

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF ALISHER NAVOI IN CENTRAL ASIAN
LITERATURE

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Abstract: *This article explores the life and literary heritage of Alisher Navoi, one of the most prominent figures in Central Asian history. The paper analyzes his contributions to Turkic literature, particularly his role in promoting the Chagatai language as a respected literary medium. Key themes of his works, such as humanism, spiritual reflection, and linguistic pride, are discussed. Navoi's legacy is examined within the context of his time and its lasting influence on the development of Uzbek and broader Turkic cultural identity.*

Keywords: *Alisher Navoi, Central Asian literature, Chagatai language, Turkic poetry, humanism, philosophy, cultural heritage.*

Аннотация: *В статье исследуются жизнь и литературное наследие Алишера Навои — одной из ключевых фигур в истории Центральной Азии. Проанализирован его вклад в тюркоязычную литературу, в особенности продвижение чагатайского языка как литературного. Рассмотрены основные темы его творчества: гуманизм, духовные поиски и языковая гордость. Также освещено значение его наследия для формирования узбекской и шире — тюркской культурной идентичности.*

Ключевые слова: *Алишер Навои, литература Центральной Азии, чагатайский язык, тюркская поэзия, гуманизм, философия, культурное наследие.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqolada Markaziy Osiyoning yetuk vakillaridan biri Alisher Navoiy hayoti va adabiy merosi o'rganilgan. Uning turkiy adabiyotga, xususan, Chig'atoy tilini adabiy til sifatida rivojlantirishdagi hissasi tahlil qilingan. Navoiy ijodidagi insonparvarlik, ruhiy izlanish va milliy tilda ifoda etish g'oyalari tahlil markazida turadi. Uning madaniy merosi va bugungi kunga qadar Markaziy Osiyo va keng Turk dunyosidagi ahamiyati yoritilgan.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Alisher Navoiy, Markaziy Osiyo adabiyoti, Chig'atoy tili, turkiy she'riyat, insonparvarlik, falsafa, madaniy meros.*

Introduction

Central Asian literature has been shaped by numerous brilliant poets, philosophers, and thinkers throughout history. Among these figures, Alisher Navoi stands out as one of the most influential and respected literary giants. Born in 1441 in Herat, Navoi was a poet, philosopher, statesman, and linguist whose works helped to establish Turkic (specifically Chagatai) as a literary language on par with Persian and Arabic. His profound contributions transformed the cultural and literary traditions of Central Asia. This article explores the life

of Alisher Navoi, examines his literary contributions, and highlights his lasting legacy in Central Asian literature and culture.

Alisher Navoi was born on February 9, 1441, in Herat, a major cultural and intellectual center of the Timurid Empire. He grew up in an environment rich in art, science, and literature. Navoi received an excellent education, learning Arabic and Persian languages, philosophy, Islamic sciences, and literature from an early age. He was deeply influenced by the leading scholars and poets of his time and developed an early passion for poetry.

Navoi's close connection to the Timurid court allowed him to engage with some of the most prominent intellectuals and rulers, including Sultan Husayn Bayqara, who later became both his close friend and a patron of the arts.

Literary Works and Contributions

Alisher Navoi's literary contributions are vast and cover different genres of poetry, prose, and philosophy. He wrote primarily in Chagatai Turkish, making him one of the earliest and most influential authors in Turkic literature. His efforts raised the prestige of the Turkic language, which had previously been considered inferior to Persian in literary circles.

His most famous works include:

Khamsa (The Quintet): A collection of five epic poems inspired by the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi, but written in Turkic and reflecting Central Asian culture and philosophy.

Muhakamat al-Lughatayn (The Judgment of the Two Languages): A comparative study that argues the richness and expressiveness of the Turkic language over Persian.

Lison ut-Tayr (The Language of the Birds): A poetic allegory based on Sufi philosophy, influenced by Attar's "Conference of the Birds."

