

The Mention of Shaykhs in Alisher Navoi's Works

Gavhar Muftullayeva
Navoiy State University, Uzbekistan



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.61796/ejheaa.v2i6.1333>



Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: May 25, 2025

Final Revised: June 1, 2025

Accepted: June 10, 2025

Published: June 23, 2025

Keywords:

Khamsat al-mutahayyirin

Haloti sayyid hasan ardasher

haloti pahlavon muhammad

Khoja muhammad parsas

Khoja ubaydullah ahrar

Shaykhs of instruction

Shaykhs of spiritual training

Shaykhs of discourse

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the literary, spiritual, and didactic functions of Sufi shaykhs in Navoi's works, particularly focusing on Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin, Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher, and Haloti Pahlavon Muhammad. **Method:** The research examines Alisher Navoi's memoir-biographical texts through a contextual literary analysis, categorizing the representations of Sufi shaykhs into roles such as instructional, educational, and discourse-based, and aligning them with Sufi doctrine. **Result:** The research demonstrates that Navoi strategically integrates these figures to emphasize the concept of the "Perfect Human," exemplify spiritual virtues, and underscore the moral alignment of his mentors with Sufi principles. His references vary contextually – from autobiographical reminiscence to symbolic illustration. **Novelty:** Navoi's connection to Sufi thought is widely acknowledged, but the nuanced portrayal and purpose of mentioning specific shaykhs across different genres of his writings have not been thoroughly examined. By offering a structured understanding of their representation in Navoi's narrative, these findings deepen the scholarly interpretation of Navoi's Sufi worldview and invite further exploration of how literary form and spiritual content are harmonized in Central Asian classical literature.

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 [1]. 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 [2].

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 [3].

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" [4]. 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. *Manāqib* is a classical genre depicting the biographies and virtues of saints and spiritually eminent individuals [5].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative literary analysis methodology focusing on the exploration of Alisher Navoi's references to prominent Sufi shaykhs in his biographical and poetic works. The research involved a close reading of texts such as *Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin*, *Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher*, and *Haloti Pahlavon Muhammad*, in which Navoi elaborates on his interactions and spiritual reflections regarding Sufi mentors, notably Khoja Muhammad Parsa and Khoja Ubaydullah Ahrar [6]. A historical-contextual method was used to interpret Navoi's language, metaphors, and narrative strategies by referencing explanatory dictionaries of his poetic vocabulary and classical commentaries. The study also involved comparative content analysis, aligning Navoi's portrayal of spiritual virtues with the teachings of Sufi thinkers such as Abdulqadir Gilani and the doctrinal classifications of the Naqshbandi and Qadiriyya orders. Additionally, the research relied on secondary sources, including scholarly works by N. Komilov, B. Valikhojaev, and others, to triangulate interpretations and trace the conceptual continuity in Navoi's representation of the "Perfect Human" (*Insan-i Kamil*) [7]. This holistic methodological approach enabled the synthesis of theological, literary, and philosophical elements to uncover how Navoi's references to Sufi shaykhs serve both as spiritual guidance and as literary expressions of Sufi metaphysics [8].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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 [9]. 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..." [10]. 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, and *ahlullah* refers to the saints or those close to God [11].

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* [12]. 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." 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." 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 [13]. 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. 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." 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."

Many of these qualities are echoed in the teachings of Abdul Qadir Gilani, the founder of the Qadiriyya order [14]. 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. Several of these are explicitly assigned to Ardasher by Navoi.

For example:

1. **Not blaming others:**

"He respected all dervishes. If they erred, he never rebuked them but sought to correct gently and forgive..."

2. **Responding to harm with patience:**

"No matter how harshly someone treated him, he endured calmly without troubling himself..."

3. **Humility and modesty:**

"He made no distinction between silk and sackcloth. Lavish clothing displeased him; dervish garb suited him better."

This reveals that all Sufi paths, despite doctrinal differences, aim for the same goal: cultivating the spiritually perfected individual [15]. 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." 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. 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:

1. **Instructional Shaykhs** – who provide theoretical knowledge.
2. **Educational Shaykhs** – who spiritually nurture disciples like their own children.
3. **Discourse Shaykhs** – who inspire through speech and presence.

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

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : 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. Through detailed analysis of texts such as *Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin*, *Haloti Sayyid Hasan Ardasher*, and *Haloti Pahlavon Muhammad*, the study has shown that Navoi's portrayals are deeply rooted in the Sufi tradition of reverence for spiritual mentors. Navoi not only expresses admiration for these figures but also constructs them as exemplars of the Perfect Human (*Insan-i Kamil*), thus merging literary artistry with spiritual pedagogy. **Implication :** By narrating their biographies and embedding their qualities into his works, Navoi provides insight into the characteristics deemed essential for spiritual growth – patience, humility, wisdom, and compassion. Moreover, the study demonstrates that Navoi's references to shaykhs are not merely rhetorical; they serve a broader didactic purpose of guiding readers on the Sufi path. This reinforces the notion that literary creation and spiritual cultivation were deeply interconnected in Navoi's worldview, with his method of embedding real-life spiritual exemplars into literary works reflecting both personal devotion and an intention to inspire ethical and spiritual reflection. **Limitation :** However, the current analysis is limited to selected texts and primarily emphasizes biographical and didactic functions, which may not capture the full spectrum of symbolic and esoteric meanings present across Navoi's literary corpus. **Future Research :** Therefore, future research could explore other Sufi figures and spiritual frameworks within Navoi's oeuvre, including how symbolic language and mystical cosmology further illuminate the integration of Sufi ethics into classical Central Asian literature.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Gilani, «Al-Kunya li Talib Tariq al-Haqq [The Guide for the Seeker of the Path of Truth]», *Yosh Kuch Mag.*, c. 10, 2000.
- [2] D. Yusupova, *Classical Uzbek and National Renaissance Literature (The Era of Alisher Navoi)*. Tashkent: Tamaddun, 2016.
- [3] M. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*. Paulist Press, 1996.
- [4] *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works*, Vol. 1. Tashkent, 1983.
- [5] *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works*, Vol. 2. Tashkent, 1983.

- [6] A. Navoi, *Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin*, т. 15. Tashkent: Fan, 1999.
- [7] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
- [8] J. Burke, «Spiritual Authority in Sufism: A Historical Review», *J. Islam. Stud.*, cc. 299–317, 2014.
- [9] [N. Komilov, *Sufism*. Tashkent: Movarounnahr - Uzbekistan, 2009.
- [10] J. R. Elov, G. N. Navruzova, и G. Yunusova, *Teachings of Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya: Analysis and Description*. Tashkent, 2020.
- [11] Q. Ergashev, «The Concept of the Perfect Human in Alisher Navoi's Works», *Uzb. Lang. Lit.*, c. 11, 2023.
- [12] B. Valikhojaev, *The Great Spiritual Mentor*. Tashkent: Fan, 2004.
- [13] Z. Rahmonova, «The Knowledge of Discourse and Companionship in Sufism», *Uzb. Lang. Lit.*, c. 91, 2018.
- [14] S. H. Nasr, «The Spiritual and Cultural Significance of Sufism», *Tradit. Islam Today*, cc. 41–56, 2002.
- [15] W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. SUNY Press, 1989.

***Gavhar Muftullayeva (Corresponding Author)**

Navoiy State University, Uzbekistan

Email: gavharmuftullaeva@gmail.com
