

The Irfanic Essence of The Concepts of World and Fana In the Works of Alisher Navoi

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Abstract: This article analyses the irfanic essence of the concepts of “world” and “fana” in the works of Alisher Navoi from an artistic and philosophical perspective. The study reveals the Sufi interpretation of the image of the world in the poet’s works, as well as its symbolic meaning as a complex of carnal desires and transient interests. In addition, the concept of fana is examined as a process of renouncing the egoistic self, achieving spiritual purification, and ascending toward divine perfection.

The article explores the interrelation between the concepts of world and fana in Navoi’s literary heritage and their position within the Sufi-irfanic system. According to the research findings, Navoi does not advocate the absolute rejection of the world; rather, he promotes a balanced and correct attitude toward it, while interpreting fana as an irfanic stage leading human beings toward spiritual perfection.

Keywords: World, fana, irfan, Sufism, ego (nafs), contentment (rizo), renunciation of the world, spiritual perfection, classical Eastern literature, symbolic images.

Introduction: In the history of classical Eastern literature, the works of Alisher Navoi occupy a distinctive place as a sublime example of human spiritual perfection, divine love, and Sufi-irfanic thought. In the poet’s works, such issues as the relationship between man and existence, the transience of the world, the purification of the soul, and attaining union with the Divine Truth are interpreted through profound philosophical and artistic perspectives. In particular, the concepts of “world” (dunyo) and “fana” emerge as significant notions expressing Navoi’s irfanic worldview.

In Sufi doctrine, the world is interpreted as the realm of material desires and carnal passions, whereas fana signifies the renunciation of the ego, the striving toward divine truth, and the attainment of spiritual perfection. Alisher Navoi represented these concepts not only in a religious-irfanic sense but also through highly refined artistic and aesthetic devices. In his literary heritage, the unfaithfulness of the world, the

transience of human life, and the idea of becoming annihilated in the love of the Divine constitute some of the leading themes.

In the contemporary era of globalization and the transformation of spiritual values, studying Navoi’s irfanic heritage through modern scholarly approaches acquires particular relevance. Specifically, revealing the Sufi essence of the concepts of world and fana in the poet’s works allows for a deeper understanding of both his artistic thinking and his place in the development of Eastern irfanic literature.

This article analyses the irfanic essence of the concepts of world and fana in the works of Alisher Navoi, their inseparable connection with Sufi philosophy, and the peculiarities of their artistic expression.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In classical Eastern literature, the image of the world and its symbolic–Sufi interpretation represent one of the central objects of scholarly research. In particular,

within Sufi philosophy, the transience of the world, human relations with the material realm, and the irfanic essence of the concept of “fana” have been interpreted as key ideas in the works of Eastern thinkers. Therefore, this issue has been studied by both Eastern and Western scholars using various methodological approaches.

In the study of Persian-Tajik classical literature and Sufi thought, the works of Y.E.Bertels, M.N.Osmanov, A.Mirzayev, I.S.Braginskiy, J.Trimingham, M.T.Stepanyants, and M.L.Rejsner are of particular significance. These studies extensively examine the symbolic nature of the image of the world in Sufi literature, as well as the process of human spiritual perfection. In particular, in their scholarly views, the concept of the “world” is primarily interpreted as a symbol of transience, the ego (nafs), and material desires, while the concept of fana is explained as a stage of spiritual ascent toward Divine Truth.

In Uzbek literary studies as well, Alisher Navoi’s depiction of the world and his Sufi-irfanic worldview have been examined from various perspectives. In the works of A.Qayumov, A.Hayitmetov, A.Rustamov, N.Komilov, Y.Ishoqov, I.Haqulov, H.Boltaboev, B.Tukhliev, N.Jabborov, S.Rafiddinov, E.Ochilov, B.Rajabova, and M.Asadov, the artistic, philosophical, and Sufi characteristics of the image of the world in Navoi’s works have been analysed.

In particular, A.Hayitmetov explores the ideological and artistic essence of the images related to the world, time, and people of the time in Navoi’s poetry, as well as the poet’s socio-philosophical views [5]. I.Hakkulov, on the other hand, examines the Sufi concepts of renunciation of the world, the ego (nafs), and spiritual purification, thereby providing a deep analysis of the irfanic layer in Navoi’s works. The scholar’s views serve as an important theoretical basis for understanding the Sufi essence of the concepts of “world” and “fana” [6, 7].

Furthermore, the studies of N.Komilov, Y.Ishoqov, and H.Boltaboev extensively explore the Sufi poetics of Alisher Navoi’s works, his system of symbolic imagery, and his irfanic thought. These scholarly approaches constitute an important methodological foundation for analysing the semantic and structural-artistic features of the concepts of world and fana in the poet’s works.

