

Review Article

The People and the Motherland in Gafur Gulom's Work

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Abstract

This article discusses the creative heritage of Gafur Gulom, an outstanding representative of twentieth-century Uzbek literature and Academician of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, examining the artistic expression of the ideals of the people and the homeland in his poetic and prose writings. The study explores how Gulom's creative worldview was shaped by the complex historical conditions of the early Soviet period, rapid industrialization, the Second World War, and postwar reconstruction, and how these experiences influenced his humanistic and national perspectives. Using literary-historical analysis, textual interpretation, and comparative methods, the article analyzes key works such as the philosophical poem *Vaqt* ("Time"), the wartime poem *Sen yetim emassan* ("You Are Not an Orphan"), and the novella *Shum bola* ("The Mischievous Boy") as representative texts that embody national consciousness, moral responsibility, and collective memory. Special attention is given to Gulom's concept of time as a moral and national category, his portrayal of the Motherland as a space of compassion, solidarity, and cultural continuity, and his ability to harmonize individual experience with the collective historical destiny of the Uzbek people. The findings demonstrate that Gulom's works function as a "literary chronicle" of the nation, preserving traditional values while responding creatively to the challenges of modernity and social transformation. The article concludes that Gafur Gulom's creative legacy holds enduring artistic, pedagogical, and cultural significance, contributing to the formation of national identity and the promotion of universal humanistic ideals within both Uzbek and world literature.

Keywords

Uzbek Literature, Poetry, Prose, Translation, Humanism, Pedagogy, National Identity, Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

Gafur Gulom occupies a central place in the development of modern Uzbek literature. As a poet, prose writer, translator, scholar, and public intellectual, he became one of the key figures who shaped the cultural consciousness of twentieth-century Uzbekistan [1]. His life and work unfolded during a period of dramatic social, political, and cultural transformation. The early Soviet era, rapid industrialization, the trauma of World War II, and the reconstruction period all left a profound imprint on his creative imagination. Yet beyond ideological

frameworks, Gulom's work consistently emphasized the dignity of ordinary people and the sacred value of the Motherland.

The themes of the people and the Motherland are not incidental motifs in his writing; they constitute the philosophical foundation of his artistic worldview. For Gulom, the Motherland was not an abstract political concept but a living organism composed of families, neighborhoods, laborers, children, and elders. He perceived history as a continuous dialogue between generations, and literature as a moral archive of national memory. Through lyrical introspection, narrative realism, and

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symbolic imagery, he transformed everyday experiences into enduring cultural statements.

This article aims to analyze the artistic strategies through which Gulom represented the spirit of the Uzbek people and conceptualized the Motherland. It explores the historical and theoretical foundations of his work, examines key poetic and prose texts, and evaluates his contribution to national and world literature.

2. Theoretical and Historical Foundations of Gʻafur Gʻulom's Work

Gʻulom's perspective on the Motherland was shaped by his early hardships and his deep immersion in both classical Uzbek traditions and global literary trends.

2.1. Biography and the Formation of a National Voice

Gafur Gulom (1903–1966) was one of the most prominent figures of 20th-century Uzbek literature, whose work profoundly reflects the inner life of the people and national values [1]. He was born in the Qoʻrgʻontegi neighborhood of Tashkent, and his family environment played a crucial role in shaping his worldview and creative development. Gulom's family was rich in literary and cultural heritage: his father was not only deeply versed in classical Uzbek and Persian literature but also spoke Russian and often hosted renowned poets and intellectuals, including Muqimiy and Furqat, at their home [3]. This environment had a profound impact on Gulom's early childhood impressions, providing him with direct exposure to the life of the people and the cultural heritage of his homeland.

2.1.1. Early Orphanhood and Social Consciousness

The early years of Gulom's life were marked by hardships. He lost his father at the age of nine and his mother at the age of twelve, leaving him responsible for the care of his three younger sisters. This early adversity greatly contributed to the development of his human compassion, social awareness, and resilience. Gulom worked in various professions, including as a market laborer and in small craft jobs, and most importantly, as a typographer in a printing house. During this period, he gained direct insight into the daily life of Tashkent, the labor, and struggles of ordinary people, which later found expression in his realist and socially engaged literature.

