ISSN NO: 2770-2367
April 2026

The Image Of The Intellectual In Uzbek Literature: Historical Evolution And Typology

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Annotation: This article examines the formation, evolution, and typology of the intellectual figure in Uzbek literature from the early twentieth century to the present. The research material comprises works by Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Abdulla Qodiriy, Cho‘lpon, Abdulla Qahhor, Oybek, and authors of the independence period. Using historical-comparative, typological, and structural-semantic methods, the study identifies three stages: the enlightener-reformer (the Jadid period), the tragic intellectual in conflict with ideology (the Soviet period), and the intellectual engaged in spiritual and moral inquiry (the independence period). It is shown that the intellectual character serves as the core of artistic reflection on social development and that its principal conflict shifts from the opposition of ignorance and enlightenment to the clash between the individual and ideology, and finally to the individual’s self-understanding. The findings may be used in courses on the history of Uzbek literature and comparative literary studies.
Key words: image of the intellectual, Jadid literature, national awakening, artistic conflict, typology, Uzbek novel, superfluous man, enlightenment.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literature and its era is often revealed most clearly through the image of the intellectual. As a bearer of knowledge who bears responsibility for the fate of society, the intellectual functions as society’s means of self-awareness, its conscience and reason, and therefore occupies a special place in the artistic text. Although the concept of “intelligentsia” entered wide circulation in the Russian literary and journalistic milieu in the mid-nineteenth century, its essential meaning – the responsibility of the learned person for the destiny of the community – had long existed in the Eastern literary tradition, as the figure of the sage in the works of Alisher Navoi and the thinker-travelers in Fitrat’s Hind sayyohi (“The Indian Traveler”) demonstrate [1; 2].

In Uzbek literature the intellectual emerged as a new artistic category at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the conditions of the national awakening and the Jadid movement. Behbudiy’s drama Padarkush (“The Patricide”, 1911) is regarded as an early major example of this process: it portrays the tragedy of ignorance with open enlightening pathos [3]. Later, in the works of Abdulla Qodiriy, Cho‘lpon, Abdulla Qahhor, and Oybek, the intellectual acquired complex psychological and social content.

The topicality of the subject is determined by several factors. First, the re-evaluation of national history and literary heritage during the years of independence requires a fresh approach to the image. Second, the intellectual’s role in society and the link between his knowledge and moral responsibility have not lost their significance under globalization. Third, the image has rarely been examined typologically across all three historical periods: existing studies are largely confined to a single writer or a single era.

The aim of the research is to determine the historical development and typological features of the intellectual image in Uzbek literature. The objectives are: (1) to clarify the theoretical foundations of the concept; (2) to analyze the artistic means of depicting the intellectual in each period; (3) to identify and compare the main types of the image; and (4) to determine the factors that shape its evolution. The working hypothesis is that, under changing socio-historical conditions, the function of the intellectual in Uzbek literature has shifted from “awakener of society” to “opponent of ideology” and finally to “self-reflecting individual”.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature of the Jadid period has been studied in depth by Begali Qosimov [4] and Naim Karimov [5], who place the works of Behbudiy, Fitrat, Qodiriy, and Cho‘lpon in the context of the national awakening. The socio-psychological analysis of Soviet-era prose is found in the criticism of Ozod Sharafiddinov [6] and other scholars. Theoretical approaches to the character as an “image” and as a “voice” in the text rest on Bakhtin’s poetics [7], while the sociological understanding of the intellectual’s role draws on Gramsci’s notion of the “organic intellectual” [8] and Edward Said’s reflections on the intellectual’s duty to speak truth to power [9]. Terminological issues are clarified in the Dictionary of Literary Studies [13].

Scholars generally distinguish between the intellectual as a social category (a person engaged in mental labor) and the intellectual as an artistic type, defined not by profession alone but by a particular consciousness: critical thinking, moral autonomy, and a sense of responsibility toward the community. This article adopts the second understanding, so that a teacher, a merchant-reformer, a poet, or a ruler may each be examined as an intellectual character if the plot makes his knowledge and conscience the source of the central conflict.

Nevertheless, the evolution of the intellectual image over more than a century has not been generalized within a single conception. This article is intended to fill that gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research material was selected according to three criteria: (a) the intellectual hero holds a leading place in the plot and conflict; (b) the work occupies an important position in the Uzbek literary process; and (c) the selection makes it possible to cover all three historical stages. The main works analyzed are Behbudiy’s Padarkush; Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar (“Bygone Days”) and Mehrobdan chayon (“Scorpion from the Altar”); Cho‘lpon’s Kecha va kunduz (“Night and Day”); Qahhor’s Sarob (“Mirage”); the intellectual characters in Oybek’s works; and works by Odil Yoqubov, O‘tkir Hoshimov, and Pirimqul Qodirov from the independence period.

