

DESCRIPTION OF SOCIAL LIFE IN THE STORY “THE LAST VICTIM OF THE WAR” BY UTKIR HOSHIMOV

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Abstract. Utkir Hoshimov is an Uzbek writer who became prominent with his novels in 19th century. This article discusses uzbek people's behaviour and outlooks in the short story “The Last Victim of the War”, especially three main characters, namely Aunt Umri, Shoikrom and Xadicha. The story was carefully analysed and the analysis focuses on Utkir Hoshimov's masterful way of expressing how the war was just an excuse for some people to show their true colours. The aim of the research is to explore the depiction of main characters' inner world that is expected to contribute to literature.

Keywords. Shoikrom, war, Utkir Hoshimov, strawberries, victim, Aunt Umri, Xadicha.

Introduction. Like Kurt Vonnegut, the topic of war is an indispensable part of Utkir Hoshimov's works, including “Between Two Doors”, “Lifetimes in the Dream” and “The Last Victim of the War”. He wrote about people's struggles during hard times and created unique characters such as Kimsan, Robiya, Aunt Umri, Muzaffar and Shoikrom. Through these characters the writer shows how hard it was to live during the period of war. People get challenged in various ways, for example, morally and financially. Some of them are persistent enough to overcome the challenges, while others can not. In his story “The Last Victim of the War”, Hoshimov uses the fate of one family in order to represent devastating effects of World War II.

Main part. Utkir Hoshimov wrote about ten novels and several short stories. He primarily focuses not on soldiers, but on people thousands of miles away from the front while writing about the war. [4;256p] Particularly, “The Last Victim of the War” tells about the suffering of ordinary uzbek people through the life of one family. Critic Kushjanov said, “Despite being a small genre, Utkir Hoshimov's story “The Last Victim of the War” has great potential” [5;10p]. The story begins with the scene: “Shoikrom was sitting sadly on the edge of the sandals on the porch. It was already spring, and the days were hot, and he was upset that he had not taken off his sandals, but that no one thought about it” [1;34p]. With these two sentences the writer shows feelings of sadness and slight ignorance individuals were experiencing. As the story goes on, the writer uses phrases like “gray blanket stained with molasses”, “wooden spoon with a burnt handle” and “an empty ceramic plate” to show us the mood of Shoikrom, one of the main characters. The phrases also represent poverty and carelessness. In “The Last Victim of the War” events of the last days of the war are described. Since the war began, it has affected uzbeks' mentality, leading to increased number of thieves. As a result, ordinary people become anxious, nervous and sometimes greedy. As Shoikrom is thinking, his mother, Aunt Umri, enters from the gate. After helping her daughter-in-law put her baby to sleep Aunt Umri sits near Shoikrom and talks about her other son. Shoikrom's cow was stolen in the early spring and he remembers it with great regret that it is impossible for him to provide his brother, Shone'mat, with a bowl of milk. Shoikrom was not sent to the war because of the urgent need for qualified mechanics and he was happy when Shone'mat didn't attend the war as well. However, he later found out that his brother had tuberculosis, an illness which was impossible to cure during those times. When sitting on the porch he suddenly remembers that it had been ten days since he visited his brother. Interestingly, they live in the same yard divided by a wall because there was a dispute between Aunt Umri and Xadicha (Shoikrom's wife). A year ago when Aunt Umri took just a handful of strawberries, Xadicha got so angry at her that they did not speak to each other

