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## **The role of superstitions in Uzbek and English literature in the examples of Abdulla Qahhor's "Bemor" (Patient) and Shakespeare's "Macbeth": A comparative study**

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**Abstract**---The present article is devoted to an actual theme of linguaculturology - the use of superstitions and their influence on people. More attention is paid to the comparative pragmatic analysis of superstitions in two literary works by Khahhor and Shakespeare. Examples from both literary works are compared and differences found.

**Keywords**---superstitions, beliefs in supernatural things, Qahhor, Bemor, magic, nescience, Macbeth, omens.

### **Introduction**

Superstitious expressions have prevailed in all cultures for so long ages. Perhaps, not more attention has been paid to the use of them among language users, however there is enough peculiarities of this sphere to be studied. In literary works of well-known authors only one may encounter several superstitions used by heroes. In the meantime, even there some of them of which plots are organized around them. In the following article we try to present our little research on this field relying on two masterpieces of authors from two different cultures: "Bemor"(Patient) by Abdulla Qahhor and "Macbeth" by William Shakespeare. Comparative and contrastive analysis of these two works reveals that in any period of humanity belief in supernatural powers existed and had significant effect on individuals' life or at least the main plots of the stories were focused on them. Describing the 17<sup>th</sup> century's royal problems in his work, Shakespeare depicted various scenes where superstitions controlled human beings and their

destiny. The same similarity happens with the heroes of Uzbek story by Qahhor, main heroine was a victim of illiterate superstitious beliefs.

## **Materials and Methods**

While analyzing these two works, it was found that only small number of researchers shed light on literal side of superstition use; whereas there have been some investigations by Bleak & Frederick (1998), Dudley (1999), Wright & Erdal (2008) in terms of the worlds of athletics, academics, and economics. Regarding to their work, superstitions are prevalent in every step of people. Certain expressions used by authors such as ““Tell me, thou unknown power-” Macbeth said” in tragedy, Macbeth or in “Bemor” – “...for not feeling after remorse, Sotiboldi made her wife be quilted by one old woman for wishing recovery” seem to point out that people of the past were apparently powerless in challenging situations, but only hoped help from mirage. Using deductive method, we have found that there are certain similarities and contrasts between these two masterpieces. Even if the chosen Uzbek story is little in the content, but deep in meaning and has been studied by many Uzbek and Russian scientists such as.... The author, Abdulla Qahhor describing the background of the story writes that “Like many others, I struggled with "writing" until I realized that my own experiences and personal impressions were the most valuable material for a literary work” [1, p. 2-3]

According to his descriptions the story was based on his own life experiences. Once depicting his life condition he recalled “My mother was in labor in the dark, and I could hear her moaning and groaning inside. At such times, an elderly woman would be called from the neighborhood. She didn't have to be an experienced medical practitioner, her old age was enough to believe that she can heal people” [12, p.36]. The same with English drama, Palestinian researcher - Jamal Subhi Ismail Nafi studied the tragedy comparatively showing some superstitious elements in the work; Namibian researcher, Emilia Amuthenu critically analyzed some works of Shakespeare including Macbeth and stated that “...Shakespeare uses superstition and visions such as dreams, omens, apparitions and ghosts in his plays to bring in some dramatic effects, chaos and also to bring in some confusion amongst the characters”[2, p.17-18]

## **Discussion**

Regarding similarities in both literary works, it is fairly comprehensive that both works` main heroes were affected by their beliefs and faith in supernatural powers. The main changes in plots are generally based on superstitions. Undoubtedly, the use of superstitions demonstrates that how it was complicated to live in that primitive period. Whenever people felt scared or helpless, they always addressed to prevailing superstitions or they were made to believe in them unconsciously [10, 2-3]. In “Bemor”, it is clearly shown that when someone suffers from illness it was common at that time to call “an old woman” as she can heal the sufferer or at least help for recovery. Some processions were carried out, for instance that old lady sacrificed any animal (mostly cock or sheep in Uzbek culture) and ill person was anointed with the blood of the sacrificed animal. That happens in “Bemor” when Sotiboldi`s wife was suffering from pain “A woman came and beat him with a piece of string, butchered the chicken and anointed”.

In “Macbeth” through the work, author describes how main hero believes in those “three witches”, how he talks when he needs. Precisely, in both works “an old lady” or “three witches” seem to be the same root of a superstition – believing in old women or asking something from them. There were not any proofs of their help to solve the problem, however heroes keep believing in them. Another likeness between the works is defined in dreadful consequences of believing in supernatural powers. In “Bemor” the main sufferer of heresies is the wife of Sotiboldi who didn’t get any proper help or even was not left in peace. Eventually, she died of that disease but we would say that the main reason her death was deep rooted superstitions and people’s blindly; another main contributing factor for bad ending is nescience of people, in the meantime other members of the family became victims of those beliefs one of them was four-year-old little girl and the other one is only bread-winner of the family who was rarely feeding his family –Sotiboldi.

