



Article

# Poetic Analysis of the Eye Symbol in Alisher Navoiy's Lyric Poetry

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**Abstract:** In this article, a poetic analysis of the symbol of the "eye" one of the most frequently employed images in Alisher Navoiy's poetry is presented. In particular, the study examines how Alisher Navoiy skillfully utilized the somatic image of the eye and its synonyms in the Uzbek language, as well as their Persian and Arabic equivalents, throughout his ghazal repertoire. It is demonstrated that Navoiy, through his masterful and refined artistic innovations, significantly contributed to the enrichment and elevation of the aesthetic value of the eye symbol in classical poetry.

**Keywords:** Navoiy's Lyric Poetry, "Eye" Symbol, "Ayn", "Chashm", "Basirat", "Nargis", Issues Of Poetics.

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## 1. Introduction

In classical literature, particularly in our poetic tradition, the symbol of the human eye occupies a distinctive place among somatic images. The eye is the organ through which living beings humans included perceive the world. It serves not only as a means of sight, but also as an instrument for understanding and interpreting reality. Through the eye, a person observes the surrounding world the beauties and calamities of nature, social relations, and the consequences of causes and effects; by analyzing these perceptions, human consciousness and cognition develop. Thus, the eye is regarded as one of the most vital organs in human life [1].

For these very qualities, the image of the eye has held an important position in literature the art of words since ancient times. From folklore to classical literature, including Sufi writings, one can observe that the eye symbol has consistently been one of the leading poetic images [2]. As the prominent Navoiy scholar Ibrohim Haqqul notes: "The truths that accompany a person from birth to death have been expressed through the word eye a fact that cannot fail to astonish. For instance, the phrase 'his eyes opened' describes the birth of a child, while 'to close one's eyes to the world' signifies death."

Indeed, as the scholar rightly emphasizes, fundamental human realities are conveyed through the concept of the eye. For this reason, the eye symbol carries considerable weight in literature, particularly in poetry. This phenomenon is also characteristic of the great poet Alisher Navoiy's works. For example, let us examine the opening couplet of the 57th ghazal included in the G'aroyib as-sig'ar divan [3]:

Xasta jonim za'fin angla, ko'nglum afg'onin ko'rub,  
So'rma ko'nglum yarasin, fahm et ko'zum qonin ko'rub.

The content of the verse reflects the lament of a lyrical protagonist who suffers in separation from the beloved: "Seeing the lamentations of my heart, understand the frailty of my ailing soul; do not ask what has wounded my heart perceive it by beholding the blood of my eyes." It becomes clear that the expression "the blood of my eyes" is essential for fully conveying the lover's afflicted state. Had the poet used a different expression, the couplet would not have achieved such elegance and perfection [4]. The image of blood flowing from the eyes symbolizes both the most severe form of suffering and the deep anguish of a lover burning in the fire of separation. Such exquisite and vivid artistic depictions frequently appear throughout Alisher Navoiy's poetry [5].

## 2. Materials and Methods

In classical poetry, the symbol of the eye is also expressed through the words "ayn," "chashm," "basirat," and "nargis." For instance, in the Concise Explanatory Dictionary of Classical Literary Terms, published in 2021 by the "Ilimpaz" publishing house in Nukus, the term ayn is defined as follows:

"Ayn Eye, gaze, pupil of the eye; spring, fountain. In Sufi literature, it denotes the light of divine attributes, the essence of the heart, or the form and manifestation of a mystical phenomenon within divine knowledge." For example, in the "Avvalgi munojot" (First Supplication) section of Alisher Navoiy's Hayrat ul-abror, the following couplet appears:

Avval o'zung, oxir-u mobayn o'zung,  
Borchag'a xoliq, borig'a ayn o'zung.

In the first hemistich of the couplet, the poet addresses the Creator, declaring that the beginning the origin of everything, as well as its end and its essence, is none other than Him. In the second hemistich, it is emphasized that God, being the creator of all things, is also the "eye" that beholds all that He has created. In this couplet, the poet employs the figure of antithesis through the contrasting words "beginning" and "end."

