



THE ROLE OF FEMALE POETS IN THE HISTORY OF UZBEK LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article discusses some of the outstanding representatives of female poets in the history of Uzbek literature — Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna. In the 18th–19th centuries, through their creative works, they made a significant contribution to enriching Uzbek classical poetry and became subjects of discussion and interpretation throughout their era and beyond. Their poetry vividly reflects their artistic thinking, inner emotions, social status, and their unique perspective on noble values such as love, loyalty, and humanism. The article emphasizes their individual creative directions and the aesthetic traditions they established in Uzbek literature.

Keywords: Nodira, Uvaysiy, Mahzuna, Uzbek classical poetry, female poets, lyrical love poetry, moral and spiritual interpretation, riddles.

Introduction

The role of female poets in the history of Uzbek literature is invaluable. Although for centuries the literary process was primarily associated with male poets, there were also many female creators who made a remarkable contribution to the development of Uzbek classical poetry. Especially in the 18th–19th centuries, poets such as Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna played an important role not only in their own time but also in subsequent literary periods. Their poetic legacy holds great significance in reflecting the artistic worldview of women, their spiritual and emotional experiences, and their place in society.



Nodira (Mohlaroyim) primarily worked in the lyrical genre. Her poetry embodies themes of love, loyalty, human virtues, as well as reflections on the fate of her homeland and people. In her poems, the inner world of women, along with the pains of love and separation, are expressed with sincerity and delicacy. Her ghazals continue the finest traditions of classical literature while introducing a distinct feminine sensibility. Nodira's artistic world is vast, characterized by subtlety and deep lyricism.

Uvaysiy stands out in Uzbek classical poetry as one of the leading female poets known for her riddles and enigmatic verses. She became famous for her meaningful poetic riddles and wordplays. Her creativity emphasizes intellectual reflection, using mysterious imagery to conceal and reveal meaning. Uvaysiy's riddles elevated the poetic form of the riddle genre in Uzbek literature, demonstrating the uniqueness of her artistic mind as a woman poet.

Mahzuna, on the other hand, was one of the prominent representatives of the Kokand literary circle. Her poetry often depicts social life, human relationships, and the emotional and societal role of women. Mahzuna's verses are rich in lyricism and address moral and spiritual issues. She also engaged in poetic exchanges (mushaira) with other poets such as Fazliy, which enhanced her literary reputation.

In general, there are several common features in the works of Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna.

First, all of them continued the literary and aesthetic traditions of their time while introducing the sensitivity and emotional world of women into poetry.

Second, their works focus on themes such as love, loyalty, moral and spiritual values, and the praise of beauty.

Third, within the framework of classical literary traditions, they developed their own poetic styles, introducing new artistic directions into Uzbek poetry.

Thus, the creative legacies of Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna not only demonstrate the high artistic potential of female poets in Uzbek literature but also mark a distinct stage in the development of Uzbek poetry.

Nodira (Mohlaroyim, 1792–1842) was one of the major figures of 19th-century Uzbek literature and made an immense contribution to Uzbek classical poetry. She was the wife of Umar Khan, the ruler of the Kokand Khanate (who wrote



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poetry under the pen name Amiriy). As a stateswoman, patron, and poet, she played an active role in her era. Nodira directly influenced the development of many poets and writers in the Kokand literary circle and founded her own literary salon. The poetic legacy of the poetess is multifaceted, and her ghazals, muxammases, and other lyrical works have been preserved to this day. Three main directions can be distinguished in Nodira's creative output:

Romantic (Love) Lyricism – Many of the poetess's ghazals are devoted to human love, feelings of affection, the pain of separation, and the praise of the beloved. She expressed the theme of love, developed in classical literature, with genuine feminine sincerity. In Nodira's poems, love is portrayed as a force that elevates and spiritually purifies a person.

Moral and Ethical Direction – Nodira's works express such concepts as patience, loyalty, humanism, the pursuit of beauty, and perfection through deep philosophical and artistic interpretation. She often calls upon humankind to do good and glorifies moral purity.

