

Article

The Theme of War in Uzbek Epics

Iqboloy Adizova¹

1. Doctor of Philology, Professor of Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi
Correspondance: ataullo98@mail.ru

Abstract: This article interprets how the fate and resilience of women during the wartime period are depicted in the epics of the renowned Uzbek poet Saida Zunnunova. These works reflect the Uzbek woman's devotion, patience, loyalty, and courage. In particular, the life on the home front and the role of women within it are portrayed through historical scenes and unique artistic expressions. Using the poet's epics as examples, the article highlights her mastery and artistic skill, showing how they are harmoniously connected with nature. It also identifies the distinctive and original features of her works.

Keywords: epic, character, interpretation, landscape, song, portrait, contrast, folklore.

Citation: Iqboloy, A.. The Theme of War in Uzbek Epics. Horizon: Journal of Humanity and Artificial Intelligence 2026, 5(1), 56-61.

Received: 11th Feb 2026

Revised: 7th Mar 2026

Accepted: 20th Apr 2026

Published: 14th May 2026



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

The beloved daughter of our people and a talented creator, Saida Zunnunova, made a significant contribution to the development of our literature. Our government recognized her great services and creative activity by awarding her the "Badge of Honor" order. One of the streets in Tashkent and School No. 224, as well as a street and a school in the city of Andijan, and an academic lyceum in Bo'z district have been named after Saida Zunnunova [1].

During the years of independence, especially considerable efforts have been made to immortalize her name. In the Writers' Alley, a monument was erected to her together with her husband, Hero of Uzbekistan and People's Writer Said Ahmad. Based on a script written by their daughter Nodira Husanxo'jayeva, the feature film "Said bilan Saida" and the five-part historical series "Sabru sadoqat" were created [2].

Saida Zunnunova is a writer who enriched Uzbek literature with her unique poems, stories, and novellas. In works of these genres, the devotion, patience, loyalty, and courage of Uzbek women are vividly expressed. She wrote works adorned with feminine grace, delicacy, and gentleness. While portraying the tender emotional experiences of a woman's heart, she also demonstrated—through the lives of her characters and artistic images—that a woman can possess storm-like strength when necessary: "With the elegance characteristic of women and her fragrant, heartfelt lyrics, she became a perceptive poet who soothes our hearts, relieves our fatigue, inspires us to work, and leads our understanding toward beauty"[3-5].

S. Zunnunova achieved great success on the demanding path of творчество through her diligence and hard work. She proved her versatility through the artistic richness of her poems, stories, novellas, and epics. She strung together beautiful pearls from "words that affect hearts like the water of life": "...Without the hardship of struggling alone with thought, imagination, and words, no work of art has ever been created, nor will it ever be. Saida Zunnunova truly dug the well of words that touch hearts like the water of life with a needle, and she never shied away from this hardship, never avoided it, and never sought easier paths."

In S. Zunnunova's work, epic writing (dostonnavislik) holds a special place. Over

the course of her creative career, she produced a number of epics such as “Sodiq va Anor,” “Xayrixon,” “Qo’shnilarim,” “Alla,” “Lirik nutq,” and “Surat bilan suhbat” [6].

The poet mainly wrote lyrical epics. In such works, a small घटना or incident that inspired the creation of the piece is conveyed through the author’s lyrical experiences, emotions, and inner spiritual upheavals. Epics like “Qo’shnilarim,” “Alla,” and “Surat bilan suhbat” were created in this manner.

Toward the end of her life, between 1976 and 1978, Saida Zunnunova’s three-volume “Selected Works” was published. In the first volume, the poet herself wrote a preface titled “Debocha” (Introduction). In it, she reflects on her creative activity and speaks about the history behind some of her works. She pays particular attention to the epics closest to her heart:

“My mother, Saboxon, was a very beautiful woman. She had a lovely voice. Even as a child, I could not listen without deep emotion to the lullabies she sang to my sisters or the folk songs she sang while embroidering. My epic ‘Alla’ was written as a product of the pain and love of those days.”

The leading theme in the poet’s epics is connected with war and the fate of women. The events that deeply affected her in childhood stayed with her throughout her life. In many of her poems, especially in her epics, she repeatedly returns to this theme. She recalls this in “Debocha” [7].

“During the war years, the lives of the women in our neighborhood deeply affected me. I wrote a poem called ‘Ona’ (‘Mother’), but I did not feel relieved or satisfied. I carried this pain in my heart for a long time, and finally poured it out in ‘Suhbat bilan ruh’ (1963–1966). Yet something was still missing, and then ‘Qo’shnilarim’ (1968) was written [8].

