

CONFORMITY AND INDIVIDUALISM IN EASTERN AND WESTERN SOCIETIES: A COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF “O’TKAN KUNLAR” (BYGONE DAYS) AND “THE MOON AND SIXPENCE”

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Abstract. This article demonstrates a comparative literary analysis of the conceptualizations of conformity and individualism in Eastern and Western civilizations through the writings “O’tkan kunlar” (Bygone Days) by Abdulla Qodiriy and Somerset Maugham’s “The Moon and Sixpence”. Using traditional sociology and literary hermeneutics, the research investigates how each authors constructs social standards, personal freedom, and the tension between communal anticipations and individual ambitions. This study reveals cultural difference through a close reading of two 20th century novels Abdulla Qodiriy’s “O’tkan kunlar” (1926), a cornerstone of modern Uzbek literature, and “The Moon and Sixpence” (1919) by Somerset Maugham, a classic of British modernism.

Keywords: conformism, individualism, cross-cultural literary analysis, society and the self, Abdulla Qodiriy, Somerset Maugham, Otabek, Strickland.

Introduction. Social conformity and individual expression have been becoming central theme in every period. Conformism is defined as adherence to social norms, individualism means personal goals. Literature investigates the tension between collective conformity and personal ambitions profoundly. In Western notions, after Romanticism and Enlightenment, individualism is mainstreamed as the supreme value – the authentic self in opposition to society. Maugham’s Strickland embodies a radical, antisocial individualism that does not accept all social bonds in pursuit of artistic truth. According to many Eastern traditions, the self is defined through its position within a network of familial, communal, and social responsibilities. In Abdulla Qodiriy’s novel, Otabek represents form of individualism that is depend on his societal obligations, national identity, familial duty.

Both writings focus on protagonists who stand apart from their societies, but their motivation, attempts, and narrative purposes are different. Abdulla Qodiriy’s “O’tkan kunlar” (Bygone Days) depicts a traditional Central Asian society grounded in collective order, social duties. Conversely, Somerset Maugham’s “The Moon and Sixpence” reflects Western viewpoint of self-expression and individual freedom. By analyzing the character construction, narrative trajectory, and ethic universe of each work, this analysis shows that Qodiriy and Maugham represent culturally distinct models of non-conformity. This comparative study can reveal and bolster cross-cultural literary studies and societal criticism and philosophical features. As a result of this analytical work, cultural divergence and historical time, national outlook are analyzed with certain examples.

Literature review

Abdulla Qodiriy's novel, set in 19th century Kokand Khanate, is a historical poem and a foundational narrative for Uzbek national identity. Its protagonist, Otabek, is a young, schooled aristocrat. Otabek individualism does not reject entire society, but he can not acknowledge community of people or habits, in that all of them have to do with injustice such as corruption, stagnation. His uprising is channeled through socially recognizable roles: he is an ideal son, a loyal friend, and a nationalistic figure. His love for Kumush is not just a personal romance but a narrative device that attaches to familial lineages and social networks. He struggles to enhance his society, not desire personal isolation. Otabek's value lies in his integrity, solicitude, and developing ideals within the social framework. He strives to reform, not escape. His "individualism" is thus a higher form of collective obligation – a conscious choice to conform to moral principles when society has diverged from them.

In contrast, Maugham's novel follows Charles Strickland, a middle-aged stockbroker who deserts his family and career to paint, at length dying a penniless but genius-recognized painter in Tahiti. Strickland's individualism is complete, visceral, and antisocial. He refuses not just specific social standards but the very concept of societal responsibilities- family, friendship, gratitude, and morality are banished as shackles. His art is not for civilization; it is merely personal expression. He does not have concern for recognition, money, or legacy. The novel reveals the shocking, often evil, consequences of this radical individualism on those around him. Strickland expresses a Western archetype of the artistic bent who must break free from bourgeois society to create authentically. The society he abandons is depicted as monotonous, traditional, and incapable of understanding such a primal force.

During analyzing theme, loads of resources are learned profoundly. Articles and writings about conformity, individualism and comparative analysis of Eastern and Western literature for this research.

Khalid, Adeeb's "The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia" can give detailed information about first modernist movement, Jadidism in Central Asia, which assists to understand underlying of "O'tkan kunlar" (Bygone Days).

