



## Melis Abzalov: The Problem of Time and Hero

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the special characters of films directed by Melis Abzalov, which has a significant role in the development of the comedy genre in Uzbek cinema, and also examines the artistic and ideological features of the film, the achievements of its creative components and the significance in our modern cinema.

### Keywords:

cinematography, comedy, genre, director, actor, character, film, folk hero.

In the genre of comedy within Uzbek cinema, there are several directors who possess their own distinctive "signature," and one of them is Melis Abzalov. His creations have brought a multitude of films that have captured the hearts of audiences. Among them, films of the comedic genre such as "Duel under the Maple," "Suyunchi," "Bride Uprising," "The Case of Maysara," "Chimildiq," and "Wedding in Funeral" have endeared themselves to the audience for years.

In Melis Abzalov's film "Duel under the Maple," the conflict between different generations and age groups, contemporary heroes, and their distinctive traits take the forefront. In "Suyunchi," he skillfully presents concepts of honesty, modesty, respect, and honor towards elders, as well as family values and relationships, through gentle humor, aimed at entertaining the audience. One more notable general feature is evident in Melis Abzalov's films. "If the backdrop of many films typically involves the bustling areas of the city, filled with tall buildings, factories, and urban commotion, ... Melis Abzalov's films "Duel under the Maple," (1978) and "Suyunchi" (1982) feature characters that operate

in a different environment. The characters of these films are representative of the rural Uzbek lifestyle. As usual, the films are built upon comedic situations. The combination of comedy and impactful satire forms the foundation of the overall narrative, but it doesn't solely rely on amusing characters.<sup>1</sup> Along with this, vocational characteristics of events emerge. Here, this "different environment" provides a closer connection to the audience through its simplicity and straightforwardness. Even the characters' dialogues, gestures, movements, and interactions with their surroundings are portrayed in an unusual manner, highlighting their full-fledged alignment with the medium of education.

In the later years, Melis Abzalov places societal issues at the forefront in his films within the comedic genre. Troubles that exist within society and affect numerous individuals are brought to the screen with a comedic touch. The film "Bride Uprising" (1985), based on Said Ahmad's work of the same name, is a prime example of this. While the playwright's work was staged in 14 different country theaters, the

<sup>1</sup> Каримова Н.Ф. Ўзбекистон бадий кинематографиянинг шаклланиши ва тараққиёти//Санъатшунослик фанлари доктори

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cinematic adaptation under the same title was also screened in Uzbekistan and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The characters of the film are representatives of the large family led by Farmonbibi. While at first glance, Farmonbibi (Tursunoy Jafarova) might appear as a strict, ruthless, power-hungry figure with a strong-willed and authoritative character, in reality, she is a wise, observant, and compassionate mother. As the film unfolds, her commitment to justice and her nurturing nature become evident. Managing seven sons and seven daughters-in-law under one roof, tending to the various needs and idiosyncrasies of the 41-member household requires tremendous effort and resilience from Farmonbibi. The remaining family members have already submitted to Farmonbibi's established "family rules."

However, her youngest son Nigor is an exception until he gets married. He brings a breath of fresh air and a new approach to this household, which was accustomed to a set routine. After all, even the most established rules needed an update, especially since the children were reaching an age where they were branching out on their own, venturing into the world beyond their family's cocoon. The arrival of Nigor's bride, Nigora (Dilorom Egamberdiyeva), serves as a symbolic example of injecting a fresh perspective into this established routine. She introduces her opinions, a touch of modernity, and new worldviews, challenging the traditional norms within the family. In the end, she manages to bring the remaining stubborn characters onto her side.

Nigora's distinctive, assertive character is truly that of a contemporary hero – an athlete who participates in competitions and can be referred to as a "world-seen" girl. And even though she does exhibit a tough, resolute, and seemingly authoritarian demeanor under Farmonbibi's rule, in reality, she is wise, observant, a kind mother, and concurrently a staunch advocate of justice. Her interaction with

the remaining family members, however, isn't as smooth, as she doesn't easily submit to the "feudal society." Additionally, the rigid, opinionated individuals among them find it difficult to coexist. Nonetheless, Dilorom Egamberdiyeva's portrayal of Nigora's character adds a touch of vivacity, audacity, and a somewhat rebellious nature. She doesn't refrain from responding when her opinions are dismissed, and she won't tolerate disrespect.