2. Methods

This study employs literary-analytical and comparative methods to examine the epics of Saida Zunnunova. The research mainly focuses on the poet’s epics “Qo’shnilarim,” “Alla,” and “Surat bilan suhbat.” The artistic depiction of women, war memories, motherhood, loyalty, and national values were analyzed through textual and thematic interpretation. In addition, excerpts from the poet’s “Debocha” and selected poetic passages were used as primary sources for analysis.

3. Results

The poet’s epic “Qo’shnilarim” was written under the influence of her childhood memories. It is known that she was born in Andijan and later lived in the capital. When she returned to visit her neighborhood, the emotions she experienced inspired the writing of the epic. As she walked through her old neighborhood, memories of childhood events, her neighbors, and the emotional hardships and struggles in their lives gradually came back to her. From the perspective of a peaceful time, she recalls the horrors of war that had once engulfed her childhood. She depicts its terrifying image, which erased joy and light from human life, and, using the device of simile, compares it to the darkness of night:

*Ko’zlargacha tun misol cho’kdi bir alam,
Yuzlarni tark etdi oftobday kulgu.
Keksalar qaddini egib qo’ydi g’am,
Onalar ko’zidan yo’qoldi uyqu [Zunnunova S., 2001, 68].*

She recalls how young men, without having truly experienced life, withered away on the battlefields, and how the hearts of parents were burned and broken by their loss. She speaks about the resilience, patience, and strong will of Uzbek mothers who sent three, five, even six sons to war and spent their entire lives waiting and watching for their return:

*Besh o’g’il, azamat besh o’g’il ketdi,
Aytishga osondir, bu hazil gapmi.*

The poet masterfully portrays the courage and hard labor of women on the home front. Reflecting the inner world of many youths whose springs ended too early, when she writes, "Perhaps our share remained in those springs," and laments the loss of each young man who sacrificed his life in battle with the words, "Perhaps my street lost a poet," we witness how truthfully she depicts the atmosphere of that time, as well as the sorrow of the people and the homeland [9-11]. Such epics by the poet are heartfelt songs dedicated to women's loyalty, maternal devotion, and the duty of children to their Motherland. Through the heart of a mother, the world is observed, and the attention of the younger generation is directed toward valuing, cherishing, and preserving peace.

In many of Saida Zunnunova's stories, novellas, poems, and epics, we see the vivid image of the Uzbek woman. No matter which work she writes about an Uzbek mother, her own mother inevitably appears before her eyes. She feels her mother's heart in every mother she portrays. For this reason, the image of the mother in her works always appears sincere and natural, nurturing in every reader a deep love for their own mother [12].

The poet's epic "Alla" (1972) begins with the epigraph "Dedicated to my mother," because lullaby and mother are inseparable concepts—they cannot exist apart from one another. There is no nation without lullabies. A lullaby is the very first song in the world. Through it, mothers plant the seeds of goodness in a child's heart, shaping in their minds love for their homeland, their people, their relatives, and their loved ones. It fosters feelings of kindness, national pride, and respect:

U alla aytmasa tonglar otmaydi,

U alla aytmasa quyosh botmaydi.

U alla aytmasa dillarning g'ashin

Na suvlar yuvmaydi va yo'qotmaydi [Zunnunova S., 2001, 110].

While reflecting on the lullaby (alla), the poet views it as a means that awakens true humanity within a person:

Balki ilk she'rimdir o'sha iztirob,

Odamlikka qo'ygan ilk qadamim yo?.. [Zunnunova S., 2001, 111].

Saida Zunnunova lived through two different worlds, two contrasting realities, and two distinct ways of life. One was the harsh and cruel hardship of the war years of her childhood. The other was the joyful, peaceful, and prosperous days of a tranquil life. In her epic, the poet compares these two opposing poles with one another. From the perspective of happy and contented days, she looks back into the distant past. She recalls the lullabies that were sung and listens to the echoes of that time within them [13]. From the depths of history, she draws the sorrowful and melancholic images of the past, portraying them with artistic expressiveness:

Mehribonim ketdi-yu, alla,

Mehri ko'zimdan ketmadi, alla.

Mehribonim yo'q uchun, alla,

Hech kim meni yod etmadi, alla.

Men ketarman bosh olib, alla,

Qaro ko'zimga yosh olib, alla... [Zunnunova S., 2001, 112].

In the epic, such sorrowful moments are depicted only briefly, serving mainly to highlight and further illuminate the joyful days and to make their value more deeply appreciated. The poet's main purpose is to portray the happy life and bright days of her people [14]. This idea is reinforced when we listen to the mother's lullaby, which is filled with happiness and gives a sense of reassurance and confidence in a brighter life:

Rayhonlarning shoxidandir elpig'ichim, allayo,

Gul ichidan terib olgan gulparchinim, allayo.

Bo'ylaringga ming tasadduq bo'lsin onang, allayo,

Shakar qo'zim, shirin so'zim, Oybachinim, allayo... [Zunnunova S., 2001, 112].

