

THE MENTION OF SHEIKHS IN NAVOI'S MEMOIR-BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the mention of Sufi shaykhs in Alisher Navoi's memoir-biographical works. In particular, it explores the role of prominent mystics such as Khoja Muhammad Parsa and Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar in Navoi's life, as well as the reasons for mentioning these figures in his works. The study highlights stylistic and thematic features specific to Navoi's literary method.

Keywords: Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin, Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher, Haloti Pahlavon Muhammad, Khoja Muhammad Parsa, Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar, shaykhs of instruction, shaykhs of spiritual training, shaykhs of discourse.

Introduction. Alisher Navoi's creative legacy is closely tied to Sufism. Regardless of which work scholars examine, the Qur'an serves as a primary source. Sufi teachings, being rooted in and inspired by the Qur'anic worldview, developed within the Islamic world on this foundation. Representatives of the Naqshbandi Sufi order are frequently and respectfully mentioned in Navoi's writings. The exemplary lives and rare works of these great shaykhs are always in need of scholarly study, and Navoi's texts serve as a rich source of information about them. Among these notable figures are Hazrat Khoja Bahauddin Naqshband and his spiritual successors—Khoja Muhammad Parsa and Khoja Ahrar Vali.

So, why does Navoi repeatedly honor and praise these individuals in his works? Why does he include anecdotes about them? It becomes clear that Navoi, a poet of deep spiritual insight, urges readers toward inner growth and purification through divine love. To understand his message, intellect alone is insufficient. Without understanding Sufism, one cannot grasp the essence of Navoi's writings. The purpose of this article is to explore these aspects in detail.

Analysis of Sources. As literary scholar N. Komilov states, "Alisher Navoi mentions those who positively influenced his upbringing and artistic development with deep respect and gratitude in his works" [6, p.149]. Among them, Abdurahman Jami, Sayyid Hasan Ardasher, and Pahlavon Muhammad stand out. Navoi dedicated manāqib (spiritual biographies) such as Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin, Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher, and Haloti Pahlavon Muhammad to these figures [6, p.149]. Manāqib is a classical genre depicting the biographies and virtues of saints and spiritually eminent individuals [10, p.214].

In Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin, dedicated to his teacher Jami, Navoi presents five sections: introduction, three main parts, and conclusion. The introduction discusses Jami's lineage and early life, the first section recounts dialogues between Jami and Navoi, and the second section contains their letters. In one of these letters, the name of Khoja Nasiruddin Ubaydullah (i.e., Khoja Ahrar) is mentioned. B. Valikhojaev emphasizes that "Khoja Ubaydullah was not only familiar with Navoi's public activity but also his literary work," and cites this passage from Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin: "At a time when the noble prince Kichik Mirzo was humble and devoted to the poor and the people of spiritual poverty, he sent my qasida Tuhfat al-Afkar to the

service of Hazrat Khoja Nasiruddin Ubaydullah in Samarkand...” [4, p.54]. While it is not confirmed whether Navoi personally sent his works to Khoja Ubaydullah, what is clear is that he considered Khoja Ahrar to be his spiritual guide. In this text, Navoi calls him “Hazrat Malazu-Panoh Ahlullah” (a haven and protector of God’s friends). According to annotated dictionaries of Navoi’s language, malazu-panoh means refuge or protector [2, p.218], and ahlullah refers to the saints or those close to God [1, p.183].

In the introduction to Hayrat al-Abrar, Navoi again elaborates on Khoja Ahrar’s elevated status, his personal virtues, and his significant socio-economic influence. Notably, Navoi does not repeat the same metaphors or phrases in different texts when describing his spiritual master—each portrayal is distinct in form but consistent in meaning. In the concluding part of Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin, when listing works he read under Jami’s guidance, Navoi refers to Khoja Muhammad Parsa’s Qudsiya and Khoja Ubaydullah’s Volidiya. About Qudsiya, he writes: “The spiritual realities expressed in Hazrat Bahauddin Naqshband’s gatherings were recorded by some of his successors. Khoja Muhammad captured these meanings and elaborated them for seekers.” [3, p.59] Regarding Volidiya, he notes: “...Few sons are granted such fortune as to write a valuable book in obedience to their father’s wishes and to be praised for doing so.” [3, p.59] In Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher, Navoi again mentions Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar. Sayyid Hasan Ardasher was deeply devoted to him. Traits such as indifference to wealth and fame, spiritual solitude, love for poetry and knowledge—all attributed to Ardasher—are also consistent with the Naqshbandi path. Scholar Q. Ergashev notes that Navoi’s concept of the “Perfect Human” (Insan-i Kamil) is reflected not only in his fictional characters (Farhod, Majnun, Iskandar) but also in real historical figures like Abdurahman Jami and Sayyid Hasan Ardasher [9, p.11]. N. Komilov adds: “To Navoi, the perfect human is not a fictional ideal but a real person—a true dervish who has accepted the Sufi path.” [6, p.357] Navoi attributes various traits to Ardasher—compassion, humility, patience, gentleness, and modesty—and concludes: “God had created him as a perfect being with such qualities.” [3, p.75]

Many of these qualities are echoed in the teachings of Abdul Qadir Gilani, the founder of the Qadiriyya order. In his treatise Al-Kunya li Talib Tariq al-Haqq, he outlines ten virtues of spiritual perfection, such as truthfulness, patience, humility, avoiding harm to others, and so on [5, p.10]. Several of these are explicitly assigned to Ardasher by Navoi.

For example:

- **Not blaming others:**

“He respected all dervishes. If they erred, he never rebuked them but sought to correct gently and forgive...” [3, p.74]

- **Responding to harm with patience:**

“No matter how harshly someone treated him, he endured calmly without troubling himself...” [3, p.75]

- **Humility and modesty:**

“He made no distinction between silk and sackcloth. Lavish clothing displeased him; dervish garb suited him better.” [3, p.75]

This reveals that all Sufi paths, despite doctrinal differences, aim for the same goal: cultivating the spiritually perfected individual. Navoi portrays Sayyid Hasan Ardasher as one such person in real life. In his final years, Ardasher visited Khoja Ahrar in Samarkand. Navoi records: “He journeyed to Samarkand to be honored by the company of Hazrat Khoja Nasiruddin Ubaydullah—whom many, especially the people of Samarkand, called a Qutb. After several days of discourse and respect, he returned to Herat.” [3, p.80] The designation “Qutb” (spiritual axis) indicates Khoja Ahrar’s high spiritual status. According to Tirmidhi’s *Khatm al-Awliya*, a Qutb is the highest-ranking saint [8, p.12]. Such a visit reflects the deep master-disciple relationship in Sufi tradition. Zulaykho Rahmonova, in her article “The Knowledge of Discourse and Companionship in Sufism,” classifies Sufi mentors as:

- **Instructional Shaykhs** – who provide theoretical knowledge
- **Educational Shaykhs** – who spiritually nurture disciples like their own children
- **Discourse Shaykhs** – who inspire through speech and presence [7, p.91]

Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar embodied all these roles in his relationship with Ardasher.

Conclusion (Analysis Summary). From the analyses, it becomes evident that Alisher Navoi referred to Khoja Muhammad Parsa and Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar—whom he regarded as his spiritual mentors—in almost all of his works. The purposes for mentioning them, however, vary depending on the context. In *Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin* and *Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher*, Navoi refers to Khoja Muhammad Parsa and Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar as part of his personal memories, which fundamentally differs from the way shaykhs are mentioned in his epic poems.

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