From 1919 to 1927, Gulom worked as a teacher and school principal [6]. This experience shaped his pedagogical views and instilled a strong sense of responsibility for the moral upbringing, national consciousness, and education of the younger generation. In this way, Gulom's literary voice encompassed not only artistic expression but also social and ed-

ucational dimensions, aiming to strengthen the moral and cultural standards of the Uzbek people through poetry and prose.

2.1.2. Literary Beginnings and the “Dinamo” Phase

Gulom's literary career began in 1923 with the publication of his poem *Feliks Farzandlari* (“Children of Felix”), which directly responded to the social and political issues of his time and laid the foundation for the emergence of a new national voice [2]. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, his creative focus shifted toward themes of industrialization, urban and infrastructural development, and the tangible aspects of national progress [3]. Collections such as *Dinamo* (1931) and *Tirik Qoʻshiqlar* (Living Songs, 1932) introduced new rhythmic and lexical possibilities to Uzbek poetry [5]. In these works, he celebrated the construction of the Turksib railway and the modernization of cities, highlighting the labor of the people and the advancement of society.

During this period, Gulom's work significantly contributed to the formation of a national literary voice. He skillfully combined simple expressions from the vernacular with artistic poetic language, and sought to connect contemporary themes with enduring cultural values. Through this synthesis, Gulom created a harmonious voice of the people and the era, turning his poetry into a “literary chronicle” that reflected the spiritual life, historical experience, and industrious nature of the Uzbek people.

2.1.3. The National Voice as a Reflection of Collective Identity

Gulom's personal experiences and early hardships shaped a literary voice deeply connected to the people and attentive to national identity. His poetry and prose blend personal experiences with national values: every character, event, or depiction of nature reflects the collective spirit and values of the nation. In this way, Gulom's work became “the voice of the people,” portraying not only historical events but also the moral and cultural portrait of society [8].

Moreover, his literary voice was attuned to contemporary contexts. Gulom emphasized, through both poetry and prose, the importance of valuing the nation's historical path while striving for modern labor and spiritual advancement. From this perspective, Gafur Gulom's biography and creative journey represent not merely a collection of personal life events but a source of the formation of a national voice, embodying profound philosophical reflections on the people and the Motherland.

2.2. The Philosophy of Time and National Identity

One of the central themes in the works of Gafur Gulom is the philosophical concept of time and its role in shaping national identity. Gulom does not perceive time as a simple mechanical measurement or merely a means of marking events;

rather, he views it as a fundamental factor in the spiritual development of individuals and society, historical consciousness, and national stability. In his understanding, when individuals use their time wisely and productively, they enrich not only their personal lives but also the spiritual and cultural progress of the entire nation. From this perspective, time serves as one of the most significant metaphors of the national idea in Gulom's creative work.

2.2.1. Analysis of the Poem *Vaqt* ("Time")

Gulom's poem *Vaqt* ("Time"), written in 1945, fully reflects his philosophical and national views [2]. In this work, time is portrayed as the most valuable resource in human life something that inevitably passes, yet simultaneously provides the opportunity to create and leave a lasting mark. One of the poem's well-known lines, "The meaning of a single moment is an entire spring," emphasizes that every minute of life contains immense creative potential and embodies the spiritual and intellectual capacities of the human being.

In *Vaqt*, Gulom unites the personal and the national dimensions of time. Each individual's labor, love, and devotion leave an eternal trace in the history of society, thereby contributing to the progress of the Motherland. He calls upon the reader to rise above personal interests and fleeting passions, encouraging dedication to the common good and the preservation of national values. In his philosophical outlook, the nation appears as an organic whole that develops harmoniously within the flow of time.

In the poem, time itself is presented as an abstract concept that becomes materialized through human activity. Gulom writes that people create eternal monuments through their lives. Through this idea, he underscores the inseparable connection between the individual and the Motherland: for a nation to be strong, each citizen must enrich their time with meaningful spiritual and practical deeds.

2.2.2. Time as a Tool of National Identity Formation

Gulom's concept of time is not merely a personal or abstract philosophical reflection; it functions as a powerful instrument in the formation of national identity. In his poetry, historical events, the labor of the people, and national traditions are harmonized within the flow of time. Thus, the past, present, and future are interconnected, forming a unified system that strengthens national consciousness and deepens historical awareness.

