

# A Comparative-Poetological Study Of The Preambles Of Alisher Navoi's "Majolis Un-Nafois" And Sadiki Kitabdar's "Majma' Ul-Khavas" Tazkiras

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**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative and poetological analysis of the preambles of Alisher Navoi's Majolis un-nafois and Sadiki Kitabdar's Majma' ul-khavas. The study demonstrates that the preamble in the tazkira genre is not a simple introductory section, but rather a significant theoretical space that articulates the author's aesthetic views, literary criteria, and poetic stance. The research reveals that Navoi's preamble establishes a normative model for Turkic tazkira writing, while Sadiki's preamble represents a conscious and creative continuation of this model. Through comparative analysis, the study elucidates the divine nature of word and verse, the authorial position, and the internal poetic principles governing the tazkira tradition.

**Keywords:** tazkira tradition, poetics of the preamble, comparative poetology, intertextual analysis, Alisher Navoi, Sadiki Kitabdar, Majolis un-nafois, Majma' ul-khavas, concept of word and verse, classical Turkic literature.

**Introduction:** In classical Turkic literature, the tradition of tazkira writing developed not merely as a genre collecting literary-biographical information, but as an important artistic system expressing the author's aesthetic views, literary criteria, and poetic worldview. In particular, the preamble of a tazkira text functions as a conceptual section that defines the theoretical and poetological foundations of the genre and reveals the author's attitude toward literary tradition. In this respect, the preamble does not merely serve an introductory function, but appears as a poetic manifesto of the tazkira.

In the history of Turkic tazkira writing, Alisher Navoi's Majolis un-nafois occupies a crucial place in the formation of the genre and the establishment of its normative model. In the preamble of this work, the divine nature of word and verse is grounded through Qur'anic verses and religious sources, granting the poet a high aesthetic and spiritual status. Through this preamble, tazkira writing is interpreted not only as a historical-documentary genre, but as a literary phenomenon based on clearly defined poetological criteria.

This tradition continued in tazkiras created in subsequent centuries. In particular, Sadiki Kitabdar, the

author of Majma' ul-khavas, written at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, consciously refers to the preceding tazkira tradition in his preamble. The works of Jami, Navoi, Davlatshakh, and Som Mirza are mentioned, and Majma' ul-khavas is presented as a continuation of this coherent lineage. The genre diversity of Sadiki's preamble, the active integration of poetry and prose, and the author's modest self-representation as a "poor servant" demonstrate the legitimizing character of the work.

In scholarly literature, the affinity between Majolis un-nafois and Majma' ul-khavas has primarily been noted in terms of historical-literary influence, linguistic features, and structural similarities. Some studies emphasize the closeness of the two works in title, language, and overall structure, as well as the fact that Sadiki's work was created within Navoi's tradition. However, these studies have not specifically addressed the poetological function of the preambles, their role as literary manifestos, or their internal aesthetic mechanisms.

Although the text of Majolis un-nafois and its Persian translations have been thoroughly studied from a textual-critical perspective, these studies have largely

focused on textual issues, leaving the genre-related, poetic, and intertextual features of the preamble insufficiently explored. Thus, while existing scholarship provides a reliable textual foundation for the preambles of Navoi's and Sadiki's tazkiras, the need for their poetological comparison remains.

This article analyzes the preambles of Majolis un-nafois and Majma' ul-khavas through comparative poetological and intertextual approaches. The aim of the study is to determine the place of both preambles within the tazkira tradition, the authorial position, the aesthetic evaluation of word and verse, and the mechanisms by which literary continuity is maintained. This approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the internal poetic principles of Turkic tazkira writing.

### Discussion and Results

In classical Islamic literature of the East, poetry and prose often coexist within a single work, regardless of whether it is a product of oral tradition or an individual author. The well-known example of One Thousand and One Nights suffices to illustrate this phenomenon. Within this syncretic framework, the interaction between poetry and prose is highly active and natural. A single "prose" work may contain various poetic genres, with verses serving not only as illustrative examples but also as a form of argumentation within the prose text.

