

The Use of Similes in Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-Qulub*: A Linguocultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the use of similes in Alisher Navoi's Mahbub ul-Qulub from linguistic, literary, and linguocultural perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the distinction between free and conventional similes and their role in revealing the author's individual artistic style and the cultural worldview of the Uzbek people. The study demonstrates that free similes reflect Alisher Navoi's creative imagination and individual authorial skill, while conventional similes are closely associated with the historical, cultural, and national experience of the people. The article analyzes the thematic classification of similes used in the work, including zoonymic, legendary, religious, anthroponymic, and cosmonymic similes. Special attention is given to comparisons involving animals, particularly the dog and donkey, as well as legendary and religious figures such as Hatam Tay, Rustam, Jamshid, Simurgh, Samandar, Jesus, and Khidr. The analysis shows that these similes serve not only as expressive artistic devices but also as carriers of culturally significant meanings and traditional value orientations. The study also examines the continuity of certain similes in later Uzbek literary works, demonstrating how authorial comparisons created or refined by Navoi have been preserved and developed in subsequent literary discourse. The findings indicate that similes in Mahbub ul-Qulub contribute significantly to the vividness, expressiveness, and ideological depth of the work while reflecting the linguistic and cultural worldview of its period.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, Mahbub ul-Qulub, simile, free simile, conventional simile, linguocultural unit, cultural code, zoonymic simile, religious simile, anthroponymic simile, cosmonym.

INTRODUCTION

Similes used in the speech of every nation reflect its culture. In other words, similes emerge from the worldview, mentality, and national customs and traditions of a particular people. As scholars have noted, “the most valuable sources of information about a people’s culture and mentality are phraseological units, metaphors, symbols, and similar linguistic phenomena, in which myths, legends, customs, and traditions are preserved in a seemingly ‘conserved’ form” [1: 3]. Similes reveal the spiritual identity of a people; that is, they linguistically manifest the “linguistic worldview” (L. Weisgerber) characteristic of that particular nation, which is also transmitted from one generation to another. In his study devoted to this field, Jo Min Yong states: “A simile is not only a means of understanding the external world; at the same time, it can be regarded as one of the most effective means that enables us to learn about a culture alongside learning its language.” Drawing on several sources, the scholar notes that people reportedly use similes approximately six times per minute in everyday communication. This also demonstrates the significant role that similes play in both language and culture [2: 13]. Similes have existed since ancient times and were studied in antiquity from the perspectives of rhetoric and poetics. “Beginning with the grammar of Panini, who lived in the fourth century BC, similes were studied as a poetic form in ancient Indian poetic and grammatical treatises” [3: 5].

For human beings, simile has historically been one of the ways of comprehending the world. Aristotle also expressed his views on this matter. According to him, simile is one of the earliest means of cognition for humanity, beginning in childhood. While philosophers acquire new knowledge through theoretical reasoning, ordinary people understand a particular phenomenon by comparing it with another phenomenon [4: 23].

METHODS

Alisher Navoi also employed similes in his work *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, contributing to the unique artistic quality of the work and making its content as exquisite as pearls strung on a thread. Free similes demonstrate the author's individual ability and creative skill, whereas conventional similes are the product of a people's long-standing cultural heritage and their distinctive perceptions of the surrounding world. Alisher Navoi made thoughtful and skillful use of both types in his literary works. In the formation of conventional similes, Alisher Navoi played two important roles: 1) he refined similes that had existed before him and transmitted them to the people; 2) similes created by Navoi were subsequently used by his followers and admirers, gradually becoming conventional similes and taking their place among the linguocultural units of the Uzbek people.

The similes employed by the author in the work can be analyzed according to various thematic groups. In the present study, they were classified and examined within different thematic groups.

