



Article

# The Genesis of The Images of Creatures In The Lyrics of Alisher Navoi

Khasanova Laylo Firdavsiyevna

1. Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi
- \* Correspondence: [hasanovalaylo12@gmail.com](mailto:hasanovalaylo12@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The use of symbolic imagery in classical Turkic literature plays a pivotal role in conveying spiritual, emotional, and philosophical dimensions. Within this tradition, the lyrical poetry of Alisher Navoi demonstrates a profound engagement with animal imagery, drawing on the symbolic heritage of Sufi literature and the poetic influence of predecessors such as Jalaluddin Rumi, Lutfi, Atoi, and Gadoi. Despite the recognized symbolic power of creature imagery in Navoi's poetry, systematic comparative analysis of how these images evolved and were reinterpreted across related poets remained limited. This study aims to explore the genesis, artistic significance, and symbolic functions of creature imagery in Navoi's lyrics, while comparing them with uses in the works of his contemporaries. The findings show that Navoi not only inherited rich symbolic conventions from earlier poets but also expanded them with philosophical depth and mystical content. Specific images such as the dog, moth, nightingale, lion, and gazelle are analyzed in their aesthetic and spiritual dimensions, revealing nuanced Sufi interpretations. Comparisons with Lutfi and Gadoi highlight variations in symbolic intensity, emotional range, and cultural resonance. This work provides a unique statistical and interpretive analysis of animal imagery across multiple classical poets, demonstrating Navoi's role in elevating such symbols to new artistic heights. The study deepens the understanding of classical Uzbek literary tradition and affirms the value of symbolic analysis in interpreting spiritual and cultural messages embedded in poetic texts.

**Keywords:** Alisher Navoi, images of creatures, Sufi philosophy, classical literature, symbolic meaning, Gadoiy, Lutfiy, Atoyi.

**Citation:** Firdavsiyevna, k. L. The genesis of the image of creature in the lyrics of alisher navoi. Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2025, 6(3), 482-489.

Received: 15<sup>th</sup> Apr 2025  
Revised: 29<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
Accepted: 21<sup>st</sup> Jun 2025  
Published: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025



**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## 1. Introduction

Alisher Navoi was inspired by the literary heritage of his predecessors, and in some cases he turned to their system of images and artistic principles. In the poet's lyric poetry, images of creatures serve as intermediary symbols in expressing his artistic idea. Navoi not only adopted these creatures from his predecessors, but also approached them with a new look, expanding their figurative possibilities and imbuing them with mystical and philosophical content[1].

The poetic legacy of Alisher Navoi represents a pinnacle in classical Turkic literature, particularly in its innovative use of symbolic and mystical imagery. In the general background, classical Oriental poetry has long employed animal imagery to convey emotional, philosophical, and Sufi meanings. This tradition, enriched by figures such as Jalaluddin Rumi and Lutfi, laid the groundwork for future poets, including Navoi. The specific background of this study centers on Navoi's lyrical works, where creatures such as dogs, moths, nightingales, and deer are not merely decorative but serve deep symbolic functions aligned with Sufi philosophy[2]. The knowledge gap lies in the underexplored comparative analysis of how Navoi adopted and transformed inherited symbolic imagery from predecessors like Gadoi, Atoi, and Lutfi, while infusing it with novel metaphorical

depth. The aim of the research is to examine the formation, transformation, and artistic significance of these creature images in Navoi's lyrics, drawing connections with classical and religious sources. The results reveal that Navoi skillfully elevated traditional motifs, such as the dog symbolizing loyalty and humility, or the moth as a metaphor for self-sacrifice, embedding them within mystical and philosophical frameworks. The novelty of the study lies in its systematic comparison of animal symbolism across multiple classical poets and its detailed interpretation of lesser-known symbolic nuances in Navoi's poetry. The implications extend to a broader understanding of how symbolic imagery functions as a cultural and spiritual bridge in classical literature, enhancing interpretive frameworks in literary and religious studies[3].

