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Cognitive Metaphor and Symbolic Mapping in Alisher Navoi's *Khamsa*

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Abstract: This article explores the symbolic architecture of Alisher Navoi's Khamsa through the lens of cognitive poetics, applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Turner) and Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner). It examines how Navoi encodes ethical and spiritual meanings through layered metaphors, narrative symbolism, and culturally embedded images such as wine, the moth and candle, the mirror, and the mystical journey. These metaphors function as cognitive mappings that link tangible experiences to abstract Sufi ideals. Drawing comparisons with the Persian Khamsa tradition of Nizami Ganjavi, the article highlights Navoi's original contribution in transforming inherited symbols into complex spiritual allegories. It argues that Navoi's literary mastery lies in his ability to synthesize narrative tradition with mystical doctrine and cognitive structure, making his Khamsa a deeply philosophical and poetically innovative work within the Timurid cultural renaissance.

Keywords: Alisher Navoi; Khamsa; cognitive metaphor; conceptual blending; Sufism; symbolism; Persian–Turkic comparative literature; poetic allegory; mystical narrative; literary cognition.

Introduction

Alisher Navoi (1441–1501), the great Chagatai Turkic poet and thinker, crafted a *Khamsa* (quintet of epic poems) that stands as a pinnacle of Timurid-era literature. His *Khamsa* – comprising *Hayrat ul-Abrar* ("Wonders of Good People"), *Farhad and Shirin*, *Layli and Majnun*, *Sab'ai Sayyar* ("Seven Travelers"), and *Sadd-i Iskandari* ("Alexander's Wall") – was the first of its kind in Turkic and was directly inspired by the Persian *Khamsa* tradition of Nizami Ganjavi. While adhering to the established themes and structures of his predecessors, Navoi imbued his epics with original symbolic innovations and a profound Islamic mystical (Sufi) vision. His poems abound in metaphors and symbols – wine, the moth and candle, the lover's journey, legendary lovers like Farhad and Shirin – that encode spiritual and ethical meanings beneath the surface of romantic and heroic narratives.

This article examines Navoi's use of metaphor and narrative symbolism in the *Khamsa* from a cognitive poetics perspective. Applying conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) and conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), we explore how Navoi's imagery and story structures serve as "cognitive mappings" that link concrete story elements to abstract spiritual concepts. We also compare Navoi's symbolic strategies with those of his Persian predecessor Nizami, highlighting Navoi's innovations in mapping Sufi philosophical ideas onto poetic narrative. Through this analysis, we see how traditional Islamic-Sufi symbols (e.g. wine, the moth and flame, the journey, the mirror) in Navoi's epics function as *conceptual metaphors* and *blends* that convey layers of devotional and ethical meaning to the reader.

Cognitive Metaphor and Conceptual Blending in Literary Analysis

Cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Turner argue that metaphor is not merely a stylistic ornament of language, but a fundamental mechanism of thought (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). In their view, even poetic metaphors draw from underlying conceptual mappings in the human mind, where a *source domain* (often something concrete or experiential) is mapped onto a *target domain* (often abstract). For example, the common metaphor "LIFE IS A JOURNEY" reflects a cognitive mapping between the concrete domain of travel and the abstract domain of life's progress. Poets can creatively extend or elaborate such mappings, but the comprehension of these metaphors still relies on shared conceptual structures (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). In Navoi's case, many of his poetic images – such as the idea of spiritual love as an intoxicating *wine* – resonate with entrenched metaphors in Islamic culture and language, making them readily meaningful as conceptual mappings for his audience.

Fauconnier and Turner's conceptual blending theory further complements metaphor analysis by explaining how disparate mental "input spaces" can be integrated to produce emergent meaning (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). In literary symbolism, a poet may draw from multiple domains – e.g., a physical journey, a religious quest, and a romantic tale – and blend them into a single narrative image or scenario. The blended space can contain elements of each input (concrete and abstract) and generate novel meanings not present in either source alone. Navoi's elaborate allegories often function as conceptual blends: for instance, the literal journey of a hero through perilous adventures is blended with the spiritual journey of the soul toward God, yielding a rich narrative that operates on dual levels. Using cognitive frameworks like CMT and blending in analyzing Navoi's *Khamsa* allows us to systematically identify these source–target mappings and blended structures, thereby unraveling the spiritual and ethical subtext encoded in the poetry.

