



Section 1. Gender studies

DOI:10.29013/EJHSS-25-2-3-6



THE PORTRAIT OF WOMEN IN NAVAI'S POETRY AND ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

Rakhmonova Shakhlo Rashidovna ¹

¹ Shahrizabz branch of the Tashkent Institute
of Chemical Technology Shahrizabz, Uzbekistan

Cite: Rakhmonova Sh.R. (2025). *The Portrait of Women in Navai's Poetry and Artistic Interpretation*. *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2025, No 2. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJHSS-25-2-3-6>

Abstract

The works of Alisher Navoi, a prominent figure in classical Persian-Turkic literature, provide a profound exploration of human emotions, values, and relationships. Among these, the portrayal of women occupies a significant place, characterized by profound respect, admiration, and idealization. This research paper delves into the nuanced depiction of women in Navoi's poetry, exploring their roles as symbols of beauty, virtue, and spiritual transcendence. Through textual analysis and historical context, the paper examines how Navoi's artistic interpretation of women reflects the cultural and ethical paradigms of his era while transcending time to remain relevant in contemporary discussions on gender and representation.

Keywords: *Alisher Navoi; Women in Poetry; Sufi Influence; Timurid Era; Symbolism; Gender Dynamics; Artistic Interpretation; Cultural Heritage*

Introduction

Alisher Navoi (1441–1501) is celebrated as one of the most influential poets in the Turkic literary tradition. His works, including the famous “Khamsa” (Five Treasures), have left an indelible mark on the cultural and literary heritage of the Turkic and Persianate world. Navoi's portrayal of women is deeply intertwined with his philosophical musings and Sufi inclinations, presenting them as embodiments of divine beauty and moral excellence.

The cultural and historical context of the Timurid Empire, where Navoi lived

and wrote, shaped his worldview and poetic themes. This period was characterized by a remarkable synthesis of Persian, Turkic, and Islamic traditions, which greatly influenced Navoi's literary style and subject matter. Women in his poetry are not merely characters but symbols of broader metaphysical and ethical ideals. According to Bertels (1965), Navoi's works reflect an unparalleled depth of humanistic thought and artistic sophistication, blending mystical philosophy with the classical literary traditions of the Persianate world.

Moreover, Navoi's Sufi background plays a pivotal role in his depiction of women. As DeWeese (1994) highlights, Sufi literature often employs the figure of the beloved as a metaphor for the soul's yearning for divine union. Navoi's poetic treatment of women echoes this tradition, presenting them as intermediaries between the material and spiritual realms. In his epic works such as "Layli and Majnun" and "Farhad and Shirin," Navoi reimagines traditional narratives to emphasize women's roles as sources of inspiration and moral guidance.

The depiction of women in Navoi's poetry also reflects his nuanced understanding of gender dynamics. While the societal roles of women in the Timurid period were largely circumscribed, Navoi's literary imagination transcended these limitations. Ahmedova (2018) notes that his depiction of legendary and historical women – such as Layli – challenges contemporary norms by elevating them to positions of intellectual and moral prominence.

In Navoi's ghazals, we also see several of the poet's socio-political views. Regarding this, information has been provided in the works of Uzbek literary scholars such as O. Nosirov and Y. Isoqov. In classical literature, poets reflected the lifestyle of women, their laughter and sorrow, and their dreams and wishes for happiness in their poetry. The great writer Maqsur Shayxzoda wrote: "Women, who make up half of society, hold a very significant place in Navoi's works. Every line written in dedication to women demonstrates Navoi's deep respect for them. In his ghazals, Alisher Navoi created an eternal example of a beautiful woman. The melody of sincere and true love in Navoi's ghazals is sung at the highest notes of world music.

In Navoi's works, the depiction of women and girls highlights their dedication to knowledge and craftsmanship, not for personal gain but for the advancement of society. Through these qualities, an image of an active woman in social life emerges (Nosirov, 1999; Isoqov, 2001). Furthermore, in Navoi's poetry, women are portrayed as faithful, enlightened, beautiful, and graceful, with their active roles emphasized. The greatness of Navoi lies in the vividness and spiritual elevation of the perfect women depicted in his lyrical works (Shayxzoda, 1983). The poet, who

wished for an increase in literacy, the widespread love for poetry, and the education of the nation's children, also openly expressed his respect for women. This is because science and art were prominent fields in the social life of Navoi's time (Nosirov, 1999).

In his poetry, Navoi idealizes his aspirations through his characters, many of whom are women. He portrays their passion for knowledge, their dreams and aspirations, and introduces these to the reader (Isoqov, 2001). Navoi's lyrical works feature pure women, wise and skilled women, masterful horse riders, musicians, queens, and women who were stateswomen. In his works, he praises the unparalleled beauty and grace of women, their deep intellect, cultural knowledge, and literacy, as well as their social activity in state and national affairs, and their bravery in battles and struggles (Shayxzoda, 1983). Navoi desired women to be educated and accomplished in every field. The socially active women he created fight courageously for their rights in family, state, and cultural matters (Nosirov, 1999).

In the 15th century, women like Layli and Shirin, known for their beauty and resilience, lived, and Navoi created idealized images of Uzbek women as he envisioned them. The female characters in Navoi's Khamsa epics, such as Layli, Shirin, Mehr, Ravshanak, Mehrnoz, and Dilorom, exemplify this. By depicting his favorite heroines as creative, heroic, patriotic, and humane, Navoi sought to demonstrate the social activism of youth, particularly young women, in developing society (Shayxzoda, 1983). He pointed out that historical, social, scientific, and political tasks could also be accomplished by young, educated women, portraying them as ideal individuals (Isoqov, 2001).