The reviewed literature shows that although the concepts of “world” and “fana” have been studied separately in Alisher Navoi’s works, their mutual conceptual relationship and irfanic-artistic integrity have not yet been sufficiently addressed as a separate research object. The present article is therefore relevant in that it seeks to fill this scholarly gap.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a complex scholarly approach to elucidate the irfanic essence of the concepts of world and fana in the works of Alisher Navoi. During the research process, theoretical sources related to classical literature and Sufi philosophy were first analysed in order to determine the semantic content of the concepts of “world” and “fana” within Eastern irfanic thought.

The article applies comparative-typological, hermeneutic, structural-semantic, and contextual analysis as the main research methods. Through the comparative-typological method, the common and distinctive features of the concepts of world and fana in Navoi’s works are examined in relation to Sufi sources. Using a hermeneutic approach, the symbolic and irfanic meanings in the poet’s texts are interpreted, revealing the inner (batin) essence of the images.

Structural-semantic analysis is used to examine the interrelations between key concepts such as world, fana, nafs (ego), love, and union as they appear in Navoi’s poetic and prose works. Contextual analysis helps to clarify the connection of these concepts with the socio-spiritual environment of the poet’s time and the traditions of Sufi thought.

The primary sources of the study include the lyric divans of Alisher Navoi and his epic cycle ‘Khamsa’. In addition, the research draws on scholarly works by local and international literary scholars, studies on Sufi philosophy, and theoretical investigations of classical Eastern poetics.

These methodological approaches make it possible to comprehensively study the artistic-aesthetic and irfanic essence of the concepts of world and fana in the works of Alisher Navoi.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the works of Alisher Navoi, the image of the world emerges as one of the central concepts of Sufi-irfanic

thought. The great thinker often interprets the world as a source of carnal desires and material inclinations that distract the human being from the path of Divine Truth. In the poet's view, excessive attachment to the world distances the human heart from spiritual perfection and submerges it into the domain of transient passions. Therefore, in Navoi's works, the concepts of "world" and "fana" are interpreted in close interrelation, each serving as a semantic foundation for understanding the other.

These ideas are vividly expressed, in particular, in his work 'Nazm al-javahir', written on the basis of the maxims of Hazrat Ali. The following ruboi, based on the wisdom "The healing of the heart lies in being content with divine decree," presents an irfanic interpretation of the notions of the world and spiritual contentment:

Har kimga livoyi charxi farsud kerak,

Ko'nglida sipehr dardi mavjud kerak.

Har kimgaki, ko'ngli dardi nobud kerak,

Har neki qazodin o'lsa, xushnud kerak. [1.147]

[Interpretive meaning: Whoever desires the banner of the decayed heaven (worldly dominion) indeed carries the pain of the world in his heart. Whoever seeks to be freed from the pain of the heart must accept with contentment whatever comes from divine decree.]

In this ruboi, the image "livoyi charxi farsud" carries a symbolic meaning: "charx" refers to the world, while the "banner" symbolizes dominion and attainment of worldly aims. According to Navoi, whoever harbors the desire to dominate the world is already afflicted by worldly sorrow. Here, the world is not merely a material realm but a complex of carnal inclinations that distance a person from Divine Truth. In the following lines, the liberation from worldly suffering is presented through the concept of "rizo" (contentment). According to Sufi doctrine, acceptance of divine decree signifies the abandonment of egoistic desires and submission to the Divine Will.

The inner layer of this ruboi also contains the concept of fana, which is conceptually reinforced in the following verses from 'Sab'ayi sayyor':

Sen chu ursang fano yo'lida alam,

Yo'qqa mumkin emas yetishmak alam.

Alamin ko'rmayin desang yo'q bo'l,

Seni yo'q topsa o'zga netgay ul? [2.382]

[Interpretive meaning: If you raise the banner of fana, know that pain cannot reach what does not exist. Therefore, if you wish to avoid worldly suffering, become "nothing" (attain fana). When the world finds you in a state of non-existence, what power can it still have over you?]

In these verses, the poet's artistic mastery is demonstrated through the use of tajnis art, where the word "alam" is used in two meanings: "banner" and "pain/suffering." According to Navoi, if a person annihilates his ego and worldly desires on the path of fana, he becomes free from worldly suffering. Since pain cannot reach that which does not exist, fana here does not signify physical annihilation but rather the abandonment of the egoistic self and movement toward spiritual purification.

In general, Navoi's interpretation of fana is closely aligned with the Sufi idea of "dying before death," signifying an inner spiritual rebirth. In the poet's view, true perfection is achieved through renouncing worldly attachments and purifying the heart with divine love. In this sense, fana is interpreted as an irfanic station leading the human being toward truth and spiritual enlightenment.

Another ruboi from 'Nazm al-javahir' critically addresses the consequences of excessive attachment to the world:

Dunyo bila necha zebu oro qilmoq,

Ul zeb ila do'zax o'ti barpo qilmoq.

Mumkin emas ersa tarki dunyo qilmoq,

Uqbo bila xushtur ani savdo qilmoq. [1.139]

[Interpretive meaning: To adorn oneself with the world is, in fact, to prepare the fire of hell through such adornment. If renouncing the world is not possible, the best way is to "trade" the world for the hereafter.]

