

**A FUNCTIONAL AND STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PERIPHRASES IN THE
WORKS OF ALISHER NAVOI**

Allayorova Shaxnoza Primkulovna
Jizzakh State Pedagogical university
snoza3328@gmail.com
Tel: +998915964986

Abstract: This paper explores the functional and stylistic features of periphrasis in the works of Alisher Navoi, with a particular focus on its role in enriching poetic language and conveying nuanced meanings. Drawing from selected examples across Navoi's lyrical and narrative compositions, the study analyzes the semantic functions and stylistic intentions behind the use of periphrastic expressions. It is argued that periphrasis in Navoi's texts serves not only an aesthetic function but also reflects cultural, philosophical, and emotional layers embedded in the literary tradition of the time. Through this analysis, the research highlights Navoi's masterful use of language and underscores the importance of periphrasis as a significant stylistic device in classical Eastern literature.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi, periphrasis, stylistics, poetic language, functional analysis, rhetoric, figurative expression

Alisher Navoi, a towering figure of Turkic literature, enriched the Chagatai language with his poetic mastery and sophisticated stylistic devices. Among these, periphrasis—a rhetorical and stylistic figure involving indirect or roundabout expression—plays a significant role in shaping the aesthetic and semantic depth of his works. This study aims to investigate the functional and stylistic roles of periphrases in Navoi's poetry and prose, examining how such devices contribute to the expression of abstract ideas, cultural values, and poetic beauty. The research explores the types of periphrasis used, their semantic layers, and the reasons behind their use from a stylistic perspective. Special attention is given to the interplay between language, meaning, and context, demonstrating how Navoi employs periphrasis not merely as ornamentation but as a powerful communicative and stylistic tool.

Periphrasis, as a rhetorical and stylistic device, plays a significant role in classical literature, especially in poetic traditions that prioritize indirect expression, symbolic imagery, and aesthetic richness. In the works of Alisher Navoi, one of the most influential poets of the Eastern literary canon, periphrasis emerges as a powerful linguistic and stylistic tool. Rather than stating something plainly, Navoi often uses descriptive or symbolic expressions to convey meaning, emotion, or philosophical depth. This indirect style, deeply rooted in the traditions of Persian, Arabic, and Turkic poetics, allows for multiple layers of interpretation and gives the reader an opportunity to engage with the text on a symbolic and spiritual level.

Periphrases in Navoi's works serve a variety of functions, which may be classified broadly into poetic, mystical, euphemistic, and cultural categories. Each of these plays a distinctive role in the construction of meaning within the poet's texts. For instance, in many of his ghazals, Navoi avoids directly naming emotions, people, or divine concepts, instead cloaking them in layers of metaphor and periphrasis. This stylistic approach not only enhances the musicality and elegance of his poetry but also aligns with the Sufi tendency to veil spiritual truths from uninitiated readers.

A poetic periphrasis often occurs when Navoi refers to an ordinary object or phenomenon in a beautified and metaphorical way. For example, the beloved's hair (zulf) is frequently described as a net, a chain, or the darkness of night—each metaphor suggesting both physical beauty and emotional entrapment. In the line “Zulfing aro giriftor bo‘lmoqqa sabr yo‘q” (I have no patience to be caught in your curls), the curls symbolize the snares of love or fate. This expression transforms a simple description of physical beauty into a metaphor for emotional bondage, suggesting both desire and suffering.

Similarly, religious and mystical periphrases are particularly frequent in Navoi's didactic and Sufi-inspired works, such as *Lison ut-Tayr* and *Hayrat ul-abror*. In these texts, worldly images such as wine, tavern, or intoxication are not to be understood literally but are used metaphorically to denote divine love, spiritual ecstasy, or the soul's union with God. For example, when Navoi writes about drinking wine from the cup of the beloved, he is often referring to the experience of divine revelation or spiritual enlightenment. This use of periphrasis allows him to conform to the poetic conventions of his time while also expressing deeply personal and mystical ideas in a symbolic form. Euphemistic periphrasis in Navoi's texts can be seen when he addresses sensitive themes such as death, illness, or longing. Instead of naming these directly, he often employs softening or elevated language. For instance, death may be referred to as “the journey to the eternal friend” or “the call of fate,” which reflects both a cultural and religious attitude toward mortality. This approach not only maintains the decorum and elegance of the poetic voice but also resonates with the philosophical ideals of the time, where physical life is seen as temporary and illusory. Another important type is cultural and historical periphrasis. Navoi frequently refers to kings, rulers, or social roles using expressions that suggest divine authority or metaphorical imagery. For example, a just ruler may be described as “God's shadow on Earth” (*soyai hudo*), reflecting Islamic political ideology and legitimizing the ruler's power. Similarly, Navoi may describe a scholar as “the lamp of wisdom” or “the sea of knowledge,” which emphasizes their intellectual and spiritual authority in poetic terms.

