

# The Spiritual World of a Child as an Expression of Tragicness: An Analysis of Safar Barnoev's Works

Rukhsora Tulabaeva

*Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature, Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

**Keywords:** Children's Writer, War Tragedy, Tragicness, Story, Child Mentality, Hero Tragedy, Author's Tragedy, Period Tragedy.

**Abstract:** The 20th century was a period when Uzbek children's literature was full of contradictions, sometimes bitter truths were expressed, and sometimes truths were hidden. Although the existing system fully subjugated art and literature, literary works that reflected human longings, his inner world, and his psyche were also produced. The Second World War was the most painful topic of the last century, and the tragedy of the war affected the fate of everyone. This great tragedy was certainly reflected in the works of art and became the main theme of the day. Participants or workers behind the front became the protagonist of the oeuvres war. This applies to the lives of children as well as adults. Children were also mobilized for hard work for their fathers, brothers, and uncles who went to war. These life events were reflected in fiction. Safar Barnoev, a writer who experienced the hardships of war in his childhood, embodied this timeless theme in children's literature. The article examined the collection "Stories of 1947" ("1947-yil hikoylari"), which depicted the wartime events of Safar Barnoev. Issues such as the emergence of the tragedy in the child's psyche and the reflection of the tragedy of the war in the psyche of the hero and the author were covered.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Uzbek children's literature, drawing from folklore and classical traditions, is nurturing the growth of the younger generation. Safar Barnoev was a distinguished figure in 20th-century Uzbek children's literature. As a prolific writer, Barnoev produced numerous children's books across a variety of genres. His poetry and prose were widely admired and became favourites among children and teenagers. He penned numerous stories and short stories, capturing the psyche, joys, and sorrows of teenagers.

Analysing Barnoev's work, H. Nusratova asserts, "One of the most significant features of Barnoev's story-writing was his series of stories. 'Stories of 1947' ('1947 –yil hikoylari'), and 'Afghan Stories' ('Afg'on hikoylari'), belonged to these series. The writer's 'Stories of 1947' series, comprising more than ten stories, holds a distinctive position in expressing animosity towards war. The theme of anti-war sentiment is portrayed naturally and authentically, at times overtly, at others symbolically."

In all of Barnoev's stories on the theme of war and childhood, these two themes are interwoven. The recurring aspects that unify the "1947 stories" series are: 1) the uniform theme of condemning war, and 2) the protagonists of all the stories are children - specifically, children from the period of war. (Nusratova H., 2017, 12)

Furthermore, according to the researcher, the "Afghan stories" series, which comprises 15 stories, is comparable with the "1947 stories" series in terms of the core topic. However, the events differ in terms of time and space. Even though the writer did not experience the war first-hand, he appeared indirectly as a participant in the war in the events described in the "Stories of 1947" series. He wrote the "Afghan Stories" series through direct participation in the Afghan war, deeply feeling its tragic impact on children and successfully expressed the theme of the tragic life of foreign children during the war. Barnoev's poems and stories from this series resonated not only with the Afghan nation but also with children worldwide. (Nusratova H., 2017, 12)

---

\* Corresponding author

Safar Barnoev authored numerous books in Uzbek children's prose that profoundly depicted the teenage psyche. Notably, the writer pioneered the tradition of writing a series of stories in Uzbek children's storytelling. These series gained special significance because they covered events of political and social life. While most prose books published in Uzbek children's literature during the 70s and 80s of the 20th century reflected the mood of the time and the life and feelings of teenage children, short stories and novellas also flourished during this period. These pieces artistically explored the lives of teenagers in various ways. The works paid attention to the development of moral attributes of teenagers, and the scope of depicting their school-related lives expanded. Among the works by writers such as H. Nazir, H. Tokhtaboev, E. Raimov, and H. Polatov dedicated to this topic, Barnoev's short stories have a special place. P. Shermuhammedov, in his article "Kichkintoylar Nigohi", discussed the accomplishments and shortcomings of the writer's short stories "Nur yog'ilgan kun" ("Sunlight Day") and "Tutash yo'llar" ("Connecting Paths") (Shermuhammedov, 1973, 158). M. Husainov, in his review article devoted to the analysis of children's literature of the 70s and 80s, limited his comments to the writer's novella "Egizaklar" ("Twins"). (Husainov M., 1989, 223) Although the writer turned to prose with the intention of providing a broader interpretation of the theme of war and childhood, various aspects of a child's character are extensively covered in his short stories and novellas.

