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Symbolism and Social Commentary in Cho'Ip'on's Stories: Landscape and Artistic Details

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Cho'Ip'on's symbolic use of natural elements, such as the "sea" and the "shore," to explore themes of societal oppression, economic hardship, and the fate of women in his stories. By analyzing key characters and their interactions, the study highlights how Cho'Ip'on portrays the inner struggles of his female protagonists against patriarchal and socio-economic challenges of their time. The article also delves into the metaphorical implications of recurring motifs, such as the sea's resilience and the shore's dominance, to shed light on broader issues of gender inequality and social injustice. Through a detailed exploration of these symbolic representations, the research underscores Cho'Ip'on's advocacy for women's empowerment and his critique of societal norms that perpetuate their subjugation.

Keywords: Cho'Ip'on, symbolism, sea and shore metaphor, women's fate, societal oppression, gender inequality, patriarchal norms, socio-economic challenges, literary analysis, empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

In society, ideal individuals guide people toward specific goals. This is because individuals unify around a common ideal in pursuit of their objectives. As E. V. Osichnyuk aptly emphasized, "The role of a societal ideal in an individual's life is significant" [1].

By the beginning of the 20th century, the social and cultural changes occurring in society were also reflected in literature. An important question arose in the new era of literature: What requirements should be placed on the literary-aesthetic ideal? The resolution of this issue can be found in P. Kropotkin's statement: "Artistic literature is not devoid of a personal character; no matter how much the author strives, their desires are reflected in their work. They idealize what aligns with their dreams" [2].

In the first quarter of the 20th century, Korean creators influenced by Western culture and art gained the opportunity to create freely on various topics. Writers and poets of the new era shifted their focus from creating the image of an ideal person in line with the ideas of the feudal

backwardness era to producing works that reflected transformations in the human psyche, the heroes of the era, freedom, and the independent individual. In doing so, they relied on examples from world literature.

At the beginning of the era, the issue of the ideal, like poetic imagery, was interpreted with new meaning in both Korean and Uzbek prose. Figures such as Lee Gwang-su and Kim Dong-in in Korean literature, and Fitrat and Cho'Ip'on in Uzbek literature, emerged in line with the worldview of those seeking to transform national consciousness.

"Although poetic images are developed and perfected by certain creators, they form and attain completeness within a specific literary environment, gradually becoming a tradition over time. It is no secret that, in the early 20th century, poetic imagery began to be constructed on a purely secular, national, and social foundation" [3].

The Korean writer Kim Dong-in and the Uzbek writer Cho'Ip'on highlighted their aesthetic ideals through their

stories, which often carried unexpected resolutions. In their stories, the ideals they sought to convey were reflected in every depicted event, action, and detail, guiding readers toward a clear goal. In this context, the scholar P. Turopova's statement is particularly relevant: "The creator's ideal varies depending on the work created during different periods and by different authors. At the same time, the literary-aesthetic ideal is manifested in various forms, influenced by the creator's emotional experiences and the needs of the era. Therefore, each creator may depict their ideal differently based on the purpose of writing, their worldview, and the demands of their time" [4].

The protagonists chosen by both writers, whether male or female, are characterized by their natural behavior. The stories penned by both authors stand out among the works of their contemporaries due to the weight of their ideas. For this reason, the artistic components employed in their stories resonate deeply with the reader's heart. This, in turn, demonstrates that the authors possess a distinct voice and style of their own.

In the story "A Basket of Sweet Potatoes" by Kim Dong-in, a hut is introduced as a significant detail. The author describes the hut as follows: "Uch-to'rt oy shu tarzda ishlagandan keyin bir xaroba kulbani ijaraga olish uchun pul ishlab topdi", "Ijara haqini vaqtida to'lamaganlari uchun tez orada ularni bu kulbadan quvib chiqarishdi", "Ularning shahar darvozasidan tashqarida joylashgan xarob kulbalardan iborat mahallaga borib yashashdan boshqa choralari qolmadi", "Bu daraxtlar qurib qolishiga olib kelishi mumkinligini o'ylagan shahar ma'murlari qashshoq aholini, asosan xarob kulbalarda yashaydigan ayollarni ipak qurtini qo'lda terishga jalb etishga qaror qilishdi" [5] (Trans: "After working like this for three or four months, they earned enough money to rent a dilapidated hut", "Soon, they were evicted from this hut because they failed to pay the rent on time", "They had no choice but to move to a neighborhood outside the city gates, consisting of run-down huts", "Fearing that this might lead to the trees drying up, city officials decided to employ the impoverished people, mostly women living in these dilapidated huts, to manually collect silkworms").