Argumentation through poetry operates at least on two levels. On the one hand, poetic lines function as logical and even scholarly evidence supporting the prose narrative. On the other hand, they serve as an aesthetically powerful means of embellishing and reinforcing the prose. It was believed that no matter how skillfully crafted, prose alone could not achieve such a high level of aesthetic persuasion. In other words, refined aesthetic sensibility was considered essential in any literary work, and this was most effectively expressed through carefully selected verses.

This observation is supported by the fact that both authors begin the preambles of their tazkiras with poetic passages. In both cases, the introductions open with traditional praise of God. In Majolis un-nafois, Navoi cites the following passage:

Yuz hamd angakim yasab jahon bo'stoni,  
Aylab yuz-u zulfidin gul-u rayhoni.

Qildi yasag'och bu bog'i ruhafzoni

Nazm ahlin aning bulbuli xush ilhoni.

Similarly, Sadiki Kitabdar begins the introduction of his work with the following lines:

Yo Rab sadafi tab'imi gavharzo qil,

Xurshi kalomimni jihonoro qil,  
Ko'nglumni duri shukring ila daryo qil,  
Ya'ni tilimni hamding ila go'yo qil.

In terms of character, Navoi's poetic passage functions primarily as a hamd (praise of God), whereas Sadiki Kitabdar's passage evokes the notion of a munājāt (supplicatory prayer). Nevertheless, both texts share a common focal point: the emphasis on the power of the word. Navoi glorifies God's creative might, likening the world and its beauty to a blooming garden and portraying poets as nightingales who sing in its praise. Sadiki, on the other hand, implores God to illuminate the universe through the "sun of his pen" and to make his tongue eloquent in divine praise.

Navoi's subsequent poetic passage reads as follows:

To taxti fasohat avjida topti nishast,  
Ham nazmki etti zumrayi tab'parast.  
Ham nozimining poyasiga berdi shikast,  
Ham nazmini qildi qaro tufroqqa past.

In this passage, Navoi continues the act of praise by associating poetry not with ordinary human creativity, but with divine speech. While noting that Arab rhetoricians endeavored to demonstrate the highest examples of eloquence and rhetorical mastery—so much so that their claims were said to have "reached the heavens"—he emphasizes that all such efforts ultimately proved powerless in the face of divine revelation. In the accompanying prose, the author advances what he considers the most compelling proof of poetry's supreme value: the revelation of the Qur'an. The melodious nature of Qur'anic verses, their internal rhythm, and the depth of their meaning represent the highest level of poetic expression. At the same time, Navoi does not regard everyone who engages in versification as a true poet. In his view, a genuine poet is one who is capable of grasping subtle meanings and uncovering the wisdom and symbolism hidden behind words, attaining the "pearls of subtleties" (daqāqiq durrī) and the "rubies of meanings" (ma'ānī la'lī). This approach corresponds to the classical poetological tradition, which interprets the poet not merely as an artisan of language, but as a bearer of knowledge, reflection, and inspiration.

Navoi further stresses that the names of such figures should be preserved in history, noting that contemporaries composed works in their honor. In this context, he recalls that Abdurahmon Jomiy also mentioned them in his Bahoriston. In the following quatrain, Navoi praises Jomiy as a figure of boundless knowledge and talent. Even if his learning were compared to the entire cosmos (the nine celestial spheres), it would still amount to no more than a single

drop beside the ocean of his knowledge. His talent, likened to a clear spring that emerges in time, is depicted as a life-giving water that benefits all and fills its surroundings.