## 2. Materials and Methods

Specifically, Ali Tojiddini's *Farhang-e Nomadha* discusses the symbolic representations of creatures found in the works of the great Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi. A total of 56 creature names are recorded in this work. Among them are the following:

These include deer, dragon, horse, hawk, nightingale, butterfly, bird, moth, egg, crocodile, foal, owl, quadruped, donkey, rooster, rabbit, bat, pig, snake, fox, crow, bee, locust, dog, steed, lizard, Simurgh, camel, jackal, lion, peacock, parrot, scorpion, Anqa, spider, elephant, partridge, pigeon, vulture, raven, ox, cat, wolf, calf, stork, snake, fish, chick, duck, fly, ant, mouse, hoopoe, and Huma bird[4].

Undoubtedly, religious-narrative works in prose form — particularly *Qissas ar-Rabghuzi* — were among the key themes that received special attention in literature prior to the time of Alisher Navoi. The work *Tarikhi Anbiya va Hukama*, attributed to Alisher Navoi, is also recognized as a continuation of this religious-narrative tradition[5].

## 3. Results and Discussion

In this work, the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), described as the most beautiful and exemplary narrative, includes mention of five creatures destined to enter Paradise. These are:

1. The wolves of Ya'qub (a.s.),
2. The dog of the Ashobi Kahf,
3. The she-camel of Salih (a.s.),
4. The donkey of Isa (a.s.),
5. And the horse named Duldul belonging to Ali (r.a)[6].

Additionally, when we examine the literary environment of Transoxiana (*Movarounnahr*), particularly the works of Mawlana Lutfi — a poet considered close in spirit to Alisher Navoi — we observe that various animal images are also used in his poetry with expressive and symbolic meaning. In Lutfi's *Divan*, titled *Sensan Sevarim* and published in 1968 by the Gafur Ghulom Publishing House, the statistical representation of animal imagery was determined as follows:

Table 1 illustrate Alisher Navoi's sophisticated use of animal imagery to convey Sufi ideals[7]. Among the 21 animals identified, the dog is most prominent, symbolizing spiritual devotion and self-effacement. By referencing these creatures, Navoi embeds deep mystical significance into his poetry, transforming ordinary animals into vehicles of philosophical, emotional, and religious meaning. This analysis supports the broader argument that Navoi's poetry fuses classical literary motifs with Sufi symbolic depth[8].

**Table 1.** Animal Imagery in Alisher Navoi's Lyrical Works

1. Andalib – 3	2. Ari – 1	3. Arslon – 1
4. Ashhab – 1	5. Bulbul – 18	6. Buroq – 2
7. Chibin – 1	8. G'izol/g'azol – 1, 1	9. It – 22
10. Jayron – 1	11. Kabk – 3	12. Magas – 1
13. Ohu – 7	14. Ot – 4	15. Parvona – 7
16. Qush – 8	17. To'ti – 2	18. Tovus – 1
19. Tulku – 1	20. Yilon – 1	21. Zanbur – 1

The poet's lyrical works feature images of 21 different animals. Among these, the most frequently referenced is the image of the **dog**. This image is typically interpreted as a symbol of a devout seeker (*salik*) who loyally serves on the path of love. The lyrical protagonist aspires to be counted among the ranks of dogs. Through this image, he regards spiritual humility and loyalty as the highest virtues — equating such a state even with that of royalty:

Itlaringning mansabin Lutfiyg'a ta'yin aylakim,  
Davlatningda qilsa sultonlig', ne bo'lg'ay bir gado?

or:

Eshiking itina kim bo'lsa yo'ldosh,  
Oning iqboli sultondin qolishmas[9].