Navoi's* Khamsa *in the Persian Tradition: Imitation and Innovation

Navoi consciously positioned his *Khamsa* in dialogue with the Persian masters. Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209) had established the *Khamsa* genre as the gold standard of epic poetry, and many later poets (including Amir Khusraw and Jami) attempted their own quintets in emulation. Writing in Chagatai Turkic, Navoi had to both follow the traditional story motifs and "be sufficiently original" to justify his endeavor. He succeeded by infusing the conventional plots with his distinctive Sufi perspective and symbolic richness.

One notable innovation is Navoi's treatment of the famous love story of Khosrow and Shirin. Whereas Nizami's version (*Khosrow o Shirin*) centered on the king Khosrow, Navoi's retelling is pointedly titled *Farhad and Shirin*, elevating the humble stonemason-lover Farhad to primary status. This titular change is not arbitrary; it reflects Navoi's deeper "understanding of the purport" of the story. In Navoi's Sufi interpretation, the true hero is not the worldly king but the selfless lover. Indeed, Navoi "confirms that the hero of the art of words should be a man in real love as Farhad, not a shah as Khusraw, whose aim is the throne and not love" (Kurbonov et al., 2020, p.7362). By making Farhad the protagonist, Navoi shifts the narrative focus to the spiritual qualities of devotion, sacrifice, and ego-transcendence represented by Farhad's character. This is

emblematic of Navoi's overall approach: the entire structure of *Farhad and Shirin* – its plot events and symbolic images – is designed as an embodiment of the Sufi idea of *"forgetting one's own identity to find Him (God)"*. As we shall see, Navoi embeds in this and other *Khamsa* poems a host of symbolic motifs (many inherited from the Islamic poetic tradition) which he retools to convey mystical meanings.

Metaphor, Symbolism, and Spiritual Meaning in the Khamsa

One of the most pervasive symbols in Islamic poetic tradition is *wine* (*may* in Persian, or *bāda* in Navoi's terminology). In Sufi poetry, wine and drunkenness are metaphors for the ecstatic love of the Divine or the spiritual bliss of gnosis. Navoi, a devout Muslim and acquainted with Sufi thought, employs the wine symbol extensively across his work, including the *Khamsa*. At first glance, references to wine could be misunderstood as promoting literal intoxication, but contemporary Navoi scholarship emphasizes that in most cases "may and drunkenness are symbolic". The "wine" that the lover drinks is a spiritual wine – the love of God that inebriates the soul. As one study explains, "in our classical literature the meanings of wine are used [with] the same sense. So wine is called love. But this love is not the pleasure of the body, but the love of the pleasure of the soul". In other words, Navoi's poetry maps the *sensory experience of drinking* (source domain) onto the *supersensory experience of divine love* (target domain). This conceptual metaphor – **LOVE (OF GOD) IS WINE INTOXICATION** – is richly developed.

Navoi was influenced by earlier Sufi thinkers like Jami. Jami, in his treatise *Lavāmi'*, enumerated ten points of analogy between wine and love, showing how the effects of wine on a drinker parallel the effects of love on the lover's heart. For example: wine boils and bubbles in a vessel just as love stirs in the lover's heart; wine affects the entire body just as true love occupies one's whole being; wine can give courage and remove inhibitions just as love emboldens the lover and strips away his ego. Navoi echoes these ideas in his poetry. He classifies types of love in a threefold hierarchy – *'avām* love (common love ending in bodily union), *khāṣṣ* love (love of the elect), and *ṣiddīq* love (true love of the enlightened). The highest love, he suggests, is like the purest old wine that utterly overwhelms the self. In one of his poems, Navoi explicitly calls to the *saqī* (wine-bearer) for a draft of "faith's wine": *"Saqi, I am dead – bring the wine of faith, / Infuse my body with the soul from that wine"*. Here the metaphor is made overt by juxtaposing *wine* with *faith*, equating them as source and target. Indeed, the *saqī* or cupbearer in many Sufi-tinged poems (including Navoi's) is interpreted as *the Divine giver* of ecstasy – "the drinker is the Almighty Himself," pouring the cup of *Kawthar* (the celestial fountain).