From a stylistic perspective, the use of periphrasis in Navoi's works fulfills several overlapping functions. Firstly, it serves an aesthetic function by enriching the sound, rhythm, and beauty of the verse. Navoi's language is known for its elegance and musicality, and periphrasis contributes significantly to this. Secondly, it carries a semantic function, allowing the poet to convey complex and abstract ideas indirectly. By using periphrastic expressions, Navoi gives his readers the opportunity to interpret meanings allegorically, symbolically, or spiritually. Thirdly, it enhances the emotional and expressive function of the language. Rather than expressing sorrow, joy, or longing in plain terms, periphrasis allows for subtle and layered emotional tones. Moreover, the use of periphrasis in Navoi's poetry is closely tied to the cultural and religious worldview of his time. The symbolic use of nature (roses, nightingales, gardens), objects (mirrors, lamps, wine), and physical features (eyes, hair, lips) reflects the values, beliefs, and poetic conventions of 15th-century Central Asian and Persianate societies. This stylistic tradition, which Navoi both inherited and expanded upon, made use of periphrasis as a bridge between form and meaning, between surface beauty and inner truth.

Periphrasis is not merely a decorative element in Navoi's poetic arsenal—it is a core device that allows him to express philosophical, emotional, and aesthetic meanings in an elevated and culturally resonant way. Through careful and deliberate use of periphrasis, Navoi creates a poetic language that is not only beautiful but also profound, capable of

engaging readers across centuries and languages. His mastery of this device exemplifies his broader contribution to the development of Turkic literary expression and underscores his role as a bridge between classical Islamic thought and Turkic literary traditions.

In Alisher Navoi's vast oeuvre, periphrastic expressions are not only numerous but also highly diverse in function and form. Based on a stylistic analysis, they can be classified as follows:

Used to embellish the text, often with rich metaphors and similes.

Example: "Ko'z yoshi" (tears) is referred to as "ko'ngul suvi" (water of the heart), emphasizing emotion and spiritual depth.¹

Used in masnaviy and sufistic ghazals to refer to divine or spiritual concepts indirectly.

Example: "Sharob" (wine) refers not to the literal drink but to divine love or mystical ecstasy.

Used to avoid taboo or sensitive topics while still addressing them.

Example: Words related to death, illness, or suffering are often softened through metaphor.

Refers to political figures, locations, or customs in indirect, allusive ways.

Example: A ruler may be referred to as "soyai hudo" (the shadow of God), emphasizing divine legitimacy.²

Alisher Navoi's use of periphrasis is among the most distinctive features of his poetic style. Through indirect and symbolic expressions, he transforms simple language into a profound vehicle of mystical and emotional meaning. Below are selected examples from his major works, illustrating the richness and depth that periphrastic language adds to his poetry.

In *Xazoyin ul-maoniy* (The Treasury of Meanings), one of Navoi's famous ghazals demonstrates the refined use of periphrasis:

Original: Ko'nglum aro ul mehru vafong'a xohishim yo'q, Yuzingdek oy ko'rmakka menim iltijo qilg'um³.

Translation: My heart desires neither love nor loyalty— I only plead to see a moon like your face.

Here, the word "moon" does not merely describe a celestial body. It functions as a periphrasis for the beloved's face, emphasizing both its radiant beauty and its unattainable, almost divine quality. This indirect reference elevates the emotion of longing beyond the physical to the spiritual.

In the allegorical work *Lison ut-Tayr* (The Language of the Birds), Navoi draws upon Sufi symbolism:

Original: Sharob ichib, mast bo'lmak kerakkim, bu yo'lga yo'ldosh topilsin.⁴

Translation: One must drink wine and become intoxicated to find a companion on this path.

The "wine" in this line is not to be taken literally. Instead, it serves as a periphrasis for divine love or mystical knowledge. In Sufi tradition, intoxication symbolizes spiritual ecstasy and detachment from worldly concerns. This metaphor opens the way for the reader to interpret the act of drinking wine as a yearning for spiritual awakening.