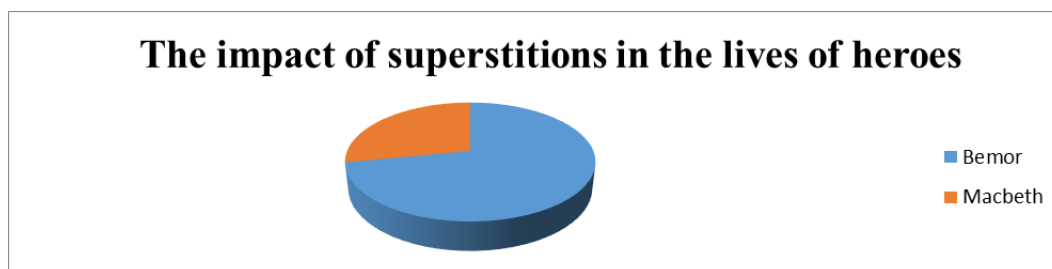
Likewise, in Macbeth the main hero believing in those three witches and their prophecies about future, commits a murder. Macbeth kills the King of Scotland, perhaps the main trigger was his constant addressing and talks with witches that only exists in his mind. However, the dramatist describes the witches like reality, possibly it is because of his intention to create dramatic effect in the tragedy. All the time it was clear that the base and foundation of the continuing tragedies were rooted in the belief of supernatural forces. Despite the fact that Macbeth did that, he felt guilty. It is shown in the dialogues of him and himself. What is more, in Act 1, Scene 5: “the raven is a hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan” [13, p.21-22], in this part Lady Macbeth believes that the croak of the raven is a bad sign of the death of Duncan King. Again something unwanted or bad thing related beliefs led to dire consequences. Here is found another interesting superstition that is related to birds superstitions - that is believed about bad sign, in Act 2, Scene 2, Lady Macbeth says: “it was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman”. As a result it has been once more proved that superstitions and people’s beliefs in them never leads to a good ending. There are several differences between these works, one of them refers to the address of the works. Among English dramatists, actors and artists, there are euphemisms such as “Scottish play” or “the Bard’s play” concerning Macbeth play. Regarding to a theatrical superstition, named “Scottish curse”, uttering the word Macbeth inside the theatre is believed to cause disaster. It is certainly the result of the effect of masterpiece on people, even the work was written centuries ago, its heft is still prevailing among audience. Avoiding to say the leading characters’ names, they are called the Scottish king, Scottish Lord, Scottish Lady or Mackers and MacB are referred to Macbeth and his wife [5, p.294]

Contrary to English tragedy, Uzbek short story has not got continuing superstition-related background but it does not mean that it is not being studied. Perhaps, it is likely that there is difference between the rate of superstitious nations. One of them still keep following superstitions, another one may have already got rid them of. In addition, some contrastive features between works appear in the reason of the birth of superstitions. From the plot of Uzbek story one may vividly conceive that people of the story were in poverty, they were illiterate, mainly they were helpless. While in Macbeth, writer describes the story of a soldier who is thirsty for power, his overriding ambition makes him be more

faithful to various superstitions. Writer use the idea of “prophecy by witches” to empower the main hero, the role of supernatural power is flaring the existing intention of main hero. Yet, it is understandable and vivid that Macbeth misinterprets the prophecy (if it exists), being unable to understand that witches are untrustworthy and they have no good he only realizes the hidden reality while facing his death. Apparently, till that moment he has already done enough to be described as a tyrannical figure.

## Result

In both works, omens, ghosts, witches, prophecy and signs were used to determine the lives of heroes. Again it is undoubtedly clearly described that in the past people were enough naïve to let unbelievable features control their life. As a result, while studying the works comparatively it has been found out that there are two substantial similarities and two significant differences. Their differences lie mostly in the reason of their cultural backgrounds. According to the use of superstitions, both works show that heroes were the victims of prevailing superstitions in their time, but the heroes of Macbeth suffered a lot more and more tragic situations happen due to their belief. If we describe it in a chart, it would be like this:



Relying on our research on these literary works we have found that there is significant cultural factor of nations` address to superstitions. Certainly, literature is the reflection of a nation, beliefs and faith, so as a result they can be analyzed by both linguistic and cultural side. In this work we tried to study two parts of literature on the field of linguaculturology and pragmatics.

## Conclusion

To conclude, in the present article we have a brief discussion of the use superstitions in two literary works by two different culture and nations. While studying we looked through the reasons of superstition use, their impact on people, their role/meaning, the differences and similarities of beliefs in supernatural power between works. The comparison and contrast of the works have been proven with the means of examples from works. Our little research is highly likely to be one of the contributing bases for upcoming thorough research works.

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