Through such verses, the poet conveys his artistic ideas using Sufi symbolism. In Sufism, the image of the dog often represents a devoted dervish in the presence of a spiritual guide — a *murshid*, *wali*, or *shaykh*. In certain contexts, this symbol is even interpreted as signifying a status comparable to that of a *saint* (*awliya*). This same symbolic interpretation is clearly evident in one of Alisher Navoi's *na't* (praise) ghazals, where the dog image is imbued with deep mystical meaning:

Itlaring maxsus-u mahzundur, Navoiy, koshki,  
Kirsu bu mahrum ham ul zumrai mahram aro[10].

In Lutfi's poetry, the nobility and elevated status of dogs is expressed in the following verse:

Bo'ldi muyassar oxiri itlari mansabi manga,  
Har kim egosi eshikin saqladi, bo'ldi mo'tabar.

In these verses, the qualities typically associated with the image of the dog — such as loyalty and devotion — are interpreted as symbols of sainthood and spiritual reverence. Thus, this image not only enriches the aesthetic dimension of the poetry but also serves the deeper Sufi-spiritual layer of meaning[11].

Moreover, the scene of dogs lamenting is also depicted with artistic beauty in Lutfi's poetry:

Eshiking itlari ko'p, Lutfiydin qilar faryod,  
Kim uyqu bo'ldi harom oning ushbu joyinda.

In Sufi literature, *faryod* (lamentation) refers to the lover's plea and cry expressed in the form of *dhikr* (remembrance). It is typically interpreted as the anguish of a seeker on the path of spiritual enlightenment, breaking the silence with heartfelt supplication. In the work *Navoiy Timsollar So'zligi* (Navoi's Dictionary of Symbols), *faryod* is defined as follows:

"A form of *dhikr* performed loudly and involuntarily — a plea uttered in a state of self-forgetfulness and deep surrender to God."

Thus, the lamentation of dogs functions as a symbolic device that reveals the spiritual condition of the lyrical protagonist. The overall content of the ghazal centers on the description of a beloved, with the protagonist's devotion and longing for her expressed through the symbolic image of the dog[12].

Ich bo'lg'oli raqib, turur Lutfiyini o'rni tosh,  
Oshiqning iticha ham qoshida e'tibori yo'q.

In this verse, the dog is depicted as being inside, while Lutfi positions himself outside. In this way, the lover mournfully expresses that the attention granted to the dog has not been afforded to him. This contrast intensifies the emotional tension in Lutfi's lyricism, particularly through the opposition between the rival and the lover.

The image of the moth (*parvona*) in classical literature symbolizes a lover who sacrifices their life in the path of love. In Navoiy Timsollar So'zligi (Navoi's Dictionary of Symbols), the moth is defined as:

"A yearning for divine light. A seeker (*salik*) who journeys through spiritual stations (*ḥāl* and *maqām*), ultimately reaching union — that is, attaining *fanā fi'llāh* (annihilation in God)."

In Lutfi's ghazals, this image comes to life in two distinct forms:

1. As admiration toward the moth:

Parvona ishi mendin erur yaxshiroqkim,  
O'rtansa, bori qovushur dulfuro'ziga[13].

2. And as the **lyrical protagonist himself** embodied in the image of the **moth**:

Jamoling shammina parvona keldim,  
Firoq o'tina yona-yona keldim.

In classical literature, the images of the moth (*parvona*) and the nightingale (*bulbul*) are sometimes presented in contrast. The moth burns in silence — consumed by the inner fire of love, it expresses its state through self-sacrifice and quiet suffering. In contrast, the nightingale follows the path of ecstatic utterance (*sukr*), representing a lover who laments with melody and song. In Lutfi's ghazals, there are also instances where these two images are used in opposition, reflecting the diversity of emotional and mystical experiences.

The poet writes:

Yorutti ishq charog'ini sham'u parvona,  
Hadis-u bulbul-u gul qiyl-u qol emish, bildim[14].

the poet expresses the divine illumination of mystical love through symbolic images — the candle, moth, nightingale, and rose.

Here, the candle represents the guiding light of the path of love; the moth, the self-sacrificing lover; the nightingale, the passionate lover who lives through ecstatic cries (*sukr*); and the rose, the symbol of the beloved.