RESULTS

Zoonymic similes: These are various types of similes expressed through animals. In *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, Alisher Navoi provides several similes associated with dogs. In these similes, the entity being compared is represented by one element, while the image used for comparison consists of several elements. This can be demonstrated through the following examples:

1. *Harzago'ykim, ko'y takallum surgay, itdekdurkim, kecha tong otquncha hurgay*
 "A person who speaks pointlessly and excessively is like a dog that barks continuously from night until dawn." [5: 94]

In this verse, the author employs the simile marker *-dek* ("like/as"). Through this expression, the writer uses the image of a dog to reveal a negative human characteristic. In other words, a

loquacious person who annoys those around him by talking excessively is compared to a dog that barks incessantly until dawn. The author employs this simile with considerable artistic skill: both the excessively talkative person and the barking dog disturb those around them through their voices and cause discomfort through their behavior.

The representation of excessively talkative people through artistic similes is relatively uncommon in literary discourse. Such character traits are more often revealed through direct description or dialogue. Nevertheless, in his work, the author successfully portrays this type of person through comparison. As a result, the image becomes more vivid and expressive and is represented more clearly in the reader's imagination. This clearly demonstrates the writer's artistic mastery and his ability to make effective use of expressive literary devices.

2. *Yatimki pichoq urmoq aning ishi bo'lg'ay, o'zi telba it, pichoq aning tishi bo'lg'ay. Sog'lig'ida qutuz it va usrukligida qochib andin yuz it*

"A thug's occupation is stabbing; he himself is a mad dog, and his knife is his tooth. When sober, he is a rabid dog, and when intoxicated, a hundred dogs flee from him." [5: 36]

Through this simile, the writer compares the behavior of mad dogs, which attack and bite people and cause them harm, with that of thugs, who attack people, threaten them with knives, and use them to take their possessions. Thus, thugs are compared to mad dogs, while their knives are likened to the dogs' teeth. The author portrays thugs as being as ferocious as rabid dogs when sober and as being in an even worse condition when intoxicated, to the extent that even dogs would flee from them. Through this comparison, he emphasizes that just as rabid and mad dogs are savage and dangerous, thugs are equally vicious and harmful.

A similar type of simile can also be found in Yusuf Khos Hajib's *Qutadg'u bilig*. The work contains the following statement: "A person of bad character is like a heavy burden that constantly weighs upon a person. It causes him suffering. Or such a person is like a dog. It is not an ordinary dog but a rabid

and vicious dog. It may attack you whenever it wishes. Evil and depraved behavior can do what even an enemy would not do" [6: 73].

3. *Har oqshom usruklerin xorij tarona, telba itlar ulushqondin nishona*
 "Every evening, the drunken revelers' singing is like the howling of rabid dogs." [5: 106]

The singing and humming of heavily intoxicated people may appear as unpleasant to the human ear as their appearance is repulsive to those around them. The author conveys this idea effectively through a simile. Just as the howling of rabid dogs sounds unpleasant and disturbing to the human ear, the drunken revelers' singing evokes a similar sense of annoyance and discomfort in listeners.

4. *Bevafo odam haqshunos va vafolig' itdin kam. Vafolig' qo'tuz it yaxshroqkim, va rosiz xush barno yigit*
 "A faithless person who does not appreciate goodness is inferior to a loyal dog. Even a loyal, mangy dog is better than a handsome and youthful man who is devoid of loyalty." [5: 116]

Just as human beings possess both positive and negative qualities, dogs are also associated with both favorable and unfavorable characteristics. Dogs are not represented solely as embodying negative traits; they are also used as an ethalon of loyalty. Dogs have traditionally been companions and friends of human beings. In Uzbek culture, dogs have long assisted people in guarding homes and livestock. They have protected houses from strangers and livestock from wild animals. Dogs have also traditionally been regarded as loyal to their owners. Therefore, Alisher Navoi employs the dog as an ethalon of loyalty, emphasizing that a loyal dog is better than a faithless person. He further stresses that even a mangy but loyal dog is superior to a handsome and youthful man who lacks loyalty.

