

The Origin of Iskandar's Image in Fiction and Navoi's Attitude Towards It

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Abstract: This article explores the relationship between the historical figure, Alexander of Macedonia, and the literary portrayal of Alexander the Great. Specifically, we examine the refinement of the image of Iskandar Zulkarnain, as well as his interpretations in works such as Firdavsi's "Shohnoma", Nizami's "Iskandarnoma", Khusrav Dehlavi's "Oyinai Iskandariy", and Abdurahman Jami's "Hiradnomai Iskandariy". Alisher Navoi's unique perspective on this image, as interpreted in the epic "Saddi Iskandariy", is also analysed. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic and figurative features of the image. Navoi's genius in this context is substantiated through examples.

1 INTRODUCTION

The earliest historical information about Iskandar the Horned, renowned in the world of literature, was chronicled by 10th-century historians Hamza ibn Hasan al-Isfahani, Dinyuvari, and Tabari (Abdurrahman Jami. 1978). Later, this information was found in Beruni's book, "Relics from Ancient Nations" (Abu Rayhan Beruni. (1968)). Beruni identifies Zulkarnain as Alexander ibn Filif (i.e. Alexander the Great), providing information about Alexander's birth, his battle with Darius, while also referring to data that significantly contradicts this idea, suggesting that Zulkarnain might have originated from Yemen. Although he seems to back the latter hypothesis, he refrains from expressing a definitive opinion. N. Pegulevsky, in his work 'Syrian Legends about Alexander the Great', documents over 80 legends about Alexander the Great in 24 languages. Among these, the Syrian legends are the most ancient, and Pegulevsky argues that the legendary images of Hizr and the two-horned representation of Alexander originate from the narratives about the historical figure of Alexander the Great (Abulqasim Firdavsi. Shahnama. (1976)).

The reign of Alexander traces back to Egyptian mythology, where the Egyptian priest Calefin first dubbed Alexander as "the son of the god Amon Ra." The depiction of him with two horns also stems from

legends that describe Amon Ra as being two-horned. The Greek scholar Plutarch noted in his work, 'Alexander the Great', that while the Greeks hailed him as the son of Zeus and the Egyptians proclaimed him the son of Amon, Alexander himself neither expressed agreement nor opposition to this glorification (Alisher Navoi. (1989)).

Alexander first emerged as a literary figure in Firdavsi's "Shohnoma". In this work, Firdavsi narrated more historical events, including Alexander's march on Iran and his defeat of Darius, portraying Alexander as a gallant king. Concurrently, he is recognised as a disciple of the wise Aristotle, a king who heeded the counsel of his philosophical mentor (Alisher Navoi. (1996)). The positive portrayal of Alexander in Firdavsi's Shohnoma is likely influenced by Alexander the Great's regard for the Persians. As per the Greek historian Plutarch, Alexander became so immersed in Persian customs that he even adopted Persian attire at social gatherings, adhering to their traditions (Alisher Navoi. Saddi Iskandari. 1991).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the two-part epic "Iskandarnoma", featured as a distinct work within Nizami's "Panj Ganj", the folk tales and legends about Alexander are elaborately

developed, based on the fairy tales and myths influenced by these narratives. The explanation provided for the designation of Alexander as Zulkarnain stems from the confrontation between Alexander and the barber, the fact that he battled Gog and Magog, and constructed a wall against them (Komilov N. (2005)).

Overall, any existing contradictions in Firdavsi's perspective of Alexander are resolved in Nizami's epic, where Alexander is depicted as a fairly positive figure. Nizami interpreted Alexander as a courageous king who heeded the advice of wise men. The image of Alexander is fully developed within the epic, based on the folk tales and stories about him. Another noteworthy point is that Nizami aligned the image of Dhu'l-Qarnayn in the Qur'an with Alexander, dubbing his hero as Alexander Dhu'l-Qarnayn. The reason why the Macedonian was named Dhu'l-Qarnayn was because he wore a two-horned hat. Consequently, various aspects, including the motives for Alexander's war with Darius, his patriotism and combativeness, his entrepreneurial skills, his role as a disciple of Aristotle, his beautiful wife Ravshanak, his battles against Gog and Magog, are all extracted from the verses depicting Alexander the Great. Additionally, the folk legends about Alexander's quest for the water of life alongside Hizr, and his conflict with the barber are also addressed, culminating in the creation of an exceedingly imaginative, ideal image.

