

# THE ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF SYMBOLISM IN SHUHRAT'S NOVELS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL "THOSE WHO SOUGHT PARADISE")

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**Annotation.** The article provides a scientific analysis of the literary nature of symbols and emblematic images in fiction, their role in the creation of artistic imagery, and the symbolic functions used in the novel *"Those Who Sought Paradise."* The study reveals how concepts such as paradise, freedom, homeland, labor, and human dignity transform into symbolic meanings within the work. It also analyzes the author's spiritual and philosophical worldview through artistic examples, highlighting the aesthetic significance of symbolism in shaping national consciousness.

**Keywords:** symbol, emblem, national consciousness, paradise, freedom, emotional experience, artistic truth.

Literature is a unique phenomenon that embodies the historical memory, spiritual world, and moral life of humanity. Artistic texts not only depict real life as it is, but also reveal hidden meanings, subtle contradictions, and the invisible layers of human psychology. These aesthetic possibilities emerge through symbolism. A symbol is an artistic device that reveals life's truth not directly but through figurative images and allusions, where meaning is placed into a secondary layer and the reader must independently discover it by entering the text.

There are various scholarly views on defining and explaining the essence of symbolism. Literary scholar D. Quronov describes the concept as follows: *"In fiction, symbol—as a type of trope closely related to allegory—is widely used. The difference between symbol and allegory is that a symbol can function both in its literal sense and figurative sense within a given context."* [1] Turkish literary scholar T. Karataş writes: *"A symbol is an image, sign, or emblem. It is a word or sign taken from an object or nature that acquires a special meaning in the consciousness of society and is used to express feelings and concepts within a contextual framework throughout history. According to another definition: 'To express, show, or imply something through analogy, association, tradition, or similarity.' In symbolic expression, abstract entities are represented through concrete objects grounded in reality."* [2] It is also customary to refer to literary characters as *symbols* (from the Greek "symbolon"). In Uzbek literary studies, the terms "simvol" and "ramz" are often used interchangeably. In Turkish studies, the literary hero is frequently referred to as *simge* (symbol). [3]

Maqsd Shayxzoda stated: *"Shuhrat's long-flourishing creativity is a colorful and engaging world that deserves deep scholarly and critical study."* [4] His novel *"Those Who Sought Paradise"* can indeed be regarded as a masterpiece possessing such qualities. In our opinion, through this work the author demonstrated a kind of moral courage by indirectly opposing the pressure of the Soviet totalitarian regime.

Shuhrat's novel *"Those Who Sought Paradise"* [6] artistically reflects the historical processes and events of the 1960s, as well as the complex emotional experiences of the human spirit. The events of the novel take place in Uzbekistan and in one of the Eastern countries abroad. At the heart of the novel lies a central idea: true paradise is the life achieved through working for one's homeland, for its freedom and prosperity. This idea runs consistently throughout the entire compositional structure.

As the main characters, the author portrays Uzbek individuals who have not lost their conscience and remain loyal to honesty and national values. Through the images of Ummatalı, the kindergarten director Nafisa, and the sovkhoz director Alikho'ja Azimkho'jayev, the author reveals complex social realities of the era. Their integrity and dedication symbolize the nation's spiritual revival and the efforts made for the progress of the homeland.

The novel highlights how the protagonists honorably fulfill their patriotic duties and strive to serve society through honest labor. The life of Ummatalı illustrates the intense internal struggles within the human soul. The betrayal and emotional turmoil he experiences in his family, especially his wife Qimmatxon's moral downfall, compel him to break away from his household. His decision emphasizes the importance of preserving dignity, prioritizing honor, and upholding human values.

When the author places his protagonist in the center of dramatic situations, these trials are not seen as ordinary hardships of life but as a path guiding him toward moral perfection. Seeking salvation from social darkness, Ummatalı returns to an environment where honesty, purity, and humanity are valued. His new life with Nafisa symbolizes one of the greatest victories in his journey—a sign of his spiritual renewal.

As the leading character of the novel, Ummatalı stands at the center of the artistic concept. Through his destiny, the writer interprets human dignity, patriotism, and determination against a backdrop of life's painful trials. His perseverance after each difficulty represents the triumph of simplicity and truth over evil. Thus, Ummatalı's image becomes a symbol of moral maturity, devotion to truth, and love for the homeland.

In the title of Shuhrat's novel, the word *"paradise"* is not used in its direct religious meaning but symbolizes free life, national independence, human dignity, and restored honor. The author discovers paradise not in a foreign land but in one's homeland, where it is achieved through honest work. Even characters who endure deep suffering find their paradise through loyalty to their motherland and purity of conscience.

The concept of paradise merges the fates of both individuals and the nation: as a person becomes self-aware, society spiritually awakens; as the nation strives for freedom, the human soul becomes liberated. Thus, the novel elevates paradise to the level of a national-symbolic ideal.

Ummatalı's life path symbolizes spiritual resilience—enduring hardship, striving from darkness toward light. Betrayal and injustice shake his world, yet he does not lose inner purity. Labor and honesty become his means of salvation. His spirit does not break; instead, it strengthens. Through this character, the author transforms concepts such as human dignity, patriotism, and pursuit of justice into artistic symbols. In this sense, his destiny is not merely individual but represents the spiritual biography of the nation.

Nafisa's life story is also rich in symbolic meaning. The depiction of how destructive forces—ignorance, oppression, and lust—are overcome by feminine honor associates the female image with the nation's moral integrity. Nafisa's tragedy reflects how colonialistic influence penetrates families, while her restoration symbolizes independence and national awakening.

Her determination in choosing a path to happiness creates the image of a free-thinking woman and reflects national pride—an artistic interpretation of the ideal of pure womanhood in the Uzbek psyche.

The theoretical considerations and literary analyses in this research demonstrate that symbolism is one of the key poetic devices shaping the thematic-philosophical layers of literary works. Through symbols, the writer creates hidden layers of meaning, inviting the reader to actively participate in the process of artistic interpretation. Symbolism therefore fulfills not only aesthetic but also epistemological functions, urging individuals to think, seek, and view themselves and society through a deeper lens.

Symbolism is central to the literary structure of *“Those Who Sought Paradise.”* Concepts such as paradise, labor, homeland, feminine honor, and spiritual resilience rise to the level of symbols, serving as artistic tools in comprehending the process of national awakening. Through these symbols, the historical essence of events is generalized, reflecting the psychological burden of colonialism and the internal struggles of society through personal destinies.

The symbolic layer portrays the nation’s self-awareness, spiritual renewal, and the pursuit of freedom with outstanding aesthetic power. The spiritual interpretation of paradise leads the reader to the idea that true happiness is found in one’s homeland—through working for its future while preserving personal dignity. This is the philosophical essence of the novel and refers to the internal foundations of national independence.

Similarly, the images of Ummatali and Nafisa embody moral integrity, patience, and purity of conscience—symbolizing the nation’s historical experience and struggle for identity. Their path of spiritual ascent becomes an aesthetic interpretation of socio-moral truth, calling upon the nation’s collective memory through symbolic meaning.

Therefore, symbolism in *“Those Who Sought Paradise”* is not just an artistic device but also a socio-cultural phenomenon shaping national consciousness. Its symbols transcend individual destinies and become carriers of broader ideas about patriotism, freedom, and restored dignity. Thus, the work stands as a remarkable example of symbolic thinking in Uzbek literature and demonstrates the effective aesthetics of comprehending artistic truth.

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