While the film's presented events may initially seem routine and centered around the internal dynamics of one family, each character exemplifies the ability to humorously critique their own shortcomings, allowing each character's faults to be brought to a comic forefront. This is done through clear expression, sometimes laughing, sometimes frowning, and at times witnessing their own reflections. In this context, the proficiently written dialogues deserve special mention as well. The comedic situations highlight the characters' personalities and are reflected in their dialogues. Particularly, in some instances in Melis Abzalov's "Duel Under the Maple," "Suyunchi," and "Bride Uprising," the characters' personalities carry echoes of folkloric legends.

By introducing new dimensions to the world of drama and collaborating with the playwrights S. Akhmad and R. Mukhammadjonov, the director creatively exploited the existing material, offering opportunities to create characters not previously explored in national cinema. Unlike the heroes of the post-war 1970s, the characters of this period are less confined by their surroundings; thus, together with elaborating the "interior," they venture into their own worlds.<sup>2</sup>

The important elements that the director intended to convey become apparent in the film's conclusion. The conversation between the woman who came to ask for help for her sick son and Farmonbibi is striking. In this scene, which spans about five minutes (captured during a

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time when a significant amount of money is displayed in the film), Farmonbibi resists selling her vision, abstains from tarnishing her family's reputation and honor, and refuses to provide her children with ill-gotten gains. However, during that period, such instances of corruption and crimes are distressingly prevalent. This brief episode showcases virtues such as honesty, good manners, humility, and dedication to one's profession at the forefront of the film. Similarly, when Farmonbibi leaves the house and the true nature of the brides is revealed, an episode is presented depicting their inherent disrespect, mutual hostility, and the casual preparation of disguises. This sequence involving the 7 sons and 7 brides illustrates the necessity for Farmonbibi's determination, her firmness, and how without her resolute efforts, the family would have dissolved into discord.

Until today, the film's value remains untarnished, and it is eagerly awaited by audiences. The ensemble of actors, including Dilbar Ikromova, Klara Zhalilova, Noila Toshkentboeva, Louiza Kosimova, Rikhsi Ibrohimova, Gulchehra Sa'dullayeva, Nabi Rahimov, Dias Rakhmatov, Obid Yunusov, Rashid Malikov, Jamshid Zokirov, Soat Sharipov, Teshamominov, G'oyib Iskandarov, Muhammadjon Rahimov, Naima Po'latova, among others, contributed responsibly to their roles with full commitment to the characters' spiritual essence, which holds significant importance.

Moreover, the proficiency with which Melis Abzalov directed theater actors in portraying their roles in the film, his effective collaboration with actors, and the insights he gained from the skilled Georgian comedy director Georgiy Daneliya, have all proven to be valuable assets. Melis Abzalov learned how to approach cinematic comedy and how to create a national comedy, as Georgia's film comedies had gained international recognition since the 1970s. Specifically, films such as "33," "Autumn Marathon," "Afonja," "Mimino," "Gentlemen of Fortune," and "Kin-dza-dza!" directed by Georgiy Daneliya, introduced a new spirit into the comedy genre. Georgiy Daneliya masterfully blended elements of comedy, melodrama, and

satire into a single film, setting an example of how to present complex comedies to the audience.

Melis Abzalov's subsequent comedies also carry his signature style, characterized not only by his wit and the use of the tools of humor but also by his incorporation of profound realities and candid truths. The director's comedies engage both the mind and the heart of the viewer. The same can be observed in Georgian comedies as well. Comedy, for some contemporary directors, is not only about utilizing humor but also about delving into deep reflections, making observations, providing insights into ordinary human issues, and portraying them on a universal scale. Melis Abzalov seamlessly imported these elements from Georgian comedy to Uzbek cinema in his own national comedic style. Collaborating with his mentor and basing it on his direction, the film "Duel under the Maple" presented Uzbek audiences with similar enriching comedic experiences.

Hamza Hakimzoda Niyozzi's work "The Task of Maysara" (also known as "The Job of the Red-Tails" or "Maysara's Task") laid the foundation for the comedy genre in Uzbek literature. Likewise, with the film adaptation of "The Task of Maysara" based on the screenplay by Eduard Akopyan, Melis Abzalov introduced a classic musical comedy with a spiritual touch to the Uzbek cinema, an achievement that can be considered noteworthy.

