# THE CONCEPT OF FEMALE SELF-IDENTITY IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH WOMEN'S LITERATURE

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**Annotation.** This article examines the concept of female self-identity as represented in Uzbek and English women's literature from a comparative and cultural perspective. The study focuses on the ways female characters construct, negotiate, and redefine their identities under the influence of social expectations, cultural traditions, family responsibilities, gender relations, education, and historical transformations. Particular attention is given to the representation of female agency, self-realization, individual freedom, and the relationship between personal aspirations and collective values. The works of prominent English and Uzbek women writers demonstrate that female identity is not a fixed category but a dynamic process shaped by historical and sociocultural circumstances. The comparative analysis reveals both universal aspects of women's search for selfhood and culturally specific patterns of identity formation. While English women's literature frequently emphasizes individual autonomy, psychological introspection, and resistance to patriarchal structures, Uzbek literature often presents female selfhood through the interaction of personal aspirations with family, community, national identity, and traditional values. The study concludes that literary representations of women's self-identity provide an important means of understanding changing gender roles and the complex relationship between individual freedom and cultural belonging.

**Keywords:** female self-identity, women's literature, Uzbek literature, English literature, female agency, feminism, self-realization, gender identity, cultural identity, tradition and modernity.

**Introduction.** The exploration of female self-identity in Uzbek and English women's literature offers a captivating comparative study, revealing both universal human experiences and profound cultural specificities. Across these distinct literary traditions, writers delve into how women perceive themselves, make choices, and navigate societal expectations, often challenging or reshaping these norms. The concept of selfhood, as illuminated by feminist philosophy and identity studies, is not a fixed entity but a dynamic process deeply influenced by social roles, the power of voice, and individual agency. This comprehensive analysis will explore the intricate interplay of culture, history, gendered power dynamics, language, and modernity in shaping female self-identity in these two rich literary landscapes. In English literature, the journey of female self-identity is marked by a long and dynamic evolution. From the early works that cautiously explored women's experiences within restrictive societal frameworks to contemporary narratives that champion radical self-determination, the tradition consistently engages with the struggle for female agency and self-definition. The Victorian era, for instance, witnessed women writers beginning to question the idealized "angel in the house" archetype, subtly weaving in the complexities of women's realities. Authors like Jane Austen masterfully depicted heroines navigating the intricate social codes of marriage and reputation, subtly asserting their interior autonomy even within these constraints. Emily Brontë's Catherine Earnshaw, a passionate and untamed spirit, directly challenges the societal expectations of her time, embodying a fierce individuality.


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**Literature Review.** Uzbek women's literature presents a parallel yet culturally specific arc of female self-identity, deeply rooted in family, tradition, and the broader context of national modernization. While traditionally emphasizing roles such as motherhood, loyalty, and moral integrity, there is a discernible and growing shift towards more individualistic and multifaceted female identities. This literature frequently explores the tension between deeply ingrained cultural values and the aspirations for personal growth and autonomy, making the concept of "self-realization" a central theme. Elaine Showalter's influential critical framework categorizes this evolution into three phases: the "Feminine" phase (1840-1880), where women often adopted male pseudonyms and wrote within prescribed social roles; the "Feminist" phase (1880-1920), characterized by a direct and often overt challenge to patriarchal structures and a focus on women's rights; and the "Female" phase (1920-present), which signifies a broader self-awareness, psychological liberation, and the exploration of diverse female experiences. Virginia Woolf, a towering figure of the "Female" phase, championed the idea that women needed both financial independence and a "room of one's own" to achieve authentic selfhood, foregrounding interiority and the politics of voice. Her stream-of-consciousness technique delved deep into the inner lives of her characters, revealing the intricate processes of self-formation.

