

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# The Portrayal of Alisher Navoi In Qahhor Bakhshi's Epic

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## Abstract

This article examines the artistic portrayal of Alisher Navoi in the epic Alisher Navoi in Samarkand created by Qahhor Bakhshi Rahimov. The study analyzes how the bakhshi tradition combines historical reality with artistic imagination in the depiction of Navoi's personality and life events. Particular attention is given to the role of improvisation, traditional epic style, and national cultural elements in shaping the narrative structure of the epic. The research also explores the influence of written literature, folk legends, and socio-cultural factors on the creation of the work. The image of Navoi in the epic is interpreted not only as a historical figure but also as a symbol of spirituality, justice, knowledge, and humanistic ideals within Uzbek folk epic tradition. The article concludes that Qahhor Bakhshi's creative approach enriched the Uzbek epic heritage by harmonizing established traditions with innovative artistic expression.

## KEYWORDS

Bakhshi tradition, Uzbek epic poetry, oral folklore, artistic interpretation, historical epics, improvisation, national values, Uzbek literature.

## INTRODUCTION

A bakhshi is a poet who emerges from among the people and possesses his own talent, aesthetic vision, and artistic thinking. Above all, a folk bakhshi is an artist who understands the pains of the people, lives among them, and sings of their desires, aspirations, hopes, as well as their attitudes toward society and social life.

As performers of traditional epics, folk bakhshis are also regarded as individual creators; therefore, their repertoire is highly complex. Although, from the perspective of genre, their творчество is mainly limited to terma and epic poetry, in terms of ideas and themes it is extremely diverse and many-sided.

Usually, in the creative work of folk bakhshis, the primary genre is the terma. They are folk poets who perform a wide range of works, from biographical and didactic termas to

compositions depicting the pressing issues of their time, and from ancient heroic epics to romantic epics.

In particular, a bakhshi's eloquence, improvisational skill, aesthetic knowledge, and artistic mastery are revealed through the creation and performance of termas and individual epics.

Qahhor Bakhshi Rahimov, People's Bakhshi of Uzbekistan, is considered one of the skilled bakhshis who, alongside performing traditional epics, also created individual epics. On this matter, A.Ergashev provides the following information: "By creating individual epics, Qahhor Bakhshi demonstrated that he was talented, possessed profound epic knowledge, had a highly developed artistic and aesthetic thinking, and showed his awareness of many traditions, customs, and national values connected with the art of epic performance"

A bakhshi's performance is closely connected to the environment surrounding him. His individual mastery and performing activity are manifested within the framework of a strong and stable artistic tradition. In this process, the role of the bakhshi lies in the fact that he gives new life to a traditional work through his skill of improvisation. The level of tradition and improvisation, as well as their place and significance in a work, are also reflected in distinctive ways and various forms in the epics creatively composed by the folk poets themselves.

Indeed, Qahhor Bakhshi possessed an inherited talent passed down from his forefathers, and as a highly educated literature teacher, he was inspired not only to perform traditional *termas* and epics, but also to create individual modern *termas* and epics. In Qahhor Bakhshi's repertoire, alongside traditional epics, there are a number of historical, modern, and moral epics composed by the bakhshi himself. The study and analysis of these works help us to understand the true extent of his artistic mastery.

Qahhor Bakhshi's self-composed epics may be divided into several groups according to the factors that gave rise to them:

1. Epics formed under the influence of written literature and literary works – Alisher Navoi in Samarkand, Temur and Bayazid, Gavhari Khushtar;
2. Epics formed under the influence of folk legends and narratives – Guloh, Varakhsha and Gulshah, Qongirot;
3. Epics formed under the influence of socio-cultural life and the development of the country – Independence, The Charm of Samarkand, An Epic about Qodir Bakhshi.

The thematic scope of these epics also varies, and they may be classified into historical, autobiographical, and moral types. Accordingly, the epic Alisher Navoi in Samarkand in Qahhor Bakhshi's repertoire holds particular significance for its historical and moral character. Qahhor Bakhshi's epic entitled Alisher Navoi in Samarkand was created in 1968.