In 1989, the director presented this film to capture the events of the past and bring the characters to life for modern audiences. The film's setting and atmosphere are reminiscent of "Nasreddin Bukhara," even from the very beginning. However, the depiction of the heroes as "scapegoats" portrays the mistreatment of these figures who are often neglected, and the injustices inflicted upon them by people seeking refuge. Both films reveal instances of women being mistreated by the public figures, their lack of respect for women, and their unscrupulous treatment of valuable items without consideration for their true value.

Furthermore, the film effectively conveys the characters' transition from a state of suffering to triumph. The director masterfully

portrays the nobility of those surrounding Nasreddin who might be generous at heart, as well as Nasreddin's own respectful conduct towards others, showcasing the wisdom and refinement of both Nasreddin himself and the individuals around him.

The character of Maysara (played by Sayram Isaeva) represents a modern heroine of her time, known for her intelligence, wit, and charm. The actress's facial expressions, emotions, dialogue delivery, and even her footsteps, including those under the veil, help in deciphering her character's essence. Sayram Isaeva's skillful use of facial expressions and her expertise in dance contribute to the portrayal of the Maysara character in the film.

It's also worth mentioning that while Tajik actress Sayram Isaeva brought her role as Nodirabegim in Komil Yormatov's film "Nodirabegim" to Uzbek cinema, her recognition and appreciation soared even higher due to her portrayal of the Maysara character.

In "The Task of Maysara," the director confronts a variety of challenges and presents them through the language of the characters. Particularly, Maysara's words "Let my breath be taken in this rich man's cradle, I hope it'll be the end of me. May the wind blow his house away!" highlight the desperation of women during that era, forced into such circumstances, as well as their frustration with the society's disregard for their wellbeing. Similarly, Maysara's dialogue "Is this world a circus? God tied up the hands of the religious leaders and took them away. All the evil comes from them! What kind of evil is that? It's evil that starts by interpreting religious laws. Repent!" sharply exposes the hypocrisy and blindness of the women in her time, as well as the injustices and inconsistencies they faced.

The portrayal by Obid Yunusov of Mullahdost in "The Task of Maysara" is distinct, portraying him as a unique, cunning, and shrewd servant. Though he is older in age, his youthful spirit remains alive within him. However, in the episode where the character is discussing the marriage proposal for Maysara, the true nature of the cunning and devious servant is revealed. Mullahdost's deceitful nature becomes evident as he devises a scheme

involving three different suitors for Maysara, aiming to create doubt in her mind and alerting her to this. Obid Yunusov's performance is compelling, and his every action is believable. Even in humorous scenes where he performs tricks or feigns pain, there is an underlying sense of sympathy for his character.

The chemistry between Mullahdost and Maysara is enhanced by their unique duets and their conversational style, which is tailored to each actor's voice. Sayram Isaeva and Obid Yunusov's partnership contributes significantly to depicting the most comedic situations in the film.

In the film, each character's entry is marked by unique music that captures their essence and characteristics. Notably, Khoji's (Ato Mukhamedzhanov) introduction through his music enhances the portrayal of his character and traits. Khoji's inclusion highlights his personality and quirks. His music accentuates the fact that he is uncompassionate and insensitive, someone who ignores others' misfortunes and does not value anything beyond his selfish desires. His music is emblematic of the enormous misfortune that he brings upon others and his own perilous path. As for the phrase, "Is the world a circus? God tied up the hands of the religious leaders and took them away. All the evil comes from them! What kind of evil is that? It's evil that starts by interpreting religious laws. Repent!" said by Maysara, it exposes the injustices and flaws of women during her era in a straightforward and impactful manner.

Tajik actor Ato Mukhamedzhanov's portrayal of Khoji brings a powerful performance to the Uzbek audience. His roles in "Farewell, Youth," "Young Amir," "Karakhlik," "Sayidali Father," "Great Amir Temur," and others highlight his exceptional acting skills. His portrayal of Khoji shows a deep understanding of theatrical nuances. His rendition of the line "Who are we waiting for? You're waiting for me, and I'm waiting for you. Let's meet in the darkness, Maysara!" might be as captivating as an actor's theater performance.

Alamkhon (Husan Sharipov) is always at Khoji's side, a two-faced individual who has "learned to steal milk from the end of the horn."

Husan Sharipov's experience in comedic roles becomes evident in his portrayal, bringing this role to life with remarkable finesse. His unique sense of humor is consistently displayed in every film. In this film, his expressive eyes, coupled with his mischievous smiles and his ability to playfully deceive Khoji while also maintaining a level of naivety, contribute to his compelling character.

