

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF AGRARIAN CRISIS IN THE NOVELS THE GRAPES OF WRATH BY JOHN STEINBECK AND BETWEEN TWO DOORS BY UTKIR KHOSHIMOV

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Abstract: *Agrarian problems have historically been among the most significant socio-economic issues reflected in literature. The transformation of rural life under the influence of economic, political, and environmental changes has shaped the thematic focus of many literary works. In this regard, the novels of John Steinbeck and Utkir Khoshimov offer valuable insights into the condition of farmers in different socio-cultural contexts. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck presents the agrarian crisis as a result of structural economic changes. The Great Depression, combined with ecological disasters such as the Dust Bowl, led to the displacement of thousands of farming families. The land, which once symbolized stability and identity, becomes inaccessible to its traditional owners. Banks and large agricultural corporations replace individual farmers, transforming the rural economy into a system driven by profit rather than human need.*

Key words: *transformation, a human-centered agrarian system, displacement, valuable insights, socio-cultural contexts*

Steinbeck's depiction reveals a critical shift from a human-centered agrarian system to a mechanized and impersonal economic order. Farmers are no longer autonomous agents but victims of economic forces beyond their control. This loss of agency is central to understanding the depth of the agrarian crisis portrayed in the novel. In contrast, *Between Two Doors* by Utkir Khoshimov reflects agrarian life within a different socio-political framework. While economic difficulties exist, they are not the sole focus. Instead, the novel emphasizes the interplay between material conditions and moral values. Farmers are portrayed as individuals navigating complex social relationships, where economic survival is intertwined with ethical responsibility. Thus, while Steinbeck highlights external economic pressures, Khoshimov presents a more integrated view of agrarian life, where economic and moral dimensions coexist.

The portrayal of farmers' hardships in both novels reflects the authors' commitment to realism. However, the nature of these hardships differs significantly.

In Steinbeck's narrative, hardship is primarily external and collective. The Joad family's journey illustrates the devastating impact of displacement, poverty, and exploitation. Their struggle for survival is marked by physical suffering, including hunger, fatigue, and

insecurity. The harsh conditions of migrant life expose the vulnerability of farmers in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

Moreover, Steinbeck emphasizes the dehumanization of farmers. They are often treated as disposable labor, valued only for their economic utility. This portrayal underscores the ethical implications of an economic system that prioritizes efficiency over human dignity. On the other hand, Khoshimov's depiction of hardship is more nuanced and internalized. Farmers face challenges that are not always visible but are deeply felt. These include moral dilemmas, social pressures, and conflicts between personal desires and societal expectations. The symbolic concept of "two doors" represents the choices individuals must make in difficult circumstances. Each decision carries moral consequences, reflecting the complexity of human existence. In this sense, hardship is not merely a matter of survival but also of maintaining integrity and ethical values. The psychological portrayal of characters is a key aspect of both novels. Through their characters, the authors explore the emotional impact of agrarian hardship.

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, psychological suffering is closely linked to material deprivation. The loss of land leads to a loss of identity, creating a sense of alienation and despair. However, Steinbeck also highlights the resilience of the human spirit. Characters such as Ma Joad embody strength and determination, serving as sources of stability in times of crisis. The collective nature of suffering in the novel fosters a sense of solidarity among displaced farmers. This shared experience becomes a foundation for mutual support and resistance against injustice.

In contrast, Khoshimov's characters experience psychological conflict on a more individual level. Their struggles are often internal, involving questions of right and wrong. Emotional tension arises from the need to balance personal interests with social responsibilities. Hoshimov's focus on inner life allows for a deeper exploration of human consciousness. His characters are not merely victims of circumstance but active participants in shaping their moral identity. Family and community play a central role in both novels, serving as sources of support and conflict.

In Steinbeck's work, the family is depicted as a unit of survival. The cohesion of the Joad family enables them to endure extreme hardships. However, the pressures of migration and poverty gradually weaken traditional family structures. This reflects the broader disintegration of rural society under economic stress. Community, on the other hand, emerges as an alternative form of support. Migrant camps become spaces where solidarity and cooperation are essential for survival. Steinbeck suggests that collective action is necessary to address systemic injustice.

In Khoshimov's novel, family and community are deeply embedded in cultural traditions. They function as moral frameworks that guide individual behavior. Respect for elders, social responsibility, and adherence to ethical norms are central values. However,

these institutions can also impose constraints. Individuals may struggle to reconcile personal desires with societal expectations, leading to internal conflict. This dual role of family and community adds complexity to Khoshimov's portrayal of rural life.

Both authors use literature as a means of addressing social issues, but their approaches differ. Steinbeck adopts a direct and critical stance. His novel exposes the injustices of the economic system and calls for social reform. The vivid depiction of farmers' suffering is intended to evoke empathy and inspire action. Steinbeck's work aligns with the tradition of social realism, where literature serves as a tool for raising awareness.

In contrast, Khoshimov employs a more implicit form of social critique. Rather than focusing on systemic issues, he explores the ethical dimensions of human behavior. His work encourages readers to reflect on their own values and decisions.

This difference in approach reflects broader cultural and literary traditions. While Western literature often emphasizes external conflict and social critique, Eastern literature tends to focus on moral introspection and philosophical reflection.

A comparative analysis of the two novels reveals both similarities and differences in the representation of agrarian problems.

Common features include:

- 1) The centrality of farmers as representatives of rural society
- 2) The depiction of hardship and resilience
- 3) The emphasis on human dignity and moral values

Differences include:

- 1) The nature of conflict (external vs. internal)
- 2) The focus of narrative (economic vs. ethical)
- 3) The stylistic approach (realistic vs. reflective)

These differences highlight the influence of cultural context on literary representation. At the same time, the similarities demonstrate the universality of agrarian issues.

Conclusion. The analysis of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and *Between Two Doors* by Utkir Khoshimov confirms that agrarian problems are a significant and enduring theme in literature. Both authors provide a comprehensive portrayal of farmers' lives, addressing economic, social, and moral dimensions. Steinbeck's work highlights the impact of systemic injustice and environmental crisis, emphasizing collective suffering and resistance. Hoshimov's novel, in contrast, focuses on individual morality and the complexity of human relationships within rural communities. Together, these works offer a multidimensional understanding of agrarian life, demonstrating that the challenges faced by farmers are both context-specific and universally relevant. Their continued significance underscores the role of literature in exploring and addressing social issues.

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