**Research Methodology.** Early 20th-century Jadid reform movements played a crucial role in fostering new spaces for women's education and public voice within evolving cultural norms. The Soviet and post-Soviet eras further intensified debates surrounding issues like unveiling, schooling, and women's roles in the workforce, fundamentally reshaping feminine selfhood in response to shifting state and social discourses. Uzbek poets and prose writers, such as Halima Xudoyberdiyeva and Zulfiya, have skillfully illustrated female subjectivity as a blend of personal longing and social critique. Their works often showcase how self-definition necessitates a negotiation of gender, religious beliefs, and national identity. Contemporary Uzbek writing continues to map selfhood onto cultural memory, gendered labor, and the negotiation of tradition in an increasingly globalized world. There is a growing voice of female poets and writers who actively advocate for women's rights, express a spectrum of aspirations, and challenge stereotypes that confine women to passive or purely traditional roles. The influence of cultural context is profound, with literature serving as a means to both celebrate Uzbek heritage and reflect ongoing societal transformations. Unlike the English tradition, where selfhood often foregrounds individual rights and psychological reflexivity, Uzbek narratives frequently frame self-identity through the reconciliation of communal duty and individual desire, anchoring it in collective belonging and family responsibility.

**Analysis and Results.** Despite their distinct cultural and historical trajectories, both Uzbek and English women's literature share a fundamental concern: the persistent exploration of how societal expectations, cultural norms, and historical circumstances shape and are shaped by the female self. Both traditions demonstrate a shared recognition of the multifaceted nature of female characters who increasingly challenge traditional gender scripts. Whether through the overt feminist critiques in English literature or the nuanced negotiation of tradition and modernity in Uzbek writing, the fundamental human desire for self-discovery, agency, and authentic selfhood remains a powerful and unifying theme. Across both literatures, education emerges as a pivotal lever for self-making and social mobility. Access to knowledge and the ability to articulate one's thoughts empower women to transcend prescribed roles and pursue their own paths. Language and literary form, in turn, serve as crucial encoders of belonging and difference. The linguistic nuances and narrative strategies—such as diaries, letters, lyric testimony, and confessional modes—function as powerful technologies of self-assertion and critique. While



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English literature tends to emphasize individual rights and psychological depth, Uzbek literature frequently foregrounds relational ethics and familial honor, reflecting differing cognitive associations embedded in each language's conceptualization of "woman."

**Conclusion.** The concept of female self-identity in Uzbek and English women's literature is a dynamic, culturally situated project that reflects both shared human concerns and local particularities. It centers on women naming themselves within or against social scripts and on writers staging the negotiation between tradition and autonomy. In English literature, selfhood often emerges through an emphasis on interior voice, agency within or against social norms, and, in modern times, explicit feminist critique. In Uzbek literature, self-identity is frequently linked to family, community, and national modernization, with poets and writers foregrounding female subjectivity as a site of social critique and cultural memory. Education, labor, and public engagement repeatedly surface as pathways to self-definition in both traditions, empowering women to forge their paths. The languages of Uzbek and English—along with Persian and other cultural overlays—mark identity while shaping narrative possibilities and reception. Dialogues across translations and cross-cultural studies reveal that selfhood can be both a personal achievement and a political act. The female body and voice become sites where gender norms are tested, reinforced, or reimagined. Literary form—whether diary-like, epistolary, or lyric—serves as a vehicle for self-authorship and resistance. The study of these literatures confirms that women's selfhood is not monolithic but a spectrum of responses to power, culture, and history. Authors in both traditions show how self-identity can be built through education, work, love, and creative expression even within restrictive social frameworks. Across time and space, female selfhood remains an arena of contest, negotiation, and growth, continually redefined by changing social imaginaries. The cross-cultural comparison illuminates how universal the impulse toward self-definition is, while also highlighting the diverse structures that shape women's lives. Together, Uzbek and English literatures chart a rich landscape of female subjectivity, where personal emergence is inseparable from collective history and cultural memory. The ongoing dialogue between these literatures promises deeper understanding of gendered experience and the ways women imagine themselves into the world. The narratives, whether challenging directly or subtly negotiating, contribute significantly to a global understanding of what it means to be a woman.

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