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Mir Alisher Navoi and his Persian-language poetry

Abstract: Mir Alisher Navoi highly appraised his predecessors and teachers such as Hafiz, Sa’di, Nizami and Djami the famous Persian poets. The article characterizes the literary heritage of Navoi in the Persian language, mainly of his “Divan-e Foni” and provides comparative analysis of its manuscripts.

Keywords: Navoi, Foni, manuscripts, dastans, gazelles, Timurids’ reign.

Mir Alisher Navoi (1441, February 9 Herat — 1501, January 3 the same city) lived and worked during the period of Timurids’ reign. He was a highly estimated and adored man of his time in Persian and Turkic dwellings as the greatest poet, scholar and statesman. If we look more thoroughly into the contents and essence of his books, we can note the peculiar interpretation done by him concerning all religious, philosophic and mystic viewpoints existed in the Eastern Lands at that time. Navoi’s *dastans* (poems) and *gazelles* (a genre of Oriental poetry) are deeply soaked with broad scientific, literary, religious, philosophic ideas that demand of a reader great knowledge to understand and interpret most of his gazelles. And without any doubt the influence of such famous Persian poets as Farid ad-din Attar, Kasim Anvor, Hafiz Sherazi on Navoi’s outlooks was immense. It can be proved with his words written in the book “Lisan at-tayr” (The language of birds) where he mentioned that he had learned Farid ad-din Attar’s “Mantiq at-tayr” (The logic of birds) by heart from the beginning up to the end still being

a schoolboy, and knew Sa’di’s “Gulistan” (Dwelling of flowers) and “Bustan” (Land of flowers and prosperity) very well. And, indeed, the famous azerbaijani poet Nizami Gandjavi (XIII c.) and the indian poet Khosrav Dehlavi (XIV c.) made a great influence on little Alisher. Turning to those grandiose personalities he wrote the following words in his dastan “Sadd-e Iskandari” (The wall of Alexander).

Kichik erkonimdin bo’lib qoshima,
Ulug muddao soldingiz boshima [14, 31].
(At my very early ages, you made me
Deal with great deeds willingly).

It makes us believe that Alisher aimed at writing “Khamsa” (Quinary) at his very early age. In his book “Muhakamat al-lughatayyin” (Dispute of two languages) he with notable respect mentioned the names of those poets who wrote in Persian. They were Ferdousi, Khakani, Anvari, Kamal Ismail, Salman Savadji, Sa’di, and Hafiz Sherazi. Abd ar-rahman Jami considered Navoi to be one of the notorious poets who wrote in the Persian language. So he wrote:

Kunad dar she'r ta'bash mu shikofi,
V-az on mu nug-e killkash she'rbofi [9, 368].
(And he said to be keen-set for writing verses,
Indeed, he goes in for it deeply with fondness).

And the same high estimation was given to him by Kamal ad-din Binai a famous Persian poet (XV c.) of his time:

Buvad dar forsi-u turki khub,
Forsi khub-u turkiyash marg'ub [3, 106a].
(He does well in both Persian and Turkic
Persian creations are good, Turkic ones pretty).

In number of *tazkiras* (remembrance, information given about men of letter, their activities), namely in Abd ar-rahman Jami's *Baharistan* (the dwelling of spring) [10, 1a-b], in Davlatshah Samarkandi's *Tazkirat ash-shuara* [4, 368] (Recollection of poets), in Som Mirzo Safavi's *Tohfa-e Somi* [17, 167a] (The Gift of Somi) there were given enough information about Navoi's *qasidas* (dedication to one person or to one philosophic, didactic, social phenomenon which is written in high flown mood, melodious, rhymed as gazelles, consisting of from 20 bayts up to 200 ones, one of the genres used in oriental literature) in Persian and "Khamsa" (Quinary) in Uzbek language which had been written in the way of imitation to the same Persian-language works of Nizami Gandjavi, Khosrav Dehlavi and Abd ar-rahman Jami.

It should be pointed out that there were a number of scientists who turned their attention to Navoi's literary activity in the Persian language and conducted serious researches. Among them were the followings: a well-known Russian scholar E. E. Bertels [2, 283–417], Uzbek scholars S. Erkinov [6, 3–4], T. Ahmedov [1, 4], S. Hasanov [7, 3–117; 8] and number of Turkish scientists Umar Yillar, Ebru Shenjak, Tural Guzin, Azerbaijanian scholar Hamid Orasli and many others. In their works there are dealt with comparative study of *dastans* with a similar plot and famous in the world of the Oriental literature. Navoi was verified as an independent creator by them, but the above mentioned interpretations were limited to finding out commonness and otherness of ideas, identifying writer's individual approaches to the content and the form.

We can come to the same conclusion on the analysis of poems written by Navoi in the Persian language under the pen-name *Foni*. He wrote a number

of works in Persian: "Divan-e Foni", "Sitta-e Zaruriyya", "Fusul-e Arba'a" and "Mufradot".

Imitative poetry writing used to be a tendency called *tatabbu'* (tracing somebody's activity or something's way of actions), that method was used for combating with great men of word, for demonstrating one's own degree of maturity. Yet, unfortunately, in the opinion of scientists who deal with oriental literature, Alisher Navoi is an imitator and translator, who translated the works of Persian poets. These facts show that Navoi's manifold poetic abilities have not been fully investigated yet.