His philosophy of time also conveys historical continuity and national resilience. By linking ancient events, prominent historical figures, and the collective historical experience of the people with contemporary realities, Gulom portrays the Motherland as a living organism - constantly developing while preserving its essential identity. For instance, in his poetic vision, historical figures such as Amir Temur and Alisher Navoiy appear alongside modern workers and farmers. This juxtaposition illustrates the continuity of national history and highlights the present generation's responsibility toward its

heritage.

2.2.3. Humanism, Time, and Civic Responsibility

Within Gulom's philosophical framework, time emerges not only as an individual but also as a social and humanistic category. In his poems, he calls upon both youth and adults not to spend their time solely for personal benefit, but to dedicate it to society, family, and the Motherland. This perspective aligns closely with his pedagogical views: enriching time, creating spiritual values, and cultivating human virtues are essential conditions for the strength and maturity of the nation.

The motif of valuing time in his poetry addresses numerous personal and social issues relevant to modern life. Gulom encourages people to fill their free time not with idleness, but with creativity, scholarship, labor, and socially beneficial work. Through this approach, time becomes not only a means of individual self-development but also a foundation for national stability and the formation of identity.

2.2.4. Time in the Context of National Literature

Through the poem *Vaqt*, Gulom broadens the philosophical and modern orientation of national literature. By synthesizing classical Uzbek poetic traditions with contemporary philosophical thought, he introduced new rhythmic and semantic possibilities into Uzbek poetry [3]. At the same time, the motif of time functions as a tool for shaping national consciousness and providing moral guidance to the younger generation.

As a result, Gulom's philosophy of time represents a complex conceptual framework that reflects the creative and spiritual power of the Uzbek people. It harmonizes historical and contemporary realities, unites personal and national responsibility, and affirms time as a dynamic force in the continuous formation of national identity.

2.3. Wartime Lyricism: The Motherland as a Haven of Humanism

The wartime poetry of Gafur Gulom represents one of the most profound stages of his creative development, revealing deep humanistic and national ideals. During the years of the Second World War, his works were not limited to patriotic encouragement; they expressed sincere compassion for war victims, especially children and separated families. In this period, Gulom portrayed the Motherland as a moral sanctuary — a space where kindness, solidarity, and cultural responsibility prevail over destruction and despair [4].

2.3.1. *Sen yetim emassan* ("You Are Not an Orphan")

Written in 1942, *Sen yetim emassan* ("You Are Not an Orphan") is one of Gulom's most moving wartime poems [1]. During the war, thousands of orphaned and evacuated children were brought to Uzbekistan. In response to this tragedy,

G'ulom created a poetic image of the nation as a compassionate parent. The famous line, "You are not an orphan, sleep, my dear," transforms the entire people into a symbol of collective care and protection [5].

Through this poem, the Motherland is presented not as a political abstraction, but as a living source of love and humanity. Gulom emphasizes that every citizen shares moral responsibility for protecting vulnerable children and preserving human dignity. The poem embodies unity, empathy, and social solidarity, showing that even in times of war, national strength lies in compassion.

Beyond its emotional power, *Sen yetim emassan* demonstrates how literature can ease psychological suffering and maintain hope. It reinforces the idea that a nation is defined not only by its historical struggles but by its commitment to human values. For this reason, the poem remains a lasting symbol of national humanism.

2.3.2. *Sog'inish* ("Longing") and Paternal Pride

Another significant wartime poem, *Sog'inish* ("Longing"), reflects the emotional complexity of separation and hope. In this work, a father waits for his son to return from the battlefield [2]. His personal longing is intertwined with a sense of national pride and moral duty. Through images of apples and peaches in the family garden, Gulom connects private family life with the broader cultural and natural landscape of Uzbekistan.

These natural images symbolize continuity, patience, and faith. The father's waiting becomes more than a private sorrow — it represents the endurance of the entire nation. In this way, Gulom unites personal and national experience, portraying resilience, compassion, and moral courage as defining qualities of the people.

2.3.3. War Poetry as a Moral and Civic Instrument

Gulom's wartime poetry also served as a moral and civic instrument. His works addressed not only soldiers at the front but also mothers, children, and young people at home. By encouraging unity, responsibility, and hope, his poetry strengthened social cohesion during a time of crisis.