The bakhshi composed this epic directly under the influence of the knowledge he acquired about the great Uzbek poet Alisher Navoi during his years as a student and later as a teacher, as well as under the influence of Navoi's literary legacy. In addition, it is possible that folk narratives and popular scholarly literature devoted to Alisher Navoi also contributed to the creation of the epic. If one pays attention, it becomes evident that in the plot of the epic the bakhshi gives particular importance to the chronology of Alisher

Navoi's life and to historical reality. The epic begins with the events of Sultan Abu Sa'id's capture of Herat, his ignorance and tyranny, and Husayn Bayqara's struggle against him.

Alisher Navoi's school friendship with Bayqara, the threats directed against the poet's family, his exile to Samarkand, and his subsequent recognition there as a poet who attains honor and prestige are all described in a convincing artistic manner. Certain episodes in the epic—such as the search of the poet's courtyard, his seeing Amir Temur twice in a dream, his beloved Gulira'no, the poetess Asaloy, the Turkic guards on the bank of the Amu Darya, and Bayqara's protection of the poet's brother Darveshali and his beloved Nafisakhon—may be regarded as products of the bakhshi's imagination or as elements inspired by folk legends about Alisher Navoi.

The characters in the epic, in turn, may also be divided into two groups. The first group consists of artistic images based on real historical prototypes, including figures who played a certain role in Alisher Navoi's life, such as Amir Temur, Ulugh Beg, Umar Shaykh Mirzo, Abu Sa'id Mirzo, Husayn Bayqara, Darveshali, the teacher Abulaysiy, Uloy Shoshiy, Hoji Sughdiy, Qutib Samarqandiy, and Ahmad Hojibek. The second group consists of fictional characters created through the poet's artistic imagination, such as Tilovmor, Ochildov, Nurmat the cart-driver, Ermat the marksman, Jovkash the executioner, Berdi Bobo, Berdi Bakhshi, Gulira'no, Asaloy, and Nafisakhon.

In the epic, Alisher Navoi first appears against the background of his meeting with Gulira'no in a garden. In this episode, one may notice the influence of Izzat Sultan's drama Navoi. The bakhshi depicts their meeting through the use of *saj'* (rhymed prose), much like the descriptions found in traditional folk epics: "The jet-black hair of his beloved was braided into forty plaits, as though the forty climes were woven into each braid; on her moon-like face, it was as if the image of paradise had been mysteriously concealed; her pair of eyes seemed like the twin belts of love stretched in harmony; her eyebrows were like a tautly drawn bow above her eyes, speaking through spear-like eyelashes; and upon her breast stood, as if making their dwelling there and scattering fire, two watchful stars."

This epic by the bakhshi is a vivid example of the unity of tradition and creative improvisation. On the one hand, the features of our classical epics and the markers of traditional style resound in it with renewed artistic force; on the other hand, it is precisely on such a firm foundation that Qahhor Bakhshi's creative power becomes visible. This is especially evident in the use of traditional stylistic forms, epic clichés,

and fixed epithets in the work, all of which create broad possibilities for artistic improvisation.

In the epic, Alisher Navoi appears not only as a poet, but also as a loyal beloved, a true friend, and a devoted son. In most literary works devoted to Alisher Navoi, his mother does not appear prominently. However, in Qahhor Bakhshi's epic, the poet's mother emerges as one of the central elements sustaining the plot. This may be explained by the fact that the epic fully reflects Uzbek character, life, and everyday existence, while also revealing the presence of the bakhshi's own "I" within the narrative.

As historical and scholarly works dedicated to Alisher Navoi describe in detail, the years 1469–1481 were the period in which Navoi rendered his most active service in social life and in works of public improvement and construction. As B. Sarimsoqov also emphasizes, full saj' (rhymed prose) proved especially effective in reflecting, in poetic form, this noble feeling and elevated spiritual state found in Navoi.

Usually, the image of the creator is concealed within the protagonist of a literary work. Likewise, in the image of Alisher Navoi created by Qahhor Bakhshi, one may also discern the reflection of a simple folk bakhshi:

Mother, when you cry, my whole being gives way,

Pain runs through every bone and joint.

We are all only guests in this passing world,

Do not sorrow-my heart shudders at the sight of you.

As the poet departs from Herat, his appeal to his native land seems to sound as if spoken in the bakhshi's own voice:

An evil son is a grief to his father,

Yet the oil-lit wick is what brightens the home.

The sovereign of a people who knows no mercy,

One without nobility is but a living corpse.

Strangers have parted me from my homeland,

As others yearn for crown and throne.

O God, do not abase the people and the land,

When will this black night awaken into dawn?