The study employs historical-comparative, typological, structural-semantic, and hermeneutic methods. Each character was analyzed by the following parameters: social status and education; worldview and values; principal conflict (with society, authority, family, or the inner self); fate and plot resolution; and the author’s attitude (praise, sympathy, criticism, or detachment).

The periodization follows turning points in the sociopolitical and cultural life of the country: the Jadid movement and the first attempts at modern national literature; the establishment and consolidation of the Soviet system with its normative aesthetics; and the restoration of independence, which opened the way to free artistic search. These boundaries are conventional, since the features of one stage often appear in the preceding or following one, but they provide a workable scale for comparing the parameters listed above and for observing how the same character type is transformed under different conditions. The interpretations offered here are based on close reading of the primary texts, supported by the relevant critical literature.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. The enlightener-reformer (early twentieth century – 1920s)

In Jadid literature the intellectual first appears as a bearer of enlightenment. In Padarkush the intellectual is presented not so much as an individual personality as through the opposition of knowledge and ignorance: the ruin of a wealthy family caused by ignorance proves the necessity of the enlightening idea [3]. At this stage the image is predominantly ideological and publicistic, and the hero becomes a mouthpiece of the author’s thought.

In Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar, the image of Otabek raises this type to a high artistic level. Otabek is educated and independent-minded; he carries a new worldview alongside his commercial and family obligations. Although he is in tension with the traditional environment, he does not reject it but seeks to reform it from within. Qodiriy shows the intellectual not through didactic pathos but through inner experience and moral choice, which protects the image from schematism [4]. In Mehrobdan chayon a new facet appears: Anvar is educated and patriotic but weakened in the struggle with circumstances, an early instance of the motif of the intellectual’s vacillation that intensifies later.

In Cho‘lpon’s Kecha va kunduz the intellectual is revealed through the boundaries between social strata. Characters such as Miryoqub are inconspicuous yet possess great spiritual strength and feel the

ISSN NO: 2770-2367
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change of society from within [5]. In Cho‘lpon the intellectual is at once an expresser of the people’s pain and its helpless witness.

A comparison of these works reveals a gradual shift in narrative technique. In the early drama the intellectual’s idea is voiced directly, through speeches and moral instruction, and the spectator is expected to accept the conclusion offered by the author. In the novels of Qodiriy and Cho‘lpon, by contrast, the hero is revealed through events, dialogue, and the details of everyday life, and the reader is invited to judge his choices independently. This movement from declaration to depiction marks the maturing of the image as an artistic phenomenon and prepares the psychological analysis of later decades.

The space in which the Jadid intellectual acts is also significant. He is placed at the junction of the traditional neighborhood, the bazaar, the family home, and the new school or press, and it is precisely in these thresholds that his values are tested. The tension between loyalty to inherited customs and openness to new knowledge becomes the main source of drama, and the heroes’ attempts to reconcile the two define the specifically Uzbek version of the enlightener type.

2. The tragic intellectual in conflict with ideology (1930s–1980s)

In Soviet-era literature the nature of the image changed markedly. Official ideology demanded that the intellectual be a “builder of the new society”, and two poles emerged: the “new intellectual” loyal to party ideas and the intellectual bound to the old worldview and judged “alien”.

Qahhor’s Sarob is an early complex artistic expression of this conflict. The image of Saidiy shows the intellectual’s vacillation in his relation to the new order, his inability to find his path, and his spiritual crisis. It displays typological similarity to the Russian “superfluous man”: an educated hero who cannot find a place in life [6]. In Oybek’s work, thinkers and poets are glorified in historical novels, while in contemporary works the intellectual is presented mostly as a socially active figure, which reflects the influence of ideological pressure on artistic choice.

An important feature of this stage is the double-layered nature of the image. On the official level the intellectual is shown as meeting the demands of the time; on the hidden level genuine pain is expressed through inner protest, silence, irony, and allegorical depiction. This duality brought devices of Aesopian language into Uzbek prose.

The official model of the “new intellectual” was normative: his biography, convictions, and even speech were expected to confirm the correctness of the ruling ideology, which often turned the character into a schematic figure. The more significant works of the period, however, treat the intellectual as a person whose education sharpens moral sensitivity and therefore makes the contradictions of the age more painful for him. In such texts the hero’s tragedy is not the result of personal weakness but of the incompatibility between independent thought and the demands of conformity. The recurring motifs of loneliness, silence, interrupted careers, and unfinished work belong to this tragic register and later became a point of reference for authors writing in the years of renewal.