The free similes created by the author on the basis of his individual artistic vision have subsequently become conventional similes in modern Uzbek literary language. For example, in

Normurod Norqobilov's work *G'animlar*, a simile expressing the meaning of loyalty and devotion is used: "Because of his simplicity, he is not particularly respected in the village. However, he is as loyal to a friend as a dog" [11: 97].

The examples presented above demonstrate Alisher Navoi's remarkable mastery in employing similes and once again confirm his status as the "sultan of the realm of words." In Examples 2, 3, and 4 presented above, no explicit simile markers are used. Rather, the emphasis expressed in these constructions conveys a meaning that is even stronger than that of an explicitly marked comparison. In other words, the comparative relationship is implicit and is realized through the semantic structure of the utterance rather than through a formal comparative marker.

The author compares ignorant people to donkeys in his work. He skillfully compares the donkey's ability to carry whatever load is placed upon it and to move in whichever direction it is led with the characteristic behavior of an ignorant person. An ignorant person is portrayed as someone who lacks independent thought, believes whatever others say, acts without reflection, and makes decisions without considering their consequences. This idea is expressed through the following simile:

Nodon - eshak. Balki eshakdin ham kamrak. Eshakka har ne yuklasang ko'tarur va qayon sursang ul yon borur, aql va tamiz da'viysi yo'q. Bermasang ochdur, bersang to'q. [5: 100]

"The ignorant person is a donkey, perhaps even inferior to a donkey. Whatever load is placed upon a donkey, it carries, and wherever it is driven, it goes; it makes no claim to reason or discernment. If it is not given food, it is hungry; if it is given food, it is satisfied."

The ignorant person's meaningless and unpleasant throat-clearing is also compared to the braying of a donkey. Through this simile, the author conveys that just as the braying of a donkey sounds unpleasant to the human ear, the senseless throat-clearing of an ignorant person evokes an equally unpleasant feeling:

Nodonning muvahhish harzag'a bo'g'zin qirmog'i - eshakning jihatsiz qichqirmog'i. [5: 94]

"The ignorant person's horrible throat-clearing over meaningless talk is like the senseless braying of a donkey."

There are also instances in the work in which one image of comparison is associated with several entities being compared. For example, a bad vizier is compared to both a poisonous snake and a scorpion:

Zahr berib bemor o'lturguvchi tabib, bularning holig'a mushobehdur va qarib. Bu ikki xayldin har biri bir af'i, shohg'a vojibdur bularniig daf'i. Bular jumlası chiyonlar, xaloyiqqa yetkurur ziyonlar. [5: 12]

"A physician who gives poison and kills the sick is similar to these people. Each of these two groups is like a poisonous snake, and the king must eliminate them. All of them are scorpions that cause harm to the people."

Such similes occur several more times in the work. For example, a "black-army soldier" is compared to Gog and Magog; a "muezzin" is compared to a sorcerer who makes a snake dance by playing a flute; a "lazy muezzin" is compared to a donkey; "thugs and vile people" are compared to harmful insects and vermin; "Jews and Gypsies" are compared to monkeys; a "high-minded person" is compared to a lofty-flying falcon; a "mean-spirited person" is compared to a hawk that hunts mice; a "soft-spoken person" is compared to a sorcerer; an "ugly person whose speech is meaningless" is compared to a frog; a "person who wishes to serve the king" is compared to a donkey; a "worldly-minded person dressed in brocade" is compared to a fly that has landed on filth; and an "ignorant rich man" is compared to a golden fly.

Similes associated with legends, religion, and anthroponyms

In Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, one can observe the use of similes associated with legendary figures and narratives. Legends emerge from the national values, distinctive customs, traditions, and worldview of a particular people and are transmitted as

cultural heritage from one generation to another. In the work under study, legendary figures and creatures include Hatam Tay, Rustam, the div, Jamshid, the hoopoe, the Simurgh, and the Samandar.