It should be noted that Navoi also at times condemns *literal* wine-drinking, distinguishing profane drunkenness from sacred intoxication. In *Hayrat ul-Abrar*, he devotes one chapter to criticizing the "intoxication of the weak" who drink actual wine and urges them to repent. Thus, not every mention of wine in his work is metaphorical – context matters. As one scholar of Navoi cautions, "not all wine [in Navoi's verses] should be understood as spiritual wine". Often, however, especially in high poetic or contemplative passages, the *maykhana* (tavern) sought is the tavern of annihilation in God, not a physical tavern. In a cognitive sense, Navoi relies on readers to perform a **conceptual blend**: the concrete image of a tavern gathering dissolves into the abstract idea of a Sufi gathering in remembrance of God; the "wine" in the cup blends with the elixir of divine love experienced by the mystic.

Navoi also extends the wine metaphor to include the *cup* or *goblet* as the human heart. In Sufi symbolism, the heart is often likened to a cup or a mirror that must be cleansed and polished to reflect God's light. Navoi uses exactly this mapping: "The light of God, that is, the beauty of the Truth, is reflected in the heart of the traveler and the glass is marked as a symbol of the heart" (Karimov, 2021, p.193). This implies a nested metaphorical mapping within the wine imagery: **HEART IS A GLASS/CUP** that can be filled with **DIVINE LIGHT AS WINE**. We see this in verses where Navoi describes the beams of guidance (*anvār ul-hudā*) shining from the "sun's

cup" and instructing the seeker to see the Beloved's reflection therein. Such lines reflect a sophisticated symbolic network: the *Sun* is the divine source, its *wine-like light* fills the *cup of the heart*, and the seeker who drinks from it perceives the "Beloved reflection" (i.e., sees God's attributes in the world). In cognitive metaphor terms, Navoi is layering mappings (light as wine, heart as cup, God as beloved, etc.) to create a blended image of mystical enlightenment. Through these symbols of wine and the cup, Navoi encodes an ethical-spiritual message: true pleasure and "intoxication" come not from worldly sensuousness but from annihilation in God's love – a state that requires purification of the heart and an emptying of the ego's cup to be filled with the divine vintage.

Another traditional set of symbols Navoi employs is the contrast between the *nightingale* (bulbul) singing to the *rose* and the *moth* (parvānā) burning in the *candle's* flame. Both are classic Persian images for lovers and beloveds, but with a nuanced difference that Navoi explicitly highlights. In his *ghazals* of praise (hamd), Navoi uses the nightingale and flower to represent a lover captivated by *apparent* beauty (the physical beloved or the outer manifestation of Divine beauty), whereas the moth and candle represent the lover drawn to the *source* of beauty (the Divine essence itself). The nightingale's love for the rose is joyful and melodious – it "loves the flower – the manifestation, that is, the apparent beauty – with pleasure". This symbolizes the soul who admires God's creation or the outer forms of beauty in the world, but "cannot comprehend the divine essence" fully. Thus, the nightingale sings incessantly every dawn, ever in love but never consumed. The moth, by contrast, is the lover of the *candle's flame*, i.e. the lover of the naked Divine light. The moth does not sing; it immolates itself by flying into the flame. Navoi describes the moth as "a lover of divine beauty and a symbol of death" – specifically, the death of the self in the Divine presence. The moth's fate illustrates the Sufi concept of *fanā'* (annihilation): "the moth… will eventually perish in the way of its purpose," attaining the Truth by surrendering its life.

Navoi even reinforces this parallel through an explicit allusion (talmeh). In one verse he compares the moth's candle to the fire of Nimrod in the Abrahamic story, which miraculously became "cool and peaceful" for Abraham (Khalilullah). For the true lover (the moth), the seemingly lethal flame is like the fire of Nimrod that was in fact a rose garden – a trial that turns into salvation. Navoi thus equates the moth's faith with that of Prophet Abraham, implying that immolation in God's light is a holy martyrdom of love. The cognitive mapping here is clear: **THE BELOVED'S LIGHT IS FIRE** and **THE TRUE LOVER IS A MOTH**. The destructive aspect of fire corresponds to the obliteration of the ego, and the moth's burning is the spiritual transformation of the lover. By contrast, the **flower** and **nightingale** map to **worldly beauty** and **the appreciative but still separate lover**. Navoi "appropriately uses" these paired symbols to show two degrees of love. In cognitive terms, he delineates two related conceptual metaphors: (1) **WORLDLY LOVE IS A NIGHTINGALE SINGING TO A FLOWER**; (2) **DIVINE LOVE IS A MOTH BURNING IN A FLAME**. Both metaphors rely on commonplace image schemas (a small being attracted to a source of beauty), but the outcomes differ – continuous song versus annihilating union – reflecting the different targets (earthly beloved vs. God).