3. The intellectual in spiritual and moral inquiry (1990s – present)

In the independence period the image acquired new content. First, recourse to historical themes strengthened: in historical novels rulers, scholars, and poets are interpreted as intellectuals of their eras, as in the works of Pirimqul Qodirov. Second, in prose on contemporary themes the intellectual hero is analyzed through the inner world, conscience, and duty. In the works of authors such as O‘tkir Hoshimov and Odil Yoqubov, the intellectual is shown in connection with justice, honesty, and moral responsibility.

New features of the image took shape at this stage: (a) inner freedom, free from ideological pressure; (b) the effort to restore historical memory; (c) awareness of the relation between a global cultural environment and national identity; and (d) small moral choices in everyday life. Table 1 summarizes the three stages.

Unlike the earlier stages, the contemporary intellectual is rarely presented as a leader of the people or as a victim of an external force alone. The conflict is moved inward: the hero is troubled by compromise, indifference, the temptations of career and material success, and the fading of spiritual values. Narrative forms change accordingly, with the growing role of inner monologue, memory, and the narrator’s self-analysis. At the same time, the historical novel of the period reconsiders the figures of past rulers and scholars as intellectuals who sought to unite power and knowledge, which links the present-day discussion of the intellectual’s responsibility with the national cultural tradition.

ISSN NO: 2770-2367
April 2026

Table 1. Historical stages of the intellectual image

Parameter	Stage I (1900s–1920s)	Stage II (1930s–1980s)	Stage III (1990s–present)
Main type	Enlightener-reformer	Tragic, vacillating intellectual	Intellectual in moral inquiry
Main conflict	Ignorance vs. enlightenment	Individual vs. ideology	Individual vs. self-understanding
Artistic method	Pathos, symbolism	Double layer, subtext	Psychologism, inner monologue
Author's attitude	Glorification, idealization	Sympathy and veiled criticism	Analysis, problematization
Outcome	Triumph or tragedy of the idea	Spiritual crisis, defeat	Open ending, continuing search

DISCUSSION

The results show that the intellectual image in Uzbek literature is a dynamic rather than a static category. At the first stage the intellectual is interpreted as a force that awakens society; at the second he collides with society, or more precisely with ideology; at the third he mainly enters into a relationship with himself. This change reflects not only the internal development of literature but also the influence of external socio-political factors.

The conclusion shares features with Said's view of the intellectual's duty to speak truth to power [9], but in Uzbek literature this duty was often carried out not through direct declaration but through allegory, symbol, and subtext. Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual" [8] is borne out in the case of the Jadids, who emerged from the people, expressed its needs, and found literary expression for them.

In the context of world literature, the Uzbek intellectual shows typological affinity with general tendencies. The resemblance between Saidiy and the Russian "superfluous man" (Onegin, Pechorin) – the presence of knowledge but the absence of any possibility of action – is one example. There is also a difference: in Uzbek literature the intellectual's vacillation is usually interpreted not as a personal flaw but as a national and social tragedy, so that his fate is closely bound with that of the whole people.

Three factors shaping the evolution of the image were identified: the socio-political factor (the free enlightening milieu of the Jadid period, censorship and ideological control in the Soviet period, and freedom of thought in the independence period); the literary-aesthetic factor (the influence of realism, modernism, and postmodernism broadened the means of depiction from pathos to psychologism); and the cultural-historical factor (the interplay of Eastern values such as conscience, modesty, and learning with Western scholarship gave the image its national coloring). The study is limited to the selected works; the female intellectual, the lyrical hero in poetry, and the diaspora intellectual merit separate research.

From a practical standpoint, the proposed typology offers a framework for teaching and further research. It allows individual works to be read not in isolation but as links in a continuous chain, in which each new image answers the questions left open by the previous one, and it suggests directions for comparison with the literatures of neighboring nations that passed through similar historical experiences.

It should also be noted that the readers' reception of the intellectual image has changed together with the image itself. Heroes who were once read as models of civic virtue are now read as complex personalities with doubts and weaknesses, and heroes once criticized as "alien" are re-evaluated as bearers of national memory and moral integrity. This continuing re-reading confirms that the intellectual remains one of the most productive images through which Uzbek literature reflects on its own past and future.

CONCLUSIONS

The image of the intellectual in Uzbek literature emerged together with the Jadid movement at the beginning of the twentieth century and has passed through three historical stages: the enlightener-reformer, the tragic intellectual in conflict with ideology, and the intellectual engaged in spiritual and moral inquiry.

ISSN NO: 2770-2367
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At each stage the main conflict of the image changed: from the opposition of ignorance and enlightenment to the clash of the individual and ideology, and then to the individual's process of self-understanding. The means of depiction also developed, from open pathos and symbol to a double-layered text and subtext, and then to deep psychologism and inner monologue.

The image shows typological similarity to the corresponding tendencies of world literature, yet it is distinguished by the fact that the intellectual's fate is frequently bound to national tragedy. The results can be used in courses on the history of Uzbek literature, literary analysis, and comparative literary studies.

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