Amir Khisrav Dehlavi's "Oynai Iskandari" amalgamates both of Alexander's qualities - bravery and wisdom. In this work, he portrays eminent philosophers such as Aristotle, Apollonia, and Plato as Alexander's mentors, and describes them as companions on his terrestrial and maritime voyages (Koshifi Husayn is a preacher. Futuvvatnamai Sultani. N. (1994)).

In the epic "Khiridnomai Iskandariy", the depiction of the great king is somewhat relegated. Jami places more emphasis on Alexander's wisdom and counsel than on his kingship, and incorporates himself among the ranks of the wise (Nizami Ganjavi. Iqbolnama. (2009)). Nizami, Khusrav Dehlavi, and Jami, through their epics about Alexander, present to the readers their invaluable thoughts - a blend of scientific wisdom set against the backdrop of his wisdom and the wisdom of his interlocutors.

Navoi synthesised his experiences and, employing his genius, forged a novel image of Alexander. We first perceive Alexander the Great as a brave prince with an aversion to the throne, then as an enterprising king and enlightener who, with courage and astuteness, won the hearts of various

nations and people. Following this, he is seen as a perfected individual, striving to conquer the unseen, and finally, we encounter the image of a helpless servant departing the world empty-handed. Alexander's quest for worldhood is premised on the pursuit of wisdom and gnosis, and his conquest of the seven climes signifies the acquisition of manifest sciences on this path. This is because, when Navoi speaks of perfected individuals who are rulers, he separately mentions their progression in the "science of the outward and inward (zohir va botin ilmi)" (Khondamir. Makorim ul-Akhlaq. (2015)). Guiding him on this path is his mentor, Aristotle, often referred to as the master of logic in philosophy - further evidence that his student, Alexander, embarked on mastering the logical sciences. In mysticism - or divine knowledge - such desires as knowledge are characterised. In this epic, Navoi symbolises the divine sciences with the seven seas. Thus, Alexander, the possessor of seven climes, embarks on a voyage, with Socrates, the progenitor of irrational sciences, leading the way (as he did with Farhod in the epic 'Farhod and Shirin'). This is clearly evident in the tale of the fish in the same saga, which dived into the whirlpool in search of water, only to realise upon their impending death that they had lost their water. Alexander not only navigated the seven seas but also constructed a glass box, descended into the sea, and explored its depths. Consequently, an individual versed in the divine sciences, having learned from Socrates, will now become immersed in these sciences. Alexander spent such a considerable time underwater that he gained an abundance of knowledge, which resulted in the undersea marvels revealing themselves and beginning to inform Alexander about their existence. Hence, Alexander's first voyage can be termed *ilm ul-yakin*, the second *ayn ul-yakin*, and the third journey into the underwater world can be designated as *haqq ul-yakin*. During this journey, Alexander's perceptive eyes fully opened, as Navoi stated, and he attains the stages of enlightenment - guardianship and prophethood. Professor N.Kamilov's research on the epic "Saddi Iskandariy", titled "Epic of Wisdom and Example", presents the following perspectives on knowledge and gnosis: it can be said that a judge embodies the qualities of a governor, and a governor the qualities of a judge (Yusupova D. (2014)). Thus, the great Navoi skilfully amalgamated dominion and enlightenment - the two polarities of perfection - into a singular image, consequently elevating him to the stature of a perfected individual.

The ideal of a perfect individual is fundamental to every society. Each community advocates this among

its members as there is a sensed need for such an ideal that bears its own weight. If we consider Navoi's perspectives on this matter, the character who is fitting for the image of a perfect individual and deserving of standing beside the image of Farhod, is Alexander. To substantiate that he was not solely a virtuous king and a symbol of justice but, primarily, a symbol of a perfect individual, it's sufficient to recall Alexander's first question to his teacher Aristotle in the epic - his first instance of wisdom. It pertains to "reaching the destination." This question underscores an individual's purpose in life. In the tale, Alexander enquires about ways to achieve the objective.

