

Shukur Kholmiraev's essay "That person is a mentor, and I am a disciple", its composition, plot, and system of characters

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Abstract: This article investigates the composition, plot structure, and character system of Shukur Kholmiraev's reflective essay *U Kishim - Ustoz, Men - Shogird* (That Person Is a Mentor, and I Am a Disciple). Using an interdisciplinary methodology that combines narratology, thematic analysis, and cultural contextualization, the study situates the essay within modern Uzbek prose traditions. Results reveal a layered composition that blends memoir, philosophical meditation, and fictionalized dialogue; a plot that develops through memory and moral discovery rather than linear chronology; and a nuanced cast of characters where the "mentor" figure functions as both concrete person and symbolic embodiment of moral authority. The discussion underscores the work's significance in shaping contemporary Uzbek literary discourse on mentorship, generational continuity, and national identity.

Keywords: Shukur Kholmiraev, Uzbek literature, mentorship, narrative composition, character system, modern Uzbek prose, literary analysis

Shukur Kholmiraev (1940-2005) is recognized as one of Uzbekistan's most respected modern prose writers, celebrated for his keen psychological insight and eloquent yet economical style. Among his many works, the essay *U Kishim - Ustoz, Men - Shogird* holds particular importance as an intimate exploration of mentorship and the transmission of artistic and ethical values. Written late in Kholmiraev's career, the piece reads as both homage to a formative teacher and a meditation on the moral obligations between generations of writers.

Critics such as O.Kholmuminov (2017) describe Kholmiraev's nonfiction as "bordering literature and confession," combining vivid storytelling with philosophical reflection. The present study investigates three interconnected aspects of the essay its composition, plot, and system of characters to show how Kholmiraev transforms a personal tribute into a broader commentary on artistic heritage. By drawing on narratological theory (Genette, 1980) and Uzbek literary criticism (Qosimov, 2019), the article seeks to illuminate the structural artistry and cultural resonance of this pivotal work.

The Uzbek original text was examined for narrative voice, temporal shifts, and rhetorical devices. Gérard Genette's framework of order, duration, and frequency guided the assessment of narrative time.

Building on Mieke Bal's (2009) concept of the "actor-network," each character was evaluated not only for individual traits but also for symbolic roles particularly the mentor figure as a moral archetype.

To situate the essay historically and culturally, Uzbek-language literary scholarship and interviews with contemporary critics (e.g., Rashidov, 2020) were reviewed. Comparative insights from global mentorship narratives, including works by Rainer Maria Rilke and Albert Camus, provided additional interpretive depth.

This triangulated approach enables a holistic view of Kholmiraev's narrative craft and the essay's place in Uzbek literary discourse.

The essay's composition resists simple categorization. Rather than following a straightforward autobiographical format, Khollmirzaev structures the piece as a series of memory-scenes interspersed with philosophical asides. Shifts between first-person reflection and dramatized dialogue create what scholar Dilafruz Qosimov (2019) calls "a dialogic mosaic," inviting readers to inhabit both the apprentice's and the mentor's perspectives. Symbolic motifs most notably the recurring imagery of light and craft tools underscore the transformative nature of knowledge transfer. The careful pacing, alternating contemplative passages with lively anecdote, reinforces the sense of an apprenticeship unfolding organically rather than through didactic instruction.

Although the essay lacks a conventional linear storyline, it possesses a clear narrative arc of moral discovery. It begins with the narrator's youthful uncertainty, moves through formative encounters with the mentor figure, and culminates in the narrator's realization of his own responsibility to guide future generations. The "plot," therefore, is the evolution of consciousness rather than external action, aligning with what narratologists label a Bildungsroman in miniature. This interior progression echoes Uzbek oral traditions of ustoz-shogird (master-disciple) relationships, where the climax lies in spiritual insight, not dramatic conflict.

The character network is deceptively small yet richly layered. The mentor operates on two levels: as a real historical figure likely modeled on one of Khollmirzaev's senior literary contemporaries and as an archetype of wisdom and moral steadfastness. The disciple-narrator embodies youthful curiosity and the struggle to internalize ethical artistry. Peripheral characters family members, fellow writers function as mirrors or foils, highlighting the central relationship. Literary scholar Umid Rashidov (2020) observes that the mentor's voice "is both personal and collective, representing the conscience of an emerging national literature," a view supported by the text's use of proverbial sayings and cultural references.

The findings show that *U Kishim - Ustoz, Men - Shogird* exemplifies Khollmirzaev's ability to merge memoir with cultural critique. By weaving memory, dialogue, and symbolism, he creates what can be called a "living composition," in which the form enacts the very process of mentorship. The non-linear plot underscores that intellectual and moral growth rarely proceed in straight lines, while the mentor-disciple dyad reflects a deeply rooted Central Asian tradition of apprenticeship that extends from craft guilds to literary circles.

Comparatively, the essay resonates with global texts of mentorship: Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* emphasizes self-realization through guidance, and Camus's tributes to his schoolteacher echo the gratitude and ethical urgency found in Khollmirzaev's work. Yet the Uzbek context gives the essay particular weight. Written during a period of post-Soviet cultural redefinition, it affirms the necessity of preserving indigenous forms of knowledge transmission amid rapid modernization. Translation theorists such as Venuti (1995) would note that any future English translation must carefully preserve the layered meanings of ustoz and shogird, which encompass spiritual as well as pedagogical dimensions.

Shukur Khollmirzaev's *That Person Is a Mentor, and I Am a Disciple* stands as both intimate memoir and cultural manifesto. Its innovative composition, introspective plot, and symbolically rich character system together articulate a philosophy of mentorship that bridges personal gratitude and national identity. By portraying the mentor not merely as an individual but as the embodiment of collective wisdom, Khollmirzaev offers a model of artistic continuity essential to Uzbek literature's ongoing vitality. The essay thus invites continued study, translation, and global engagement, ensuring that its lessons on guidance, humility, and creative responsibility remain resonant for readers everywhere.

References

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