

**INTERPRETATION OF SYMBOLIC IMAGES AND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS IN
THE SHORT STORY “JAJMAN”**

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Abstract. This article offers a literary and philosophical analysis of Khurshid Dustmuhammad’s short story “*Jajman*.” Particular attention is paid to the symbolic images of the work, their semantic layers, and inner meanings, which are examined in close connection with real-life reality. Through a system of symbols, the author reveals the spiritual crisis of society, inner conflicts within the human psyche, and issues of moral decline driven by base desires. The study substantiates that the use of symbolic representation enables the writer to artistically generalize real-life phenomena and to construct a philosophical interpretation of social reality. The article also analyzes the ideological and artistic features of the story, the relationship between symbol and reality, and the significance of the work within the context of the contemporary literary process.

Keywords: bazaar, people of the bazaar, greed, nafs, Zardusht-bobo, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman.

In Uzbek prose, one of the writers who holds a distinctive place thanks to the depth of artistic thinking, rich symbolic expression, and philosophically reflective nature of his stories is Khurshid Do’stmuhammad. In the writer’s works, reality is not confined to simple depiction; rather, the human psyche, moral issues within society, and the contradictions of the era are revealed through artistic generalization. In particular, the short story “*Jajman*”, written by the author, encourages the reader not to focus directly on the flow of events, but to look deeply into their inner essence and symbolic layers. The story’s allegorical nature and contemplative tone prompt the reader to think actively and to form a personal interpretation. At first glance, the characters in “*Jajman*” may seem fictional and detached from real life. However, a reader who approaches the work with deep reflection perceives behind these images the reality of life artistically reinterpreted by the author, as well as important philosophical conclusions about society and human nature. The symbols in the story do not represent reality in its literal form; rather, they function as artistic devices that reveal its inner essence. In this respect, “*Jajman*” is not only a literary work, but also a philosophical text that leads the reader toward moral and ethical contemplation and therefore requires special scholarly analysis.

Main Body. The writer’s short story “*Jajman*” is written entirely in a symbolic sense, in which each image carries its own distinctive symbolic function. The story begins in a marketplace, depicting how, from early morning, the people of the market are busy with their daily affairs. In essence, the marketplace represents the world in which we live. Just as in a market, a person encounters all kinds of people in this world, and like the market folk in the story, individuals may become absorbed in their own concerns and troubles in life. In the market, a creature called *jajman*, that is, a thief-like being, appears. At first, people pay little attention to it, but over time it becomes increasingly difficult to stop. In the story, the *jajman* symbolizes

human greed or desire (*nafs*). At first glance, it is not easy to grasp what it signifies; the writer deliberately leaves this interpretation to the reader. The more a person indulges their desires, the more they want-just as a human being can never satisfy their greed, one can never satiate the *jajman*. In the story, as the market people suffer losses, they set various traps for the *jajman*, yet they fail to stop it. Similarly, no matter how much a person struggles against their own desires, they cannot completely rid themselves of them. As for the appearance of the *jajman*, it is described as being only a handspan tall, with a face like a fox, resembling a mouse or a squirrel. No matter how much it eats, it is never full, and it carries a sack beside it. No matter how much it puts into this sack, it never becomes full. Greed is the same: at first, like the *jajman*, it may seem small and insignificant, but it is never satisfied-the more it has, the more it desires. Like a fox, greed continually tempts a person into committing wrongdoings.

In addition, the story introduces another character-Zardusht bobo. He is also a symbolic figure, portrayed as a hero with strong faith who is able to restrain his desires. His remembrance of his grandmother, and her emphasis that “this *jajman* existed before, it exists now, and it has grown considerably stronger,” also actually points to human desire (*nafs*). That is, human greed has existed since the very beginning; from the moment a person is born, they live in constant struggle with it. At the end of the story, the *Jajman* is captured and beaten to death. As it dies, it repeatedly says, “lo kilo, lo kilo.” Here, we can observe the writer’s use of a “play on words”: when the letters are read in reverse, the phrase becomes “alik ol, alik ol,” meaning “I am your desire-take me, accept me, welcome me.” This suggests that the *jajman* is none other than the human ego or greed, constantly inviting the person to embrace it.

Now, as for the word “*jajman*,” such a word does not exist in the dictionary of any people. However, “*jajman*” can be understood as “*jaggi man*,” that is, the little me, the inner me-one’s ego, base desires. After *Jajman* dies, chaos breaks out around, the wall beyond begins to rumble, a hole opens, and from it emerges another *Jajman*, slightly larger than the previous one. If a person follows the dictates of their ego and vices, the next time it grows even stronger; former desires then seem insignificant. Even though a person struggles against it, the ego never surrenders easily. Just as the second *Jajman* appears, a person’s inner feelings are also thrown into turmoil. In addition, the work refers to Ahuramazda and Ahriman. In Avesto, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, Ahuramazda is portrayed as the embodiment of good, while Ahriman represents evil, and it is said that there is a constant struggle between the two, which ultimately ends in Ahuramazda’s victory. In life as well, the struggle between the human being and the ego, between good and evil, continues unceasingly.

In a life, constant struggle continues between the human being and ego, between goodness and evil. By introducing these mythological symbols into the story, the writer raises the events of “*Jajman*” to a universal philosophical dimension and regards them not as a specific individual situation, but as an eternal problem that humanity faces . The confrontation between Ahuramazda and Ahriman is a symbolic representation of the inner conflict within the human soul-between light and darkness, faith and desire, goodness and evil. From this perspective, the short story “*Jajman*” is significant not so much for its event-driven plot as for its profound moral and ethical content. Every character and every detail in the work leads the reader away from external events toward an understanding of inner essence. The marketplace functions as a symbol of life itself, while *Jajman* represents the insatiable human ego and desire. Zardusht Bobo embodies faith, life experience, and spiritual awareness. Through the figures of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, the eternal struggle between good and evil finds its artistic expression. By uniting these images into a coherent symbolic system, the author emphasizes the complexity of human nature and advances the idea that desire should not be eradicated entirely, but rather restrained and controlled.

The open ending of the story also carries significant artistic and stylistic importance. Although *Jajman* appears to have been destroyed, its reemergence in an even larger form signifies the immortality of human desire, which merely changes its form and scale rather than

disappearing altogether. This narrative choice encourages the reader not to settle for a simple conclusion, but instead to reflect on their own life, to acknowledge the “Jajman” within, and to engage in a continual inner spiritual struggle against it. Thus, through its rich symbolic layers, the short story “Jajman” occupies a distinct place in Uzbek prose as a deeply philosophical work that illuminates the human inner world, moral responsibility, and the process of self-awareness.

Conclusion. If a person fails to recognize in time such a flaw inherent in their very nature—the “little self,” that is, the ego or desire—and does not exercise inner self-examination and control over it, this condition inevitably leads to spiritual decline and moral degradation. In Khurshid Dostmuhammad’s short story “Jajman,” this process is conveyed powerfully and in depth through artistic symbolism. When desire is left unrestrained, it gradually takes possession of human consciousness and begins to erode moral standards, ultimately causing the individual to lose a sense of responsibility before society and their own conscience. The content of the work demonstrates that the greatest danger to a human being arises not from external forces, but from the vices concealed within the inner world. Through the image of the “little self,” the author interprets desire as a force that may appear small and insignificant, yet—when neglected—can grow into a source of immense destruction. For this reason, the story calls upon the reader to engage in constant self-analysis, inner purification, and a heightened awareness of moral responsibility. “Jajman” thus functions not only as an artistic warning, but also as a profound philosophical conclusion that urges the individual toward self-discipline and moral self-education.

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