The Jamshid mosque, which was gifted to Alexander by the Chinese king, along with the mirror Chinda, are also thought to carry hidden meanings. The Jamshid Mosque is a legendary item crafted by the mythical Iranian ruler Jamshid. It possesses two peculiar features. Firstly, the maze within it never concludes, which is due to the fat outside the glass exhibiting the property of attracting fat. Secondly, its exterior reflects events transpiring all around the world. This image was later symbolised in mystical literature with a particular significance. The Jamshid Jami symbolises both heroism and the vigilant mind. The awakened mind, conversely, belongs exclusively to the perfect individual, and it mirrors not just the seven climates, but the entire universe.

The Oyini Chin (with this phrase, Navoi utilised the art of *iyham* to signify both the Chinese mirror and the mirror of truth) was a mirror that was illuminated on both sides, and Alexander used it at receptions to discern people's character. This symbol is also an emblem of a pure heart, based on the philosophical-psychological concept that the reflection of the interlocutor in the heart of an individual is as pure as the mirror of the heart.

Alexander marvelled at the magnificence of these gifts, which the art of wisdom had bestowed upon him, and commanded the responding judges to craft such miraculous objects as a mirror and a mosque. The king, who possessed the seven climates, must now observe and study celestial bodies as well, that is, the perfect man must fully deepen his knowledge. To do this, Alexander begins to observe the movement of the stars with his telescope. The magic mirror, much like the Jamshid Mosque, reflects what is happening in the world. The symbolic meaning of these inventions is that a perfect man purifies his heart as a result of deepening his knowledge, but he cannot be perfected solely by mastering the external sciences. For a person to be perfect, he also needs to master the inner sciences (Komilov N. Sufism. 2009).

In this epic, we see that Navoi expressed the divine sciences with the symbol of the seven seas. That is to say, Alexander, who ruled over seven climates, now set sail. On this path, Alexander is now guided by Socrates, the father of the irrational sciences. We see this in the story of the fish that ventured into the whirlpool in search of water in the same epic and only discovered that it had lost its water after being lured to its death (In "Lison ut-tayr", Navoi also compares water to the source of the inner sciences - the sea of knowledge). That is, people of the world are better and greater than they realise, without knowing how many qualities are bestowed upon them. However, a person knows so much that he is unaware of his own hidden depths, that he does not fully comprehend his purpose and intentions, that the words he understands without fully understanding himself, the meanings in his words, his hopes and aspirations, distinguish him from other creatures and elevate him. The determination within a person to use his intellect to discover something, to attain it, is the cause of his esteem and grace (in front of all creation and before the Creator). In particular, knowing what is in someone's heart, thinking about it, is an extremely unique and great quality for a person.

Not only did Alexander sail through the seven seas, but he also constructed a glass box, plunged into the sea and explored the underwater world. Consequently, a perfect man who has learned to master the divine sciences from Socrates will now become engrossed in these divine sciences. During this journey, Alexander's eyes of insight were fully opened, Navoi stated. And he attains the levels of guardianship and prophethood. However, everything has an end. As Aziziddin Nasafi stated in his pamphlet "The Perfect Man (Insoni Komil)", a perfect man, despite being complete in character and knowledge, is powerless in the face of destiny (Komilov N. Sufism. 2009). Alexander, too, fell gravely ill and died following his voyage. This implies that Navoi is faithful to his counsel, and regardless of how developed a person is, he remains an ordinary servant and will one day meet his inevitable end.

3 CONCLUSION

1. The image of Alexander has left its imprint on Uzbek folklore and literature, influenced by the Qur'an and earlier narratives. As a result, folk tales and legends about Alexander have been formed.
2. The image of Alexander, which emerged as an artistic figure in Firdavsi's "Shohnoma", evolved into

a perfect artistic ideal in the works of Nizami Ganjavi, Khusrav Dehlavi, and Adburahmon Jami (all authors of Hamsa).

3. In Navoi's epic "Saddi Iskandariy", three interpretations of the image of Alexander were developed without interfering with one another: a courageous prince generous enough to despise the throne, an enterprising king who bravely wins the hearts of the people, and an enlightened sage - a perfect man whose knowledge seeks to conquer the unseen.

4. The downfall of Alexander in the epic illustrates another of Navoi's wise ideas: "No matter how high a person rises, they are powerless in the face of fate. Therefore, since human life is mortal, there is no room for arrogance."

5. Although at first glance, the epic "Saddi Iskandariy" seems to be about Alexander - a figure in Eastern classical literature embodying the image of a wise, brave, and ideal king - in a deeper sense, it is a symbolic and mystical work about the path of perfection for a wise and prudent man.

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