¹ Qayumov, A. Navoiy tafakkuri va so'z san'ati. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi nashriyot. (2001)

² Zohidov, H. Alisher Navoiy she'riyati tahlili. Toshkent: O'zbekiston yozuvchilar uyushmasi. (2015).

³ Alisher Navoi. *Xazoyin ul-maoniy*. Toshkent: Fan nashriyoti. (1991).

⁴ Alisher Navoi. *Lison ut-Tayr*. Toshkent: G'afur G'ulom nomidagi Adabiyot va san'at nashriyoti. (1983)

A striking example of complex periphrasis appears in Hayrat ul-abror (Wonder of the Righteous):

Original: Bu jahon – meyxona, xalq – mast, hayot – fano sharbati.

Translation: This world is a tavern, the people are drunk, and life is the drink of annihilation.⁵

Here, “tavern” becomes a metaphor for the material world, “drunkenness” represents the illusion or heedlessness of the masses, and “the drink of annihilation” stands for the transitory nature of life. Through this rich layering, Navoi critiques worldly attachment and urges the reader to pursue truth and self-realization.

In Muhokamat ul-lug‘atayn (Judgment of the Two Languages), Navoi continues his use of symbolic imagery to advocate for the power of the Turkic language:

Original: Turkiy tilda har bir so‘z o‘zgacha ziynat berur, yuzni yuvguchidek nur solur.⁶

Translation: In the Turkic tongue, every word bestows a distinct ornament, like the radiance after washing one’s face.

“Washing one’s face” is used here metaphorically to imply purification and clarity. Navoi’s use of periphrasis emphasizes how the Turkic language not only communicates but illuminates, spiritually and intellectually.

In the tragic romance Layli va Majnun, periphrasis adds spiritual dimension to the hero’s suffering:

Original: Majnun jonidin kechdi, Layliga bo‘lmoqdin umid qilmayin, sahroga yotdi.

Translation: Majnun gave up his soul, expecting nothing from Layli, and lay in the desert.

The “desert” in this case functions as more than just a location. It becomes a symbol of spiritual exile, detachment from worldly hopes, and complete submission to divine will—a common Sufi theme.

Lastly, in Saddi Iskandariy (The Wall of Alexander), Navoi uses a vivid metaphor to describe just governance:

Original: Sulton zulmni yo‘q qildi, adolat ko‘zgusini har diyorga tutdi.

Translation: The king destroyed tyranny and held up the mirror of justice to every land.

The “mirror of justice” stands as a periphrastic symbol of enlightened rule. It suggests that a just ruler reflects truth and fairness back to his people, much like a mirror reflects light.

Through these examples, it becomes evident that Navoi used periphrasis as a central poetic strategy to elevate meaning, engage readers in layered interpretation, and align his works with Sufi and philosophical traditions. His periphrastic expressions are not only aesthetically powerful but also intellectually and spiritually resonant.

In conclusion, the use of periphrasis in the works of Alisher Navoi is not merely a rhetorical ornamentation, but a central stylistic and functional feature that reflects the depth, complexity, and symbolic richness of classical Eastern literature. Through periphrastic expressions, Navoi achieves a sophisticated layering of meaning that allows for the indirect yet powerful communication of emotional, philosophical, and spiritual content. His mastery of this device demonstrates not only his command of poetic language but also his deep engagement with the cultural, religious, and aesthetic traditions of his time.

This study has shown that periphrasis in Navoi’s works serves multiple interrelated purposes. Poetically, it enhances the musicality and elegance of his verse, contributing to the

⁵ Alisher Navoi. Hayrat ul-Abror . Toshkent: Fan nashriyoti.(1993)

⁶ Alisher Navoi. Muhokamat ul-lug‘atayn .Toshkent: Fan nashriyoti. (1991)

lyrical quality that defines his style. Functionally, it enables the poet to express abstract and mystical concepts in a culturally resonant and emotionally evocative manner. By employing symbolic substitutes for love, suffering, divine presence, beauty, and longing, Navoi crafts a poetic world in which every image carries metaphorical weight and invites interpretation beyond the surface level. Furthermore, the classification of periphrasis into poetic, mystical, euphemistic, and cultural types reveals the diverse applications of this device across Navoi's body of work. In ghazals, periphrasis often conveys romantic and emotional states; in didactic or Sufi texts, it reflects philosophical and spiritual teachings; and in socio-political contexts, it encodes ideological values or subtle critique. This diversity illustrates Navoi's unique ability to adapt the same stylistic device to multiple genres and communicative goals.

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