It is known that there are five copies of *Divan-e Foni* in libraries of Paris, Ankara and Tehran. The two ancient manuscripts kept in Paris National library (№ 285 and № 1345) were comparatively studied by an Uzbek scholar Hamid Sulaymon in 1965 and were published in Tashkent [15].

The first publication of "Divan-e Foni" was done in 1342 hijri (1963 AD) by Rukniddin Humoyun Farrukh in Tehran [5], he was aware of the existence of two manuscripts which were kept in "Shuro-e milliy" Library in Herat and Tehran. According to the information given by Humoyun Farrukh the copy kept in Tehran was made in 901–902 (1495–1496 AD) in Herat. And the very copy under number 285 which was in Paris National library was taken as the bases for Hamid Sulaymon's publication done in Tashkent. "Divan-e Foni", which was numbered 1345, was enriched with gazelles and bayts [18, 36].

Ergashali Shodiev, a scientist who dealt with studying Navoi's heritage, on comparing the two publications prepared by Rukniddin Humoyun Farrukh and Hamid Sulaymon paid his attention to uncertainty existed between them. He wrote: «It is surprising that the gazelle presented by Tashkent publication was given as "tatabbu'" (imitation) made to one of the poets and the same gazelle in Tehran publication was given as "tatabbu" to a completely different poet» [16, 26]. Both editors gave the same titles to the gazelles as they were named in "Divan-e Foni". But the names of the poets whom Navoi made imitation differ from each other. E. Shodiev wrote about it, giving samples to the gazelles which began with certain "matla" (the first two lines of a gazelle that make a bayt) were given as "Tatabbu-e Mavloni Kotibi" in Tashkent publication.

They are:

Pesh-e jom-e purmay-e rakhshanda mohro tob nist,
Sog'ar-e khurshidro gar tob hast in ob nist.

[16, 130]

Har kiro del mubtalo-e chun tu jonone buvad,
Ham fido sozad garash har mu ba tan jone buvad.

[16, 234]

Naqd-e jon dar maykada orand- u qut-e jon barand,
Jonfishon on jo qadam neh, k-onche orand on barand.

[16, 312]

But the same gazelles in Tehran publication came under numbers 77, 155, 203 were told as *tatabbu* to other poets. The first one came as imitation to Mavlana Shohi, the second one as *Tatabbu-e Khoja Salmon* and the last one given as *Tatabbu-e Mavlana Kohi* [16, 27].

There is also disparity in the number of gazelles included into "Divan-e Foni". According the information given by Hamid Sulayman, there are 6197 bayts (verses) which make (12 394 lines) "Divan-e Foni". From all 554 gazels 237 were written by making "tatabbu" to Hafiz Sherazi, 33 gazels were devoted to Amir Khosrav Dehlavi, 52 to Abd ar-rahman Jami, 25 to Shaykh Saadi, and 5 to Mavlana Kotibi. And all of these show that Alisher Navoi held his own peculiar, worthy place in Persian poetry. "Comparative study of Foni (Navoi) and Hafiz's creative activity was done by Tajik scholar Abdulg'ani Mirzoev in his book "Foni and Hafiz" [13]. Though this work is considered to be unique in studying the process of literary influence of Turkic and Persian poetry on each other on the example of the two poets, it does not fully reflect the poetics and artistry of Foni in using Oriental arts of poetics. Navoi's collection of *qasidas* presented in "Sitta-e Zaruriyya" and "Fusul-e Arba'a" also attract with their impressive size. For example, *Sitta-e zaruriyya* is consists of the following Persian *qasidas*:

Ruh al –quds (132 bayts);

Ayn al-hayat (106 bayts);

Tohfat al-afkar (99 bayts);

Qut al-qulub (120 bayts);

Minhoj an-najot (138 bayts);

Nasim al-khuld (129 bayts) [19, 192–193].

Those *qasidas* which took place in that collection had been done in the way of *tatabbu'* to Khosrav Dehlavi, Anvari and Abd ar-rahman Jami's dedication works.

"Fusul-e Arbaa" consists of four Persian *qasidas*, we are aware of it due to the creation under number 285 taken from the divan of Foni which kept in Paris National library. It was first introduced to us by an Uzbek scholar H. Sulaymon as he became aware of it, that the copy had been rewritten in 933 (1527) in Khurasan [18, 35–36]. As for "Fusul-e Arbaa" it was initially published in 1968 by Hamid Sulaymon after he found it in the collection of the divon. Before, the information concerning that work was given in "Muhokamat al-lug'atayyin" Navoi himself mentioned it. According to that work 4 kinds of mood, nature matching 4 seasons of the year were described in those *qasidas*, they were warm-bloodedness, cold-bloodedness, dryness, wetness (hot, cold, dry, wet).

It is worthy to be mentioned that certain research works about the above mentioned 2 collections of *qasidas* were conducted in Uzbekistan [11; 12; 16]. But they were basically investigations dealing with the description of the history of *qasidas*, their content and ideas. The role of *qasida* writing tendency, its importance in Oriental literature, their peculiar features, and their melodious traits were left out of the researchers' attention. In addition, it is necessary to note that Navoi's letters written in the Persian language still remain unknown within the huge oriental collection of letters and diverse munshaot — letter writing manuals of XV–XVIII c.

Thus, one of the most urgent tasks appointed to the Navoi's researchers interested in is to continue seeking for the manuscript copies of "Divan-e Foni", analyze the existing publications from comparative textological point of view, and, in future, to create a scientific-critical text of the *Divan-e Foni*.

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