

**THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN'S INDEPENDENCE IN AMERICAN AND UZBEK LITERATURE (A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GONE WITH THE WIND AND O'TKAN KUNLAR)**

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the concept of women's independence in American and Uzbek literature through a comparative analysis of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan Kunlar*. By examining the female protagonists Scarlett O'Hara and Kumush, the study analyzes how women's independence is represented within different historical, cultural, and social contexts. The research focuses on women's personal freedom, economic agency, moral autonomy, and social roles as reflected in the two novels. Using comparative and textual analysis methods, the article demonstrates that while women's independence is a universal human aspiration, its literary representation is deeply shaped by national traditions, cultural values, and historical conditions.*

**Keywords:** *women's independence, comparative literature, American literature, Uzbek literature, Scarlett O'Hara, Kumush.*

### **Introduction**

The issue of women's independence has long been one of the central themes in world literature. Literary texts often serve as a reflection of social realities, revealing how women's roles, rights, and freedoms are shaped by historical and cultural circumstances. In different societies, women's independence has been understood and represented in diverse ways, ranging from economic and social autonomy to moral strength and inner freedom.

American literature, especially in the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often emphasizes individualism, self-reliance, and personal ambition. In contrast, Uzbek literature traditionally reflects a society deeply rooted in family values, moral responsibility, and social customs. These differences provide a rich ground for comparative literary analysis.

This article aims to examine the concept of women's independence in two significant novels: *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell and *O'tkan Kunlar* (1922) by Abdulla Qodiriy. By analyzing the characters of Scarlett O'Hara and Kumush, the study seeks to identify similarities and differences in the portrayal of women's independence in American and Uzbek literary traditions.

### **Theoretical Framework: Women's Independence in Literature**

Women's independence can be defined as a woman's ability to make personal decisions, maintain moral and intellectual autonomy, and actively participate in social



and economic life. In literary studies, this concept is often explored through female characters who either challenge or adapt to patriarchal norms.

From the perspective of feminist literary criticism, women characters are frequently depicted as subjects struggling for self-expression within male-dominated societies. However, independence does not always manifest as open rebellion. In many Eastern literary traditions, including Uzbek literature, women's independence is often expressed through moral integrity, patience, and inner strength rather than external social freedom.

Therefore, analyzing women's independence requires attention not only to visible actions but also to internal values, emotional resilience, and ethical choices. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of female characters in different cultural contexts.

### **Women's Independence in *Gone with the Wind***

Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* is set during the American Civil War and Reconstruction era, a time of dramatic social and economic change. The novel portrays the collapse of the old Southern aristocracy and the emergence of new social realities. Within this context, Scarlett O'Hara stands out as a complex and unconventional female character.

Scarlett O'Hara embodies a strong sense of individualism and determination. Unlike traditional Southern women, who are expected to be gentle, submissive, and dependent on men, Scarlett actively resists these expectations. Her primary goal is survival, and she is willing to defy social norms to protect her family and property.

One of the most significant aspects of Scarlett's independence is her economic agency. After the devastation caused by the war, she takes responsibility for preserving Tara plantation and later becomes involved in business activities. Her willingness to work, manage finances, and make strategic decisions demonstrates a form of independence that was rare for women of her time.

In addition, Scarlett's approach to love and marriage reflects her desire for personal control. She enters marriages not purely for emotional fulfillment but often for financial security or social advantage. While this behavior is morally ambiguous, it highlights her refusal to conform to traditional romantic ideals imposed on women.

However, Scarlett's independence is not without limitations. Her emotional immaturity and lack of empathy often isolate her from others. Thus, Mitchell presents women's independence as a powerful yet complex force, capable of both empowerment and personal conflict.

### **Women's Independence in *O'tkan Kunlar***

Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan Kunlar* is considered one of the first realist novels in Uzbek literature. The novel depicts the social life of Turkestan in the late nineteenth century, focusing on issues such as tradition, reform, family relations, and social injustice. Within this framework, the character of Kumush represents an idealized image of an Uzbek woman.

Unlike Scarlett O'Hara, Kumush does not openly challenge social norms. Her independence is subtle and primarily internal. She is portrayed as intelligent, morally

strong, and deeply devoted to her family. Despite living in a patriarchal society where women's choices are severely restricted, Kumush maintains her dignity and personal values.

Kumush's independence is most evident in her moral autonomy. She is capable of making ethical judgments and expressing her feelings with sincerity and courage. Her loyalty, patience, and emotional strength allow her to endure injustice without losing her sense of self.

The tragic fate of Kumush reflects the harsh realities faced by women in traditional society. Her suffering highlights the limitations imposed on women's independence by social customs such as polygamy and rigid gender roles. Through Kumush's character, Qodiriy criticizes the social system that suppresses women's rights and individuality.

### **Comparative Analysis of Scarlett O'Hara and Kumush**

A comparative analysis of Scarlett O'Hara and Kumush reveals both similarities and significant differences in the representation of women's independence. Both characters demonstrate strength and resilience, yet their paths to independence are shaped by their cultural environments.

Scarlett's independence is external and action-oriented. She openly challenges social expectations and prioritizes personal survival and success. Her independence is closely linked to economic power and individual ambition.

In contrast, Kumush's independence is internal and value-oriented. She adheres to social norms but preserves her moral integrity and emotional autonomy. Her strength lies in endurance, ethical consistency, and inner resistance rather than social rebellion.

These differences illustrate how women's independence is not a uniform concept but a culturally conditioned phenomenon. Western literature often associates independence with individual freedom and material success, while Eastern literature emphasizes moral strength and spiritual resilience.

### **Conclusion**

The comparative study of *Gone with the Wind* and *O'tkan Kunlar* demonstrates that women's independence is a central literary theme shaped by historical and cultural contexts. Scarlett O'Hara represents a model of active and pragmatic independence rooted in individualism and economic agency. Kumush, on the other hand, embodies moral and emotional independence within the constraints of a traditional society.

Although their expressions of independence differ, both characters reflect women's desire for self-worth, dignity, and personal agency. This study confirms that women's independence is a universal value, yet its literary representation varies according to national traditions and social structures. Such comparative analyses contribute to a deeper understanding of gender roles and cultural diversity in world literature.

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