The "Stories of 1947" series includes over ten stories where the tragedy of war is experienced through a child's heart, and people's tragic fate is witnessed through a child's eyes. The story "To'lin oy" ("Full Moon"), part of this series, is narrated from the perspective of a boy whose father has gone to war. The boy frequently writes letters to his war-bound father, but he never receives a response. He maintains the belief that his father will return from the war. The story concludes with the boy discovering that he has received a dreaded 'black letter' from his father. Ultimately, this represents the tragedy of the child's psyche. Until this point, he believed that his father would return; he constantly awaited his father's return and envisioned a future with him. The sudden realisation of the truth shatters all his dreams and inspirations.

The tragedy begins before the boy becomes aware of this fact. The adults, knowing that a 'black letter' has

arrived from his father, send the boy to his grandfather, who resides in a distant village, and they grieve and offer condolences. This is hinted at throughout the story. For example, the grandfather pats his head with tearful eyes; the grandmother cries in solitude. These actions, however, remain abstract. Eventually, the adults recognise that the truth cannot remain hidden and decide to inform the child of this fact. "I long for him, looking at the door... When my mother appears to be alone, I immediately ask the question: 'Mother, when will father come?' 'Tomorrow.' 'When will he come tomorrow?'"

I am aware that my mother always provides the same response to my question. Subsequently, she nibbles on the end of her scarf while staring at me, or she might say, "Go, play with your friends. I'm tired and need a rest." (Barnoev S., 1979, 162)

The realisation of the tragedy occurs when the child returns home - to his mother. Simultaneously, the reader also comprehends the tragedy that has transpired: the father has died in the war. This story is penned as an expression of profound tragedy. To express such tragedy, the author would have had to experience a similar situation. In this respect, the story portrays not only the protagonist's tragedy but also the author's. After all, Safar Barnoev himself was orphaned at an early age and endured this tragedy from his youngest years.

Suvon Meli, a renowned literary scholar, identified three types of tragicness in his article "Edges of Tragedy": 1) heroic tragedy, 2) author's tragedy, and 3) period tragedy. (Suvon Meli, 2020, 50-59) In this regard, we can argue that all three aspects of tragicness are reflected in the story "Full Moon" from Safar Barnoev's "Stories of 47 Years" series.

## 2 EXPERIMENTAL PART

The fate of a boy whose father went to war and never returned is highlighted in the story "Nasiba" ("Fate") by Safar Barnoev. From the outset, the ongoing war is made evident by the people's chatter. Consequently, the story's characters are not immune to this tragedy. In the tale, like all fathers, Karimjon's father is drawn into the conflict. Before he departs, relatives and neighbours congregate at their home, each taking a bite from a loaf of bread given to the father. This ritual is a national tradition, symbolising the hope that the soldier will not sever ties with his homeland, but instead will have the fortune to return

and eat the bread he once bit into. It may be just a tradition, but for those heading to war and those left behind, it provided a glimmer of hope — a hope that the soldier would return alive.

After fathers, husbands, and brothers were conscripted, life carried on. The burden then fell on women, the elderly, and children. Karimjon, like all children, toiled in the fields, carried bread on his back, and harvested corn. The story's significance lies in its detailed portrayal of the characters' tragic circumstances. This detail is encapsulated by a piece of bread, hinting at its importance right at the start of the story. At the outset, we read, "Brother, bite the bread. If you return safely, we'll share the bread and eat together." (Barnoev S., 1985, 83) This particular detail might suggest the father's return. However, as the events unfolded, the opposite proved true.

Each morning, Karimjon would look at the piece of bread his father had bitten, hanging on the house's netting before setting off to work, steadfast in his belief that his father would return. The author narrates the difficult days, the struggle to make ends meet, and the hopeful boy awaiting his father during these challenging years. By the end of the story, the pivotal detail finally fulfils its role. The bitten bread vanishes, symbolising the entire tragedy:

"Karim was pleased with his work that day. He had collected an abundance of corn ears. Nobody had berated him. The brigadier wasn't present... He left the bag full of ears in the hall and went into the house, as usual, to see the bread his father had bitten into. He stepped inside and froze. He couldn't believe his eyes. The bread was no longer hanging on the stake. He hastily felt the wall... He ran out into the yard. His mother hadn't yet returned from the field. He dashed directly towards the field where his mother was working. Seeing her son approach hurriedly, the mother put down her hoe and went out to meet him:

- What's happened, Karimjon? Has your father come back?

- No, - replied Karimjon, shaking his head, - there's no bread that my father bit into.

The mother shivered and sat up abruptly. She then embraced her son and began weeping uncontrollably." (Barnoev S., 1985, 87)

By the story's conclusion, it is revealed that Karimjon's mother had given the bitten bread to the

neighbour's children, who were suffering from hunger. However, she hadn't anticipated the profound impact the bread's disappearance would have on her child.

