



Understanding Mysticism in Alisher Navoi's "Foniy" Divan

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Abstract: This article explores the mystical (irfaniy) perspectives of the 15th-century renowned Muslim poet and thinker, Mir Alisher Navoi, as reflected in his divan *Foniy*. Sufism and its teachings have long played a significant role in shaping Islamic thought, influencing human perception, self-awareness, and moral refinement. Alisher Navoi, as a distinguished poet of his time, deeply engaged with Sufi philosophy and incorporated its themes into his literary works. His *Foniy* divan vividly illustrates key Sufi concepts such as repentance (*tawba*), annihilation of the self (*fana*), unity (*wahdat*), and divine bewilderment (*hayrat*). The article examines Navoi's poetic reflections on these spiritual ideas, particularly his view that love and divine truth transcend religious and physical boundaries. Drawing comparisons with the works of earlier Sufi poets such as Rumi, Hafez, and Sa'di, the study highlights Navoi's mastery in blending poetic elegance with profound mystical thought. His expressions of religious tolerance and unity resonate with modern concepts of pluralism and inclusivity. Through a close reading of selected ghazals, especially his famous verse equating the Ka'ba and the monastery, the paper sheds light on Navoi's belief in the universality of divine love and the ultimate goal of spiritual unity.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, *Foniy* divan, Sufism, mystical poetry, irfan, spiritual unity, *fana*, *wahdat*, Rumi, Hafez, Islamic literature, religious tolerance.

Introduction: The works of Mir Alisher Navoi, a prominent and renowned poet and thinker of the 15th-century Muslim world, testify to his deep engagement with mystical philosophy, Sufi teachings, and literature. Sufis and the teachings of Sufism have always held an important place in the Islamic world. These teachings have influenced people's perception and inner essence, helping them realize their true self, refine their desires and will, and achieve spiritual elevation, which in turn

has laid the foundation for humanism and tolerance in actions. Sufi poets, philosophers, and representatives of Sufi literature have sought to elevate people's thoughts and social activity levels by presenting the ideas of Sufi teachings and enriching human knowledge and spirituality. Alisher Navoi, a prominent Muslim poet of his time, demonstrates through his works that he mastered the teachings of Sufism with great attention and precision, incorporating these ideas into his writings. Indeed, his works, especially in the Foni divan, uniquely and powerfully express the lower and higher levels of Sufism, from repentance to the ultimate stages of Sufism, such as annihilation (fana), unity (wahdat), and spiritual wonder (hayrat). This is not surprising, as Navoi, being a disciple of Hazrat Jami, also drew inspiration from the ideas and works of Hafez, Sa'di, and Rumi, which reflect his awareness and mastery as a poet. His following of his predecessors' path further demonstrates his literary skill and deep connection to mystical literature.

Navoi's Sufi perspectives and the outcomes of his spiritual journey lead him to embrace the path of attaining the ultimate truth and essence. The concepts known today as religious pluralism and tolerance find clear expression in his Sufi philosophy. In his Foni divan, particularly in the ghazal Tatabu-ye Xoja (No. 153), Navoi emphasizes that there is no fundamental difference between the Ka'ba and the monastery, highlighting the unity of all paths leading to the Divine.

کعبه و دیر تفاوت نکند چون همه جا،
[1] دیده بر روی تو و میل دلم سوی تو بود

There is no difference between the Ka'ba and the monastery because everywhere

My eyes see your face, and my heart longs for you.

Ka'ba bilan dayrda tafovut yo'q, chunki hamma joyda
Ko'zim yuzingda-yu, dilim mayli edi senda.

Like the great thinker, poet, and founder of the Mevlevi order, Rumi, Navoi also believes that for those who follow the path of love, all roads leading to the Ka'ba are open.

در راه طلب عاقل و دیوانه یکیست
در شیوه عشق خویش و بیگانه یکیست
آن را که شراب وصل جانان دادند
[3] در مذهب او کعبه و بتخانه یکیست

In the path of seeking, the wise and the mad are one.

In the tradition of love, the familiar and the stranger are one.

Those who have reached the union with the Beloved through the wine of love,

In their path, the Ka'ba and the idol temple are one.

Talab yo'lida oqilu devona birdir

Ishq rasmida o'zgayu begona birdir

Sharobdan jonon vasliga yetganlar

Ul mazhabida Ka'bayu butxona birdir

In this quatrain, Mawlana Rumi emphasizes that in the search for love and truth, there is no difference between a rational person and a mad one; both walk the same path. Likewise, in true love, everything appears the same, and for the lover, any place that brings them closer to the beloved is sacred and dear. Therefore, in love, semantic distinctions disappear, and everything merges into unity (wahdat). For one who has experienced the intoxicating depth of love, there is no difference between the Ka'ba and an idol temple—both become symbols of divine presence. In other words, in the realms of love and spirituality, all things are equally sacred and valuable. Navoi echoes this idea in his Foni divan, particularly in the 82nd ghazal, where he states:

باده ده ز آن که زهر خانه سوی حق راه است
اگر از گوشه مسجد و گر از کنج کنشت

Bo'da ber, chunki har uydan yo'l bor Xudo sari,

Whether it be the corner of a mosque or the nook of a church.

