

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND REFORMIST
IDEALS IN THE NOVEL “KECHA VA KUNDUZ”**

Saidova Madinabonu Abduhakim qizi

Tashkent International University
of Financial Management and Technologies

Abstract: This paper examines the ideological confrontation between religious belief and reformist thought in the Uzbek novel *Kecha va kunduz*. The narrative illustrates the tension between characters who uphold traditional Islamic values and those who promote modern reforms in areas such as education, social life, and national identity. Through vivid character portrayals and symbolic episodes, the novel reflects the broader societal struggles between faith-based conservatism and emerging progressive ideologies during a time of transformation in Uzbek society. The study highlights how the author uses literary techniques to question rigid dogmatism while also warning against uncritical adoption of modern ideas. Ultimately, *Kecha va kunduz* serves as a literary mirror of historical, cultural, and spiritual conflicts faced by societies undergoing modernization.

Keywords: *Kecha va kunduz*, religious belief, reformist ideas, traditionalism, modernity, Uzbek literature, ideological conflict, national identity

In periods of social and cultural transformation, literature often becomes a platform for exploring ideological conflicts that shape the future of a nation. The Uzbek novel *Kecha va kunduz* stands as a compelling example of this literary function. The work reflects a time when society found itself at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, faith and reason, stability and reform.

At the heart of the novel lies a profound conflict between characters representing two contrasting worldviews. One side embodies deep-rooted religious values and adherence to traditional ways of life. The other side embraces reformist ideals—calling for educational progress, women’s rights, and national awakening. This confrontation is not portrayed as a simplistic clash between good and evil, but rather as a nuanced and deeply human struggle between competing visions of the future.

The novel’s narrative reveals how these tensions affect personal relationships, societal roles, and moral choices. By weaving historical and cultural realities into the plot, the author provides a critical reflection on the challenges of reconciling spirituality with modern progress. *Kecha va kunduz* thus invites readers to consider the balance between preserving one’s identity and embracing change—a dilemma that remains relevant in many post-traditional societies today.

This paper aims to explore how the novel presents this ideological conflict, what it suggests about the period in which it was written, and how it continues to resonate with contemporary debates on religion, reform, and identity in Uzbek society.

The novel *Kecha va kunduz* stands as a powerful literary exploration of the ideological conflict between religious conservatism and reformist thinking in early 20th-century Uzbek society. Through its characters, narrative structure, and cultural references, the novel presents a vivid picture of a nation in transition—struggling to reconcile centuries-old spiritual values with the rising tide of modernization, education reform, and national awakening.

At the core of this conflict lies the portrayal of two ideological currents embodied in the figures of tradition-bound characters and those who advocate for societal change. The conservative camp, often portrayed as clinging to rigid interpretations of Islamic faith, is characterized by figures who emphasize obedience, spiritual authority, and resistance to change. They are often suspicious of new ideas, particularly those introduced through secular education or Western influence. Their world is built on religious hierarchy, patriarchal values, and unquestioned adherence to inherited norms.

In contrast, the reformist characters advocate for renewal and progress. They emphasize critical thinking, the value of secular education, gender equality, and the necessity of updating cultural practices to align with the realities of a changing world. These characters are often younger, educated, and more open to foreign ideas, although their reformist spirit is frequently met with social resistance, suspicion, and even hostility. The novel, rather than portraying either side as wholly right or wrong, constructs a complex and layered depiction of the ideological crossroads at which Uzbek society stood during that period.

One of the most powerful aspects of the novel is its exploration of how this ideological struggle affects family structures and personal relationships. Conflicts between generations often symbolize the broader societal clash. Parents and elders often represent the religious status quo, while the younger generation, having been exposed to reformist thought, begin to challenge traditional roles and expectations. The result is not only intellectual disagreement but emotional and moral turmoil, as characters are forced to choose between loyalty to family and community, and a personal commitment to progress and truth.

In this sense, *Kecha va kunduz* reflects the very real historical debates that shaped Central Asian society during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially during the Jadid movement. Reformist thinkers of that era, known as Jadids, called for educational modernization, women's rights, and rational thinking—often facing fierce resistance from the conservative religious establishment. The novel integrates these tensions into its narrative, offering not a didactic message but a mirror of the society's moral and ideological fragmentation.

