

“FARHAD AND SHIRIN” – A SUFI POEM IN ALISHER NAVOIY’S KHAMSA

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Farhad and Shirin is the second poem in the great thinker and poet Alisher Navoiy's Khamsa, completed in 1484. Before Navoiy, this work was widely known in the form of Khosrow and Shirin. The hero on whom the legend is based, Khosrow Parvez, was in fact a historical figure; he ascended the throne of Iran in 590 AD and in 628 was killed by his son Sheruya. According to the Navoi scholar Dilnavoz Yusupova, his love for Shirin—an Aramean or Armenian girl—is recorded in many historical sources. In particular, Navoiy himself provides information about Khosrow Parvez in the section dedicated to the history of the Sasanids in his work *Tarixi muluki Ajam*. However, in literary tradition, the story of Khosrow and Shirin was first mentioned by Firdausi in his epic *Shahnameh*. Later, the Azerbaijani thinker Nizami Ganjavi turned it into a separate romantic-adventurous poem. His *Khosrow and Shirin* was translated into Turkic by Qutb Khorezmi in 1340.

For his own poem *Farhad and Shirin*, Navoiy elevates Farhad—previously interpreted as a secondary figure in earlier works—to the level of the main protagonist. In fact, the depiction of Farhad as a central figure in classical literature first appeared in the 14th century in Azerbaijan, in the poem *Farhadnama* (1369), written in Persian-Tajik by Orif Ardabili. However, the events described in that work differ entirely from those in Navoiy's poem.

Alisher Navoiy's primary purpose in composing this poem was to sing of the Sufi concept of :

Bu rangin sahfa bilkim, dard bog‘i,

Ayon har lolasida ishq dog‘i.

Through these lines, the poet expresses that the main purpose of the epic is to depict the adventures of a seeker devoted to the path of divine love — the *sālik* (symbolized by Farhad as a lover who enters the way of the *tariqat*).

Alisher Navoiy's *Farhad and Shirin* consists of 54 chapters and 5,782 couplets. The work begins with a traditional *hamd* — praise to Allah. The fourth chapter of the poem is dedicated to the praise of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the initial chapters, the poet also glorifies his predecessors — Nizami, Khusraw Dehlavi and Abdurahman Jami.

Emas oson bu maydon ichra turmoq,

**Nizomiy panjasig'a panja urmoq.
Tutaykim qildi o'z changini ranja,
Nekim urdi aning changiga panja.
Kerak sher ollida ham sheri jangi,
Agar sher o'lmasa, bori palangi.**

The main part of the epic begins with Chapter 12. The storyline opens with the depiction of the Chinese Khan's childlessness and the sorrow this brings him. At last, his prayers are accepted, and God grants him a son. Navoiy describes every stage of the child's life in detail — from his birth to his coming of age.

**Anga farzona Farhod ism qo'ydi,
Hurufi ma'xazin besh qism qo'ydi.
Firoqu rashku hajru oh ila dard,
Biror harf ibtidodin aylabon fard...
Jahonda qolmadi ul yetmagan ilm,
Bilib tahqiqini kasb etmagan ilm.**

As Farhad grew older, he became increasingly sorrowful and melancholy. Seeing this, the Khan father offered him the throne, hoping to cure his son's inner pain. In reality, however, the prince's condition was not worldly, but rather a sign of divine love. Through this scene, Navoiy illustrates the difference between those inflamed with divine love and those attached to the fleeting world.

Farhad refuses to ascend the throne and, seeking experience, begins by exploring the royal treasury. There, he discovers a mysterious chest hidden behind a secret veil, containing an enchanted mirror. Unable to unlock the mirror's mystery, Farhad sets out for Greece to meet Socrates.

