe that no mother or father could ever truly forsake their child, and yet... life sometimes leaves no other path. In the end, what do parents truly want? They want their children to live better lives — freer, fuller, untouched by sorrow. They strive to give them everything they never had. But in giving, they sometimes forget to guide. And so, unknowingly, they may create harm where they only meant to bring joy. A child needs more than comfort. A good life must be paired with good values, discipline, and love with direction.

In conclusion, the image of the father in modern Uzbek literature is a rich and multifaceted one, reflecting the complex interplay of tradition, historical events, social change, and individual psychology. Writers continue to explore this important figure, offering insights into the evolving nature of family, society, and the human experience.

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