Xoh u masjid burchagi bo'lsin, yo kaliso kunji.

In Alisher Navoi's mystical perspectives, the highest goal is unity (wahdat). He considers the distinctions between "you" and "me" as the result of error:

من و مایی نبود در ره وحدت، هشدار
که من این ما و منی از عین خطا میبینم

On the path of unity, there is no "you" and "me" —be aware,

For I see this distinction between us as a pure mistake.

Vahdat yo'lida siz biz (degan so'z) yo'q, hushyor bo'l,

Chunki men, bu siz bizni ayni xato deb ko'raman.

Navoi criticizes the sermons of preachers in his time, as well as the state of religion and spirituality, considering the preaching of religious figures to be nothing more than an expression of selfishness. According to Navoi, the preacher is in a state of despair, while the bird is in fear. He advises people not to listen to the preacher's cries but instead to listen to the melodies of the singer (mug'anniy) (Navoi A., 1996:286). He views the sermons of preachers as a cause of ignorance, comparing them to a mythical sleep (Navoi A., 1996:73).

Navoi emphasizes this idea, stating that he will not abandon love and wine for the sermons and advice of the sheikh, as the sheikh's words are sometimes mere fables and sometimes spells (Navoi A., 1996:99). Continuing his criticism, Navoi also refers to the constant conflict between reason, love, and morality.

He argues that knowledge and deeds are powerless on this path, and the only way to attain union with the Divine (Haq) is through the doctrine of fana (self-annihilation). According to him, madness and love cannot be comprehended by reason (Navoi A., 1996:227).

The conflict between intellect and love is a prominent theme in Sufi literature, and Navoi also pays special attention to it: "In our intoxication, we have stepped beyond the bounds of reason." (Navoi A., 1996:100). In his view, even the wisest elder is like a schoolchild in the face of love (Navoi A., 1996:90). Navoi also argues that many concepts that once held value have deteriorated over time, losing their original meaning and significance. He pays special attention to the concept of zuhd (asceticism). In early Sufi literature, asceticism had a positive connotation. The great Sufi scholar Ansari defined the signs of a true ascetic as three: constant remembrance (zikr), contentment with what one has, and companionship with dervishes (Ansari Kh., 1989:25). However, by the time of Navoi and Hafez, this concept had undergone significant changes. Hafez also condemns hypocritical ascetics, stating: "Misguided elders—the ascetic sheikhs—have turned us into mere fables."

Navoi discusses asceticism and its implications more than forty-five times in his Divan, highlighting it as both a religious and social shortcoming. He considers zuhd and afiyat (spiritual well-being) to be mere illusions (Navoi A., 1996:99). He perceives asceticism as a flaw, acknowledging that he did not achieve his goals through asceticism and piety. Furthermore, Navoi finds hypocritical asceticism unbearable.

فانی اندر سیر اطوار طریقت هرچه دید،
(Navoi A., 1996:142) بود نیکو لیکنش زهد ریایی شاق بود

"In the tariqa, whatever attire or habit one may adopt, All is good, except for asceticism and hypocrisy, which are bad and difficult."

Foniy, tariqatda har qanday atvor va odatni ko'rsa
Hammasi yaxshi, faqat zuhd-u riyo yomon va qiyin.

Navoi repeatedly emphasizes the negative aspects of asceticism (zohidlik). He describes it as an obstacle to attaining the Divine Friend, a source of numerous spiritual ailments in people, and the root of hypocrisy (Navoi A., 1996:158). In his view, the cloak of asceticism and piety is worthless, and hypocritical asceticism has become a source of darkness for humanity.

مرا در خانقه زهد و خرد بس تیره می دارند
(Navoi A., 1996:143) خوش آن رندی که در دیر مغان سرمست شیدا شد

In the khanaqah, asceticism and reason wear down my soul,

How blissful is the carefree wanderer, drunk and enraptured in the monastery of the Magians!

Xonaqohda zuhd-u aql ta'bimni tirriq qiladi,

Mug'lar dayrida mast va shaydo bo'lgan rindga qanday yaxshi.

Navoi openly invites moving away from the house of asceticism and hypocrisy, stating that if one turns towards the monastery (dayr), Allah will be with them (Navoi A., 1996:221). He describes wine as the source of purity and freedom, the cure for old pain. Alisher Navoi even prefers the wine of love to the asceticism of the sheikh.

می ده که جرم مابه دو صد زاری و نیاز
(Navoi A., 1996:146) زان زهد به که شیخ به عجب و ریا کند

Give me wine, for the sins we committed with much force and desire

Are better than the good deeds performed by the sheikh with arrogance and hypocrisy.