The path to Socrates is shown to him by a wise scholar named Suhaylo. According to the book *Tasavvuf* by the Sufi scholar Najmiddin Komilov, Suhaylo is Farhad's first spiritual guide on the path of tariqat. Suhaylo informs Farhad of the obstacles he must overcome — the dragon and the demon. In Sufism, the dragon symbolizes the nafs (ego), while the demon represents earthly power. To defeat the dragon, Suhaylo gives Farhad salamander oil. The salamander, a creature that lives within fire, symbolizes love. When Farhad applies the oil to his body, the dragon's flames cannot harm him — meaning the fire of love extinguishes the fire of ego.

Likewise, the lion and the iron statue that Farhad later encounters also possess symbolic meanings: the lion represents anger — a seeker on the path of divine love must be free from anger.

The iron statue signifies the false, material world, for a true seeker must not attach his heart to worldly desires.

Thus, the disciple Farhad travels to the presence of his master Socrates. According to Najmiddin Komilov, Socrates is a *pir-i komil* — a perfect spiritual guide — without whom the seeker, Farhad, cannot reach his ultimate purpose. The master Socrates holds private conversations with his disciple Farhad, honoring him as his own son, for in Farhad he sees the continuation of his spiritual path. He then says to Farhad:

**Chu mahbubi haqiqiy uldurur ul,
Aning vasli sori qat' aylamak yo'l...
Bu yo'l ichraki behad dardu g'amdur,
Uzoq tortar, vale ikki qadamdur.
Kim ul ikki qadamning qat'i ming yil,
Kishi ursa qadam mumkin emas bil.
Biri o'z lukni qilmoq bo'ldi foniy,
Yana bir dog'i topmoq bo'ldi oni.**

According to Socrates, the path to Truth (Haq) is as close as two steps, yet to take those two steps may require a thousand years of struggle. The first step is to renounce the self, and the second is to regain the true self — for without abandoning the ego, one cannot attain the pure, divine identity.

On his journey to Socrates, Farhad passes through the stations of the *tariqat*, and through the guidance of the perfect master, he begins to understand the essence of divine love. When he returns to China, the mirror reveals not only Shirin, but also himself, along with the future events that he must one day experience.

One of the worldly figures deprived of divine love in the epic is King Khosrow. While describing the dialogue between these two characters, Navoiy highlights the distinction between two kinds of love — ordinary, worldly love and sacred, divine love.

**Dedi: qaydinsen ey majnuni gumroh?
Dedi: majnun vatandin qayda ogoh?
Dedi: nedur senga olamda pesha?
Dedi: ishq ichra majnunlik hamisha.
Dedi: bu ishdin o'lmas kasb ro'zi,
Dedi: kasb o'lsa basdur ishq so'zi.
Dedikim: ishq o'tidin de fasona,**

Dedi: kuymay kishi topmas nishona.
Dedikim: kuymakingni ayla ma'lum,
Dedi: andin erur jox ahli mahrum.
Dedi: qay chog'din o'ldung ishq aro mast,
Dedi: ruh ermas erdi tanga payvast.
Dedi: bu ishqdin inkor qilg'il,
Dedi: bu so'zdin istig'for qilg'il.
Dedi: oshiqqa ne ish ko'p qilar zo'r,
Dedi: furqat tuni ishq balosho'r.
Dedi: ishq ahlining nedur hayoti,
Dedi: vasl ichra jonon iltifoti.
Dedikim: dilbaringning de sifotin,
Dedi: til g'ayratidin tutmon otin...
Dedi: ishq ichra qatling hukm etkum,
Dedi: ishqida maqsudimga yetkum!

Alisher Navoiy tilidan Farhod o'limi munosabati bilan aytilgan

Vujudin o'rta ul so'zi gudozi

Haqiqatqa badal bo'ldi majozi.

This confession can be regarded as a spiritual conclusion about the lovers who have attained the Divine Beauty. In the following verses, we can observe how the poet further strengthens his idea and clarifies the views expressed through the figure of Farhad.

Baqo shahrida sultonliqqa yetti,

Haqiqat mulkida xonliqqa yetti.

In conclusion, it can be said that through the image of Farhad, Navoiy created the figure of a true Lover — a devotee of God. Thus, Farhad and Shirin may rightfully be included among the poet's Sufi works.

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