"Karim was more distraught than when his father had gone to war; he couldn't sleep and wept throughout the night:

- The bread's gone; he won't return. His mother's heart broke at her son's wailing. She hadn't expected this. What had she done..." (Barnoev S., 1985, 88)

By the end of the story, the boy is resolved to find the thief who stole the bread. To maintain hope, the mother assures her child that they will hunt for the thief together. The story captures the child's anguish through his actions and words. The portrayal of adults is also integral to the story. Interactions between adults, their conversations and dialogues play a crucial role in expressing the child's persona. The tragedy – acknowledged by adults but merely sensed, not fully understood, by the child – is manifest in the story. The fact that the child is determined to locate the thief who stole the bread signifies a deep-seated feeling of the tragedy, despite not comprehending it entirely. The era's tragedy - the war - represented a profound calamity that affected all of humanity. Therefore, the story commences with the depiction of the tragic mood of the time. The hero's and the author's tragedies are subtly hinted at throughout the story and are ultimately fully disclosed. The tragedy and tragic state of mind experienced and felt by this hero also serve as an expression of the author's own tragedy.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Safar Barnoev's short stories and novellas, tragedy unfolds not only from the catastrophic events of war or separation. The writer expertly articulates the tragic experiences that arise from the interpersonal relations, conflicts, disagreements, and misunderstandings of the characters. The story "Izlar" ("Traces") is featured in the book "Soldat qaytgan kun" ("The Day the Soldier Returned"). As often emphasized in literature, conflict is vital; sometimes, it's the most significant aspect of a work. Berdiali Imomov, in his work titled "Dramatik mahorat sirlar" ("Secrets of Dramaturgical Skill"), represents conflict as the driving force of dramatic plays. While B.Imomov argues that conflict shapes the content of a drama, it is undeniable that conflict manifests itself, to varying degrees, in every genre.

"Conflict is a crucial component that propels the development of events in a work, manifesting in varying degrees depending on the potential of each era, each artistic form, and genre. Anxiety stems from a disruption of harmony, and it is necessary to eliminate this disturbance. The resolution of conflict paves the way for restoring previous balance, or the trajectories shift from one state to another. The presence of conflict, its development, and resolution bring closure to the fate of the characters and events. Conflict fuels the plot. The author should flesh out the characters without predetermining the events. Characters evolve throughout the plot, and these changes also influence the storyline. The plot's activity facilitates the full unfolding of content. Conflict is a disagreement between characters. The clearer and more vividly individualised the characters are, the more intense and sharp the conflict becomes. Intrigue, in essence, is also a form of conflict, built on perplexing events, often found in comedy. There was a time when the theory of non-conflict prevailed, causing conflict to disappear or significantly weaken, not only in novels but also in dramas of that era. The discontinuation of the non-conflict theory had a positive impact on the development of literature and art. An artistic conflict cannot be equated with real-life conflicts. Conflict was classified into antagonistic and non-antagonistic types." (Imamov B., 1991, 183)

Conflict (lat. conflict) refers to the mutual struggles of the characters in an artwork, the clashes between the hero and his environment, as well as contradictions within his psyche. Because artwork is an artistic reflection of reality with the human figure at its core, all conflicts present in a person's real life find an artistic representation. (Kuronov D., 2018, 176)

The story "Izlar" is entirely built on the premise of conflict, with this conflict depicted through the characters' attitudes and their inner experiences, right up to the plot's culmination. The protagonists are Year 6 students, but given their varying ages, substantial conflicts and power struggles ensue. Among them, Solly is known for his aggressive nature, making all the students fearful due to his pugnacious tendencies. Everyone follows Solly's instructions. In the midst of this, a new student joins the school. Tursunboy, who until now had studied in a rural school, quickly gains the respect of his new city school peers, earning praise from his teachers for his academic excellence. Naturally, this development does not sit well with Solly, who is considered the "best" in the class, and his friends. From this point, it is evident that the plot

begins to be built on the basis of conflict. The initial conflict progressively escalates throughout the story. By the story's end, it's clear this conflict has triggered a deeply poignant and melancholic experience. The tension is palpable in the dialogues. "After lessons, Solly slowly signalled us and intercepted Tursunboy. The three of us encircled him.

- "How are things, scholar, desi?" Soli asked.

- "Good," answered Tursunboy.

- "What's good?"

- "It's good."

- "If you do homework, you must copy it into my notebook," Halim said seriously.

- "Why?" Tursunboy asked.

- Soli said, "You have to say yes sir to what I said."

- "I won't say so," Tursunboy retorted, "Everyone should work on their own."