The moth and candle symbol was well-known in Sufi lore (it appears in Rumi and others), but Navoi's particular contribution is to integrate it artfully within his praise poems and narratives to underscore the supremacy of spiritual love. By presenting the nightingale and moth in parallel, he invites the reader to compare these cognitive models of love. The *nightingale/rose* mapping might correspond to an initial stage of the soul's journey (love of God's creation and attributes), whereas the *moth/candle* mapping corresponds to the advanced stage (love of God's essence, requiring self-sacrifice). In *Layli and Majnun* and other works, Navoi also portrays human lovers who transition from the nightingale-type to the moth-type. Majnun, for instance, starts as a passionate lover of Layli's human beauty but ends up a mad ascetic in the desert, burning in the flame of divine-ishq that Layli's beauty sparked in him. Indeed, Navoi explicitly frames Layli and Majnun

in metaphysical terms: *"Layli is the embodiment of the manifestation of Allah… [Majnun's] love for Layli was a reflection of love for the One"*. We see that Navoi uses the lover-beloved pairs of legendary romances as symbolic *projections*: Layli and Shirin represent *Divine beauty manifest in the world*, and Majnun and Farhad represent the souls who perceive that radiance and become "enraptured" (*majzub*) and committed on the *path of Truth*. In short, Navoi maps profane romance to sacred yearning, aligning his characters with the Sufi paradigm of *majbūb* (Beloved, i.e. God's beauty in form) and *'āshiq* (lover seeking God). Through these symbols, the ethical-spiritual lesson is imparted: the highest love demands complete selflessness (be the moth, not just the nightingale), and the earthly beloved is but a mirror to the Divine beloved.

Journeys and quests structure several of Navoi's epics, serving as master metaphors for the soul's progression toward enlightenment. The idea that "life is a journey" is a basic conceptual metaphor; Navoi elevates it to "the soul's return to God is a journey." In Sufi literature, the seeker's path is often described in stages or "valleys" (as in Attar's *Conference of the Birds*). Navoi was well aware of this schema – his work *Lison ut-Tayr* (Tongue of the Birds, modeled on Attar) explicitly mentions the seven valleys culminating in the valley of *fanā'* (annihilation in God). In *Hayrat ul-Abrar*, Navoi includes chapters on the "journey of the soul" and the discipline (*riyāżat*) required of the seeker. Clearly, the journey motif for him is a vehicle to discuss moral and spiritual development.

Within the *Khamsa*, the clearest example of a spiritually mapped journey is *Farhad and Shirin*. Navoi transforms this romantic tale into an allegorical quest that Farhad undertakes, one that mirrors an adept's journey toward the Divine Truth. Midway through the poem, Farhad embarks on a perilous expedition to win Shirin: he travels to mystical locales, confronting challenges that are anything but ordinary. According to modern analyses of the poem, Navoi introduces a sequence where Farhad must seek out a sage (identified as Socrates) in a distant mountain to learn the secret of a miraculous *mirror*. To reach Socrates, Farhad overcomes a series of three trials – a dragon, a giant, and a bewitched castle (tilsim) – each yielding a legendary treasure (respectively, the treasure of Afridun, the ring of Solomon, and the cup of Jamshid). These fantasy-adventure elements are in fact laden with Sufi symbolism. As Komilov (as cited in Kurbonov et al., 2020) first noted, *the love described in the poem is not earthly love at all, but divine love*, and the entire plot's "hidden meaning" is allegorical. Every obstacle and item in Farhad's journey corresponds to an inner quality or impediment on the Sufi path. The dragon Farhad slays "is the symbol of *nafs* (carnal self)", representing his overcoming of his selfish passions. The giant he defeats at the second stage is likewise associated with the *nafs* or ego – "the giant *nafs* – carnal desires". The enchanted fortress (*tilsim*) of Iskandar (Alexander) that blocks his way symbolizes the illusory images of the worldly life that veil the soul.