In this ruboi, excessive indulgence in worldly blessings is presented as a factor leading to spiritual destruction. According to the poet, the more a person becomes adorned with worldly pleasures, the more he in fact prepares "the fire of hell" for himself. Here, worldly possessions are depicted as means that strengthen the ego and veil the human heart from truth. In the concluding part of the ruboi, Navoi does not advocate absolute rejection of the world but rather proposes

transforming it into a means for the hereafter – an idea of exchanging the temporal life for eternal objectives. This demonstrates that Navoi promotes a balanced and spiritually grounded attitude toward the world rather than complete renunciation.

In some of his rubois, the concepts of truth (haq) and falsehood (baʼtil) are expressed through symbolic imagery:

Botilki chaqilsa barqi toboni aning,

Koʻzni yumub ochquncha yoʻq imkoni aning.

Haqkim yoʻq naʼ ichinda poyoni aning,

Boʻlgʻusi qiyomatqacha javlani aning. [1.144]

[Interpretive meaning: Falsehood is like lightning—it appears for a moment and disappears in the blink of an eye. Truth, however, brings endless benefit and remains until the Day of Judgment.]

Here, falsehood is compared to lightning: bright but extremely short-lived. Truth, in contrast, possesses eternal and beneficial essence. Through this comparison, Navoi emphasizes that the deceptive attractions of the world are temporary, while permanence and ultimate reality belong to Truth. The semantic layer of the ruboi contains clear allusions to Qurʼanic interpretations of truth and falsehood, demonstrating the close connection between Navoi's poetics and Islamic-irfanic sources.

The issue of “renunciation of the world” (olam tarki) is also among the key irfanic concepts in Navoi's oeuvre:

Olam tarki kishiga himmatdin erur,

Kim koʻp shiddat ul sari ragʻbatdin erur. [1.138]

[Interpretive meaning: Attaining renunciation of the world is a matter of spiritual aspiration (himmat). Excessive inclination toward the world leads to hardship and suffering.]

These verses indicate that excessive attachment to the world is the primary cause of spiritual distress. In Sufism, “renunciation of the world” does not mean physical withdrawal but rather purification of the heart from worldly inclinations. In this sense, Navoi's concepts of fana and renunciation of the world approach the Naqshbandi principle of “solitude in the crowd” (khilvat dar anjuman), meaning that one may live among people outwardly while remaining inwardly with God.

Thus, in the works of Alisher Navoi, the concepts of world and fana are interpreted as deeply interconnected notions. While the world is portrayed as a transient realm of carnal desires that occupy the human heart, fana is presented as the spiritual station through which one is liberated from these desires and ascends toward Divine Truth. Consequently, in Navoi's poetics, the concepts of world and fana become essential irfanic-aesthetic categories expressing the process of human spiritual perfection.

CONCLUSION

The creative legacy of Alisher Navoi represents a pinnacle of Sufi thought and irfanic literature in the East, offering profound artistic and philosophical interpretations of human spiritual perfection, the struggle against the ego (nafs), and the aspiration toward Divine Truth. In his works, the concepts of “world” and “fana” emerge as central components of this irfanic worldview.

The results of the study demonstrate that in Navoi's interpretation, the concept of the “world” does not denote a simple material existence; rather, it signifies a system of carnal desires, fleeting passions, and transient interests that distance the human being from Divine Truth. The poet frequently portrays the world as deceptive, unfaithful, and inherently transient in nature.

Based on the analysis of rubois and narrative verses examined in this article, it has been established that the concept of fana in Navoi's poetics does not imply physical annihilation. Instead, it signifies the renunciation of the egoistic self and the ascent toward spiritual purification and divine perfection. In the poet's view, the station of fana represents an irfanic stage that liberates the human being from worldly suffering and inner spiritual anguish. Therefore, the concepts of world and fana function as mutually complementary elements within Navoi's conceptual system.

The study also revealed that Navoi does not advocate the absolute rejection of the world; rather, he calls for a balanced and spiritually conscious relationship with it. According to the poet, the world acquires positive value only when it serves as a means guiding the human being toward the hereafter and ultimate truth. This demonstrates that Navoi's Sufi outlook is not detached

from life but is instead a practical-irfanic doctrine aimed at elevating human spirituality.

Furthermore, the article has shown the symbolic and semantic nature of the concepts of world and fana in Navoi's works, as well as their close connection with Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions (hadith), and Sufi teachings. It has been established that the poet's artistic thinking reflects a profound assimilation of religious and irfanic sources, expressed through a highly refined poetic form.

In conclusion, the concepts of world and fana in the works of Alisher Navoi constitute essential irfanic-aesthetic categories that express the process of human spiritual perfection. The study of these concepts not only deepens our understanding of Navoi's artistic universe but also provides valuable insights into the essence of Eastern Sufi thought.

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