

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN THE WORKS OF THEODORE DREISER AND CHO'LPON**Ergasheva Bakhora Bakhtiyorovna**Second-Year Doctoral Researcher (PhD Candidate),
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Abstract: This article examines the interpretation of social inequality in the literary works of Theodore Dreiser and Cho'lpon. The study focuses on Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* as well as Cho'lpon's *Kecha va kunduz* (Night and Day). The research analyzes how economic, social, gender, and cultural inequalities influence the destinies of literary characters. Both writers depict individuals who struggle against restrictive social structures; however, the historical and cultural contexts of their works differ significantly. Dreiser portrays inequality within the framework of American industrial capitalism and urbanization, whereas Cho'lpon reflects the contradictions of colonial Turkestan, patriarchal traditions, and social injustice. The comparative analysis demonstrates that despite differences in national and cultural backgrounds, both authors reveal the destructive consequences of unequal social systems. The study concludes that social inequality functions not merely as a background element but as a fundamental force shaping human destiny in the works of both writers.

Keywords: Theodore Dreiser, Cho'lpon, social inequality, naturalism, realism, American literature, Uzbek literature, *Sister Carrie*, *An American Tragedy*, *Kecha va kunduz*, social stratification.

Introduction

The issue of social inequality has remained one of the most significant themes in world literature. Literary works often reflect the contradictions existing within society and reveal the impact of unequal distribution of wealth, power, education, and social status on human lives. In this regard, the works of Theodore Dreiser and Cho'lpon occupy an important place in twentieth-century American and Uzbek literature.

Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945) is recognized as one of the leading representatives of American literary naturalism. His novels portray the realities of industrial capitalism, social mobility, and class stratification in the United States. *Sister Carrie* presents the struggle of a young woman attempting to improve her social position within an urban capitalist environment, while *An American Tragedy* explores the destructive consequences of excessive ambition and unequal opportunities.

Cho'lpon (1897–1938), one of the prominent representatives of Uzbek Jadid literature, addressed issues of social injustice, colonial oppression, and gender inequality. His novel *Kecha va kunduz* depicts the tragic condition of ordinary people, particularly women, in early twentieth-century Turkestan. Researchers note that the novel reflects major social contradictions and the difficult lives of women under patriarchal and colonial structures.

The objective of this article is to analyze the artistic interpretation of social inequality in the works of Dreiser and Cho'lpon through a comparative literary approach.

Methodology

The research employs comparative literary analysis, historical-contextual analysis, and textual interpretation. The comparative method is used to identify similarities and differences in the representation of social inequality in Dreiser's and Cho'lpon's works. Historical-contextual analysis helps explain how social conditions influenced the authors' literary perspectives. Textual analysis focuses on characterization, narrative structure, and thematic development.

Primary sources include Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* and Cho'lpon's *Kecha va kunduz*. Secondary sources consist of scholarly studies devoted to the authors' literary heritage and the social themes reflected in their works.

Results

The analysis demonstrates that social inequality serves as a central organizing principle in the selected works.

In Dreiser's novels, inequality emerges primarily through economic and class divisions. Urban industrial society creates opportunities for upward mobility, yet these opportunities remain unevenly distributed. Carrie Meeber's rise in *Sister Carrie* is connected to her adaptation to social and economic realities rather than to moral ideals. Similarly, Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy* seeks entry into the upper class but becomes a victim of social aspirations that exceed his actual opportunities.

In Cho'lpon's *Kecha va kunduz*, inequality appears through social hierarchy, patriarchal traditions, and colonial conditions. The novel portrays the suffering of women and ordinary people who lack the ability to influence their own destinies. Social status and traditional norms determine the opportunities available to individuals, particularly female characters. Scholars emphasize that the novel highlights the tragic position of women within early twentieth-century society.

Both writers demonstrate that individuals are often constrained by larger social forces beyond their control.

