

Poetic Thought and Sufi Ideas in Alisher Navoi's Nasāyim Al-Muhabbat

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Received: 28 February 2025; **Accepted:** 29 March 2025; **Published:** 30 April 2025

Abstract: Tazkiras hold an important place in Eastern literature as literary-artistic and historical-biographical sources. This article analyzes the classification of tazkiras and their historical development. In particular, it highlights the traditions of Turkic and Persian tazkira writing and their impact on the development of literature and scientific thought. Furthermore, the author emphasizes that tazkiras serve not only as sources of biographical information but also as works of significant moral-educational and artistic value. The formation of tazkiras, their genre characteristics, and the analysis of their most renowned examples are discussed, paying attention to how they evolved in response to the demands of their time. The article offers a new approach to the study of tazkiras, aiming to determine their genre-specific features and their role in the literary process. Alisher Navoi's *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* is analyzed artistically, focusing on the harmony of lyricism and didacticism within the work. While depicting the lives of sheikhs and saints, the lyrical spirit is enhanced through artistic imagery, and at the same time, didactic elements — moral exhortations — promote Sufi-educational ideas. The article scientifically analyzes the integration of literary devices such as metaphors, similes, symbolic imagery, and wise sayings with didactic content. As a result, the distinctive features of the work in terms of the combination of lyricism and didacticism are identified.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat*, lyricism, didacticism, Sufism, literary devices, moral exhortations, symbolic imagery, metaphor, simile.

Introduction: Alisher Navoi is recognized in the history of Uzbek literature not only as a poet but also as a thinker and a prominent representative of Sufism. His work *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* is of a Sufi-biographical nature, expressing moral and educational views through the lives of sheikhs and saints. In this work, lyricism and didacticism are harmoniously embodied, clearly showcasing Navoi's style of skillfully combining artistic imagery with moral exhortations.

Although *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* is dedicated to the chain of Sufi followers, as mentioned above, it also provides information about many renowned representatives of Persian and Turkic poetry, in relation to the theme of the work [4, p.79].

Alisher Navoi wrote this work in 1499, creating it as an edited and revised version of Jami's *Nafahāt al-Uns*. However, Navoi did not limit himself to mere translation; he enriched it with his lyrical approach,

highlighted the special place of Sufi figures in artistic creativity, and incorporated didactic elements related to Sufism.

The work contains the biographies of more than 770 saints and sheikhs, conveying instructive lessons to readers through the lives, wise sayings, and behaviors of Sufi figures. *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* begins with Shaykh Uways al-Qarani and concludes with Bibichay Munajjima. After the main part of the work, a detailed table of contents and explanations about individual sheikhs are provided.

Navoi mentions many famous Sufi scholars and poets such as Imam Azam, Imam Shafi'i, Muhammad Aslam Tusi, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Abdurahman Jami, Husayn ibn Mansur Hallaj, and Abu Bakr Shibli. He also includes references to "gnostic women who attained the rank of men," mentioning a total of 35 Sufi women such as Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, Maryam al-Basriya, Rayhana al-

Waliha, Ufayra al-Abida, and Sha'wana.

Thus, through the tazkira, we obtain information about Sufi women as well. The work serves not only as a purely biographical source but also fulfills educational and moral-pedagogical functions.

The expression of lyricism and its artistic means:

In *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat*, lyricism manifests itself in the depiction of the lives of sheikhs and saints, in expressing their spiritual experiences, and in Navoi's deep respect and love for them. The poet vividly portrays events through effective use of imagery and poetic style.

In Navoi's work, lyricism is expressed through the following artistic devices:

Metaphors – conveying Sufi concepts with beautiful artistic expression:

“It is said that Zunnun stated: ‘To reflect upon the Divine Essence is ignorance, and to point to it is polytheism. The truth of gnosis is wonder.’” [1, p.12]

Similes – using poetic style to describe the virtues of saints:

Regarding Shaykh Uways al-Qarani, it is said:

“Upon hearing that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) blessed tooth was martyred in the Battle of Uhud, he, in devotion, broke all thirty-two of his own teeth.” [1, p.9]

Symbolic imagery – employed to express spiritual purity and divine love:

“He said: ‘Be ascetic in this world and expect nothing from anyone, so that all people will become dependent on you; when this happens, you will inevitably become wealthy and a king in this world and in the Hereafter as well.’” [1, p.10]

For example, the saints' devotion to God is compared to the light of dawn, and they are depicted as “the lamp of love” or “the sun of truth.” In another place, the idea is conveyed: “Unless you become completely annihilated of yourself, you cannot enter the domain of love.

As one of the great thinkers of his time, Alisher Navoi approached the Sufi community with deep respect. His work *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* is a vivid example of the artistic-poetic thought of the 15th century, in which the virtues of sheikhs and saints are portrayed with profound reverence. When mentioning these figures, Navoi not only honors their lofty moral qualities but also uses artistic means to render their images even more impressive.

Navoi's respect and reverence for the sheikhs enhance the lyrical spirit of the work. When referring to certain

figures, he praises their virtues with affection: in mentioning Imam Azam (may Allah sanctify his secret), Navoi states, “His merits are boundless, and his praiseworthy qualities are innumerable,” and regarding Imam Shafi'i (may Allah be pleased with him), he writes, “In describing his excellence and praised character, the pen is helpless and the scribe is astonished. What has been narrated of him is so extraordinary that the human mind finds it hard to comprehend.” Through such poetic expressions, Navoi conveys that the knowledge and perfection of the sheikhs are beyond human comprehension. This approach further intensifies the lyrical atmosphere of the work.