The work contains the figure of the historical-legendary personality Hatam Tay. Hatam Tay is traditionally regarded as the ruler of the Tay tribe in Yemen. He was a renowned poet and military commander who became legendary among the peoples of the East for his generosity, nobility, and justice. In popular speech and literary works, Hatam Tay is used as a symbol of the moral virtue of generosity. Among the Uzbek people, the expression *Hotamtoylik qilish* ("to behave like Hatam Tay") is also used. The image of Hatam Tay was likewise employed by Ahmad Yugnaki in *Hibat ul-Haqoyiq* to express the meaning of generosity:

*Arab – Ajam bilimlini olqishladi,
Chunki so'zi nasihatdan ohishmadi.
Mol-dunyosiz faqirga bilim — boylik,
Sarf aylab, qo'rqmay qilsin Hotamtoylik .*

Alisher Navoi also uses the name "Hatam Tay" as a simile in his work: *Ko'ngullari to'bichoq sekreturdin orom topmoq va so'zlari bosh yalang yuzga chopmoq. Bazmda da'volari Xotamliq, razmda taloshlari Rustamliq* [5: 13].

The author describes such people as follows: although they are sinful and ill-natured and boast of their bravery, at feasts they claim to be as generous as Hatam Tay, while in battle they behave like Rustam. Thus, the author uses the name Hatam in the sense of generosity.

The image of Hatam Tay is also used in Tohir Malik's work *Odamiylik mulki*: "He was a young man who shared everything with others, as generous as Hatam Tay" [8: 25].

The legendary hero Rustam is also employed as a simile in the work. The image of Rustam embodies such high moral qualities as honesty, compassion, love of justice, and simplicity. Rustam is one of the traditional figures widely represented in the oral and written literature of the peoples of the Middle East. He

serves as a symbolic representation of mythological ideas of bravery and heroism and of the epic ideal. In Persian legends and the *Shahnameh*, Rustam is interpreted as a loyal defender of Iran. In the epics and legends of the Turkic peoples, however, he is portrayed as a hero belonging to the lineage of Tur and is described as a warrior who protects Turan from external invasions.

The author employs the image of Rustam as a simile in the following passage:

Ko'ngullari to'bichoq sekreturdin orom topmoq va so'zlari bosh yalang yuzga chopmoq. Bazmda da'volari Xotamliq, razmda taloshlari Rustamliq. [5: 13]

The image of Rustam is also used as a simile in modern Uzbek literature. For example, this comparison occurs in Pirimqul Qodirov's novel *Yulduzli tunlar*: "The woman serving the meal pleaded with Qorako'z Begim: 'May you be blessed with a son like Rustam, my lady!'" [9: 529].

Another legendary figure employed as a simile is Jamshid. This figure is interpreted in literature as a multifaceted and semantically rich symbol. On the one hand, he is portrayed as an enlightened and just ruler who contributed to the development of society and the improvement of the country. On the other hand, his downfall as a result of pride and arrogance is emphasized, making him an instructive example of the consequences of violating human virtues and moral norms. Therefore, in literature, Jamshid represents not merely a historical or legendary king but also a symbolic figure that encourages reflection on human spiritual development, inner purity, and moral perfection. Through this figure, writers have sought to highlight, from an artistic and philosophical perspective, the transience of worldly wealth, sovereignty, power, and fame, while emphasizing humility, purity, and modesty as the highest human values.

In Alisher Navoi's work, the author conveys the degraded character of habitual wine drinkers by comparing them to Jamshid:

Har mug'bacha ilgidinki, jome tortib, Jamsheddin istig'no va shavkati ortib.

Because of their excessive drinking, they become impoverished from head to toe. With every cup of wine they receive from the wine servers, they feel themselves to be happier and more glorious than Jamshid.