Since ancient times, human beings have lived with an innate inclination toward beauty. For this reason, every person born with physical attractiveness whether male or female naturally draws the attention of others. Looking upon a beautiful person fills the human heart with delight and intensifies the desire to approach them. Of course, each nation and culture perceives beauty in its own way, in which facial structure plays an important role. For some peoples, blue eyes represent the ideal of beauty, while for others, black eyes fulfill that role. Indeed, the first marker of human beauty is considered to be the eyes.

Among Eastern peoples, black eyes are traditionally regarded as a sign of beauty, and the shape of the eyes is given particular attention. For this reason, in both everyday speech and literary language, the word "eyes" is frequently used together with its descriptive qualifiers: black eyes, hazel eyes, almond-shaped eyes, and so on.

In both folklore and written literature, when describing outward beauty, special emphasis is invariably placed on the eyes of the one being praised. Likewise, in Navoiy's poetic corpus whether in his love ghazals, mystical ghazals, or his rendon (hedonistic, carefree) ghazals the somatic symbol of the eye is widely and actively employed. For instance, let us examine the following couplet from the ghazal beginning with the matla "Ko'nglum o'rtansun agar g'ayringg'a parvo aylasa," included as number 23 in the G'aroyib us-sig'ar divan:

O'zgalar husnin tamosho aylasam chiqsun ko'zum,  
O'zga bir ko'z hamki husnungni tamosho aylasa.

In this couplet, the expression of the lover's fidelity to the beloved is foregrounded. The lover conveys his unwavering loyalty through the symbol of the eye more precisely, through the widely used folk expression "ko'zi chiqmoq" ("to lose one's eyesight / for one's eyes to be put out"). He declares that if he were to gaze upon the beauty of another, his eyes should be struck blind; likewise, any eyes that dare to behold the beauty of his beloved should suffer the same fate. In this way, the poet emphasizes both the lover's absolute devotion and the sacredness of the beloved's beauty.

The couplet also employs the poetic device of tanosib (also spelled tanosub), which is based on the use of semantically related or mutually complementary words. In this case, the harmonious relationship among the words husn (beauty), ko'z (eye), and tamosho aylamak (to behold, to gaze upon) creates the aesthetic balance that defines the device.

O'zgalar **husnin tamosho aylasam** chiqsun ko'zum,  
O'zga bir ko'z hamki **husnungni tamosho aylasa**.

In this couplet, the poet employs several forms of the rhetorical device known as repetition (takrīr), including one subtype based on the recurrence of a single word in two places within the couplet tasdīr. This device itself is divided into several categories depending on the position of the repeated word.

It should be emphasized that the presence of more than one type of tasdīr in the above couplet is evidence of the poet's exceptional artistic mastery. The repetition of the word appearing at the beginning of the first hemistich again at the beginning of the second hemistich gives rise to this rhetorical figure:

**O'zgalar** husnin tamosho aylasam chiqsun ko'zum,  
**O'zga** bir ko'z hamki husnungni tamosho aylasa.

The couplet also contains another subtype of tasdīr, namely the form in which a word occurring in the middle of the first hemistich is repeated at the end of the second hemistich:

O'zgalar husnin tamosho aylasam chiqsun ko'zum,  
O'zga bir ko'z hamki husnungni tamosho aylasa.

The couplet also employs the rhetorical device of tardī (inverse repetition), a form of repetition in which two words or phrases are first presented in a specific order and then repeated with their positions reversed.

The poet's use of this device can be observed in the way the phrase husnin tamosho aylasam ("if I behold the beauty") in the first hemistich and the word ko'zum ("my eye"), with certain syntactic affixes removed, are repeated in reversed order in the second hemistich.

O'zgalar husnin tamosho aylasam chiqsun ko'zum,  
O'zga bir ko'z hamki husnungni tamosho aylasa.

At this point, it is important to note that the word ko'z ("eye") used in both hemistiches of the couplet is not identical in meaning. In the first hemistich, ko'z is employed in its literal sense, whereas in the second hemistich it is used figuratively. This represents a synecdoche a type of semantic transfer in which a part is used to denote the whole or the whole is used to denote a part. Here, the word ko'z does not signify the physical eye itself, but rather refers metonymically to the entire person to whom the eye belongs.