Navoi then consistently outlines the tradition of earlier tazkiras, the necessity of recording poets who lived and created in his own time, and the reasons behind the composition of Majolis un-nafois. He highly evaluates the efforts of earlier tazkira authors, particularly Jomiy and Amir Davlatshah Samarqandi. At the same time, he points out that these works predominantly focused on poets of the past, leaving contemporary poets outside the recorded literary process. According to Navoi, although the cultural milieu formed during the reign of Sultan Husayn Boyqaro produced poets of remarkable maturity—especially in the ghazal genre, combining elegance of meaning with stylistic refinement—their names and works were not firmly documented in written sources. This situation led the author to the necessity of gathering contemporary poets and inscribing them into literary memory. As a result, Majolis un-nafois was structured as a tazkira consisting of eight assemblies, through which a new poetic image of the era is presented while remaining grounded in earlier tradition. In this way, the author interprets the tazkira not as a simple biographical compilation, but as a scholarly-literary work that systematizes the literary process and reinforces the aesthetic and historical status of poetry. He concludes the preamble with the following poetic passage:

Bu tuhfaki, xushmen ibtidosi birla,  
Ham nazm latoyifi adosi birla,  
Ummid bukim, umr vafosi birla,  
Xatm aylagamen shoh duosi birla.

Here, the distinctive role of praising the ruler in the conclusion becomes evident.

In comparison, Sadiki Kitabdar's Majma' ul-havos features a preamble that is somewhat more extensive than Navoi's. Following the poetic passage of divine praise, two additional rubā'īs are included. In the first rubā'ī, God is depicted as an ocean of grace, mercy, and generosity. It is emphasized that, in comparison to the vast sea of divine beneficence, the world amounts to no more than a single drop. Here, the world is not devalued in itself; rather, it is presented as a relatively small phenomenon against the backdrop of God's infinite power. Images such as the "shell of my creation" and the "jewel chest of imagination" serve to interpret creativity not as a product of individual skill, but as the result of divine will and bestowal. At the end of the rubā'ī, the poet asks that his talent be devoted to na't, that is, praise of the Prophet. This reflects a

well-established idea in classical poetics: poetry should not exist merely for aesthetic pleasure, but must serve a sacred purpose.

In the second rubā'ī, the theme of intercession comes to the forefront. God's majesty is depicted in such a way that, in His presence, even the vast heavens appear narrow and exalted intellect becomes powerless. This imagery underscores the limited nature of human reason in contrast to divine omnipotence. In the final lines of the rubā'ī, the poet confesses his own "evil deeds" and envisions salvation through intercession. This intercession is associated with Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants. In this manner, the rubā'ī is enriched with themes of repentance, divine justice, and hope for mercy. Consequently, poetry is transformed from an expression of individual emotion into a poetic articulation of the Islamic belief system.

In addition, several passages of the preface contain quotations from the Qur'an. In particular, following the aforementioned poetic passages, the discourse begins with boundless praise and gratitude to God, emphasizing that God has granted humankind the blessing of expressing words through language and that this ability is grounded in divine will. The author interprets the human being, citing verse 4 of Sūrat al-Tin ("created in the most beautiful form"), as a being endowed with a superior ontological status, and identifies two fundamental qualities that distinguish humans from animals—both of which are likewise substantiated through Qur'anic references.

The first of these qualities is divine grace and mercy, supported by verse 70 of Sūrat al-Isrā' ("We have honored the children of Adam"). The second is knowledge and the capacity to name things, which is justified by verse 30 of Sūrat al-Baqara ("He taught Adam the names of all things"). Through these citations, the author underscores the idea that God manifests His miracle through the twenty-nine letters, and that as a result of this miracle—the Qur'an itself—even a single verse cannot be equaled by the combined works of poets and scholars of all ages. These views are fully consonant with Navoi's reflections on divine speech (Kalām Allāh) in the preface to Majolis un-nafois.