May ber, ko'p zor-u niyoz bilan qilgan gunohimiz
shayxning takabburlik va riyo bilan qilgan savobidan yaxshiroqdir.

The mystic who seeks divine intoxication and pleasure sees all happiness and joy in this world. Navoi thinks in the same way as Shaykh Sa'di:

غم و شادی بر عارف چه تفاوت دارد
(Sa'diy Sh., 1975:13)' ساقیا باده بده شادی آن کاین غم از اوست

Orif uchun qayg'u va quvonchning farqi nimada?

Soqiyo, unga o'sha g'amning shodlik bodasidan ber.

Navoiy ham xuddi shu mavzuni ko'taradi:

باشدم خرمی از هرچه درین عالم از اوست از غمش نیز دلم شاد کاین
هم ازوست

نبود هیچ تفاوت ز نشاط و غم دهر به وصالم چو نشاط و به فراقم
غم اوست

نیستم آدمی ار شاد نباشم ز غمش چون غم و شادی انواع بنی آدم ازوست
(Navoi A., 1996: 128)

Every joy I experience in this world is only from Him,
That is why my heart rejoices in sorrow, for that too is His.

There is no difference between the sorrow and joy of this world—

The joy of union and the grief of separation are both from Him.

If I do not find joy in His sorrow, I am not truly human,
For the sorrow and happiness of all people come from Him.

Dunyoda bo'lgan har bir shodligim faqat undandir,
shuning uchun dilim g'amdan shodlanadi, chunki bu
ham uning (g'ami)dir.

Dunyoning g'am-u shodligida hech tafovut yo'q, visol
shodligi-yu, firoq g'ami ham undandir. Agar uning
g'amidan shod bo'lmasam, odam bolasi emasman,
chunki turli odam bolalarining g'amg'inlig-u xursandligi
undandir.

He sees a heart without love as doomed to destruction.
He attributes his own transformation and transition
into another world to the fortune he found in the realm
of love. Navoi considers ordinary knowledge powerless
in attaining the source of divine union:

به درس عشق درآ صوفیا، چو مطلوبیت

نگشت فتح ز مفتاح و کشف از کشف (Navoi A., 1996:218)

O Sufi, if your desire is not unlocked through the
revelations of Miftah and Kashshof,

Then enter the school of love and learn its lesson.

Ey so'fiy, agar matlubing «Miftoh» va «Kashshof»ning
kashfi bilan ochilmasa, ishq darsiga kirib sabaq o'rgan.

He considers wisdom to be nonsense and calls on
the owner to follow the path of love (Navoiy A.,
1996:291). He calls the fire of love the source of the
speed of action of the tax:

به مقصد گرچه ره دورست اگر آتش رسد از عشق

چو برق آسا تواند کرد به گامی قطع منزلها (Navoiy A., 1996:68)

The path to the goal is long, but if the fire of love ignites
within you,

With a single step, you can reach the destination like
lightning.

Maqsadga yetmoq yo'li uzoqdir, lekin agar senga ishq
o'ti tushsa,

bir qadam tashlab yashin kabi manzilga yetmoq
mumkindir.

Navoi believes that all beauty originates from the
foundation of love:

Navoi considers love (ishq) to be the source of human
prosperity, the solution to all difficulties, a path to
discovering and reaching other worlds, and a means of
abandoning mundane knowledge. He sees it as a state
of intoxication, madness, and liberation from disgrace
(Navoi A., 1996:79). Love, in his view, frees one from
both sorrow and joy, removes the garment of worldly
well-being, and resolves life's dilemmas. Ultimately,
the trials of love rescue many from aimless wandering
and guide them toward righteousness and virtue
(Navoi A., 1996:77).

Examining Alisher Navoi's thoughts confirms the
assumption that he was well-versed in the stages of

spiritual journey (suluk), its different levels, and the
mystical states (maqamat) of Sufism. He was aware of
the flaws in his society and openly criticized the
hypocrisy and duplicity of ascetic preachers. In his
works, he masterfully interprets profound mystical
concepts—ranging from repentance (tawba) to
annihilation (fana), from love (ishq) to divine witnessing
(shuhud), and from the mosque and khanaqah to the
tavern and monastery. This demonstrates his deep
understanding of Sufi teachings. His mystical worldview,
influenced by Rumi and Hafiz, revolves around the
essence of divine unity (wahdat) and love (ishq), which
hold a central place in his philosophy.

CONCLUSION

Alisher Navoi, both as a thinker and a poet, possessed
exceptional skill and intellect, which is reflected not only
in his works written in Turkic but also in those composed
in Persian. In particular, his Devon-e Foni demonstrates
his deep familiarity with the works of renowned Persian
poets who came before him—ranging from Sanai to
Sa'di Shirazi, Hafiz Shirazi, Mawlana Balkhi, Umar
Khayyam, and others. It would not be an exaggeration
to say that Navoi masterfully incorporated the finest
thoughts of these poets into his own verses, enriching
them with a uniquely Turkic sensibility.

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