The image of Jamshid also appears in Sayfi Saroyi's *Guliston bit-turkiy*:

Bir faqir munojot qilur vaqtin aytti: "Ilohiy yovuzlarg'a rahmat qilg'il, ey gularga rahmating doim tegar. Avval kishikim, to'nina tiroz tiki dag'i elina yuzuk churub boqti, Jamshid edi. Ayttilar: «Nechun barcha ziynatni so'lg'a berding?» Aytti: «Sog'g'a sog'liqi yetar». [12: 13]

This demonstrates that the tradition of employing the image of Jamshid in literary works existed even before Alisher Navoi.

The work under study also contains the names of the legendary birds Simurgh and Samandar. In Eastern literature, the Simurgh is often portrayed as a symbol of boundless wisdom, divine knowledge, and the attainment of truth. In Sufi works, it represents the path through which a person achieves spiritual perfection. The image of the Simurgh was employed before Alisher Navoi by Fariduddin Attar in his work *Mantiq ut-Tayr*. The word *Simurgh* is explained in Persian as *se* ("thirty") and *murg* ("bird"). Alisher Navoi also used the name of this legendary bird in many of his other works, including *Lison ut-Tayr*.

Another legendary bird is Samandar. According to legends and narratives, the Samandar is portrayed as a creature associated with fire. It is believed to be a magical being capable of living within fire or remaining unharmed by it. Therefore, the image of Samandar is often regarded as a symbol of strength, patience, endurance, and resilience.

In Uzbek and Arabic, the name "Samandar" is associated with the meanings of steadfastness, resilience, and vitality. Because of its legendary ability to withstand fire, it can also symbolize a person who is strong-willed, unafraid of difficulties,

and capable of enduring any trial. In the work under study, the image of Samandar is used in reference to the great poets Amir Khusrau of Delhi and Abdurrahman Jami:

*Ki to bo'lg'ay bular bir-birlari birla qariyn bo'lsun,
Samandarlar kibi ishq o'ti ichra hamnishin bo'lsun.*

The image of the legendary Samandar bird is also employed in Erkin Vohidov's poem *Sevgi otashi*:

*Bilmadim, ul otash ichra
O'tanib bo'lgum ado
Yo samandardek chiqarman
O't arosidan butun. [11: 11]*

DISCUSSION

The author employs religious similes in a distinctive manner, using the names of prophets and other religious figures and concepts. The names of the following prophets are mentioned: Muhammad (peace be upon him), Adam, Jesus (peace be upon him), Job (Ayyub), Moses, Noah, and Khidr. Religious names and concepts include angels, hell, Gog and Magog, the Day of Judgment, the div, Pharaoh, Nimrod, and Qarun.

The author divides physicians into two categories: the skilled physician and the ill-natured, ignorant physician, portraying each through distinctive similes. In addition to creating vivid imagery in the minds of readers, these comparisons also impart religious knowledge. For example, the skilled physician is compared to the compassionate and merciful Jesus, his face to Khidr, who brings salvation, and the drink he provides to the Water of Life. The ill-natured and ignorant physician, by contrast, is compared to the disciple of an executioner.

It is well known that Jesus is traditionally associated with the ability to revive the dead and restore life. Alisher Navoi compares this quality with that of a skilled physician: the miracle of Jesus consisted, by God's permission, in restoring a departed soul to the body through prayer, whereas the physician's task is

to prevent a soul that is about to depart from leaving the body through treatment and medical care. This can be observed in the following passage:

Hoziq tabibki shafqati bo'lg'ay — Insoi Ruhullohg'a nisbati bo'lg'ay. Iso ishi chiqqon jonni tang'a kivurmak duo bila, munung tandin chiqadurg'on jong'a mone' bo'lmoq davo bila. [5: 20]

The author further describes the face of such a physician as pleasing to the troubled heart, his breath as a remedy for the sick, and his presence as healing for patients. Through comparison, the skilled physician's face is likened to Khidr, the bringer of salvation, while the drink he provides is compared to the Water of Life. In Islamic narratives, Khidr is regarded as a symbol of wisdom, eternal life, and divine guidance. He is often portrayed as a mysterious and sacred figure. The Water of Life, in turn, symbolizes longevity. The work under study contains the following passage:

