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NAVOI'S TATABBUS

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Abstract: This article examines the phenomenon of *tatabbus* in the literary heritage of Alisher Navoi and highlights its artistic, aesthetic, and spiritual significance in classical Uzbek literature. *Tatabbus*, understood as a poetic response, creative imitation, or continuation of an earlier literary model, occupies an important place in Eastern classical poetics. Alisher Navoi, as a great representative of Turkic literature, not only followed the literary traditions of his predecessors but also enriched them with original artistic thinking, philosophical depth, and linguistic mastery. The article analyzes the essence of *tatabbus*, its role in the development of poetic skill, and the distinctive features of Navoi's creative approach to this genre. Special attention is given to the relationship between tradition and innovation, intertextuality, artistic influence, and the individuality of the poet in the process of poetic emulation. The study concludes that Navoi's *tatabbus* works are not simple imitations, but highly creative reinterpretations that demonstrate his intellectual maturity and literary genius.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, tatabbus, classical literature, poetic response, literary tradition, artistic mastery, intertextuality, ghazal, creative imitation, Uzbek literature

Alisher Navoi holds an exceptional place in the history of Uzbek and Turkic literature. His poetic and prose works are recognized not only for their linguistic elegance and philosophical richness, but also for their close relationship with the classical literary traditions of the East. One of the significant manifestations of this relationship is seen in his *tatabbus* works. In classical oriental poetics, *tatabbus* refers to composing a poem in response to or in continuation of another poet's work while preserving certain formal aspects such as rhyme, meter, or theme. However, this literary practice is not limited to imitation alone; rather, it serves as a field for creative dialogue, artistic competition, and intellectual interpretation.

The tradition of *tatabbus* was widespread in Persian-Tajik, Arabic, and Turkic classical literature. Poets often wrote responses to renowned masters in order to show respect for them, to test their own artistic power, and to contribute to the continuity of literary culture. Navoi, deeply influenced by earlier poets such as Nizami, Khusraw Dehlavi, Saadi, Hafiz, Jami, and others, entered this literary dialogue in a highly original way. His *tatabbus* works reflect his ability to synthesize tradition with innovation and to transform inherited models into independent artistic achievements.

The relevance of studying Navoi's *tatabbus* lies in the fact that it helps reveal not only the poet's literary craftsmanship but also the broader principles of classical literary development. Through such analysis, one can better understand how classical literature functioned as a dynamic system of textual relationships, cultural continuity, and spiritual communication between generations of poets.

In the literary theory of the East, *tatabbus* is generally viewed as an act of poetic following, answering, or creatively reworking an earlier poem. It differs from direct plagiarism because the poet openly positions himself within an established tradition and uses the previous text as an artistic and intellectual point of departure. In this sense, *tatabbus* is both reverence and rivalry. It is reverence because it acknowledges the greatness of a former poet; it is rivalry because the later poet aims to demonstrate equal or greater artistic ability.

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The aesthetic value of *tatabbus* lies in the balance between fidelity and originality. A successful *tatabbus* preserves the external framework of the original poem while giving it new emotional depth, semantic breadth, and stylistic freshness. Therefore, the poet's task is not merely to repeat a known pattern, but to enrich it through personal vision and mastery.

In classical poetics, such literary practices played a major role in forming poetic schools, transmitting artistic standards, and shaping the individuality of poets. For Navoi, *tatabbus* became a means of proving the expressive possibilities of the Turkic language and placing it alongside the most advanced literary traditions of his time.

Navoi's literary worldview was formed under the influence of a rich intellectual and poetic environment. He was well acquainted with Persian classical literature and had profound respect for great poets and thinkers. Yet his relationship with them was never passive. Instead, he actively entered into dialogue with their texts, reinterpreting them through the lens of his own cultural, moral, and linguistic experience.

Navoi's creative response to literary tradition may be observed in different genres, especially in the ghazal and in larger epic works. He inherited poetic images, symbols, themes, and compositional models, but he transformed them into vehicles for his own humanistic, ethical, and mystical ideas. In this process, *tatabbus* served as an important artistic method.

The significance of Navoi's *tatabbus* is especially clear when considering his role in elevating Chagatai Turkic to the status of a refined literary language. By engaging with prestigious poetic models previously associated mostly with Persian literature, Navoi demonstrated that Turkic could convey the same subtle emotions, philosophical reflections, and aesthetic complexities. Thus, his *tatabbus* had not only literary but also cultural and linguistic importance.

One of the key characteristics of Navoi's *tatabbus* is creative independence. Although he may follow the metrical and thematic framework of an earlier poem, he introduces new shades of meaning, richer psychological insight, and distinct imagery. This shows that for Navoi, *tatabbus* was not a mechanical repetition of another poet's work, but an act of artistic renewal.