Diwan: Collections of lyrical poems in different forms such as ghazals, qasidas, and rubais.

Navoi's poetry is characterized by deep humanism, spiritual themes, love, ethics, and a search for truth. He beautifully blended mystical Sufi elements with the realities of human life.

Navoi's works reflect his philosophical outlook, deeply rooted in Sufism and humanistic ideals. He emphasized moral integrity, kindness, love for humanity, and the search for divine truth. Many of his poems discuss the inner world of a person and the struggles between earthly desires and spiritual aspirations.

Navoi also promoted the idea that the Turkic language was just as capable of expressing profound philosophical and emotional ideas as Persian. Through his works, he encouraged Turkic-speaking poets to take pride in their language and use it as a medium for high art.

Before Navoi, most literary works in the region were written in Persian or Arabic. Navoi's use of the Chagatai language (the literary ancestor of modern Uzbek) laid the foundation for Turkic-language literature in Central Asia. He demonstrated that Turkic could be a language of science, philosophy, and high poetry.

Navoi inspired generations of poets in Central Asia and beyond. His influence spread not only across Turkic-speaking regions but also impacted Persian and Arabic literature. Later

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Uzbek poets such as Babur, Mashrab, and Nodira admired and followed his literary tradition.

Navoi's philosophical outlook was deeply rooted in Sufism, which emphasizes the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment and the purification of the soul. His works consistently advocate for moral values such as justice, compassion, and humility. Navoi's poetry reflects his belief in the importance of love as a transformative power—both divine love and human affection. He viewed love as a means to rise above material desires and attain a deeper connection with God.

Another important theme in Navoi's works is the concept of the ideal ruler and the responsibilities of leadership. He believed that rulers should govern with wisdom, fairness, and a deep concern for the well-being of their subjects. His close relationship with Sultan Husayn Bayqara allowed him to put some of these ideals into practice, advising the ruler on matters of governance and culture.

Navoi was also a strong advocate of linguistic pride. In an era when Persian was considered the dominant language of high culture, Navoi promoted the Chagatai Turkic language as equally capable of expressing sophisticated literary and philosophical ideas. His "Muhakamat al-Lughatayn" is a landmark work in this regard, demonstrating that Turkic, too, could serve as a rich medium for artistic expression.

Navoi's themes of humanism, spiritual searching, and linguistic pride created a powerful legacy that continues to influence writers and thinkers in Central Asia and beyond. His works invite readers to reflect on their inner selves and to strive for a more just and compassionate world.

Alisher Navoi's influence on Central Asian literature is unparalleled. He is widely regarded as the father of Turkic classical literature, and his efforts helped establish Chagatai as a literary language with the same prestige as Persian and Arabic. By writing extensively in Turkic, Navoi inspired countless poets and writers who followed in his footsteps.

One of Navoi's most notable literary successors was Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, who also composed poetry in Chagatai. Babur admired Navoi's style and philosophical depth, and his own works reflect Navoi's humanistic and lyrical traditions. Other Central Asian poets, such as Mashrab, Ogahiy, and Nodira, also drew inspiration from Navoi's themes of love, spirituality, and moral responsibility.

Navoi's legacy extends beyond literature. In modern Uzbekistan, he is celebrated as a national hero and a symbol of cultural pride. His name adorns streets, universities, theaters, and libraries throughout the country. February 9, his birthday, is commemorated as the Day of Uzbek Language and Literature, reflecting his enduring impact on the national consciousness.

In addition to his literary achievements, Navoi is remembered for his contributions to education, architecture, and philanthropy. He founded schools, built libraries, and sponsored

charitable works that benefited the people of Herat and beyond. His holistic approach to culture and society underscores his vision of a just and enlightened community.

Conclusion

Today, scholars around the world continue to study Navoi's works, translating them into various languages and analyzing their significance in the broader context of world literature. His emphasis on compassion, intellectual inquiry, and cultural pride remains relevant in contemporary discussions about identity, heritage, and human values.

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