Mundoq tabibning yuzi mariz ko'ngliga mahubdur va so'zi bemor jonig'a marg'ubdur. Dami alillarg'a davo va qadami xastalarg'a shifo. Xizri najot aning tal'ati va obi hayot aning sharbati. [5: 20]

The figure of Khidr is also employed in Sayfi Saroyi's *Guliston bit-turkiy*:

*Ko'zumning babaki ichra xayoling naqsh erur mutlaq,
Yana aqlim sening husnang tangirg'ab fikri hayroni.
Zanahdoning qudug'inda ko'ngul Iskandari tolib,
Ajabtur anda bo'lmasa Xizrning obi hayvoni [12: 13].
Bediyonat sudur bid'ati sayyiadur bilo-zarur. [5: 12]*

In this sentence, the author employs *bid'ah*, a religious concept, as a simile. He portrays faithless officials as an evil form of religious innovation. *Bid'ah* refers to innovations that have no direct basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In scholarly literature, the term is primarily applied to practices or phenomena that are not established within religious norms but are nevertheless followed by people.

The term *bid'ah* is also used in Ahmad Yugnaki's *Hibat ul-Haqoyiq*, although there it is employed in its direct lexical sense rather than as a simile:

*Zohid ibodatni, amalin olim
Tark etdi, o'yinga yuz burdi orif.
Yomonni tiyguvchi kishi qolmadi,
Bid'atlar avj oldi, egarda zolim.*

Similes associated with cosmonyms

The work under study also employs cosmonyms as the basis of similes. The author mentions the sky, stars, the planet Zuhul (Saturn), and Naxsi Asghar – Mirrix (Mars). Among these names, “Naxsi Asghar,” that is, “Mirrix (Mars),” is a celestial name that continues to be widely used in both scholarly and literary discourse. In *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, the author uses it as follows:

*Ahli saodatlar ruhbaxsh zulolig'a manba' ham til, ahli shaqovatlar
nahs qavqabig'a matla' ham til.*

The planet Mars was associated with Ares in ancient Greek mythology. Ares was regarded as the god of war, battle, and bloodshed. The Romans called him Mars, which is why the planet is now known by this name. Mars is a reddish planet visible in the sky. Its reddish, flame-like appearance also contributed to its symbolic association with this name.

In the work under study, Alisher Navoi employs the image of Mars in a negative sense. He indicates that the tongue can serve as a source of spiritual vitality and happiness for the fortunate and noble, while it can also lead toward the star of misfortune, Mirrix, associated with the emergence of evil. In this sense, the author uses the image of Mirrix (Mars) negatively, suggesting that it leads people toward conflict, hostility, and war.

The image of Mars is also encountered in modern Uzbek literature. For instance, Abdurauf Fitrat wrote a poem entitled ‘Mirrix yulduzi’ (‘The Star Mars’), while the name Mars occurs in Erkin Vohidov's *Inson* (‘Human’) qasida. Thus, it can be

observed that the term *naxs*, used in earlier centuries, is represented in contemporary usage by the forms *Mirrix* and *Mars*.

It can be observed that Alisher Navoi approached the use of similes in *Mahbub ul-Qulub* in a distinctive and original manner. In employing similes, the author skillfully drew upon the similarities in the structure and characteristic features of the entity being compared and the comparative image. Whether conventional or free, the similes used by the author were carefully selected so that the two elements of comparison corresponded to and complemented each other.

Each simile employed in the work evokes a particular image in the reader's mind, encourages reflection, and contributes to a deeper understanding of the content. In creating the work, the author also made use of distinctive ethalons and symbols, which further enriched the artistic and linguocultural significance of the similes. Thus, the similes in *Mahbub ul-Qulub* function not only as artistic means of expression but also as important carriers of cultural meanings and values.

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