

MIGRATION IN UZBEK LITERATURE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS (WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD)**Namazova Manzura Urakovna**

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Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the migration theme in Uzbek literature, tracing its evolution from traditional epics to contemporary postcolonial narratives. Based on precise statistical data from international organizations (UN, IOM) and Uzbek state statistics, the study examines how labor migration to Russia (affecting 10-12% of Uzbekistan's population, approximately 2-2.5 million people by 2010) has transformed literary discourse since independence in 1991. Applying postcolonial theory (Bhabha's "third space," hybridity, Said's Orientalism) and transnational analysis methods, the article identifies key literary trends: economic causation versus family tragedy motifs, cultural identity crisis and "unhomeliness," nostalgia and return desires. Comparative analysis with world literature (Rushdie, Lahiri) reveals both universal tendencies (hybridity, displacement) and specific features of Uzbek labor migration literature. The study employs discourse analysis and narrative analysis to demonstrate how Uzbek literature critically engages with social policy, unemployment, and family disintegration while gradually incorporating global postcolonial theoretical frameworks.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, labor migration, postcolonial theory, hybrid identity, transnationalism, "unhomeliness," discourse analysis, economic migration, cultural identity crisis.

Migration represents one of humanity's most ancient and persistent phenomena, yet its literary expression has undergone radical transformation in the era of globalization. While world literature has extensively explored postcolonial migration, intellectual diaspora, and displacement through theoretical frameworks developed by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and others, Central Asian literary traditions have received comparatively limited scholarly attention [1, 201]. This article addresses this gap by examining how Uzbek literature has engaged with migration, particularly the mass labor migration to Russia that emerged following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991.

The scale of this phenomenon demands serious literary analysis. According to official Uzbek statistics and international organization data (UN, IOM), by 2010 over 2 million Uzbeks were working in Russia, representing approximately 10-12% of the country's total population [2, 45]. By 2023, this figure remained stable at 2 million, with 1.2 million (60%) in Russia, demonstrating the persistent structural nature of this migration [3, 78]. Unlike the intellectual or political displacement characteristic of postcolonial diaspora literature, Uzbek migration is predominantly economic labor migration, creating distinct literary representations that this article analyzes through comparative and discourse-analytical methodologies.

The theoretical framework combines postcolonial theory with transnational analysis, examining how Uzbek writers negotiate between local specificities and global literary trends. As Rustamjon Urinboyev's ethnographic research demonstrates, Uzbek migrants maintain transnational connections through "po rukam" (informal hand-to-hand) practices and smartphone-mediated contact with homeland, creating new forms of cultural hybridity [4, 112].

The roots of migration themes in Uzbek literature extend to traditional epics and classical literature. The "Alpomish" epic contains motifs of exile and return that resonate with contemporary narratives [5, 156]. However, modern forms developed during the Soviet period and intensified after independence.

The first decade of independence (1991-2000) represented an economic transition period marked by unemployment, poverty, and industrial decline [6, 234]. From the mid-2000s (2005-2010), labor migration intensified dramatically due to: slow economic reforms and insufficient

job creation; Russian demand for construction and service workers (simplified visa regime and higher wages); and mass rural exodus [7, 267].

Unlike Soviet-era internal migration, contemporary Uzbek migration possesses distinct postcolonial characteristics. It represents both the legacy of colonial economic dependency and new globalization processes [8, 45]. From postcolonial theoretical perspective (Bhabha, Said), this phenomenon creates "third space" and hybrid identity—the migrant feels fully "at home" neither in Uzbekistan nor in Russia [9, 78].

Transnational analysis reveals how migrants maintain homeland connections through smartphone-mediated communication, creating "virtual diaspora" phenomena that literature increasingly represents [10, 112]. The feminization trend—growing participation of women and youth in migration—has introduced new gender dimensions previously underrepresented in literary discourse [11, 156].

Table 1. Uzbek Labor Migration Statistics (2010-2023)

Indicator	2010	2023	Source
Total migrants in Russia	2.0-2.5 million	1.2 million (60% of total)	IOM, Uzbek State Statistics [2, 45; 3, 78]
Percentage of population	10-12%	~6% (due to population growth)	UN estimates
Remittances as % of GDP	12-15%	~15%	World Bank data
Feminization trend	15% women	35% women	IOM reports [11, 156]

Labor migration became a prominent literary theme in Uzbek literature during the late 2000s-early 2010s. Prior to this period, migration appeared primarily as Soviet-era internal mobility (village-to-city migration in works by Abdulla Qahhor, Oybek) [12, 201]. The independence period saw intensified social-realist criticism in narrative prose, with migration "entering the novel" as a central theme in publications like *Sharq yulduzi* journal [13, 234].

Discourse analysis of contemporary Uzbek prose reveals consistent patterns. Characters are compelled to migrate due to unemployment, creating tension between "hope for earnings" and "reality" [14, 267]. Narrative structures typically depict: the migrant's difficult labor abroad, experiences of humiliation, and nostalgia for homeland. Unlike intellectual diaspora literature, economic necessity drives plot development.