### 3. Results and Discussion

According to scholarly sources, the term synecdoche derives from the Greek synecdoche, meaning "to give a relation," and is a form of semantic transfer based on the part-whole relationship. In this sense, it is considered a subtype of metonymy; the meaning is transferred through relational association, often interpreted as a quantitative form of metonymy [6].

In Navoiy's ghazals, the somatic symbol of the eye is employed not only to depict the beauty of the beloved but also to express the psychological state of the lyrical hero the lover [7]. The grammatical affixes attached to the word play an important role in this function. For example, in the ghazal beginning with the matla "Vahki, hajrinda jahon bo'ldi ko'zumga zulumat," included as number 83 in the G'aroyib us-sig'ar divan, we observe this usage [8]:

Vahki, hajrinda jahon bo'ldi **ko'zumga** zulumat

Kim, borur yayqalib-u qaytmas ul obi hayot.

In this couplet, the psychological state of the lover, suffering from the pangs of separation from the beloved, is depicted: the beloved's absence torments the lover so intensely that even the world appears dark to his eyes [9]. The poet skillfully employs the folk expression "the world appears dark to one's eyes" to convey extreme mental anguish and emotional distress. It is evident that the somatic symbol of the eye plays a crucial role in accurately and vividly expressing the lover's inner turmoil [10].

Similarly, in the ghazal beginning with the matla "Lolazor ermashki, ohimdin jahong'a tushti o't," included as number 86 in the divan, the lover's eyes are again mentioned:

O'qlaring ko'nglumga tushkach kuydi ham **ko'z**, ham badan

Kim, kuyar o'l-u qurug' chun naysitong'a tushti o't.

In this couplet, it is depicted that when the beloved's "arrows" her eyelashes strike the heart of the lyrical hero, both his eyes and his body burn with passion. To enable the reader to fully imagine this state, the poet skillfully employs the art of irsoli masal (incorporation of proverbs or folk sayings), citing in the second hemistich the proverb: "If fire falls upon the forest, both the wet and the dry alike will burn." In addition, by using the word "arrows" instead of "eyelashes," the poet applies the device of metaphor (istiora), further enhancing the expressive power of the imagery [11].

Similarly, in the ghazal beginning with the matla "Ko'ngullar nolasi zulfung kamandin nogahon ko'rgach," included as number 96 in the divan, the psychological state of the lover is also vividly conveyed through the somatic symbol of the eye:

Ko'ngul chokin **ko'zumda** ashki rangin elga fosh etti,

Balig' zaxmini fahm aylarlar el daryoda qon ko'rgach.

No matter how much the lyrical hero suffers in the separation from his beloved, he strives to conceal his pain from everyone. However, the bloody tears flowing from his eyes reveal this secret to others. The poet masterfully employs the art of tamsil (allegorical illustration) to express the lover's emotional state in a unique way: just as a fish perceives illness upon seeing blood in the river, so too do the bloody tears of the lover betray to the world the secret of his concealed love [12].

Additionally, the couplet demonstrates the use of tanosib (semantic harmony and correspondence) through the pairing of words such as ko'z-ashk (eye-tear), baliq-daryo (fish-river), and zaxm-qon (wound-blood).

This idea is further developed in the following couplet of the ghazal:

**Ko'zum** qon yosh to'kar, netib ko'ngul zaxmin yashuraykim,

Toparlar yerda zaxmin sayd qonidin nishon ko'rgach.

The lyrical hero, whose eyes are streaming with bloody tears, is unable to hide the wound in his heart caused by the beloved's separation. He is alarmed because, just as hunters can track prey by the blood it leaves on the ground, others could discover his secret sorrow by the blood from his eyes. In this couplet, the art of tamsil (allegorical illustration) predominates. At the same time, the poet extensively employs tanosib (semantic harmony) through word pairings such as ko'z-yosh to'kmoq (eye tear to shed), qon zaxm (blood wound), and sayd qon (hunter blood) [13].