Such an approach leads to the interpretation of language as a divine phenomenon, which in turn elevates the status of poetry and the poet. However, the author also emphasizes that not every poem is worthy of being raised to such a lofty level. In this regard, he cites a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) concerning the degrees of speech: "Some poetry is wisdom, and some resembles sorcery." By invoking this statement, the author explains the very

rationale behind the emergence of *tazkira* writing. That is, Persian and Turkic literary figures, in accordance with the distinction articulated in the hadith, sought to compile those poems that were most meaningful and universally acceptable from among various types of verse, thereby producing *tazkiras*.

Among such works, he gives special recognition to four *tazkiras*: Abdurahmon Jomiy's *Bahoriston*, Alisher Navoi's *Majolis un-nafois*, Davlatshah Samarcandi's *Tazkirat ush-shu'arā*, and Som Mirzo's *Tuhfayi Somiy*. The joint mention of Persian and Turkic masters of the word is particularly significant, as it reflects a multilingual literary environment, cultural diversity, and the comprehensive scope of the *tazkira* as a genre that encompasses a shared literary space.

Following this, the author begins to introduce himself poetically with Sufi-inspired humility and modesty. As he opens his *tazkira*, he presents it as a single link in the chain of previously composed *tazkiras*, while portraying himself in an extremely self-effacing manner through the following verses:

Meshaqqat mulkining bexonumoni,  
Malomat deftarining nuktadoni  
Muhabbat ko'shesining xokro'bi,  
Meveddet mejlisining poyko'bi.  
Hakaret deshtining ez'af giyahi  
Iradet dergehining xokrohi  
Vefa ser-rishtesining poybandi  
Devasiz derd-u ishqning derdmendi...

Following this modest self-introduction, the author turns to the figure of the great master whose poetry is clothed in the highest garments of eloquence and who possesses supreme rhetorical refinement—the beloved orator of the garden of words, namely Alisher Navoi. Navoi is presented as a guiding figure whose work serves to lead travelers crossing deserts and wandering wayfarers onto the true path, and whose intellectual debates and discourses are rendered subservient to the ecstasy of love.

The author describes Navoi as a poet who, with the sharp tip of his precision-cutting pen, is able to scatter a single strand of the hair of sweet-tongued beloveds, thereby bringing concealed imagination into a space of manifestation and spiritual revelation. Likewise, with a pen likened to marble, he sends powerful lovers—reminiscent of Farhod—from the fortress of words toward the mountain of divine speech, Behistun. In support of this characterization, the author appends the following poetic passage:

Ul kim mog'ul istilohin eylep meshhur

Aldi Arabu Ajam tilidin mensur  
Bo'lsa ne ajeb jihan tilige mezkur

Kim hich kishige bu yanglig' ernes maqdur.

In the cited rubā'ī, special emphasis is placed on Navoi's role in popularizing Chagatai Turkic through his own literary practice, as well as on his capacity as a zullisonayn author. His ability to integrate Arabic and Persian cultural-linguistic environments presents him as a figure of international stature and reveals the author's conception of literary universality. The author expresses a desire to embellish several pages of his work with words in Navoi's manner and to organize eight special assemblies corresponding to the esteemed gatherings of that master, wishing that this compilation might be worthy of *Majolis un-nafois*. He cites the aphorism that those who pursue knowledge in the service of a single purpose inevitably encounter hardships. He likens his aspiration to responding to droplets from clouds above an endless sea or turning toward the innumerable rays of a sun that illuminates the entire world. Nevertheless, he remains steadfast in his purpose, invoking the maxim that concealing knowledge is impermissible, and articulates the idea that gentleness of speech is rooted in the heart. Opening the proverbial door that "a sweet water source attracts a crowd," he sets his face toward the road, prepares for the journey, and seeks zeal and assistance from the spiritually triumphant souls of that exalted figure. He hopes that the pen—endowed at the outset with speed and agility—will, like a swift horse driven by a guiding whip, be supported and protected by companions of guidance and aid until it reaches its end. In this part of the passage, the author openly acknowledges the complexity and difficulty of the creative process, demonstrating a conscious awareness of the task he has undertaken and a responsible attitude toward it.

