FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND CHANGES IN LITERARY CRITICISM (80-90)

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Abstract. The article examines how Uzbek literary criticism changed in the years of independence, once freedom of speech was established in literature. Critics reassessed works written in the Soviet period, returned to Jadid literature and rediscovered the legacy of Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Qodiriy, Usmon Nosir, G‘afur G‘ulom, Oybek, Hamid Olimjon and Abdulla Qahhor. Their attention shifted to the inner, spiritual world of the human being. Articles published in the literary-critical annual “Kamalak” are discussed as early examples of free analysis and interpretation. The author argues that the main task of the period was not to create a new methodology but to adapt the existing one to the demands of the time, moving away from template-based analysis toward reading a literary work as a discovery. Uzbek literary criticism still has no unified methodology, and its renewal is tied both to social change and to the creative freedom of the writer.

Keywords: literary criticism, freedom of speech, independence period, methodology of literary criticism, analysis and interpretation, Jadid literature, reassessment of Soviet-era literature, Uzbek literature.

Literary criticism is part of literature, and the two develop by complementing each other. Criticism is the mirror that shows how high the level of a work is and helps it live on for a long time. In the years of independence, conditions were created in our country for changes on a large scale, and literary criticism re-examined itself. The freedom and independence of the word achieved in literature fulfilled the hopes of writers and of those who scrutinise their work. Renewal could be seen both in creative writing and in its study.

Changes in society usually show themselves first in literature. After independence, literary scholarship took on a new character as well. Criticism turned to the human psyche and the inner, spiritual world. Critics with a sharp pen, who could not voice their thoughts under the authoritarian regime, now had the chance to do so. Works written in the Soviet period were assessed anew. Independence changed attitudes toward freedom of speech, and in particular toward the word in literature. This freedom demanded new criteria and new principles in approaching fiction. The works of those years were, in a sense, born again: the symbolism, the variety of images, the inner essence and the emotional experience in the work of writers and poets were rediscovered. Jadid literature was also looked at again in these years: “The ideal’s ‘coming down to earth’ brought Jadid literature closer to real life in its themes, and this gave impetus to the strengthening of realist tendencies in our national literature and to its intensive development” [1].

A number of articles that appeared in this period enriched literary scholarship. The literary-critical annual “Kamalak” published Muhammadali Qo‘shmoqov’s “Go‘ro‘g‘lining tug‘ilishi” (The Birth of Go‘ro‘g‘li), Matyoqub Qo‘shjonov’s “‘O‘tkan kunlar’ boshidan o‘tgan kunlar” (The Days “Bygone Days” Lived Through), Abdurashid Abdurahmonov’s “Alangaga aylangan uchqun” (A Spark That Became a Flame), Isroil Mirzayev’s “Umid va ishonch” (Hope and Faith), Umurzoq O‘ljaboyev’s “Hayotiylik – bosh mezon” (Truth to Life Is the Main Criterion), Mirzaahmad Olimov’s “Ko‘rar ko‘zi, aytar so‘zi” (His Seeing Eye, His Spoken Word), Murtazo Qarshiboyev’s “Ruhning mangu qo‘ng‘irog‘i” (The Eternal Bell of the Spirit) and Musurmon Namozov’s “Tanqidning alvon tug‘i” (The Crimson Banner of Criticism) [2]. In these studies free interpretation and free analysis began to emerge.

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The renewal of fiction renewed the scholarly thinking of literary scholars and critics as well, and broadened their worldview and conceptions. Under the Soviets, literary criticism had become the chief servant of the official ideology, so for its new-thinking critics the rebuilding of their scholarly conceptions mattered a great deal. Criticism developed new principles of analysis and interpretation based on free thought: a literary work was now seen not as a social reflection of the human being but as a means of discovering the human being. Criticism itself began to study how a person is examined and observed. Its methodology changed. The renewed methodology set out to rediscover classical works, to restore national identity and national values and to pass them on to future generations. In analysing a work, critics moved away from template-based methods and sought a methodology that evaluates the work as a discovery.

Studies on the methodology of literary criticism, or more precisely small inquiries into methodology, had existed in the 1980s and 1990s too. But the methodology that grew out of the research of that period lost its value in the years of independence. The main task became not to create a methodology of literary criticism but to adapt the existing one to the demands of the time.

In the years of independence new criteria took shape. A number of studies examined how a work of fiction should be analysed and interpreted in criticism, and as a result a renewed methodology began to form in Uzbek literary criticism. Its own methods have now taken shape, yet the theory of literary criticism is still developing. On the whole, Uzbek literary criticism has not so far rested on a unified methodology: critics use various methods and techniques to produce different kinds of analysis and interpretation of literary works.

In the years of independence the work of Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Qodiriy, Usmon Nosir, G‘afur G‘ulom, Oybek, Hamid Olimjon and Abdulla Qahhor was rediscovered and approached on a broad scale. Studying these writers from every side opens to the reader the inner meaning of their works. At the same time, new principles of analysis appeared in literary criticism. This is connected, first, with the changes in society and, second, with the freedom of the creative individual.

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