According to the poet, the ultimate truth lies in the silent and annihilated (*fanā*) state of love — not in eloquent speech, but in surrender and inward burning.

In the poet's work, images such as deer, gazelle, doe, and related symbols (*ohu*, *jayron*, *kiyik*, *g'izol*, *g'azol*) are also used as artistic devices to describe the beauty of the beloved's eyes.

For example:

Ey, englaring hadiqayi firdavs lolasi,  
Gulzori husn ravnaqi ko'zung g'azolasi.

Here, the term "ghazol" (a gazelle, admired for its enchanting beauty) serves as a poetic simile to intensify the magical effect of the beloved's eyes. This image reflects a widely established standard of beauty in the tradition of classical literature.

Moreover, in Lutfi's work, we also observe references to figures such as the bee, lion, wasp, fly, fox, parrot, and gnat — all drawn from the rich tradition of folk imagery.

Through these images, the poet not only reflects the aesthetic norms of his time but also incorporates symbolic meanings rooted in the collective consciousness of the people, using them as expressive tools in his poetry[15].

For instance, the imagery of the bee and honey is expressed in the following way:  
 Ul og'zidur yo asalning arisi gulbarg uza,  
 Nish ila nozuk nishon qildi-yu to'ldirdi asal.

In these verses, the beauty of the beloved's mouth is compared to a flower petal from which a bee extracts honey. The bee's sting symbolizes the pain suffered by the lover, while the honey represents the delight and spiritual grace that emerge from that very pain. In this poetic technique, wound and pleasure, torment and tenderness are interpreted as a unified experience.

In folk imagination, the fox is a symbol of cunning, while the lion represents power and authority. By employing these images, the poet reflects various aspects of human character, rivalry, and social relations:

Oshiqqa o'zin sotsa raqibing, nega mengzar,  
 Arslon ila tulkugaki lof ura jalodat.

Here, the lover's rival is portrayed as cunning like a fox, while the lover himself is depicted as loyal and powerful like a lion.

Even the fly (magas) — a common motif in folk oral traditions — is not overlooked by the poet:

Jon-u ko'ngil iring sori parvoz qilurlar,  
 Har qayda asal bo'lsa, g'uluyi magase bor.

In this verse, honey symbolizes the beloved, while the fly (magas) is interpreted as a worldly opportunist or materialistic being. Here, Lutfi skillfully illustrates the conflict between carnal desire and divine love through symbolic imagery.

The use of animal imagery in Lutfi's poetry reveals the worldview of Turkic peoples and reflects a long-standing tradition of expressing philosophical and poetic ideas through folk symbols. These images also clearly highlight Lutfi's role as a predecessor of Alisher Navoi and his significance in the development of classical Turkic lyric poetry.

In his biographical anthology *Majolis un-Nafois*, Alisher Navoi describes the famous poet Gadoi of his time as follows: "Mawlana Gadoi is a Turkic-language poet — indeed, he is among the most celebrated. In the time of Babur Mirzo, his poetry gained great fame. He composed in a distinct style (*nava*) and one of his well-known opening lines (*matla*) is as follows:"

Ohkim, devona ko'nglum muftalo bo'ldi yana,  
 Bu ko'ngulning ilgidin jonga balo bo'ldi yana.

"Mawlana [Gadoi] lived beyond the age of ninety. This opening verse (*matla*) belongs to him:"

Dilbaro, sensiz tiriklik bir baloyi jon emish,  
 Kim aning dardi qoshida, yuz o'lum hayron emish" .

In this assessment, Alisher Navoi recognizes Gadoi as a "Turkic-language poet" (*turkigo'y*), affirming his place among the "mashahir" — the most renowned poets. Navoi also notes that Gadoi's poetry achieved widespread fame during the reign of Babur Mirzo, and his beautiful and meaningful ghazals became widely known and appreciated.