In the concluding section of the preface, the author once again follows Navoi's example by turning to the ruler of his time. Specifically, the Safavid sovereign Shah Abbas I is likened to Alexander. Shah Abbas I is portrayed not as a constant poet, but as a possessor of exceptional inspiration. By emphasizing the ruler's "eagle-like nature that hunts lions," the author underscores that his true domain lies in politics, action, and power. Poetry, by contrast, occupies a secondary position for him, emerging only in a blessed moment when inner necessity and inspiration are awakened. In this way, the value of verse is not diminished; rather, its elevated and rare nature is particularly emphasized.

The poem cited in the final part reveals that the ruler, too, possesses human suffering, patience, and inner experience. The love-tinged and plaintive tone of the

verses presents the ruler not merely as an embodiment of power, but as a human being who undergoes profound spiritual emotions.

Sadiki concludes his preface with a rubā‘ī. In terms of content, this final poem is encomiastic in character, offering benevolent wishes to the ruler and extolling his virtues.

Yor ab ki yeri charh binosi bo'lsun,  
Tesbihî melek zikr duasi bo'lsun,  
Eflaki inonkesh rizosi bo'lsun,  
To devr bekasidur, bekasi bo'lsun.  
Amin Ya Rabbil Alemin.

Thus, the internal structure and poetic layers of both tazkira prefaces demonstrate that the preface is not a secondary or auxiliary section within the tazkira tradition, but rather a central poetological space that determines the theoretical foundations of the genre. Within this space, the connection of word and verse to a divine source, the author's position within the literary genealogy, and the reasons for the emergence of the tazkira are formed as a unified aesthetic and theoretical system. Precisely this aspect makes the comparative study of prefaces important not only for identifying lines of historical influence, but also for revealing the internal poetic principles of Turkic tazkira writing.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the analysis show that both prefaces shape the tazkira not as a simple introductory section, but as a literary-aesthetic program and a poetic manifesto. This confirms the distinct and central position of the preface within the genre structure of the Turkic tazkira tradition. Comparative analysis demonstrates that Navoi's preface establishes a normative and foundational model of Turkic tazkira writing. By linking word and verse to a divine source, Navoi interprets poetry as a domain superior to mere human creative production. At the same time, his preface advances the idea of preserving contemporary poets in literary memory, thereby conceptualizing the tazkira as a scholarly-literary phenomenon that systematizes the literary process.

The preface of Sadiki Kitabdar, in turn, appears as a creative continuation of this normative model. While preserving the poetic-normative paradigm established by Navoi, it strengthens the legitimizing function of the tazkira through a modest authorial stance and a strong intertextual layer. Sadiki actively employs the harmony of verse and prose, interprets creativity as a divine gift, and emphasizes the moral mission of poetry. Through Qur'anic verses and hadiths, the divine nature of language and word is substantiated, and the

emergence of the tazkira is theoretically explained.

In both prefaces, the image of the ruler also performs a distinct poetic and discursive function. In Navoi's work, praise of the ruler serves to glorify Sultan Husayn Bayqaro—who fostered the flourishing of literary life in his time—and functions as a means of seeking support at the conclusion of the work. In Sadiki's preface, the image of Shah Abbas I is presented in harmony with the concept of political power. The portrayal of the ruler not as a constant poet but as a bearer of exceptional inspiration further elevates poetry as a value, presenting it as a rare and exceptional phenomenon.

Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that the relationship between the prefaces of Majolis un-nafois and Majma' ul-khavas is characterized by conscious poetic succession. Sadiki Kitabdar does not simply replicate Navoi's tazkira model, but enriches it through the perspectives of his own time, religious-aesthetic views, and Sufi worldview. This allows Turkic tazkira writing to be interpreted not as a static genre, but as a dynamic literary system governed by internal poetic principles.

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