Social and Enlightenment Themes – The poetess did not overlook the concerns and troubles of her people, nor the fate of her homeland and society. Some of her poems reflect ideas of justice, honesty, and care for the prosperity of the nation. The roles of Amiriy (Umar Khan) and Uvaysiy in Nodira's artistic development are invaluable. Her creative dialogue and poetic exchanges with Amiriy helped her refine her literary taste and artistic mastery. Umar Khan's own literary activity served as one of her sources of inspiration. Likewise, the artistic heritage of Uvaysiy, another pioneering female poet, inspired Nodira to express the emotional and psychological world of women with even greater sincerity and depth.

Nodira's creativity, while continuing the traditions of Uzbek classical poetry, introduced a new spirit and a fresh perspective into it. Her poetic language is refined, musical, and rich in lyricism, making wide use of imagery and symbolism. In her ghazals, she skillfully employed artistic devices such as tashbeh (simile), isti'ora (metaphor), and tazod (contrast), which enhanced the richness of meaning and aesthetic appeal of her works.



For this reason, Nodira is known in the history of Uzbek literature as the “Queen of Poetesses.” Her legacy not only enriched classical poetry but also became a creative inspiration for the following generations of female poets.

During the 19th century, the Kokand literary circle represented one of the most flourishing periods of Uzbek classical literature. Alongside such figures as Umar Khan, Nodira, Fazliy, Maqmur, and Gulkhani, Mahzuna also emerged as a prominent poetess. She became renowned for her artistic talent, delicate lyricism, and active participation in poetic gatherings (mushairas).

Although detailed biographical information about Mahzuna is limited, her poems and the recollections of her contemporaries demonstrate that her creative level was remarkably high. In the Kokand literary environment, she not only continued the tradition of female poets but also established her own distinct artistic style.

Several major directions can be distinguished in Mahzuna’s poetry:

Romantic (Love) Lyricism – In many of her poems, Mahzuna depicts love, affection, the image of the beloved, and the sorrow of separation. Her imagery vividly reflects feminine sincerity, subtle emotions, and spiritual sensitivity.

Moral and Spiritual Themes – In Mahzuna’s poetry, concepts such as patience, loyalty, friendship, and compassion occupy an important place. She calls upon people to strive for perfection and goodness.

Social Overtones – Mahzuna’s works also reflect the position of women in society in a distinctive way. In her poems, she promotes justice, honesty, and kindness.

Mahzuna engaged in poetic exchanges (mushairas) with many of her contemporaries. Her poetic dialogue with Fazliy became particularly famous in the literary environment of the time. This mushaira was not only valued for its artistic merit but also as a demonstration of the poetess’s talent, knowledge, and intellect.

The Kokand literary milieu was unique in that female poets actively participated in it, taking part in creative gatherings and discussions. Mahzuna, as one of the brightest representatives of this movement, occupies a worthy place in Uzbek classical literature.

The 19th-century Kokand literary environment was a productive period rich in creative dialogue and poetic debates. A mushaira was a traditional form of poetic contest and artistic communication in which poets tested their mastery of words



and literary skill. One of the most remarkable examples of this process was the poetic exchange between Fazliy and Mahzuna, which holds a special place in the history of Uzbek literature.

This mushaira took the form of a poetic question-and-answer exchange: Fazliy posed various symbolic hints and artistic challenges, and Mahzuna responded with her own skillfully crafted reply ghazals. This was not merely a wordplay—it was an aesthetic dialogue that revealed both poets' literary taste, intellectual depth, and emotional sensitivity.

The variety of literary devices used throughout the mushaira is notable. Classical poetic techniques such as tashbeh (simile), tazod (contrast), tajnis (paronomasia), and isti'ora (metaphor) were employed extensively. While Fazliy's poems displayed complexity of meaning, artistic subtlety, and symbolic thought, Mahzuna's replies were distinguished by artistic simplicity, sincere lyricism, and feminine sensitivity.

In Mahzuna's responses, lyricism is dominant, and her emotional experiences are conveyed through delicate imagery. She did not merely repeat Fazliy's poetic questions but infused them with new spirit and poetic vitality. This demonstrates her talent and creative independence.