for a year. After Aunt Umri leaves, Xadicha tells Shoikrom that she suspects strawberries are being stolen as part of the wall around their house is kind of demolished. Not having much to live on, every single fruit was considered valuable during those times and although Shoikrom is not convinced at first, later he comes to conclusion that thieves are stealing ripe fruits. Suddenly he gets enraged and wants to take revenge from the thieves for his stolen cow and strawberries. He takes a wire with which he used to light electric bulbs in weddings and places it in part of the yard where strawberries grow. In his head he repeatedly thinks “ I am going to kill whoever did this” and “ I can not even give my brother a bowl of milk because of dishonest people” and goes to sleep. After a while he is jolted awake by a horrifying sound and when he sees a figure of a person he suddenly realizes what he did was wrong. He lights up a match and sees his mother, laying dead on the ground, holding some strawberries in her hands. He instantly screams “Mom, please open your eyes!” [2;38p] and loses consciousness. When he wakes up, he sees his daughters and Xadicha crying frantically and Shone`mat with all of his strength crawling towards him. Shone`mat confesses that even if he disagreed, Aunt Umri took strawberries in order to exchange them for sheep milk. After burying his mother's lifeless body, Shoikrom accidentally hears people saying “Did you hear that the war has ended” [3;38p].

“The Last Victim of the War” is indeed a tragic and a very touching story which can make some tough people cry. From the very beginning of the story Utkir Hoshimov masterfully expresses how bad the situation was through tiny details. He makes us adapt to the mood of Shoikrom and his feelings of frustration. It is very apparent that he is not satisfied with his lifestyle at all, blaming everyone and everything but himself. When he sees a burnt spoon and a stained tablecloth, he accuses his wife of being greedy; when he can not support his ill brother, he blames thieves and when his cow is stolen, he accuses Xadicha of being neglectful. He does not care that his wife was pregnant and had to take care of a toddler by herself while he worked at night. At some point, Shoikrom gets angry that his wife gave birth to three daughters consequently. In uzbek culture, it is widely believed that a man is the leader as well as the supporter of his family. However, in this story it does not seem like Shoikrom is managing his role properly. For example, he seems to have done nothing when his mother and wife had fights and apparently did not reproach Xadicha for telling Aunt Umri that she stole her grandchildren's food. Additionally, there is a small but significant scene in the story where Xadicha hides a meal from her mother-in-law. Even if she said there is no any food left for Aunt Umri, Shoikrom knows that she lied because of her blushing. He thinks `maybe she is going to give that meal to me tomorrow` and does nothing. Xadicha and Shoikrom's actions at this point are considered completely inappropriate and selfish, since mothers must be respected and given delicious foods when they visit. At the end of the story, Shoikrom's carelessness and Xadicha's greed lead to Aunt Umri's tragic death. Though some people claim that the main reason for her death was the war, I am certain that Shoikrom is both directly and indirectly guilty. Had he explained his wife to be generous and be polite with his mother, Aunt Umri would not have to steal strawberries from her older son's house to buy some milk for his younger son. Considering sons are obligated to take care of their parents when they get old, Shoikrom did not fulfil his duty, leaving his old mother and sick brother (who is about to die) alone, without anyone to provide for them. When it comes to Xadicha, she seems to be tense as well as tight-fisted. At the beginning of this story she gets furious when her newborn baby does not stop crying, saying that her baby is jinxed. Later on, Xadicha's greed is expressed when Hoshimov writes that she and her mother-in-law did not talk for a year just because of a handful of strawberries. Even if it is possible that she did not want her daughters to starve, her actions seem a bit too extreme. Towards the end of the story, Shoikrom sees Xadicha standing, his daughters crying near him, which means either Xadicha was shocked or did not care at all that the person just died. When it comes to Aunt Umri, her kindness can be seen when she helps her daughter-in-law to put her baby to sleep. She does not hate Xadicha even if they had disputes so many times because of her greed. When she dies, Shoikrom sees all the wrinkles on her hands and her face. These wrinkles represent all the hard times and challenges she had to go through in order to raise her sons. Through these characters

the writer probably wanted to show that despite facing the same difficulties, everyone chooses different ways to cope with them and it is our choice to decide whether or not to keep our dignity.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the life during World War II is shown in "The Last Victim of the War" through the situation of one family and the theme of tragedy is dominant in the masterfully crafted story. The devastating impact of war on people who live far away from it is symbolized in the death of one mother.

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