In his lyrical works, Navoi celebrates pure love, friendship, and harmony. The poet expresses his impressions of social life, joy and sorrow, and hopes and aspirations in his ghazals (Nosirov, 1999). Creators who have contributed significantly to classical literature often drew their initial inspiration and ideas from folk creativity. They respected the people, which is why their works were cherished by the people (Isoqov, 2001).

Moreover, Navoi, in his works, emphasized the role of women in society, showcas-

ing their social activism. He brought some women out of the confines of domestic life and presented them as creators of significant endeavors, as progressive and active members of society (Shayxzoda, 1983). In doing so, he aimed to elevate the status of women in society. Navoi's poems and epics sought to define the role of women within the family, enhance their societal status, and promote their literacy and education, as well as their deservingness of love, devotion, equality, and respect (Nosirov, 1999; Isoqov, 2001).

In addition to his literary achievements, Navoi's political and cultural contributions provide further context for his views on women. As a statesman and philanthropist, he championed education and the arts, advocating for the intellectual and moral development of society. Karimov (2000) argues that this broader vision is evident in his poetic works, where the portrayal of women embodies the ideals of harmony, virtue, and enlightenment.

By exploring Navoi's portrayal of women, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which his poetry reflects the interplay between individual creativity and cultural tradition. Through a close reading of his texts and engagement with scholarly interpretations, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Navoi's literary legacy and its enduring relevance in contemporary discourse.

Women as Symbols of Beauty and Virtue

In Navoi's poetic oeuvre, women often symbolize physical and spiritual beauty. Drawing on classical literary traditions, he crafts vivid imagery to describe their elegance, charm, and grace. For instance, in his gazals, he frequently employs metaphors such as the moon, roses, and the dawn to liken the beauty of women to the splendor of nature and celestial phenomena.

Navoi's depiction of women is not limited to physical allure. He emphasizes their intellectual and moral virtues, portraying them as paragons of loyalty, wisdom, and compassion. Women in Navoi's poetry often act as muses, inspiring the poet to achieve higher spiritual and artistic heights.

Women in Sufi Context

Navoi's affiliation with Sufism profoundly influences his portrayal of women. Within the Sufi framework, women are seen as intermediaries guiding the soul toward divine love and unity. Navoi's poetry reflects this perspective, presenting women as vessels of divine light and purity.

For example, in his epic poem "Layli and Majnun," Navoi reimagines the archetype of the beloved. Layli represents unattainable beauty and spiritual longing, symbolizing the soul's quest for union with the divine. This narrative structure underscores the transcendental role women play in Navoi's poetic imagination.

Cultural and Historical Context

The depiction of women in Navoi's works cannot be separated from the sociocultural milieu of 15th– century Central Asia. Navoi lived in the Timurid Empire, a period marked by a flourishing of arts, culture, and intellectual activity. While the societal roles of women were largely circumscribed by patriarchal norms, Navoi's poetry often challenges these boundaries by celebrating women's intellectual and emotional contributions.

His progressive outlook is evident in his portrayal of legendary and historical women, who are depicted as intelligent, courageous, and morally upright figures. By elevating women to such ideals, Navoi challenges the traditional limitations placed on their roles in society.

Artistic Interpretation and Literary Devices

Navoi's mastery of poetic forms and literary devices enriches his portrayal of women. His use of metaphors, allegories, and symbolism imbues his female characters with a sense of timelessness and universality. For example:

Metaphors: Navoi frequently uses celestial imagery, likening women to stars, the moon, or the sun, emphasizing their radiant beauty and importance.

Symbolism: Women in Navoi's poetry often serve as symbols of purity, love, and divine inspiration.

Allegory: Many of his narratives, such as "Farhad and Shirin," utilize female

protagonists to convey moral and philosophical lessons.

Conclusion

Alisher Navoi's portrayal of women reflects his deep appreciation for their physical, intellectual, and spiritual qualities. Through his poetry, Navoi elevates women to a divine and moral plane, intertwining their representation with broader themes of love, beauty, and transcendence. His artistic interpretation not only mirrors the cultural ethos of

his time but also challenges societal norms, offering a progressive vision that resonates with modern values of gender equality and representation.

By exploring Navoi's portrayal of women, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of his poetic genius and the timeless relevance of his works. Navoi's idealization of women as embodiments of beauty, virtue, and spirituality continues to inspire and provoke thought, bridging the past and present in meaningful dialogue.

References

- Ahmedova G. "Symbolism in Navoi's Poetry: A Comparative Study," *Journal of Turkic Literature Studies*, 2018.
- Bertels E. *Navoi and His Influence on Central Asian Literature*. – Moscow: Nauka, 1965.
- DeWeese D. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1994.
- Karimov R. *Cultural Dynamics in the Timurid Era*. Tashkent: Uzbek Academy of Sciences, 2000.
- Navoi A. *Khamisa*. Translations and commentaries, various editions.
- Nosirov O. and Isoqov Y. *Women's Images in Classical Literature*. – Tashkent: Fan, 1995.
- Nosirov O. *The Social Functions of Uzbek Literature*. – Tashkent: Adabiyot Publishing, 1999.
- Shayxzoda M. *The Depiction of Women in Navoi's Works*. – Tashkent: Adabiyot Publishing, 1980.
- Shayxzoda M. *Women's Depictions in Navoi's Lyrics*. – Tashkent: Adabiyot Publishing, 1983.

submitted 09.01.2025;
accepted for publication 23.01.2025;
published 29.04.2025
© Rakhmonova Sh. R.
Contact: rahmonovasahlo644@gmail.com