The detail of the hut in the story reflects the dire condition of the impoverished people, symbolizing not only the tragedy of the main character but also the tragedy of the era as a whole.

"Aslida detal barcha janrlarda ham o'ziga xos o'rin tutadi.

Lekin u hikoyada boshqacha ahamiyat kasb etadi...hikoya qisqa hajmli asar. Qisqalikka esa tasvirda so'zlarni tejash orqali erishiladi. Ana shunda detallashtirish mahorati yozuvchiga qo'l keladi. Ijodkorning topqirligi tufayli qo'llangan detallar tilga kirganda hikoya gapirib yuboradi..." [6] (Trans:"In fact, details hold a unique place in all genres. However, they take on a different significance in short stories... A short story is a concise form of writing. Conciseness is achieved through the economical use of words in the description. This is where the skill of detailing benefits the writer. When details, cleverly employed by the author, come into play, the story begins to speak for itself..." [6]).

In Kim Dong-in's story, the detail of the hut transitions to the detail of a house when a turning point occurs in Ponnyo's life. "Uyga kelgach, u shu uch von pulni erining oldiga qo'ydi va o'zining daladagi sarguzashtini unga kulib gapirib berdi", "Shu voqeadan keyin xitoy Van Ponnyoning uyiga tez-tez kelib turadigan bo'ldi", "Shundan so'ng Ponnyoning eri ham indamasdan issiq kan ustidan turar va uydan chiqib ketardi" [5] (Trans:"After coming home, she placed the three won in front of her husband and, laughing, told him about her adventure in the field". "After that incident, the Chinese man Van began to visit Ponnyo's house frequently". "From then on, Ponnyo's husband would silently get up from the warm floor mat and leave the house" [5]).

Nature and the seasons have always inspired writers and poets in depicting human nature. The Korean writer Kim Dong-in subtly highlights the changes in the character of the simple girl Ponnyo by briefly referencing the seasons. The transformations in Ponnyo's psyche and her steps into a "new life," as well as the profound meanings the author hints at, are reflected in the spring and autumn seasons:

"Yoz kunlarining birida Pxenyandagi qarag'ayzorni ipak qurti bosdi" [5] (Trans: "One summer day, the pine forest on the outskirts of Pyongyang was infested with silkworms" [5])

In classical poetry, the pine tree often symbolizes uprightness and steadfastness of character. However, in the phrase "qarag'ayzorni ipak qurti bosdi" (trans: "the pine forest was infested with silkworms") the author alludes to the corruption of human thought. This is significant because it was in this setting that Ponnyo first stepped onto the path of moral downfall. Unemployed and desperate, Ponnyo found work by chance but was not happy about it,

as she observed that some young and beautiful women like herself were neither working nor climbing trees but instead spending their days playing games and socializing. Eventually, Ponnyo was drawn into this group.

The author then shifts to the next season:

“Yana kuz keldi. Kuzda kambag‘allar yashaydigan mahalla ayollari tunda shahar yaqinidagi xitoylarning pushtalariga shirin kartoshka – batat va karam o‘g‘irlagani tushishar edi. Bu tungi “yurishlar”ga Ponnyo ham qo‘shilar, qishloqda yashagan paytidagi ko‘nikmalarni eslab, qorong‘uda birovning kartoshkasini chapdastlik bilan yulib olardi” [5] (Trans:“Autumn came again. In autumn, women from the poor neighborhood would sneak out at night to the fields near the city owned by the Chinese to steal sweet potatoes and cabbages. Ponnyo joined these nightly escapades, using the skills she remembered from her time in the village to deftly pluck potatoes from the ground in the darkness” [5]).

In Kim Dong-in’s depiction of autumn, Ponnyo’s life begins to settle, mirroring the calmness of the season. She now lived in relative comfort, and her beauty flourished even more. Along with immorality, she began engaging in theft. However, these nightly “escapades” turned out to open doors of opportunity for her. During one such night, Ponnyo was caught by the landowner, a Chinese man named Van. Instead of punishing her, Van invited her to his home. From that point on, Ponnyo not only continued stealing sweet potatoes but also started visiting Van’s house, where she would receive “three won” each day.

The period of abundance in her life is symbolized by the latter part of autumn, marked by its cold winds and falling leaves. Autumn, blending with the chilly breath of winter, encapsulates the struggles, regrets, and sorrows hidden within the season’s essence—reflecting the inner turmoil and unfulfilled desires that plagued the author.