The director's meticulous selection of actors for each role contributes to the film's dynamic nature. The character of Khidoyatkhon also stands out as a well-deserved role, portrayed by actor Bakhtiyor Nazarov. His exhaustion during the portrayal of Khidoyatkhon adds authenticity to his character's transformation. His loyalty to his father, yet his inability to contribute to his daughters' upbringing due to his duties, suggests a character possessing certain feminine traits. Khidoyatkhon's elaborate footwork and larger-than-life steps while moving towards women emphasize his unique character. His line "In this world, everyone learns... except for me" is emblematic of his character's essence.

Bakhtiyor Nazarov's gestures, expressions, movements, and subtle interactions reveal the depth of his character. His ability to convey emotions through his acting is truly exceptional.

The transition of Chupon from the countryside to the city is accompanied by music. The importance of music and song in the film is immense; it plays a pivotal role in character development, explaining situations, and establishing connections with events. The film's use of music and song aligns perfectly with the requirements of musical comedies, effectively supporting the narrative, situations, and events while creating an enjoyable experience for the audience.

Cho'pon's role (Diyos Rakhmatov) is one of the symbolic comic characters. His unwavering sense of justice and support for Maysara, even while deceiving himself, is integral to his character. Despite the brevity of his appearance in the film, his character carries profound meaning. Although he may not be a visible presence during that period, he

represents individuals who remained oblivious to people's suffering, apathetic in the face of injustice, and unaware of everything around them.

The conversation between Maysara and Khoji in Cho'pon's house showcases the actors' talents at their peak. In this scene, the actors' portrayal of people who have constantly deceived themselves regarding their relationships with women is masterful. Particularly, Maysara's playful counting of buttons and the actors' engaging exchange of playful words, along with Khoji's "You won't reveal me," not only creates comic situations but also offers profound insight.

The work of the artist Nozim Abbosov is outstanding. His attention to detail, including the design of Chupon's house, the authentic props, and the overall ambiance, accurately captures the era. The rural homes, lush greenery, and adobe walls contribute to the film's portrayal of the period.

The musical comedy's essence is brought to life through the melodies composed by Turab Tola. Voices of talented singers like Louiza Zokirova, Ma'mura Qurbonova, Farrukh Zokirov, Rustam Ilyosov, and Mansur Mamirov enhance the characters with their perfectly tailored voices, adding depth and authenticity to the film.

In the film, young actors such as Ghazal Mansurkhodjaeva (Oykhon), Farhod Mahmudov (Choponali), Dilorom Egamberdieva (Nodira), and Furqat Fayziev (Tokhir) skillfully portrayed their contemporary characters who stand against injustice. While the film initially presents a comic atmosphere, it delves deeper into critiquing the injustices prevalent in their time. The film highlights instances where individuals manipulate their own social status and positions for personal gain, often exploiting their authority for their own benefit. Some of these issues, although presented humorously, still resonate in today's society.

The film begins with the poem "Hey Muslims," and this sets the tone for the portrayal of individuals who have endured injustice, yet their patience and endurance remain unwavering. The director's primary message at the end of the film centers around the

realization that the mistakes of Boy, Alam, and Khudoyorkhon, which led to discord up to this point, ultimately result in the culmination of justice. On one hand, while the film presents the consistent punishment for any crime committed, it also demonstrates the possibility of redemption and unity through a reversal of these actions, particularly shown through Nodira. Her fate showcases that death is not the end, and that instead, by utilizing intellect, unity, and a common purpose, it's possible to overcome injustice. Although during her time, Nodira was cornered into a single path as most girls were, her transformation through the "Operation to Capture Oykhon" scene emphasizes a new route for her. The sequence implies that even in such circumstances, opportunities for growth and change still exist.

Melis Abzalov's direction enhances the portrayal of justice, both in its triumph and its journey. His films maintain distinctiveness and originality, contributing to their enduring significance. The director skillfully addresses the impact of characters like Norton (in the film "Duel under the Maple"), Shermat (in the film "Suyunchi"), Nigora Kelin (in the film "Bride Uprising"), Maysara (in the film "The task of Maysara"), and Tirkash Bova (in the film "Wedding in Funeral") among others, who respond to injustices with resilience. Through these characters, he highlights their inner struggles and transformations in response to their mistakes or misdeeds. This approach has solidified the value and lasting impression of his films over the years.

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