The Fazliy–Mahzuna mushaira stands out as a high example of poetic dialogue, where the exchange of verses between two poets revealed both intellectual and emotional harmony. While Fazliy's poetry carried the rational, didactic tone typical of male poets, Mahzuna's responses emphasized aesthetic refinement, sensitivity, and heartfelt sincerity.

The artistic value of this mushaira lies in the fact that, beyond verbal contest, it expanded the aesthetic scope of the literary process by testing poetic abilities and expressing intellectual dialogue through verse. Through her responses, Mahzuna proved her strong poetic talent, and Fazliy acknowledged her position in the literary circles of the time.

Thus, the Fazliy–Mahzuna poetic dialogue not only showcased the mastery of two gifted poets but also became an important artistic event demonstrating the high status of women poets in the Kokand literary environment.

In the history of Uzbek literature, the role of female poets is extremely significant. Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna, through their poetry, not only expressed personal



emotions but also artistically illuminated the social and spiritual issues of their time. Their creative legacies form a valuable treasure of Uzbek classical literature and are still appreciated today for their aesthetic charm and artistic depth.

Nodira's creativity brought to Uzbek poetry feminine sincerity, delicacy in love lyricism, and patriotic spirit. She poetically expressed the spiritual world of women, as well as the emotions of love and separation, at a high artistic level. As both a poetess and a patron of literature, she left an indelible mark in literary history.

Uvaysiy, on the other hand, enriched classical literary genres with her riddles and poetic dialogues. Her works reflect the brilliance of female intellect and artistic mastery and contributed greatly to the development of the riddle-writing (*chistonnavislik*) tradition in Uzbek poetry.

Mahzuna, who emerged as a distinguished poetess within the Kokand literary milieu, harmoniously combined lyricism, moral-spiritual reflection, and social tones in her creative work. Through her poetic dialogue (*mushaira*) with Fazliy, she demonstrated her literary talent and intellect, thereby highlighting the elevated position of female poets within the literary environment of her time.

Overall, the creative legacies of Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna elevated Uzbek poetry to a new artistic stage. Their works have not lost their literary and aesthetic significance even today; instead, they continue to serve as sources of inspiration for young writers and researchers.

Examples from the Poets' Works

Nodira:

Ey dil, senga ishq yo 'lida ming dard ila jon berdim,

Bir yor uchun bu dunyoda yuz bor fido jon qildim.

(Oh heart, for love's path I gave my soul through a thousand pains;

For one beloved in this world, a hundred times I sacrificed my life.)

Uvaysiy (from a riddle):

Bir jomdurkim, to 'la to 'la durr ila,

Har kim ichar, bo 'lur serob ko 'nglila.

(It is a goblet filled with pearls divine;

Whoever drinks, his soul becomes satisfied.)

Answer: *Book*



Mahzuna:

Ishq derlar, qalbni kuydirgan bir sharor erur,

Oshiqqa o‘tlarda yonmoq ham bahor erur.

(They call it love — a spark that burns the heart;

For the lover, even in flames, it feels like spring.)

Nodira, Uvaysiy, and Mahzuna are among the most prominent female figures in Uzbek classical literature whose poetry left a lasting mark on literary history.

Nodira – Through her lyrical, moral-philosophical, and socially conscious poetry, she brought to Uzbek verse feminine sincerity, delicacy, and a deep sense of lyricism. Her works are rightfully part of the golden treasury of Uzbek classical literature.

Uvaysiy – As a master of riddles and poetic enigmas, she introduced the *chiston* (riddle) genre into poetry and established a unique artistic school. Through her poetry, she expressed the intellectual depth and wisdom of women.

Mahzuna – A major representative of the Kokand literary school, she combined lyricism with moral and ethical themes and displayed her poetic mastery through her *mushaira* with Fazliy.

A unifying feature in the work of all three poetesses is their incorporation of female spirituality, inner sensitivity, and emotional sincerity into poetry, giving the literary process a new aesthetic direction. Their creative heritage demonstrates how significant the contribution of women poets has been to the history of Uzbek literature.

The works of these women continue to be valued today for their literary and aesthetic importance, serving as sources of inspiration in the ongoing development of Uzbek poetry.

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