“Qish o‘tdi. Bahor keldi” (trans: "Winter has passed. Spring has arrived" [5]).

In the sentence "winter has passed," the author refers to the end of Ponnyo’s era, the completion of oppression’s work, while in "spring has arrived," he implies the beginning of a new life for the Chinese woman, Wan. Through this natural phenomenon and its artistic interpretation of attitudes toward women, the author’s main purpose becomes clear.

Kim Don, while portraying the moral conflicts between Ponnyo and the Chinese woman Wan, justifies Ponnyo’s actions based on the character of her husband. For instance, Ponnyo was sold by her father to an old, lazy man, and as the head of the family, her husband was not only supposed to take care of her but also protect her. According to the Confucian norms adhered to by the Korean people, Ponnyo was expected to obey her husband without question, submit to him, and live contentedly with what she had. However, the author logically argues that these customs fail to hold under the circumstances that arose.

This is first observed in the initial argument between the husband and wife:

“ – Bug‘doy solingan qopni bir chetga olib qo‘ying. O‘tishga xalaqit beryapti!

– O‘zing olib qo‘y! Uxlashga berasanmi, yo‘qmi, ajina?!

– Menmi?...Katta qopni men qanday ko‘taraman...

– Nima, o‘rgatishmaganmi? Yigirma yoshga to‘lguncha nima qilgansan? Qopning og‘zidan ol-da, sudra”(Trans: "– Move the sack of wheat to the side. It’s blocking the way!

– Move it yourself! Are you going to let me sleep or not, you witch?!

– Me? ... How can I lift such a big sack?

– What, no one taught you? What have you been doing until the age of twenty? Grab the mouth of the sack and drag it!" [5]).

From that moment on, Ponnyo became disillusioned with family life. The responsibility of providing for the family was placed on her shoulders by her husband, the head of the household. This burden is symbolized by the detail of the sack. Trapped within the figurative "sack," Ponnyo suffers emotionally, her dissatisfaction with life growing stronger. Consequently, she violates family rules, breaks marital traditions, and steps outside the bounds of morality.

In truth, the author depicts the complexity of social problems during a period of colonial oppression and decline, illustrating how a woman caught in such a vortex is forced to violate spiritual and moral norms.

In the story, the use of phrases like “bug‘doy solingan qop” (sack filled with wheat), “katta qop” (big sack), and

“qopning og‘zi” (mouth of the sack) enhances the intensity of the conflict in the plot and the events’ progression. These details influence Ponnyo’s character and her subsequent actions.

“Bug‘doy solingan qop” (sack filled with wheat) symbolizes a stable family and abundance, while “katta qop” (big sack) signifies the woman’s fragility and her inability to shoulder such a heavy responsibility. However, the husband’s casual remark, “qopning og‘zi” (mouth of the sack), creates the impression that he granted her freedom.

The phrase “qopning og‘zi” (mouth of the sack) opened signifies that Ponnyo broke family rules and ventured into the neighborhood in search of money. The writer portrays Ponnyo’s, or rather the era’s woman’s, step toward a new life in this way.

The economic crises, shortages, and poverty that arose in the country significantly altered people’s consciousness, worldview, and attitude toward social existence. This, in turn, created conditions for the emergence of negative factors and became a pressing issue for society. It appears that under the influence of political, social, and economic processes, Kim Don’s literary and artistic thinking entered a new path of development. Concerned about the nation’s future and the fate of its people, Kim Don sought to convey to readers the problems caused by negative factors with profound reflection in his stories.

In Cho‘lpon’s story "A Tulip in the Snow", similar details are employed to reveal the character of Sharofatxon, with one of the most significant details being the ball (koptok).

“Bir, ikki, uch, to‘rt...besh; besh...olti! Yetti, sakkiz, to‘qqiz, o‘n...

Kichkina, qizil ipdan bezalgan to‘p (koptok) aljib qochib ketib, yerto‘la og‘ilning devoriga yondoshib o‘skan yosh qantak o‘rikka borib tegdi-da, sakrab hovuzg‘a “sho‘p” etib tushib ham ketdi...” (Trans: "One, two, three, four... five; five... six! Seven, eight, nine, ten...

The small ball (koptok), decorated with red thread, wobbled and darted away, hitting the young wild apricot tree growing against the cellar barn’s wall. It then bounced and went ‘plop’ straight into the pool...” [7]).