Navoi not only describes the virtues of the sheikhs but also creates an emotional connection, allowing the reader to feel their influence and draw inspiration. One of the distinctive features of 15th-century literary thought was precisely this: delivering moral and spiritual values through vivid, figurative depiction. In *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat*, Navoi skillfully integrates lyricism and didacticism, portraying the lives and activities of sheikhs not merely as historical-biographical information but as a deeply artistic narrative.

The tazkira is imbued with didactic elements and educational ideas:

“If speech is abundant and action is scarce — it is a flaw; If action is abundant and speech is scarce — it is worthy of respect.”

“A servant's occupation with fruitless deeds is a sign that Allah has turned away from him.”

Nasāyim al-Muhabbat is not merely a literary-biographical work; it also has a strong didactic dimension, promoting the following ethical and spiritual ideas: Moral admonitions are the leading theme. Navoi imparts important moral lessons through the life paths of each sheikh. He extols virtues such as honesty, humility, trust in God, and patience, urging people towards human perfection.

Sufi-educational ideas are present: discussions focus on love for God and ways to draw closer to Him, purification of the soul, striving for spiritual perfection, and the significance of knowledge and education in human life. Navoi skillfully merges lyricism and didacticism, presenting moral teachings with artistic elevation. In portraying each sheikh, he employs lyrical imagery, delivering their virtues vividly and impressively to the reader. In *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat*, Alisher Navoi depicts the lives of saints and renowned sheikhs. The work, created in the Sufi tradition, discusses the paths of spiritual purification and self-

perfection. Based on Sufi traditions, each personal story, creative endeavor, and educational matter is presented within a religious-spiritual context. Through these depictions, Navoi explores the spiritual journey of the saints and sheikhs, advancing the idea of human perfection and unity with God.

Alisher Navoi's *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* serves as a traditional source for the works of Hasan Khoja Nisariy and Mutribi Samarqandi, both created in the 16th century. The main difference between these two works is that while Navoi's work is dominated by a Sufi spirit and religious perspective, Mutribi's focuses more on literary and aesthetic features. Navoi provides detailed information about the spiritual development of the sheikhs and their place in Sufism, whereas Mutribi analyzes the poetic achievements of poets and offers his unique critiques.

However, in both works, the central ideas revolve around spiritual growth, knowledge and enlightenment, literature, and human perfection. Additionally, *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* and *Tazkirat al-Shu'ara* both contain reflections on moral structure, personal character, and spiritual experiences. While Navoi embodies the traditions of Sufi literature, Mutribi, as a literary critic, analyzes the creative works of poets from a literary-historical perspective.

In Mutribi's *Tazkirat al-Shu'ara*, the main emphasis is on the creative activity of literary figures. Alongside illuminating the poets' spiritual worlds, Mutribi also explores literary innovations and styles. Although spirituality and moral education hold an important place, the focus is more on literary aspects — specifically, the influence of each poet's works and literary legacy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Alisher Navoi's *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat* stands as a high example of 15th-century artistic thought, where Sufism, lyricism, and didacticism are harmoniously intertwined. Navoi portrays the lives of sheikhs and saints not merely as biographical data but as poetic sources revealing their moral and educational views. Alongside glorifying their virtues, Navoi, through deep artistic thought, conveys Sufi values and presents important guidelines for spiritual development.

The lyrical spirit of the work is intensified through Navoi's respect and reverence for the sheikhs. In depicting their spiritual experiences and steps toward spiritual perfection, Navoi masterfully uses poetic devices to deeply reveal their significance in Sufism. For instance, when speaking of the sheikhs, he emphasizes that their perfection and virtues are beyond human comprehension. This tradition of glorifying great figures through poetic imagery is one of the hallmarks

of 15th-century artistic thought that Navoi continues.

In the 16th century, the development of *tazkira* writing continued with literary-critical figures like Hasan Khoja Nisariy and Mutribi. The similarities and differences between Navoi's spiritual-intellectual worldview and Mutribi's literary-aesthetic perspectives allow for a comparative study of these two works.

Not only biographical information but also Sufi-educational ideas hold a central place in the work. Navoi calls readers to virtues such as honesty, humility, trust in God, and patience, emphasizing the importance of the Sufi path for spiritual development. By illustrating Sufi doctrines through the lives of saints and sheikhs, he seeks to instill the significance of this path into the hearts of readers. *Nasāyim al-Muhabbat*, therefore, serves not only as a historical-biographical source but also as a work nurturing spiritual and moral maturity. Moreover, Navoi skillfully blends lyricism and didacticism, portraying each sheikh's character vividly and compellingly. His artistic mastery is particularly evident in this aspect — through personal emotions and vivid imagery, he creates a style that deeply resonates with the reader's heart.

Nasāyim al-Muhabbat is of special importance as a work reflecting the socio-spiritual environment of its time. Through this work, Navoi not only preserves the traditions of Sufism and gives them new artistic form but also aims to pass them on to future generations. Thus, the work serves not only as a product of its era but also remains a valuable source of spiritual and moral education today.

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