In Alisher Navoiy's ghazals, the description of the beloved's eyes also carries particular weight. For example, such instances can be found in the ghazal beginning with the matla "Ey orazi nasrin, sochi sunbul, qadi shamshod," included as number 118 in the G'aroyib us-sig'ar divan:

Sayd o'ldi ko'ngul ko'zlariga, vah, qutulurmu  
Bir qushki, aning qasdida bo'lg'ay iki sayyod.

In the couplet, the lyrical hero conveys that his heart has become prey to the beloved's eyes, illustrating this with the analogy of a bird unable to escape two hunters. While the words sayd (hunter), qush (bird), and sayyod (hunter) create a tanosib (semantic harmony), the dominant rhetorical device in the verse is husn-i ta'lil (justified beauty or poetic reasoning).

According to scholarly sources, husn-i ta'lil refers to a spiritual or aesthetic device in which a poet substantiates an idea with a seemingly convincing but non-literal argument. The reasoning does not constitute a real cause for the assertion; rather, it serves as a poetic proof to support the poet's claim. The evidence is connected metaphorically or metonymically to the poet's thought, reinforcing the idea without being a literal justification [14].

In this couplet, the lyrical hero's heart is captivated by the beloved's eyes, becoming their prey. He demonstrates this by likening himself to a bird unable to escape the grasp of two hunters the eyes of the beloved. Through this metaphor, the poet reveals the lover's emotional surrender and obsession with the beloved's gaze [15].

Furthermore, the eye, like the eyebrow, ear, or hand, is a paired organ, a fact not overlooked by poets. In the above couplet, the beloved's two eyes are likened to two hunters; in the following couplet, they are depicted as two intoxicated infidels:

Ko'ngulni ko'zlarig oldi, ne tong, iki bo'lmak  
Bir ahli dinni iki mast kofir etsa asir. (G'S, 145-g'azal)

Baytda lirik qahramon ko'nglini ma'shuqaning ko'zlari olganini xuddi bir dindor odamni ikki mast kofir asir qilib olganiga o'xshatyapti. Ma'shuqaning ko'zlari oshiqni har ko'yga solgani, hatto dindan chiqarishgacha olib borgani uchun ikki mast kofirga o'xshatilgan.

Hazrat Navoiyy ko'zga kofir sifati bilan birga yana nomusulmon deb ham ta'rif beradi:

Har dam o'rtarlar meni o'tlug' iki kofir ko'zung,  
Necha kuygaymen ul ikki nomusulmon o'tig'a. [G'S, 565-g'azal]

In this couplet, the lyrical hero's complaint about the beloved's eyes, experienced during the pain of separation, is expressed: the two infidel (kofir) eyes of the beloved constantly surround the lover, and he is bewildered by how many more times he will burn in their fire [16]. The use of tanosib (semantic correspondence, as in o't-kuymoq / "fire-to burn") and istiora (metaphor, as in nomusulmon / "infidel") enhances the artistic value of the couplet, enriching its expressive and aesthetic impact.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the symbol of the eye occupies a central and multifaceted role in Alisher Navoiy's lyric poetry. Through careful analysis of his ghazals, it becomes evident that Navoiy employed the somatic image of the eye not only as a literal organ of sight but also as a rich vehicle for conveying spiritual, emotional, and aesthetic meaning. By utilizing synonyms such as "ayn," "chashm," "basirat," and "nargis," and incorporating both literal and figurative uses, Navoiy was able to express a wide spectrum of human experiences, ranging from the lover's devotion and suffering to the subtleties of beauty and perception. The study has shown that Navoiy masterfully

employed a variety of rhetorical and artistic devices including tanosib (semantic harmony), takrīr (repetition), tasdīr, tardī (inverse repetition), istiora (metaphor), tamsil (allegory), and husn-i ta'lil (justified beauty) to heighten the expressive and aesthetic impact of the eye symbol. The use of synecdoche further demonstrates his sophisticated approach to semantic transfer, allowing a single somatic element to signify broader psychological, spiritual, or social realities.

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