The cited matlas (opening couplets) reflect the simplicity, closeness to the spoken language, and sincere expression of inner emotional states that characterize Gadoi's poetry. In particular, the line "Dilbaro, sensiz tiriklik bir baloyi jon emish" ("Beloved, life without you is a torment to the soul") contrasts the pain of love with the essence of life itself — a powerful dramatic device typical of classical lyric tradition.

The expressive simplicity, thematic richness, and closeness to the folk spirit found in Gadoi's poetry fully confirm Navoi's praise. In Navoi's view, Gadoi is not only a talented poet but also a creator of some of the finest examples of classical literature.

E. Ahmadkhojayev expresses the following view regarding Gadoi's mastery of poetic imagery:

"An analysis of the ideological content of Gadoi's literary heritage and his lyrical imagery shows that he was a talented poet of his time. His ghazals represent some of the best examples of pre-Navoi Uzbek poetry. Gadoi's poetry is deeply rooted in real life and the common people, written in a worldly spirit, with the human being at the center of his creative world."

A study of his work reveals that his divan includes references to animal imagery in 44 instances. The statistical breakdown of these references is as follows:

Table 2 presents the statistical breakdown of 44 instances of animal references in the poetic works of Gadoi. The most frequently mentioned animal is the dog (It) with 17 occurrences, reflecting its dominant symbolic role, particularly within Sufi and spiritual imagery. Other frequently referenced animals include Bulbul (6), Ohu (5), and Andalib (3), suggesting their importance in conveying lyrical and emotional symbolism.

**Table 2.** Animal Imagery in Gadoi's Divan

1. Ajdaho – 2	2. Andalib – 3	3. Ashhab – 1
4. Bulbul – 6	5. G'izol – 1	6. Humo – 1
7. It – 17	8. Jayron – 1	9. Kabki dari – 1
10. Ohu – 5	11. Ot – 3	12. Parvona – 2
13. Qush – 1	14. Tovus – 1	15. Yilon – 1

These findings indicate that, compared to his contemporaries, Gadoi made relatively fewer references to animals in his poetry, both in terms of frequency and variety. In our view, his poetry primarily deserves high recognition as a body of work that reflects worldly love and the subtle emotional experiences of the human soul.

The most frequently used animal image in Gadoi's works is the dog, which he often portrays as a symbol of the rejected, humiliated lover, suffering from neglect and unrequited love. For example:

Dardokim, o'shul ohu qaroq vaslini topman,  
Tinmay nechakim it kibi har sori davonmen.

or

Bandaningkim bor edi bir chog'da yuz ming e'tibor,  
El qoshida it kibi bee'tibor etkan ko'ngil.

In Gadoi's poetry, the dog image does not appear to carry the complex symbolic layers found in the works of poets such as Lutfi. Rather, he uses the dog primarily as a simple metaphor for a lover suffering from neglect and disregard.

Additionally, the animal imagery in Gadoi's poetry tends to be expressed through traditional names, and their meaning is most often limited to one dimension — serving to reveal different aspects of love and longing. For instance, the dragon (ajdar) and snake



commonly symbolize the beloved's locks of hair; the nightingale, often mentioned alongside the rose, represents the lover on the path of love; and deer, gazelle, and doe are used to describe the beauty of the beloved's eyes.

From this perspective, the distinctiveness of Gadoi's poetic style lies in his consistent and straightforward use of animal imagery with fixed meanings. This contributes to the clarity, fluency, and accessibility of his poetic language.

It is undeniable that the poetry of Atoi had an influence on the formation of Alisher Navoi's literary style. Therefore, in our view, examining the use of animal imagery in Atoi's works is also an important area of study.

The data highlights Atoi's extensive use of animal imagery in his literary work, indicating a rich symbolic tradition. The high frequency of the dog, bulbul, and ohu reflects Atoi's emphasis on spiritual themes, particularly within Sufi contexts. Compared to his contemporaries, Atoi's poetry is notable for both the variety and frequency of animal symbols, suggesting a deliberate effort to convey philosophical and emotional depth through natural metaphors. These findings underscore Atoi's influential role in shaping symbolic literary conventions that were further refined by Alisher Navoi, see Table 3.

