

THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD IN ALISHER NAVOIY'S WORKS

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Abstract: Alisher Navoi, a towering figure in Eastern literature, holds a prestigious position in the history of Turkic, Persian, and world poetry for his unique vision of language and words. Words, for Navoiy, were not merely vehicles of communication; they embodied the essence of human wisdom, morality, and spirituality. His treatises, poems, and philosophical reflections consistently demonstrate a profound appreciation for the word, investing it with ethical, aesthetic, and at times even mystical qualities. The notion of “the word” (“so‘z”) in Navoiy’s works extends far beyond its linguistic function and may be considered the very heart of meaning and poetry itself. In this paper, we will explore how Alisher Navoiy conceptualizes, defines, and venerates the word in his vast oeuvre, focusing especially on his prose and poetic output, and highlight the moral, philosophical, and literary dimensions that the word acquires in his worldview.

Keywords: Alisher Navoiy, word, so‘z, poetry, literary theory, ethics, society, mysticism, Sufism, Turkic language, Uzbek literature, aesthetics, cultural identity, philosophy.

Introduction

Alisher Navoiy, who lived in the fifteenth century in Herat, was distinguished not only for his mastery of poetic forms but also for his intellectual pursuits, including philosophy, linguistics, ethics, and nation-building. In all these spheres, language played a pivotal role. For Navoiy, the word was a unifying force, a vessel of knowledge, a means of expressing truth, and a key to self-knowledge. In his works such as “Mahbub-ul Qulub,” “Lison ut-Tayr,” “Hayrat ul-abror,” and especially in his celebrated “Lug‘at” and ghazal collections, Navoiy investigates the relationship between sound, meaning, and the human soul. He views the word as a sacred trust, gifted to humanity and refined through wisdom and experience. Words, in Navoiy’s opinion, should be used thoughtfully, benevolently, and with purpose; otherwise, their misuse might result in spiritual or moral decline. His narrative device frequently employs parables and didactic tales in which the right or wrong use of the word leads to either enlightenment or suffering.

Materials and methods

One of the foundational themes in Navoiy’s treatment of the word lies in its conception as a divine gift. He often invokes the creation story, emphasizing that speech distinguishes humans from the rest of creation. God bestowed upon humanity the ability to speak, and thus language, in Navoiy’s eyes, is a direct connection between the mortal and the divine. This sacred nature of the word demands the utmost respect. In several works, Navoiy refers to words as “pearls” and “jewels” scattered by the pen, which should not be wasted or used in vain. The spiritual magnitude attached to the word reflects Navoiy’s awareness of its transformative power—both on the individual and on society [1].

For Navoiy, words are threads that weave the fabric of society. Through careful use of language, one can foster peace, justice, and morality. Navoiy often cautioned his readers about the dangers of slander, gossip, and deceitful words. He emphasizes that a wise person evaluates his words before utterance, considering not only their literal meaning but also their impact on



listeners. Words can heal or hurt, unite or divide, inspire or discourage. In the didactic stories scattered throughout his masnavi, Navoiy repeatedly underlines that mastering the art of the word is key to becoming a righteous and respected member of society. He often describes the word as a reflection of the inner world of a human being. Just as a mirror does not deceive, correct and good words should reflect the speaker's honesty and nobility. Moreover, Navoiy pays special attention to the sincerity of speech, condemning hypocrisy and manipulative language. According to Navoiy, a true leader or intellectual must be vigilant about the truthfulness and appropriateness of every word spoken [2].

The poetry of Navoiy is a living testimony to the aesthetic potential of the word. His experiments with meter, rhyme, and diction showcase the sweet music and delicate patterns the word can create in capable hands. For Navoiy, words are like building bricks of poetry, each chosen with precision to achieve harmony and beauty. The metaphors and images employed in his poems reveal a deep love for the sound, color, and emotional resonance of language. His ghazals, riddles, and rubaiyat often meditate on the capacity of a single word to encapsulate vast meanings and emotions. The poetic imagination, in Navoi's philosophy, flourishes through an intimate acquaintance with the nuances and subtleties of words. He draws a distinction between words that are "simple" and those that acquire "exalted" meaning through artful combination and metaphor. The word, for Navoiy, is thus an ongoing creation—it is shaped and elevated by the poet's breath, thought, and soul. Therefore, literary creativity is synonymous with the creative use of the word [3].

Navoiy's understanding of the word is heavily influenced by the Sufi philosophy prevalent among Eastern thinkers of his era. In the Sufi worldview, language possesses the power to reveal and conceal; the word is both the veil and the key to ultimate reality. Navoiy frequently uses symbolic language, allegories, and allusions to express abstract spiritual concepts. In works such as "Lison ut-Tayr," where he describes the journey of souls in search of divine truth, the word emerges as both the guide and the test. The "so'z" in Navoiy's philosophy is likened to the "Logos"—the cosmic principle that bridges the infinite and the finite. Poetry, in this schema, is a journey towards the ineffable, a struggle to express the inexpressible. The word thus becomes a symbol of spiritual striving and human longing.

Alisher Navoiy is revered not only as a poet but also as the founder of literary Uzbek (Chagatai) language. Prior to Navoiy, Persian and Arabic dominated the literary sphere in Central Asia. Through his conscious and skillful use of Turkic words, local idioms, and rich proverbs, Navoiy established a literary norm that gave new life and dignity to his native language. For him, the word was also an instrument of national self-assertion. In his treatise "Muhokamat ul-lug'atayn," Navoiy proudly defends the expressive capacities of Turkic over Persian, illustrating how the word is inseparable from cultural and historical identity. His linguistic innovations inspired generations of writers and poets after him, anchoring the spiritual and cultural heart of the Uzbek nation. The word, therefore, plays a central role in the creation and preservation of collective memory and cultural heritage [4].

Navoiy's writings are replete with advice to young poets and scholars on the responsible and honorable use of the word. He warns that words, once spoken or written, cannot be recalled, just like an arrow that has left the bow. The intellectual, therefore, must treat each word as a moral act: to speak only what is true, beautiful, and beneficial. Navoiy celebrates the writer whose words are inspiring and healing, whose tongue is sharper in wisdom than in malice. He draws attention to the dangers of verbosity and empty talk, frequently reminding that silence is sometimes wiser than inappropriate speech. For Navoiy, the highest calling of the intellectual



is to use words in the service of truth and justice, and to defend the weak and oppressed. The word becomes a sword in the cause of righteousness. The resonance of Alisher Navoiy's conception of the word can be felt well beyond his era. His ideas helped shape not only the course of Turkic and Uzbek literature but also the broader intellectual climate of the Islamic world. Literary, religious, and philosophical scholars continue to study and be inspired by his vision of language as a force for good, a medium of beauty, and a foundation for ethical life. His analysis of the creative power of the word has been echoed in the writings of subsequent poets and thinkers. The ethical and aesthetic principles he articulated remain central to the study of Oriental poetics and continue to influence modern approaches to language and literature [5].

Conclusion

The word, in Alisher Navoiy's philosophy, is far more than a medium of information; it is a manifestation of the human soul, a bridge between the divine and the earthly, the individual and society, the past and the future. In his multifaceted treatment of the concept, Navoiy explores the word's divinity, ethical weight, social function, artistic possibilities, and national significance. His legacy serves as a reminder of the immense power wielded by words and of the responsibilities that come with this power. For generations, Navoiy's insights have guided poets, writers, and ordinary people in their search for meaningful and beautiful expression. By venerating the word, Navoiy offers a path towards self-improvement, community harmony, and spiritual upliftment—a lesson that endures and inspires to this day.

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