"Modernism: The lure of Heresty" by Peter Gay is analyzed profoundly, as it helps to know more about modernism for realizing Maugham's personage and aim.

Not only Harry Triandis's "Individualism and collectivism" is the best source to explore the constructs of collectivism and individualism but it also facilitates to comprehend characters' decisions and actions.

Methodology

Correct study methods can provide detailed information about this theme. In this analysis, comparative literary study is deployed. Methods cover:

1. Comparative framework serves as prime way to find similarities and contrasts of Eastern and Western literature. The novels are analyzed through the contrast between Eastern societies and individualist Western societies.
2. Conceptual framework foundation: Before textual analysis, critical concepts are contextualized. The Western perspective of "individualism" is realized through the lens of post-Enlightenment thought, highlighting autonomy, self-realization, and often opposition of social principals. The Eastern, especially Central Asian collectivist, model is formulated through the concept of "relational selfhood", where identity and value are descent from one's position and conduct within a connection of familial, collective and social duty. "Conformity" is not considered pejoratively but as adherence to this established, identity-defining norms.



3. Textual analysis: A close learning of “O’tkan kunlar” (Bygone Days) and “The Moon and Sixpence” is conducted using several analytical lenses:

A) Character analysis and idea. A systematic study of protagonist Otabek and Charles Strickland centers on their key decisions, dialogues, and personal ambitions. Parallel tracking of common motifs demonstrates the narrative’s valuation of their choices.

B) Contextual criticism: Literary study is merged with historical and cognitive context. Qodiriy’s writings are viewed through the Jadidist advancement’s attempt for renovated but culturally-grounded identity. Maugham’s novel is placed within Modernist disillusionment with Victorian societal restrictions, representing a turn inward toward authentic selfhood.

C) Sociological investigation of settings: The novel’s world is examined as a symbolic social construction. The 19th century Kokand Khanate is analyzed as a network of conventional responsibility, whereas the early 20th century European bourgeois society is treated as a set of contractual but stifling tradition.

Analysis and results

Individualism in Western literature: Rooted in philosophies prioritizing individual autonomy, self-dependence, and the right to self-determination. The person is often thought as prior to society. This presents in the hero who dares convention to follow an inner calling. In Qodiriy’s novel, love is constrained by social expectation, illustrating Eastern emphasis on societal harmony and stability.

Conformity and Collective obligation in Eastern: Emphasizing interdependence, amity, and accomplishing socially prescribed roles. Individual aspirations are often channeled to communal goals. “Individualism” here may be expressed through model fulfillment of societal duties or through struggling for the betterment of the collective. In Maugham’s novel, Strickland rejects social standards, family obligations, and moral expectancies due to his individual pursuit of artistic vision.

Role of hardship: Otabek suffers an account of external social conflicts and weighs of his responsibilities. Strickland dispenses suffering on others and cope with physical privation for his art.

Narrative outcome: Otabek’s narrative is tragic but declares social values like love, honor, harmony. Strickland’s story is amoral but affirms the transcendent, if pitiless, value of unbending artistic creation.

These dissimilarities are not just authorial choices but reflections of profound cultural scripts: Qodiriy formulates from a Central Asian Islamic convention undergoing national awakening, where individual’s worth is tied to the population’s fate. Maugham writes from a post-Victorian, modernist European notion, skeptical of societal traditions and fascinated by the aberrant transcendent individual.

Conclusion

The literary portraits of Otabek and Charles Strickland provide two strong, culturally established visions of defying conventions. Qodiriy’s “O’tkan kunlar” (Bygone days) demonstrates a model of individualism that is collectively oriented, where the self understands its highest potential through moral engagement for society. Maugham’s “The Moon and Sixpence” represents a form of individualism that is radically introverted and antisocial, where the self realizes its highest potential merely by rejecting society’s claims entirely.

This comparative analysis reveals that concept of “conformity” and “individualism” are not monolithic but are story constructs evolved by certain cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts. Realizing these differences through literature offers a richer, more empathetic



framework for cross-cultural dialogue, progress beyond stereotypes to value the various ways human civilization have imagined the network between the individual spirit and communal whole.

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