Conversely, the treasures Farhad gains are symbolic of spiritual enlightenment. The **treasure of Afridun** obtained after killing the dragon signifies the first "sheen of divine beauty" appearing in his heart once it is free of worldly grief. The **ring of Solomon**, gained after defeating the giant ego, stands for the wise soul that can now "hear the divine voice" (Solomon's ring in legend gave him command over spirits – here it implies inner attunement to guidance, e.g. the voice of *Khidr*). The **cup of Jamshid**, a mythical cup that showed the world, symbolizes the soul filled with the light of God's beauty – essentially a heart polished to reflect truth. Finally, the **mirror of Iskandar** itself represents the soul in its most refined state, capable of directly reflecting the Divine beauty. Socrates instructs Farhad that *"The mirror of Iskandar is [the same as] what Farhad found when he shot the cup of Jamshid… Cup of Jamshid is nothing but [the] soul that reflects the shine of divine beauty"*. In other words, as Farhad's journey progresses, the metaphoric "mirror" of his soul becomes ever brighter. This is a graduated conceptual blend: each trial cleanses more "rust" from the mirror of the heart, and each magical object is an instantiation of the soul at a new level of purity. When Farhad finally gazes into Alexander's mirror, what does he see? – He sees Shirin, but not merely the woman Shirin; he beholds the "divine beauty of

Shirin", the aspect of the eternal Beloved shining through her form. This *vision* ignites his love fully and marks the true beginning of his (now spiritual) love for Shirin. The implication is that Farhad's earthly longing has been transformed into a yearning for the Divine reality that Shirin represents.

Navoi encapsulates the Sufi moral of this journey allegory in a concise formula: *to leave oneself and find Him*. The poem's central idea, as scholars have summarized, is "to leave oneself and find Him. Dragon, giant and tilsim are [aspects of] self-identity of a person; [the] treasure, ring, cup and mirror are – He, that is, the shine of God". By defeating the former and attaining the latter, Farhad enacts the Sufi path of negating the ego and realizing God. This grand mapping – **THE QUEST FOR THE BELOVED IS THE SOUL'S QUEST FOR GOD** – is one that Navoi applies not only in *Farhad and Shirin* but across the *Khamsa*. In *Layli and Majnun*, Majnun's exile and madness similarly symbolize renunciation of the self and society for the sake of the Absolute. In *Sab'ai Sayyar*, the seven voyages or seven princesses' pavilions can be read as the soul's journey through the seven climes or seven levels of the self. In *Sadd-i Iskandari*, Alexander's building of the wall against Gog and Magog, and his global travels in search of truth, carry the undertones of building a wall against one's inner demons and seeking the ultimate knowledge (the philosophers in Alexander's story convey spiritual truths). Each narrative of travel or trial is a macro-metaphor for the ethical development of the soul. Through conceptual blending, Navoi merges the adventure-story frame with the spiritual journey frame, so that for an attentive reader, the literal travels map onto the stages of the *sālik* (spiritual seeker). This technique allows Navoi to "express figuratively [his] moral and ethical ideals" without stepping outside the entertaining narrative. The cognitive effect for the reader is the simultaneous processing of the story in two domains – enjoying the literal tale and contemplating the allegorical significance – which is precisely the kind of rich meaning-making that cognitive poetics aims to illuminate.

In Navoi's symbolic lexicon, the *mirror* (especially "the mirror of Iskandar/Alexander") occupies a special place as an image of reflection and self-knowledge. We saw how in *Farhad and Shirin* the mirror represents the purified soul reflecting Divine beauty. This resonates with a broader Sufi metaphor: the Prophet Muhammad said "the believer's heart is the mirror of the Beloved" – an idea that the heart/spirit can reflect God's attributes if polished of rust (bad qualities). Navoi explicitly references this concept. In *Farhad and Shirin*, Socrates's instruction effectively spells out the metaphor: *"the mirror… is [your] soul… the reflection in the mirror becomes more perfect if its surface gets brighter"*. The mirror that Farhad looks into is a *blended space* combining a physical object (Alexander's fabled mirror) and a mental state (Farhad's enlightened soul); when he peers into it, the boundary between *seeing Shirin outwardly* and *seeing the Divine light within Shirin* dissolves. This is conceptual blending at work: the input space of *a hero using a magic mirror to see his beloved far away* is blended with the input of *a mystic using the mirror of the heart to perceive the Divine beloved*. The emergent meaning is that Farhad's ultimate union with Shirin is not on a material plane but on a spiritual plane – he has seen *the Haqiqi (Real) Shirin*, which is a manifestation of God's beauty, and thus his love attains a mystical dimension.