He consistently placed humanism at the center of his artistic vision. The Motherland appears not merely as territory or state power, but as a community built upon love, labor, and shared responsibility. Through this perspective, wartime poetry becomes both a historical reflection and a pedagogical force, guiding society toward moral stability and spiritual growth.

2.3.4. Integration of Personal and National Experience

In Gulom's wartime works, personal grief and national destiny merge into a unified emotional narrative. The sorrow of orphaned children, the anxiety of parents, and the silence of empty homes are portrayed as collective experiences shared by the entire nation. This integration of individual feeling with

national consciousness distinguishes him as a true poet of the people.

Ultimately, Gafur Gulom's wartime lyricism transcends its historical context. It stands as a creative phenomenon that promotes compassion, unity, and moral responsibility. By presenting the Motherland as a haven of humanism, he transformed poetry into a source of comfort, strength, and ethical guidance, reminding readers that even in the darkest times, humanity remains the foundation of national identity.

3. Result

The findings of this research confirm that Gafur Gulom made an exceptional contribution to Uzbek literature, not only by advancing poetry and prose but also by preserving and promoting national consciousness and cultural values. His work created a meaningful synthesis between traditional Uzbek values and the challenges of modernity, industrialization, and socio-political transformation. As a result, his works played a crucial role in shaping national identity and strengthening the spiritual stability of the Uzbek people.

An important aspect of Gulom's legacy is his academic and scholarly activity. In 1943, he was elected a full member of the O'zbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi. This recognition allowed him to combine literary creations with scientific research [3]. As an academician, he studied classical Uzbek poets such as Alisher Navoiy and Furqat, offering modern interpretations of their works. Through these efforts, he ensured continuity between classical heritage and twentieth-century Uzbek literature, reinforcing the foundations of national literary development.

Gulom's translation activity also played a significant role in enriching Uzbek culture. He translated works of world literary figures such as William Shakespeare, Dante Alighieri, and Alexander Pushkin into Uzbek. These translations not only enhanced the expressive capacity of the Uzbek literary language but also introduced readers to global cultural traditions. In this way, Uzbek literature became more connected to world literary processes while preserving its national distinctiveness.

Due to his outstanding creative and scholarly achievements, Gulom was awarded the honorary title "People's Poet of Uzbekistan" in 1963. In 2000, he was posthumously awarded the Order "Buyuk xizmatlari uchun," which further confirmed his lasting importance in Uzbek cultural and literary history. [9] These honors symbolize recognition of both his artistic mastery and his moral and educational influence.

One of the defining characteristics of Gulom's body of work is his ability to harmonize traditional Uzbek values with modern realities. His poetry and prose reflect the historical experience of the nation, its humanism, diligence, solidarity, and resilience. For example, in his poem "Vaqt" ("Time"), the concept of time is presented not merely as a philosophical abstraction but as a symbol of national progress and cultural con-

tinuity. Through such works, Gulom contributed to the renewal of national heritage in a modern context.

Gulom's influence extends beyond national borders. His works have been translated into numerous languages and appreciated by international readers and scholars. Notably, his novel *Shum bola* was included by the BBC in 2023 among the 100 best children's books in the world. This recognition highlights the universal appeal of his humanistic and artistic vision [7].

Furthermore, Gulom's literary heritage holds strong pedagogical value. His wartime poem "Sen yetim emassan" ("You Are Not an Orphan") portrays the Motherland as a source of compassion and protection, reinforcing moral solidarity during times of crisis. His prose works, including "Yodgor" and *Shum bola*, emphasize honesty, responsibility, kindness, and social awareness, contributing to the moral education of younger generations.

4. Discussion

When analyzing the creative legacy of Gafur Gulom, one can observe a unique synthesis of Soviet ideology and national Uzbek culture within both his poetry and prose. Although his works address themes such as industrialization, war, and large-scale social transformation, he consistently places national values, historical memory, and the spiritual strength of the people at the center of his artistic vision. His literary approach demonstrates that ideological narratives and national identity were not mutually exclusive in his work, but rather intertwined in a complex and meaningful dialogue.