Do not ever forget me, my Herat.

Likewise, his teacher Abulaysiy acknowledges him in these words:

When he recites poetry, even mighty stones melt,

Through his generosity, he appears to the people like Khizr.

His intellect is equal to the heavens,

Each of his words shines like clarified butter.

The style, stanzaic structure, and rhyme scheme of the epic resemble written literary epics more closely than traditional folk epics. This is due to the fact that the bakhshi was deeply devoted to literature and possessed a poetic nature. Although the performer's improvisational skill occupies a central place in the epics created by the bakhshi himself, existing traditions still play the leading role in them. At the same time, in comparison with traditional epics, these works contain many innovations introduced by the bakhshi, as well as creative novelties. The degree of improvisation is even higher, and this, within the framework of existing traditions, marks the beginning of a new stage in the art of epic composition.

The artistic value of Qahhor Bakhshi's epic Alisher Navoi in Samarkand is manifested in several important aspects.

In the epic, the image of Alisher Navoi is artistically revealed not only as a historical figure, but also as a symbol of high spirituality, knowledge, and justice. The work vividly portrays the values, customs, and spiritual world of the Uzbek people. This gives the epic a distinct national color.

Qahhor Bakhshi employs a fluent, expressive, and figurative language characteristic of oral folk творчество. Descriptions, similes, and metaphors enhance the aesthetic value of the work. Navoi's inner experiences, aspirations, and thoughts on the pursuit of knowledge and service to the people are presented in a deeply moving manner.

In the epic, historical realities are harmoniously combined with artistic imagination, creating for the reader a vivid and convincing picture. For this reason, the epic should be regarded not only as a historical work, but also as a literary heritage of high artistic value. It artistically illuminates the Samarkand period of Navoi's life. Therefore, although it cannot be considered a fully scholarly source, it serves as an additional biographical source that helps form an understanding of Navoi's personality and his era. The work advances the ideals of knowledge, justice, and humanism. For this reason, it may also be viewed as a moral and educational source of considerable significance.

It should be noted that, although Alisher Navoi, in his poetic letter addressed to his teacher Sayyid Hasan Ardasher,

described his journey from Herat to Samarkand as an "involuntary journey," this city was valuable above all because it brought an end to the poet's wanderings and later gave him an opportunity to regain his strength before returning to the capital at the invitation of Husayn Bayqara, who had by then taken the throne of Herat, and before wholeheartedly entering into service to his people and homeland. These very aspects also find artistic expression in Qahhor Bakhshi's epic.

The image of Navoi has also been celebrated in other epics. In particular, the epic Navoi and Husayn Bayqara artistically interprets the friendship between Navoi and Husayn Bayqara, as well as their contribution to the development of the state and culture. The epic Navoi and Badiuzzaman narrates Navoi's relationship with Badiuzzaman Mirza, his upbringing, and Navoi's moral influence on him. In Navoi's Journey, Navoi appears as a wise, just, and people-loving figure who takes part in various events as the central hero.

The image of Navoi in folk epics is multifaceted: beyond being a historical figure, he is artistically portrayed as an ideal human being and as a symbol of justice and enlightenment. In this respect, he is regarded as one of the most active and enduring figures in the Uzbek epic tradition.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be said that Qahhor Bakhshi Rahimov, as a descendant of the master bakhshi-poets of the Sherobod school of epic performance, fully continued the traditions established by his predecessors.

Alongside studying and performing epic traditions, Qahhor Bakhshi also engaged in creative work and constant artistic exploration. He expanded his repertoire in several ways:

because he had received a higher education, he continuously read, memorized, and assimilated published versions of epics, thereby broadening his repertoire;

through participation in republican and international competitions, poetic contests, weddings, and other public gatherings, he gradually mastered the performance styles and repertoires of bakhshis from different regions;

and, as a creative bakhshi, he also composed modern individual epics of his own, for which he earned the recognition of folklorists.

Having responsibly studied the methods of performing traditional epics, Qahhor Bakhshi Rahimov remained faithful

to the traditions of his teachers while also employing his gift for improvisation to create new, modern epics. In particular, he composed an original individual epic about the great figure of Uzbek literature, Hazrat Alisher Navoi, in a style distinctive to the bakhshi tradition.

Although this epic was created under certain specific circumstances and in response to various demands, its artistry and compositional structure have contributed to enriching the Uzbek epic tradition.

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