Navoi also invokes the *mirror* imagery in other contexts. In *Hayrat ul-Abrar*, he philosophizes that when a man "forgets about his self-identity in his mind, here appears the shine of divine beauty" – a process akin to wiping a mirror clean so that it may gleam with light. The theme of *jalwa* (Divine manifestation) and *tajalli* (glorious epiphany) often comes with mirror metaphors in Sufi poetry, and Navoi's verses are no exception. In a praise ghazal, he writes: *"Would Majnun have been so distraught, if Layli's beauty were not a reflection of that One's beauty?"*. Here Layli's face is implicitly a mirror reflecting the "beauty of that One (God)", and Majnun is entranced not merely by Layli's human form but by the Divine beauty glinting through it. Likewise, *"If You had not hidden Your word on Shirin's lips, would Farhad's tears of blood have made the stone (mountain) turn ruby-red?"*. This rhetorical verse suggests that Shirin's words/lips carried God's "word" (truth), which so moved Farhad that his blood-tears reddened the rocks – an

image of extreme devotional labor. The "secret" of Layli and Shirin's captivating beauty, Navoi explains, "is that divine beauty is revealed in them. Their lovers, Majnun and Farhad, are *sāliks* (travelers on the path) who have been able to see this beauty, and who have started the path of Truth from understanding this beauty". This statement by Mullakhodjaeva (2021) neatly encapsulates Navoi's cognitive-symbolic mapping: the beautiful beloved is a mirror that *reveals* God's attributes, and the lover is one who *perceives and pursues* that reality, setting out on the mystical journey.

In sum, the *mirror* in Navoi's *Khamsa* operates as a **metaphor for the heart** and a **metonym for divine manifestation** – reflecting truth when cleansed. In cognitive metaphor terms, it aligns with the mapping **HEART IS MIRROR** and **SEEING THE BELOVED IS SEEING GOD**. It also provides a structural scaffold for conceptual blending in the narrative: physical acts of seeing or reflecting are blended with spiritual realization. Ethically, this symbol teaches self-reflection and purification: only by polishing one's inner mirror (through virtue, knowledge, and the "fierce struggle – *jihād* – against lust") can one witness the Truth. Navoi thus weaves a mirror motif into his storytelling to invite readers to contemplate the state of their own hearts and the source of the beauty they adore in the world.

Comparison with Nizami and Persian Predecessors

Navoi's symbolic repertoire did not emerge in a vacuum; it evolved from a long Persian poetic tradition laden with metaphors for love and spirituality. Nizami's *Khamsa* itself is full of allegorical passages, though often these are presented in discrete moral stories or philosophical digressions. For example, in Nizami's *Haft Paykar* (Seven Beauties), each princess's tale carries an ethical lesson through dream-like symbolism, and in *Iqbalnama* (part of his Alexander romance) there are encounters with philosophers and fantastic visions imparting Sufi wisdom. Navoi absorbs many of these traditional symbols – the rose and nightingale, the candle and moth, wine, Majnun's madness, Joseph's beauty, Solomon's ring, Alexander's mirror – but he recombines and emphasizes them in unique ways. One key difference is the centrality of overt Sufi doctrine in Navoi. Whereas Nizami's references to Sufi ideas are often subtle or occur in prefaces, Navoi "hid [his spiritual] belief in elements like the mirror of Iskandar, dragon, treasure of Afridun, giant and the ring of Solomon, tilsim and the cup of Jamshid" within the fabric of the story. Navoi essentially constructs an *integrated allegorical system* in *Farhad and Shirin*, as we detailed, whereas Nizami's *Khosrow and Shirin* was a more straightforward romantic tragedy with courtly and ethical overtones, but not a full-fledged spiritual allegory. By naming his poem after Farhad, Navoi signaled this shift in focus. In effect, Navoi uses the same characters and plot scaffold as Nizami but performs a cognitive re-mapping: the source domain of "romantic quest" is remapped to the target domain of "spiritual quest" much more explicitly in Navoi. Persian poets certainly recognized earthly love as an image of divine love (for instance, Nizami and Jami both hint that Majnun's love for Layli is of a transcendent kind), but Navoi takes it a step further by architecting entire narrative arcs (like Farhad's trials) that have no purpose except a symbolic one in the spiritual register. This is why researchers praise the *originality* of Navoi's *Khamsa* "in idea content, plot, and treatment of images" – he adheres to the traditional form yet innovates in layering a cognitive allegory throughout.