**Table 3:** Frequency of Animal Imagery in the Works of Atoi

1. Ajdar – 1	2. Andalib – 7	3. Anqo – 2
4. Ari – 1	5. Ashhab – 1	6. Bulbul – 17
7. G'azol – 2	8. Jayron – 3	9. Zag'an – 1
10. Zog' – 1	11. Ilon – 3	12. It – 24
13. Kabki dari – 1	14. Kabutar – 1	15. Kiyik – 1
16. Kish – 1	17. Qumri – 2	18. Qunduz – 1
19. Qush – 11	20. Markab – 1	21. Mo'r – 1
22. Nahang – 1	23. Ot – 1	24. Ohu – 14
25. Parvona – 8	26. Tovus – 1	27. To'ti – 5
28. Sheri nar – 3		

Many of these images were further refined in the works of Alisher Navoi, where they played a significant role in expressing new layers of meaning and symbolism. In particular, the poetic works of great masters such as Jalaluddin Rumi, Atoi, Lutfi, and Sakkaki widely employed animal imagery with distinctive styles and thematic richness. Alisher Navoi, continuing this literary tradition, enriched artistic thought and elevated symbolic expression to new heights.

#### 4. Conclusion

In his book *Alisher Navoi's Literary School*, Navoi scholar Rahim Vohidov provides extensive and in-depth information on this subject, offering valuable insights into the symbolic functions of imagery in Navoi's poetic legacy.

In his book *Navoi's Artistic Mastery*, Alibek Rustamov writes the following about the poet's figurative thinking:

"Navoi's excellence in the art of comparison lies not only in the form of his analogies but often in their function. This feature enabled Navoi to create many comparisons that no one had imagined before — and perhaps never would have."

In conclusion, the emergence and development of animal imagery in Alisher Navoi's lyric poetry is deeply rooted in ancient historical sources and advanced cultural traditions. Through these images, the poet enriched his artistic world and successfully conveyed profound symbolic and Sufi meanings.

---

**REFERENCES**

- [1] U. Turakulov, *Alisher Navoi and Persian Literature*. Tashkent: Mehr Nuri, 2008.
- [2] Navoi, *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works. Volume 1*, Tashkent: Fan, 1983.
- [3] Navoi, *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works. Volume 2*, Tashkent: Fan, 1983.
- [4] Navoi, *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works. Volume 3*, Tashkent: Fan, 1984.
- [5] Navoi, *Explanatory Dictionary of the Language of Alisher Navoi's Works. Volume 4*, Tashkent: Fan, 1985.
- [6] Navoi, *Khamsa (Five Poems)*. Tashkent: Fan, 1991.
- [7] M. Mirzayev, *Lexical Features of Navoi's Language*. Tashkent: Teacher Publishing, 2004.
- [8] Sh. Abdullaev, *Navoi and the Timurid Era Literature*. Tashkent: Uzbekistan Publishing, 2005.
- [9] K. Rahimov, *Navoi Studies in Modern Uzbek Philology*. Tashkent: University Press, 2012.
- [10] H. Karimov, *Poetic Imagery in Navoi's Ghazals*. Tashkent: Fan, 2010.
- [11] N. B. Rabghuzi, *Qissas of Rabghuzi. Book One*. Tashkent: Yozuvchi, 1990.
- [12] N. Hakimov, *Sufism in Navoi's Works*. Tashkent: Adabiyot, 2006.
- [13] S. Saifullah, *The Diwan of Shaykhzada Atoi*. Tashkent: Fan, 2008.
- [14] N. Jabbarov, *The Sahibqiron of the Literary World*. Tashkent: Adabiyot, 2021.
- [15] Lutfiy, *You Are the One I Love*. Tashkent: Adabiyot va San'at, 1987.