Analysis and Discussion

The interpretation of social inequality in Dreiser's works is closely connected with the principles of literary naturalism. Naturalist writers emphasize the influence of environment, heredity, and social conditions on human behavior. Dreiser presents society as a powerful mechanism in which economic success frequently depends not only on personal effort but also on structural advantages.

In *Sister Carrie*, the protagonist arrives in Chicago with limited financial resources and social connections. Her experiences reveal the challenges faced by individuals occupying lower social positions. Carrie's transformation from a factory worker into a successful performer illustrates the relationship between social mobility and economic opportunity. However, Dreiser does not portray this process as morally straightforward. Instead, he demonstrates how social inequality encourages individuals to make pragmatic choices in pursuit of survival and advancement.

The theme becomes even more pronounced in *An American Tragedy*. Clyde Griffiths is deeply influenced by the social prestige enjoyed by wealthy individuals. His desire to enter elite society reflects broader inequalities within American capitalism. The novel suggests that economic disparities create unrealistic aspirations and social pressures that may lead to personal catastrophe. Clyde's downfall is therefore not merely an individual failure but also a consequence of structural inequalities embedded within society.

Cho'lpon approaches social inequality from a different historical perspective. Early twentieth-century Turkestan experienced significant political, cultural, and social transformations. Colonial domination, traditional social relations, and limited opportunities for women created a complex environment characterized by inequality.

In *Kecha va kunduz*, social injustice is closely connected with the status of women. Female characters face restrictions imposed by patriarchal customs and social expectations. The tragic destiny of Zebi illustrates the limited autonomy available to women within traditional society. Researchers have noted that the novel exposes social contradictions and highlights the difficult circumstances experienced by women.

Another important aspect of Cho'lpon's interpretation is the relationship between individual freedom and social structures. Many characters seek personal happiness but encounter obstacles created by established norms and power relations. The novel therefore functions as a critique of social systems that deny individuals the right to determine their own futures.

Despite differences in cultural context, Dreiser and Cho'lpon share several important thematic concerns. Both writers depict societies characterized by unequal distribution of opportunities. Both emphasize the influence of social structures on personal destiny. Moreover,

neither author presents inequality as an abstract concept; instead, it is embodied in the experiences of ordinary individuals.

However, significant differences also exist. Dreiser primarily focuses on economic inequality and class mobility within an industrial capitalist society. His characters are often driven by material aspirations and the desire for upward social movement. Cho'lpon, in contrast, concentrates on cultural, gender, and social oppression within a colonial and patriarchal environment. While economic issues remain important, the central concern is the restriction of human freedom and dignity.

The comparison also reveals differences in literary method. Dreiser employs naturalistic techniques that stress determinism and environmental influence. Cho'lpon combines realist observation with social criticism and national consciousness. Consequently, Dreiser's characters frequently appear trapped by economic forces, whereas Cho'lpon's characters are constrained by both social traditions and political circumstances.

The relevance of these works remains significant in contemporary discussions of inequality. Modern sociological research continues to demonstrate that unequal access to resources and opportunities affects social mobility and life outcomes. Literature therefore provides valuable insights into the human dimensions of inequality that statistical data alone cannot fully explain.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Theodore Dreiser's and Cho'lpon's works demonstrates that social inequality occupies a central place in their artistic worldviews. Dreiser portrays the consequences of economic stratification and class divisions in American society, while Cho'lpon exposes social, cultural, and gender-based inequalities in early twentieth-century Turkestan.

Although the authors belong to different literary traditions and historical contexts, both reveal how unequal social structures shape human destinies. Their characters struggle against forces that limit freedom, opportunity, and personal fulfillment. The study confirms that social inequality is not merely a background condition in these works but a decisive factor influencing individual choices and outcomes.

The enduring relevance of Dreiser and Cho'lpon lies in their ability to transform social realities into compelling literary narratives that continue to encourage critical reflection on justice, equality, and human dignity.

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