Another comparison can be made with Jami, Navoi's mentor and a Persian poet who also wrote a *Khamsa*. Jami's poetry, being deeply Sufi, likely influenced Navoi's approach to symbols. For example, Jami's *Yusuf and Zulaikha* allegorizes the love of Zulaikha for Joseph as the soul's longing for divine beauty. Navoi similarly accentuates the mystical reading of Layli-Majnun and Farhad-Shirin. But Navoi writing in Turkic for a Central Asian audience also had something to prove linguistically – he strove to show that Turkic poetry could match Persian in conveying subtleties. Thus, he sometimes makes the metaphors even more florid or compounds multiple symbols together, as if to display the versatility of his native tongue in expressing "multi-layered

meaning of romantic Sufism-mysticism". His language is rich in Persian-Arabic mystical terminology as well (e.g., *tajalli*, *maẓhar* (manifestation), *sālik*, *fanā*), ensuring that knowledgeable readers catch the allusions.

In terms of conceptual metaphor and blending, both Nizami and Navoi used them, but Navoi's use is more systematic and sustained. Nizami might use a metaphor in a short instance (e.g., describing Majnun as a moth to Layli's candle in a few lines), whereas Navoi will extend that metaphor into a motif recurring in different poems and reinforced by commentary within the text. Navoi's poems often begin with praise (hamd, munājāt, na'ṭ) that lays out the spiritual themes before the secular story commences. For instance, Navoi begins *Farhad and Shirin* by explicitly praying for divine aid to "open the doors of meaning", hinting that the tale itself has inner meanings to be unlocked. This reflexive awareness of the metaphorical nature of his own work might be less pronounced in Nizami. Thus, Navoi can be seen as both inheriting a stock of cognitive metaphors from the Persian canon and innovating by amplifying their cognitive mapping role within the narrative structure.

Conclusion

Through the lens of cognitive poetics, Alisher Navoi's *Khamsa* reveals itself as a carefully orchestrated network of metaphoric mappings and symbolic blends that convey a Sufi ethical vision. Navoi uses familiar images – the wine, the moth and candle, the nightingale and rose, the journey, the mirror, and the iconic lovers – but channels them to point beyond themselves. Each symbol in Navoi's epics operates on two planes: the literal (narrative or sensory) and the conceptual (spiritual or philosophical). By mapping the former onto the latter, Navoi invites readers to undertake an interpretive journey paralleling the heroes' journeys in the text. Conceptual metaphor theory helps us understand how Navoi's audience could grasp complex mystical ideas: grounded in everyday experiences of love, drunkenness, light, or travel, the metaphors guide the mind from the known to the ineffable. Conceptual blending theory, on the other hand, highlights Navoi's genius in fusing story-world and spiritual-world into single enriched scenarios – Farhad's heroic adventure is at once the soul's inner odyssey, Shirin's physical beauty is at once the Face of God veiled in matter.

Navoi's symbolic mappings align with core Sufi tenets: the ephemeral nature of worldly life (life as a transient journey), the necessity of annihilating the ego (the moth's sacrifice, the slaying of dragons within), the omnipresence of the Divine beloved in the world's beauty (Layli and Shirin as God's manifestations, the mirror of the heart reflecting the One), and the superiority of spiritual love over material power (Farhad the lover exalted above Khosrow the king). By comparing Navoi with his Persian predecessors, we see that he did not merely emulate their use of metaphor but *reconfigured* it to serve his artistic and didactic aims in a new language. His *Khamsa* thus stands as a masterpiece of cognitive blending: a set of stories that can be enjoyed as romantic epics and read as guides to the soul.

In conclusion, Navoi's work exemplifies how a poet grounded in a rich literary tradition can employ cognitive tools – long before they were theorized by modern scholars – to deepen the resonance of his poetry. The metaphors and symbols in Navoi's *Khamsa* are not ornamental; they are the very medium through which the poet communicates transcendent truths. For contemporary literary studies, this fusion of cognitive science and classical poetics provides a fruitful avenue to appreciate the ingenuity of authors like Navoi, who encode layers of meaning through figurative language. Navoi's *Khamsa* continues to be studied and revered not only for its linguistic beauty but also for "the doors of meaning" it opens – meanings unlocked by understanding the cognitive metaphors and symbolic mappings that Navoi so artfully interwove into his enduring epics.

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