- "That's great," Soli said.

- "So, you don't want to?" Halim approached Tursunboy.

- "I don't want to," said Tursunboy without hesitation... (Barnoev S., 1979, 134)

The dialogue ends with the children fighting. But the result will be different from what was expected. According to the plan, the three children were going to beat Tursunboy thoroughly. However, Tursunboy, who had grown strong from hard work in the village, overpowered the city children. If the passers-by on the street hadn't intervened in this commotion and separated them, the city children would have been in real trouble. Of course, the story didn't end there. The conflicts then further escalated. Meanwhile, the children ordered Tursunboy to steal the class journal. When Tursunboy refused, they stole it and burnt it themselves. One day, Tursunboy, preparing a lesson in the classroom late in the evening, accidentally saw the burning journal thrown through the window from outside. The children falsely accused him of stealing the class journal and burning it. The conflict became increasingly serious. The school director, teachers, and Tursunboy's wealthy aunt all pointed fingers at him. This incident ended with Tursunboy being expelled from school and returning to his village. The children in Soli's group would undoubtedly have felt a slight sense of satisfaction. However, the boy-narrator-hero admitted that this happiness was exceedingly hollow and insignificant. He deeply regretted his unjust treatment of Tursunboy and felt compelled to do something to atone for this guilt. This shift indicated that the direction of the conflict in the story had changed... The conflict was no longer between the characters but within the psyche of the hero. This internal conflict was one of the most

complex aspects of the hero's psyche, which eloquently expressed the nuances of a person's inner world.

"Tursunboy," I said quietly.

He stopped. He closed his eyes, then continued on his way...

I carry a heavy burden...

"... I still haven't gotten rid of that burden..." (Barnoev S., 1979, 140)

When the hero of the story narrates, it's apparent that he isn't telling an interesting tale, but expressing his heartache and pain. After all, one of the heaviest burdens in the world is a guilty conscience. The troubled, despondent mood in Kudrat's psyche is felt from the very beginning of the story. The children are portrayed as cruel, unkind, and neglected. In particular, Tursunboy's wealthy aunt nonchalantly decides to send him back to the village because Tursunboy accidentally broke her expensive porcelain bowls. These incidents underscore that Tursunboy is a tragic figure. By the end of the story, Qodir is left with an overwhelming regret for his and his friends' actions. Even when he happens to see Tursunboy and wishes to speak to him, he finds himself unable to. This inability also speaks volumes about his inner turmoil. Experiencing the tragedy of Tursunboy's oppression, Qodir finds himself living this tragedy.

In general, in Safar Barnoev's story "Traces", the psyche of the children, their inner worlds, are vividly embodied, and the tragic nature of the hero's psyche is poignantly reflected.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

A characteristic feature of S. Barnoev's books and style is that any idea the writer wanted to express was first consistently reflected in his poetry, then in his lyrical-epic works, prose, and even, when necessary, in his journalism. He initiated the tradition of writing a series of stories in Uzbek children's literature, which is particularly significant because they encompass events of political and social life.

In general, there are many aspects of Safar Barnoev's oeuvre that still need to be explored and researched. After all, Safar Barnoev, as a prolific writer, poet, and publicist, dedicated his work to children. His prose profoundly reflected the psyche of teenage children. In this sense, the expression of tragedy in a child's psyche also amplified the effectiveness of his books.

#### REFERENCES

- Barnoev S. 1979, Soldat qaytgan kun. (The day the soldier returned), Tashkent: Young Guard, 224 p.
- Barnoev S. 1985, Mukofot. Hikoyalar. (Award. Stories) Tashkent: Gafur Ghulam Literature and Art Publishing House, 186 p.
- Nusratova H. 2017 Safar Barnoevning badiiy mahorati. Filol f.n. ilmiy darajasini olish uchun yozilgan diss. avtoref. (Artistic skill of Safar Barnoev. Philology f.n. diss. written for degree. autoref.) Samarqand.
- Suvon Meli. 2020 Badiiy tragizm qirralari // So'zu so'z (Edges of artistic tragedy // Word by word), Tashkent: East.
- Shermuhamedov P 1989. Ijod dardi (Creativity is a pain) Tashkent: Fan
- Husainov M. 1989 O'zbek bolalar adabiyoti va adabiy jarayon (Uzbek children's literature and literary process), Tashkent: East.
- Imomov Berdiali. 1991 "Dramaturgik mahorat sirlari" ("Secrets of dramaturgical skill"), Tashkent: Publishing house of literature and art.
- Quronov D. 2018. Adabiyot nazariyasi asoslari (Basics of literary theory) Tashkent: "Navoi University"