For instance, in his poem "Turksib yo'llarida," Gulom unites different historical epochs and figures within a single poetic space. He juxtaposes ancient personalities such as Amir Temur and Alexander the Great with contemporary workers and farmers [4]. Through this artistic strategy, he symbolically connects the past and the present, suggesting that modern progress is rooted in historical continuity. This blending of temporal layers reflects Gulom's distinctive interpretation of time, history, and national consciousness. History, in his poetry, is not a distant memory but a living force that shapes the moral and cultural identity of the nation.

Gulom's pedagogical ideas are equally noteworthy. Through both poetry and prose, he addresses social issues such as shortcomings in youth education, moral decline, and harmful habits like smoking. His literary works reveal a deep belief in the educational and moral function of literature. According to his worldview, the strength and stability of a nation depend primarily on the moral, physical, and intellectual maturity of its younger generation. For this reason, his wartime poems and prose works written for children harmonize national education with humanistic values. Literature, in his understanding, becomes not merely an artistic expression but a tool for shaping responsible and conscious citizens.

Furthermore, Gulom's works demonstrate a profound integration of personal and national experience. In his wartime

poem "Sen yetim emassan" ("You Are Not an Orphan"), he portrays the Motherland as a protective and compassionate force embracing children orphaned by war. In this way, individual grief is transformed into a collective national experience. [12] Personal sorrow becomes part of a broader narrative of solidarity, care, and resilience. Through such imagery, Gulom elevates private emotions to the level of shared cultural meaning, reinforcing the idea of the nation as a moral community.

His artistic style also reflects a synthesis of national and modern elements. The influence of Vladimir Mayakovsky is evident in his bold metaphors, oratorical rhythm, and dramatic intensity. However, Gulom adapts these features to the traditions of Uzbek poetry and the rhythmic richness of the plain language. Rather than imitating foreign models, he transforms them in accordance with national aesthetics. Through this creative adaptation, he harmonizes the national literary voice with broader international literary standards while preserving the historical continuity of Uzbek culture.

Another important aspect of Gulom's legacy is his ability to present national identity within a global context. His translations and international recognition have allowed his works to gain appreciation beyond Uzbekistan. Notably, his novel *Shum bola* was included by the BBC in 2023 among the 100 best children's books in the world. [14] Such acknowledgment demonstrates that his artistic vision possesses universal human value alongside its national specificity.

Thus, Gafur Gulom's creative heritage can be understood as a bridge between ideology and tradition, personal emotion and collective identity, national culture and global literary discourse. [15] Through his works, the social, spiritual, and artistic consciousness of the Uzbek people is expressed on a broader international stage. His literature continues to serve as a testament to the enduring dialogue between history and modernity, nationalism and humanism, local tradition and universal culture.

5. Conclusion

Gafur Gulom is recognized as one of the most prominent poets and writers of the Uzbek people, whose works consistently celebrate the Motherland, the nation, and universal human values. He ensured not only the modernization of Uzbek literature but also its historical continuity. His creative legacy can be viewed as a harmonious integration of personal experience, national consciousness, pedagogical concern, and humanistic ideals.

His poems, particularly "Vaqt" ("Time"), examine the philosophical significance of time from both personal and national perspectives, urging individuals to value time and use it productively. His wartime works, such as "Sen yetim emassan" ("You Are Not an Orphan") and "Sog'inish" ("Longing"), depict the Motherland and the nation as symbols of compassion and humanity, skillfully combining personal sorrow with collective pride. [13] His prose works, including *Shum bola* and

“Yodgor,” play an essential role in the moral education of younger generations, promoting social responsibility and national awareness. [10]

Gulom’s literary activity was also closely connected with world literature. Through his translations and international recognition, his works gained appreciation beyond national boundaries. Notably, *Shum bola* was included by the BBC among the 100 best children’s books in the world, demonstrating the universal relevance of his artistic vision [11]. Thus, Gulom not only preserved the creative voice of the Uzbek people but also helped present it to the global cultural community.

In summary, the creative heritage of Gafur Gulom represents a meaningful synthesis of national tradition, pedagogical values, global literary engagement, and humanism. He was not only a poet and writer of his time, but also a profound reflection of his nation’s historical experience, spiritual maturity, and cultural identity. For this reason, his works hold lasting significance for Uzbek literature and culture and continue to serve as moral and spiritual guidance for future generations.

Author Contributions

Qobulova Maftuna Davron Qizi: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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