Another important feature is his philosophical depth. In many classical poems, themes such as love, separation, beauty, fate, and spiritual longing are treated symbolically. Navoi preserves these themes, but often deepens them with ethical reflection and mystical resonance. His verses frequently transcend the immediate emotional situation and move toward universal human concerns such as loyalty, truth, patience, wisdom, and inner purification.

Navoi's language also distinguishes his *tatabbus* works. He skillfully combines simplicity and sophistication, clarity and ornamentation. His diction is precise, melodious, and emotionally charged. The symbolic system of classical poetry—rose and nightingale, candle and moth, wine and cupbearer, beloved and lover—appears in his verse with renewed vitality and national coloration.

A further remarkable aspect is intertextual richness. Navoi's poems often echo earlier texts while simultaneously opening new interpretive directions. This demonstrates a high level of literary consciousness. He does not merely borrow poetic devices; he reconstructs and recontextualizes them. As a result, the reader perceives both continuity with the past and the emergence of a unique poetic voice.

Navoi's *tatabbus* should also be understood as a form of literary dialogue. In classical literature, poets communicated with each other across time and space through texts. Such dialogue was not limited to admiration; it also involved interpretation, correction, expansion, and competition. By writing in response to well-known models, Navoi participated in a

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centuries-old conversation about beauty, truth, love, morality, and the nature of artistic perfection.

This dialogic quality is especially important because it reveals the collective character of classical literary culture. Individual genius developed not in isolation, but in relation to an inherited canon. At the same time, each major poet redefined that canon. Navoi's achievement lies precisely in this: he honored tradition while reshaping it in accordance with his own worldview and poetic mission.

In his *tatabbus*, one can observe how literary memory becomes a source of innovation. The past is not treated as a fixed authority, but as living material for new creation. Therefore, Navoi's poetry exemplifies the dynamic interaction between preservation and transformation.

Navoi's *tatabbus* is significant not only from an artistic perspective but also from a spiritual and moral one. Classical Eastern literature was deeply connected with ethical teaching, Sufi reflection, and the cultivation of inner refinement. Navoi inherited this orientation and expressed it through his poetic responses.

In many of his works, the image of earthly love expands into a symbol of divine yearning. Suffering becomes a path to perfection; separation becomes a means of spiritual awakening; beauty becomes a mirror of truth. Such interpretations distinguish Navoi from purely ornamental poets and show the seriousness of his literary purpose. He uses inherited poetic forms to convey profound reflections on human dignity, justice, compassion, and self-knowledge.

Thus, *tatabbus* in Navoi's poetry becomes a method of moral interpretation. Through engagement with earlier texts, he not only continues their artistic form but also deepens their spiritual content. This makes his works enduringly relevant and meaningful.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Navoi's *tatabbus* is the way it reveals his individuality. True artistic greatness is shown not by rejecting tradition altogether, but by mastering it so fully that one can transform it from within. Navoi achieved exactly this. His poetic responses demonstrate respect for his predecessors, but they never lose the mark of his own genius.

His originality is visible in his command of the Turkic language, his humanistic outlook, his philosophical subtlety, and his emotional sincerity. Even when writing within a traditional framework, he introduces a tone, a rhythm, and an interpretive intensity that belong specifically to him. As a result, Navoi's *tatabbus* works stand as independent literary values rather than secondary imitations.

This aspect is especially important for literary scholarship, because it helps challenge simplistic assumptions about imitation in classical literature. In Navoi's case, imitation becomes creation, following becomes leadership, and tradition becomes a source of renewal.

In conclusion, *tatabbus* occupies a central and meaningful place in Alisher Navoi's literary heritage. It reflects his deep engagement with the classical poetic tradition of the East, his reverence for earlier masters, and his extraordinary ability to reshape inherited models into original artistic achievements. Navoi's *tatabbus* works prove that classical literature developed through creative continuity rather than passive repetition.

The study of Navoi's *tatabbus* allows us to appreciate the richness of intertextuality, the aesthetics of literary dialogue, and the poet's contribution to the elevation of Turkic literature. His poetic responses reveal a rare harmony of tradition and innovation, formal discipline and imaginative freedom, aesthetic beauty and moral depth. Therefore, Navoi's *tatabbus* should be regarded not simply as an example of poetic following, but as a powerful expression of artistic individuality and cultural leadership.

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Navoi remains one of the brightest examples of how a poet can inherit a great tradition and at the same time become its renewer. His *tatabbus* continues to inspire literary scholarship and serves as an important key to understanding the spiritual and artistic foundations of classical Uzbek literature.

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