In Cho‘lpon’s depiction of the ball’s bounce, he

metaphorically paints a portrait of the young (small) and beautiful (decorated with red thread) girls of that era. Like the ball, the girls do not stay in one place; they are lively and cheerful, and Sharofatxon is one of them. However, it is known that stagnant water in a pool, over time, begins to stagnate and emit a foul odor. The ball that falls into the pool (symbolizing the young girls of that era) becomes wet and no longer bounces, representing the fate of girls who no longer have control over their lives.

The pool serves as a symbol fully reflecting the figure of the eshon (a religious elder). Sharofatxon, sacrificed to the eshon, sees her dreams and desires vanish like the soaked ball that will no longer bounce. The author expresses this through lines such as “...the street is so dark” and “...there isn’t even a single star in the sky to guide” [8]. Here, the girl who has entered (or rather, been forced to enter) the dark street is likened to a starless sky, symbolizing the loss of hope and freedom.

“Gullarning ramziy obraz sifatida she’riyatga kirib kelishi qadimgi odamlarning e’tiqodlari, ilk tasavvur-tushunchalari, totemistik qarashlari bilan bog‘liq” (Trans: “The symbolic representation of flowers entering poetry is connected to the beliefs of ancient people, their early perceptions and concepts, and their totemistic views” [7]).

"In some prose works, alongside plants, certain flowers have been widely used to depict human nature, virtues, and physical appearance. Flowers have often symbolized the beauty of girls, expressions of love, or longing. In creating the character of Sharofatxon, Cho‘lpon draws upon the tulip (lola), a flower that blooms early in spring, bringing warmth to the heart after the cold winter. He transfers the tulip’s characteristics to the image of Sharofatxon: the tulip, blooming and delighting the eyes, represents Sharofatxon at the peak of her youth, catching the attention of suitors; the untimely picking of the tulip symbolizes her being offered by her father as a sacrifice to the eshon; and the "tulip covered by snow" signifies her being given to the eshon (or the wedding ceremony). Cho‘lpon describes this as follows:"

“– Nimasini ayta-siz, yigitlar, dunyo o‘zi shunday teskari dunyo ekan...Lolaning ustiga qor yog‘di-da!.. – dedi” (Trans: “– What can I say, boys? The world itself is such an upside-down place... Snow has fallen on the tulip!.. – he said” [7]).

Similarly, the detail of the mahalla (neighborhood) is used

in the stories of both authors. In Kim Don's story, phrases such as "...they moved to one of the ruined neighborhoods where poor people lived" [5], "They had no choice but to live in the ruined huts located outside the city gates" [5], "Most of the residents of this neighborhood survived by begging" [5], and "The couple, considered the poorest of the poor living in the neighborhood of the destitute, often went hungry" [5] illustrate that, despite the Kabo Reforms of that period, social stratification persisted among people.

At the same time, the author aims to show that the residents of these neighborhoods from the lower classes were driven solely by the struggle to fill their stomachs. Ponnyo, who began living in such a mahalla, fell into a bottomless pit of immorality. In her struggle to survive, she completely forgot the upbringing and values instilled by her lineage and parents. Through this, the writer lays the groundwork for Ponnyo's subsequent actions.

Cho'lon, in his various stories and novels, approaches the issue of women's fate from different perspectives. For instance, the main character in the story "Novvoy qiz" (The Baker Girl) is a young woman who bakes and sells bread to support her elderly mother and make a living. The story provides clear and vivid depictions of human nature and the fate of women:

"Xoin erkakning marhamatsiz ko'zlari bilan aldangan qizning so'nik ko'zlari bir-biriga yo'liqishdi. Erkak mag'rur, zaharli va sovuq bir kulish bilan kuldi. Qiz juda bir og'ir jirkanish bilan yuzlarini burdi" (Trans: "The lifeless eyes of the deceived girl met the merciless gaze of the treacherous man. The man laughed with a proud, venomous, and cold sneer. The girl turned her face away with a deep and heavy sense of disgust" [7]).

The author, through phrases like "merciless gaze" (marhamatsiz ko'zlar) and "venomous and cold sneer" (zaharli va sovuq bir kulish), portrays the ruthless character of an unscrupulous man like O'lmasboy. On the other hand, through "the girl's lifeless eyes" (qizning so'nik ko'zlari) and "turned her face away with a deep sense of disgust" (og'ir jirkanish bilan yuzlarini burdi), he highlights the tragic fate of the girl.