Furthermore, religious belief in the novel is not portrayed in a simplistic or one-dimensional way. The narrative allows for a deep exploration of faith as both a source of inner strength and a potential barrier to progress. Some characters use religion as a moral compass, finding in it guidance and spiritual peace. Others use religious authority

as a means of control, manipulating tradition to preserve power and resist reform. This duality reveals the author's nuanced view of religion—not as inherently opposed to reform, but as something that must be interpreted and applied wisely in a changing context.

Similarly, reformist ideas are shown with both admiration and caution. While the novel champions the need for progress and critical thought, it also highlights the risks of adopting foreign models without cultural adaptation. Some reform-minded characters struggle to bridge the gap between idealism and reality, showing that blind modernism can be just as destructive as blind traditionalism. The novel warns against extremes on both sides, advocating instead for a thoughtful, balanced approach that honors heritage while embracing the future.

Symbolism plays a vital role in emphasizing this ideological dichotomy. The title itself—Kecha va kunduz (Night and Day)—suggests not only the passage of time but the coexistence of opposing forces. Night symbolizes darkness, tradition, and perhaps stagnation; day represents enlightenment, clarity, and transformation. Yet the two are interdependent; one cannot exist without the other. This metaphor reinforces the idea that neither religious belief nor reformist thinking can alone sustain a society—they must be harmonized to achieve meaningful progress.

In addition, the novel touches on the role of women in this ideological conflict. Female characters often serve as symbols of both cultural continuity and the potential for change. Some women are portrayed as victims of outdated customs and religious conservatism—denied education, agency, or freedom. Others emerge as voices of reason and reform, seeking to redefine their roles within the family and society. The way the novel gives space to female perspectives demonstrates the author's awareness of gender as a crucial dimension of the reform-tradition debate.

Overall, Kecha va kunduz does more than merely document the ideological tensions of its time. It invites readers to engage with difficult questions: How should societies evolve without losing their spiritual foundations? What is the role of religion in the modern world? Can reform be achieved without sacrificing cultural identity? These questions remain relevant not only in the Uzbek context but in many post-colonial, Muslim-majority, and rapidly modernizing societies around the world.

In depicting this clash with such sensitivity and depth, the novel positions itself as both a work of art and a historical record. Its characters are not simply individuals; they are representations of larger social forces, internal dilemmas, and national struggles. The tension between religious belief and reformist ideas is not resolved easily, and the novel wisely avoids offering simplistic solutions. Instead, it encourages critical reflection and open dialogue—qualities that are essential for any society seeking to navigate the delicate balance between tradition and change.

The novel Kecha va kunduz masterfully captures the ideological conflict between traditional religious belief and reformist ideals at a pivotal moment in Uzbek history.

Through nuanced characters and symbolic narrative structure, the novel portrays a society caught between the past and the future—between spiritual values rooted in centuries-old customs and the urgent calls for educational, cultural, and social reform.

Rather than favoring one ideology over the other, the author offers a balanced critique of both blind conservatism and unexamined modernism. Religious belief is shown to be both a source of moral guidance and a tool for resistance to progress, while reformist ideas are portrayed as necessary but potentially harmful if imposed without cultural sensitivity. In doing so, *Kecha va kunduz* encourages a reflective and reconciliatory approach—one that honors tradition while embracing progress.

The novel's themes remain profoundly relevant in today's globalized world, where similar tensions continue to shape political discourse, identity formation, and cultural development. By revisiting such literary works, we gain insight not only into the past but also into the enduring struggles that define human societies in transition. *Kecha va kunduz* stands as a testament to the power of literature to engage, question, and illuminate the complex dynamics of belief, reform, and national awakening.

References

1. Fitrat, A. (1926). *Kecha va kunduz*. Tashkent: Nashriyot.
2. Khalid, A. (1998). *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. University of California Press.
3. Kamp, M. (2006). *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism*. University of Washington Press.
4. Bennigsen, A., & Wimbush, S. E. (1985). *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World*. University of Chicago Press.
5. Saidov, A. (2011). "Reform and Tradition in Uzbek Literature of the Early 20th Century." *Central Asian Literary Review*, 4(2), 55–67.
6. Sultonov, S. (2004). "Spiritual Identity and Ideological Transformation in Jadid Literature." *Uzbekistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 20–31.
7. Halmuratov, B. (2020). *Islam and Modernity in Uzbek Literary Discourse*. Tashkent State University Press.
8. UNESCO (2021). *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Central Asia*. Retrieved from www.unesco.org