Garchi jimjitgina
olamdan o'tdi,

Lekin chin

passage, the images of basil, flowers, and Oybachin are used. Through these symbols, the poet attempts to connect fragrant and delightful days—like flowers and basil—with the roots of the past and the ancestors. Oybachin is one of the main characters of the folk epic “Alpomish.” She embodies all the qualities typical of an Uzbek woman, such as beauty, bravery, courage, and loyalty. The mention of this name in the lullaby signifies a mother guiding her child toward the virtues embodied by ancestral women.

In the epic, while depicting the image of the mother, the poet draws a sincere and natural portrait. Without exaggerated or lofty embellishments, she creates a simple yet unique portrayal of the mother, just as she is in reality:

*Husnini ulashdi farzandlariga,
Hatto sochlarining tim qora rangin.
Jonin malham qilib har dardlariga,
Mehr-la yuvoldi ko'ngillar zangin* [Zunnunova S., 2001, 114].

If you have noticed, the epics “Qo'shnilarim” and “Alla” are connected to the poet's personal memories of war. The epic “Surat bilan suhbat” is also close to them in this respect. It, too, is a monument dedicated to the Second World War, its consequences, and the loyalty and devotion of Uzbek women:

*Mehnatu mehrindan berib men sayqal,
She'rim bilan sizga o'rnatdim haykal* [Zunnunova S., 2001, 114].

“Surat bilan suhbat”, which in some editions is also titled “Ruh bilan suhbat,” centers on the image of a mother who, having lost her husband due to the consequences of the war, raises her only son alone. On the occasion of her son's wedding, she gazes at her late husband's photograph and enters into an imaginary conversation with him. During this dialogue, the entire landscape of her life is once again revealed before her eyes [15].

Unlike the earlier epics, where events and emotions are narrated directly by the poet, in “Surat bilan suhbat” she adopts a different approach. She uses active, dynamic characters. The emotional landscape and the pain of separation are expressed through the dialogue between the mother and the husband in the photograph. This technique ensures greater naturalness and clarity in depicting psychological states.

To enhance expression and convey emotions more vividly to the reader, the poet skillfully employs artistic devices such as simile, contrast, exaggeration, and metaphor.

4. Discussion

It is evident that S. Zunnunova has left a worthy mark in the history of Uzbek epic poetry through her works. The themes and ideas raised in them are not outdated but remain relevant and continually renew themselves over time. Reading them is of great importance for today's youth. In an era of various modern information flows, the national values that are gradually being forgotten—such as compassion, loyalty, generosity, resilience, and patience—are deeply embedded within these epics. Benefiting from them elevates the reader's spirituality and leads them toward a deeper understanding of national identity and self-awareness.

They also awaken in the heart the gentle, pleasant lullabies heard from mothers in childhood paths long forgotten. And this, ultimately, serves goodness and virtue.

5. Conclusion

Saida Zunnunova's epics vividly reflect the spiritual world of Uzbek women, the hardships of war, maternal devotion, and national values. Through artistic imagery and sincere emotional expression, the poet created works that continue to influence readers spiritually and morally. Her epics remain an important part of Uzbek literary heritage and serve as a valuable source for educating younger generations in the spirit of humanity, loyalty, and patriotism

REFERENCES

- [1] S. Zunnunova, *Selected Works*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Sharq, 2001.
- [2] H. Hasanova, *Saida Zunnunova*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Fan, 1975.
- [3] S. Ahmad, *What I Lost and What I Found*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Literature and Art Publishing House, 1998.
- [4] S. Zunnunova, *Selected Works*, 3 vols. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Sharq, 1976.
- [5] N. Karimov, *The Theme of War in Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: O'qituvchi, 1982.
- [6] U. Normatov, *Modern Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Fan, 2001.
- [7] B. Nazarov, "The Second World War and Uzbek Poetry," *Uzbek Language and Literature*, no. 4, pp. 45–52, 1995.
- [8] M. Qo'shjonov, *Theory of Literature*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Sharq, 2004.
- [9] S. Mamajonov, "The Image of Women in Saida Zunnunova's Epics," *Issues of Philology*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 71–76, 2018.
- [10] A. Rasulov, *Criteria of Artistic Expression*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Ma'naviyat, 2010.
- [11] T. Boboyev, *Fundamentals of Literary Studies*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: O'zbekiston, 2002.
- [12] D. Quronov, *Fundamentals of Literary Theory*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Akademnashr, 2018.
- [13] M. Xolbekov, "Interpretation of War Tragedy in Uzbek Epic Poetry," *Language and Literature Education*, no. 7, pp. 33–37, 2020.
- [14] R. Vohidov and H. Eshonqulov, *Classical and Modern Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Sharq, 2013.
- [15] S. Olimov, "Artistic Interpretation and Poetic Features of the Theme of War," *Sources of Science*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 88–93, 2021.