The scholar D. Quronov, who studied Cho'lon's works, evaluates it as follows: "Qahramonlar ruhiyasidagi kontrastlilik, bir tomondan, bo'lib o'tgan ishning qiz uchun tom ma'nodagi fojiayu, O'lmasboy uchun oddiygina ko'ngil xushligi: ikkinchi tomondan, qiz uchun fojianiing

kutilmaganda yuz berganiyu, O'lmasboy buni oldidan rejalashtirib qo'ygani bilan quyushadi" ("The contrast in the characters' emotions, on one hand, reflects the event as a true tragedy for the girl, while for O'lmasboy, it is merely a fleeting pleasure. On the other hand, the intensity is heightened by the fact that the tragedy was unexpected for the girl, whereas O'lmasboy had premeditated it" [9]).

In this story, Cho'lon compares the girl's helplessness to the "sea" (dengiz) and the fickle nature of the man to the "shore" (qirg'oq). In his poem "Xalq", where he likens the sea to the people, the author uses the detail of the "sea" to depict the dire state, helplessness, and lack of protection of one drop (the girl) from the people (xalq). "Dengiz shu qadar buyukligi bilan hamma vaqt qirg'oqlardan yengiladi. Achchig'i kelganda, g'azabi qaynaganda zo'r-zo'r to'lqinlar, kichik-kichik mavjlarni qirg'oqning tosh-metin gavdasiga qarab otadi. Qirg'oq, yuqorilarga ko'tarilib ketgan marmar qirg'oq, koshki pinagini buzsa! Bechora to'lqinlar, mavjar sinib, mayda-mayda bo'lib, yana dengizning ko'ksiga tushdi. Dengiz ularni yana silab-sipab boshini bir yerga qovushtirib, to'plab, yana qirg'oq otadi. Yana bo'linish, yana parchalanish...Tuganmas olishish!" (Trans: "The sea, despite its vast greatness, is always defeated by the shore. When angered and boiling with rage, it hurls mighty waves and small ripples toward the steadfast, stone-like body of the shore. The shore, the marble shore towering high above—if only it would show the slightest crack! But the poor waves and ripples break apart, shattering into countless pieces, only to fall back onto the chest of the sea. The sea gathers them again, caressing and soothing them, uniting their broken parts, and once more hurls them at the shore. Again, division, again, fragmentation... A never-ending struggle!" [7]).

The elements mentioned in the text—"sea" (dengiz), "shore" (qirg'oq), "wave" (to'lqin), and "ripple" (mavj)—are not merely descriptions of the landscape but also serve as symbolic details that reveal the characters, nature, fate, and destiny of the girl and O'lmasboy.

The girl, who until then had only worked tirelessly, knowing nothing beyond baking and selling bread to support her sick mother, represents the sea (dengiz). She was defeated by O'lmasboy, symbolized by the shore (qirg'oq), who ruined her life. She was enraged, disgusted, and tormented by what had happened, but ultimately, she shattered into fragments before her destiny, like ripples breaking upon the shore.

The author conveys this through phrases such as "...qiz bu safar iztirob va qiynoq aralash bir yuz bilan to'ppa-to'g'ri erkakning ko'zlariga tikildi-da...", "Qiz juda og'ir bir jirkanish bilan yuzlarini burdi", "...titragan lablari orasidan mana shu ikki og'iz so'zni zo'rg'a chiqara oldi", "Butun borlig'ida to'lib-toshgan iztirob va g'azab, horg'inlik va darmonsizlikni sezdirmas edi", "Ko'ksi qisildi, dami og'irlashdi, hansiradi", "Shundan so'ng qiz – dengiz o'z ojizligini bildi va butun qahr va g'azabini o'z taniga singdirib olib, paranjisini boshiga tashladi-da..." (Trans: "...the girl, this time with a face full of pain and anguish, looked straight into the man's eyes...", "The girl turned her face away with a deep sense of disgust," "...from her trembling lips, she could barely utter those two words," "Her entire being was filled with torment and anger, exhaustion and helplessness, yet she did not show it," "Her chest tightened, her breathing grew heavier, and she panted," and "After that, the girl—the sea—recognized her weakness, absorbed all her fury and anger into herself, threw her veil over her head, and..." [7]).

Cho'lpon uses the detail of the sea (dengiz) to reflect the girl's nature and inner state, portraying the family's struggles, economic hardship, and, on top of it all, her mother lying on her deathbed and the absence of anyone to support her. The story concludes with an unexpected resolution for the reader. The sea, once defeated by the shore, eventually overcomes it:

"Dengiz – qiz qullarday jim turib so'zladi.