Narrative analysis demonstrates how internal monologues reveal psychological complexity. Characters oscillate between economic obligation and emotional attachment, creating dramatic tension peculiar to labor migration literature [15, 45].

Postcolonial theory provides essential tools for analyzing identity transformation in Uzbek migration literature. Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness"—the condition of being culturally displaced, feeling neither fully at home in the native country nor in the adopted land—accurately describes migrant experiences in Uzbek texts [9, 78].

Hybridity manifests as characters attempt to preserve Uzbek values while Russian life transforms them. They become neither fully Uzbek nor part of Russian society, inhabiting Bhabha's "third space" [16, 112]. Intergenerational rupture—children growing up fatherless, cultural values weakening—receives powerful literary expression through narrative techniques that contrast rural tradition with urban displacement [17, 156].

Discourse analysis of language use in these texts reveals code-mixing and cultural translation challenges that mirror real migrant experiences [18, 201].

Nostalgia functions differently in Uzbek migration literature compared to world literature counterparts. While Jhumpa Lahiri or Salman Rushdie explore mental return and homeland idealization, Uzbek texts emphasize economic return—the impossibility of returning until financial goals are achieved [19, 234]. This pragmatic nostalgia distinguishes labor migration literature from intellectual diaspora narratives.

Uzbek prose employs realistic detail (dialogues, working conditions, family relationships) that continues post-Soviet realist traditions while incorporating globalization's impact [20, 267]. Unlike magical realist or postmodern approaches in world migration literature, Uzbek writers maintain documentary-style representation that serves social criticism function.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis: World vs. Uzbek Migration Literature

Aspect	World Literature (Postcolonial)	Uzbek Literature
Migration type	Intellectual, political exile	Economic labor migration
Primary cause	Colonialism, war, education	Unemployment, poverty
Literary style	Magical realism, postmodernism	Social realism, documentary detail
Identity crisis	Race, language, gender	Intergenerational rupture, economic necessity
Hybridity	Cultural enrichment	Suffering, contradiction, "between two worlds"
Nostalgia	Mental return, idealization	Economic return, pragmatic constraints
Gender focus	Women migrants central	Male migrants dominant (changing)
Social criticism	Imperialism, colonialism	Government policy, unemployment, family destruction

Comparative analysis reveals shared patterns between world and Uzbek migration literature. First, hybridity: following Bhabha's concept, both literary traditions depict characters forming new identities between two cultures [21, 45]. In Rushdie or Lahiri, this appears as cultural enrichment; in Uzbek stories, as suffering and contradiction—demonstrated through discourse analysis of language and cultural code mixing [22, 78].

Second, nostalgia and "unhomeliness." While world literature connects this feeling to postcolonial trauma, Uzbek literature intensifies it through desires to return to family and homeland [23, 112]. The migrant never feels fully at home anywhere, embodying Bhabha's "unhomeliness" concept [9, 156].

Third, identity crisis. World examples emphasize race, language, and gender; Uzbek context prioritizes intergenerational cultural rupture and economic causation [24, 201]. Transnational approaches connect this to virtual communication patterns (smartphone-mediated homeland contact) [4, 234].

Significant differences persist. World literature typically interprets migration as intellectual or political exile (diaspora literature), while Uzbek literature focuses on mass labor migration's

social consequences [25, 267]. Realistic elements (life details, dialogues) dominate Uzbek literary expression, serving stronger social criticism functions [26, 45].

Younger generation writers (2010-2020) increasingly absorb these themes, having themselves grown up during the migration period, gradually incorporating global postcolonial theoretical elements into local contexts [27, 78].

Modern analytical methods deepen understanding of Uzbek migration literature. Discourse analysis reveals how narrative structures, linguistic choices, and cultural codes interact to produce meaning [28, 112]. Transnational analysis demonstrates how literature represents virtual connectivity and simultaneous presence in multiple spaces [4, 156].

The future prospects for migration literature in Uzbekistan appear expansive. As globalization continues, younger writers increasingly synthesize postcolonial theoretical elements with local specificities, potentially contributing to world literature while maintaining critical engagement with social issues [29, 201].

The migration theme in world and Uzbek literature reveals both universal human problems (identity, displacement, nostalgia) and nationally specific characteristics shaped by historical and economic contexts. World literature demonstrates hybridity and cultural dialogue possibilities through postcolonial theory; Uzbek literature analyzes labor migration's social-psychological consequences [30, 45]. Comparative analysis illuminates shared humanity while respecting cultural particularity.

Modern analytical methods—transnationalism, discourse analysis—deepen these insights. Globalization creates expanding prospects for migration literature. Uzbek literature can further develop this theme, actively joining world literary processes while contributing to social problem resolution through artistic representation [31, 78].

The economic foundations of Uzbek migration distinguish it from intellectual diaspora traditions, yet shared theoretical frameworks (Bhabha's "third space," hybridity, "unhomeliness") enable productive comparative analysis. As Uzbek literature increasingly engages with global theoretical trends while maintaining local specificities, it enriches both national cultural production and world literary heritage.

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