Social criticism and artistic conflict in the dramaturgy of Abdurauf Fitrat

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Abstract: This article examines the artistic representation of social criticism in the dramaturgy of Abdurauf Fitrat, one of the leading representatives of the Jadid intellectual movement in Central Asia. The study analyzes how Fitrat addressed important social issues such as ignorance, religious fanaticism, moral decline, women's status, and social inequality through dramatic expression. Particular attention is given to the ways in which theatrical conflict functions as a means of ideological debate and social reflection. The research is based on historical-literary and artistic-analytical methods, allowing the interpretation of Fitrat's plays within the broader cultural and intellectual context of the early twentieth century. The findings demonstrate that Fitrat's dramaturgy not only served as an artistic form but also functioned as a powerful tool for enlightenment and social reform. His dramatic works reflect the principles of Jadid reformism, which aimed to modernize society through education, critical thinking, and civic awareness.

Keywords: dramaturgy, social criticism, Jadidism, artistic conflict, stage art, enlightenment ideas, social reform

Introduction. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the social and cultural life of Turkestan underwent significant transformation. The region was experiencing the complex consequences of colonial rule, which affected political institutions, educational systems, and social structures. Under these conditions, the awakening of national consciousness and the aspiration for social reform became increasingly visible among progressive intellectuals. The Jadid movement emerged as one of the most influential reformist movements during this period, advocating modernization through education, cultural renewal, and intellectual development.

Literature became one of the most effective instruments for expressing reformist ideas and promoting social awareness. Among literary genres, dramaturgy played a particularly important role because theatrical performances allowed intellectuals to communicate their ideas directly to the public. The stage became a space where social problems could be openly discussed and where audiences could reflect on the need for change. Jadid intellectuals considered theatre not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a powerful medium of enlightenment and public education. Dramatic works were designed to reveal social contradictions, criticize outdated traditions, and encourage critical thinking among audiences. In this regard, the dramaturgical heritage of Abdurauf Fitrat occupies a special place in the history of Central Asian literature.

Main part. Abdurauf Fitrat was not only a writer and playwright but also a prominent public intellectual, reformer, and cultural critic. His plays reflect the ideological and cultural struggles of his time. Through dramatic narratives and complex character interactions, Fitrat addressed pressing social issues and encouraged audiences to reconsider traditional attitudes that hindered progress. His works demonstrate a clear intention to transform social consciousness and to inspire intellectual and moral renewal within society.

Criticism of Ignorance and Religious Fanaticism in Fitrat's Dramaturgy

One of the most important themes in Fitrat's dramatic works is the criticism of ignorance and religious fanaticism. The author believed that social stagnation was largely caused by the dominance of outdated thinking and resistance to intellectual progress. Therefore, many of his plays depict conflicts between progressive individuals who advocate education and reform and conservative figures who defend traditional practices without critical reflection. Through these conflicts, Fitrat illustrates the deep ideological divisions that existed within society during the early twentieth century. The characters representing conservative attitudes are often portrayed as defenders of rigid traditions, while progressive characters promote knowledge, education, and rational thinking. This confrontation forms the basis of dramatic tension and drives the development of the plot.

Importantly, Fitrat does not present these conflicts merely as personal disagreements between individuals. Instead, they symbolize broader ideological struggles within society. The stage thus becomes a space where the audience can observe the clash of ideas and evaluate the consequences of different worldviews.

Spiritual Crisis and Moral Decline. Another significant theme in Fitrat's dramaturgy is the problem of moral and spiritual crisis. In many of his works, the playwright criticizes social indifference, selfishness, corruption, and injustice. These negative traits are presented as symptoms of a deeper moral decline affecting society as a whole. Fitrat believed that social reform required not only institutional change but also moral transformation. Therefore, his plays frequently explore the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals who must choose between personal interests and social responsibility. The internal struggles of the characters reveal the psychological dimension of social conflict.

The portrayal of inner emotional experiences and moral decision-making adds depth to Fitrat's dramatic works. The characters are not simply symbolic figures; they are complex personalities whose actions and choices reflect broader ethical concerns. This psychological realism strengthens the artistic quality of his plays and increases their emotional impact on audiences.

The Women's Question and the Role of the Family

The status of women occupies an important place in Fitrat's social critique. During the early twentieth century, women in many parts of Central Asia faced significant social restrictions, limited educational opportunities, and unequal legal rights. Fitrat regarded these conditions as one of the main obstacles to social progress. In his plays, female characters often represent the broader struggle for enlightenment and equality. By portraying women who seek education and personal freedom, the playwright challenges traditional stereotypes and encourages audiences to reconsider established gender roles. At the same time, he exposes the social structures that maintain inequality and prevent women from participating fully in public life.

Family relationships are also used as a narrative framework for exploring larger social issues. Conflicts within the family often mirror tensions within society itself. By depicting everyday domestic situations, Fitrat makes complex social problems more accessible and understandable to audiences.

Artistic Techniques and the Structure of Dramatic Conflict

Fitrat's dramaturgy is characterized by effective use of artistic techniques that enhance the dramatic power of his works. Dialogue plays a central role in revealing ideological conflicts and character motivations. Through carefully constructed conversations between characters, the playwright exposes different perspectives on social issues. Another important element is the use of contrasting character types. Each character represents a specific social position or ideological

stance, allowing the audience to observe the dynamics of social confrontation. This technique helps clarify the central message of the play while maintaining dramatic tension.

The structure of conflict in Fitrat's plays typically develops gradually. At the beginning, social contradictions are introduced through dialogue and situational tension. As the plot progresses, these contradictions intensify, leading to a climax where opposing ideas confront each other directly. The resolution often emphasizes the necessity of intellectual awakening and social reform. Importantly, Fitrat rarely imposes a single definitive answer. Instead, he encourages audiences to reflect critically on the issues presented. By leaving certain questions open, the playwright invites viewers to participate intellectually in the process of social analysis.

Conclusion. The dramaturgical heritage of Abdurauf Fitrat represents an important stage in the development of Jadid literature and Central Asian cultural history. His plays demonstrate how theatre can function not only as an artistic form but also as a powerful instrument of social criticism and intellectual transformation. Through dramatic narratives and ideological conflicts, Fitrat addressed key problems of his time, including ignorance, fanaticism, moral decline, gender inequality, and social injustice. His works reveal the close connection between cultural development and educational reform, emphasizing the importance of enlightenment for societal progress.

Even today, Fitrat's dramaturgy remains relevant because the issues he addressed continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about social modernization, cultural identity, and intellectual freedom. His dramatic works therefore occupy a significant place in the history of national literature and contribute to the broader understanding of reformist thought in Central Asia.

References

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