Qirg'oq – O'lmas tog'larday tinch turib tingladi.

Qirg'oq ag'darildi.

Tog' yiqildi.

Dengiz mavjlari va to'lqinlari quchog'iga olib, ularni qirg'oqlardan saqlash: qo'riqlash qayg'isiga botdi" ("The sea—the girl—spoke quietly, like a servant.

The shore—O'lmas—stood still, listening calmly like a mountain.

The shore collapsed.

The mountain fell.

The sea, with its ripples and waves, embraced them, engulfed in the sorrow of protecting and shielding them from the shores").

While reading the story, it becomes evident that its ending was meant to be tragic. Cho'lpon entrusted the girl, whose life was incomplete and widowed, with the responsibility of protecting other girls. This is why the story concludes with: "Dengiz mavjlari va to'lqinlari quchog'iga olib, ularni qirg'oqlardan saqlash: qo'riqlash qayg'isiga botdi" ("The sea, with its ripples and waves, embraced them, engulfed in the sorrow of protecting and shielding them from the shores") (Trans: The author imbued the sea—the girl—with renewed strength, revealing that his ultimate aim was to protect women and shield them from ignorance embodied by the shore).

The life of the girl resembles the sea—furious and crashing against the shores in anger when her honor was tarnished, yet calm and serene before judgment was passed on the shore. Orphaned at a young age after losing her mother, her life was filled with suffering. Worn down and battered like waves against the coast, the girl eventually began to see life differently and embraced a tranquil path. Now, she had to protect others like herself from men like O'lmasboy, who exploited and destroyed lives like cliffs dominating the shores.

It seems that the baker girl from Cho'lpon's story "Novvoy qiz" ("The Baker Girl") deserves a rightful place among aesthetic ideal characters. This is because her character was crafted in accordance with the demands of the time, embodying Cho'lpon's thoughts and reflections about women who kept pace with their era. As the scholar A. Akopova noted, "...har bir estetik idealning o'ziga xos tabiati bor" [2]. ("...every aesthetic ideal has its own unique nature" [2]).

In the story penned by the Korean author, the life of the Korean people is depicted against the backdrop of the hardships they faced. It portrays their suffering during a period of spiritual impoverishment, the loss of human values, and the reasons behind the erosion of compassion and mutual respect. Ponnyo's actions—her descent into immorality and her willingness to resort to any vile act for survival—profoundly provoke the reader to reflect. On one hand, this indicates a decline in faith, and on the other, what might seem like a mere moral failing symbolizes the tragedy of an entire nation.

Kim Dong-in's mastery lies in his ability to illustrate the deepening of immorality through the fate of one woman, emphasizing not only the environment but also the indifference of those around her.

As an advocate of “pure literature,” Kim Dong-in’s story is artistically and ideologically profound. It represents a novelty for the emerging modern Korean prose, marking an evolution of classical and medieval literary traditions to a new level. As the renowned writer Chingiz Aitmatov aptly put it: (Trans: “...har bir yangi asar hayotni yangicha talqin etishni, yangicha uslub, yangicha shakl, yangicha badiiy tashbehnlarni talab etadi” “Trans:...every new work requires a fresh interpretation of life, a new style, a new form, and new artistic imagery” [12].

The story vividly portrays two distinct periods in the country’s history—the transition from feudal backwardness to the Japanese annexation era—depicting the social environment, people’s lifestyles, poverty, and ignorance through generalized images. The writer’s skill is revealed in new dimensions, successfully conveying the social issue to the reader with fresh narrative approaches. The story thoroughly exposes the social conflicts arising in Korean society during this time.

Kim Dong-in’s portrayal of Ponnyo and Cho’lpon’s depiction of the baker girl both highlight the exceptionally harsh and tragic destinies of women during this period. Cho’lpon avoids idealizing the baker girl, instead portraying her with all her complexities. In contrast, Kim Dong-in, in some instances, depicts Ponnyo as someone who indulges in her emotions, particularly evident in her behavior after the Chinese man, Van, gets married.

Both stories reveal conflicts shaped by the social environment—fate versus misfortune, poverty versus wealth, humility versus cruelty, strength versus weakness, and trust versus mistrust. In the conclusion of the Korean writer’s story, the protagonist dies as a result of violating societal moral norms. However, in the Uzbek writer’s story, the girl, whose honor was tarnished by a selfish man, ultimately triumphs.

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