



Article

Munis's Creative Followership of Navoiy

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the study of the creative relationship between Alisher Navoi and Shermuhammad Munis. The paper examines the issues of the literary influence of Alisher Navoi's works on the poetry of Shermuhammad Munis. Munis's nazira and mukhammas written in response to Navoi's ghazals are analyzed. In the course of the analysis, the artistic mastery of Navoi and Munis is revealed, as well as Munis's potential and capacity as a successor and follower of his master.

Citation: Jumaxuja, N. Munis's Creative Followership of Navoiy. Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2026, 7(2), 369-377.

Received: 20th Feb 2026

Revised: 10th Mar 2026

Accepted: 30th Mar 2026

Published: 24th Apr 2026



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Keywords: Succession, Tradition, Mastery, Artistic Composition, Musalsal Ghazal, Nazira, Tatabbu, Plot-Based Ghazal, Event-Based Ghazal, Lyrical Novella, Lyrical Narrative, Divan, Preface (Debocha)

1. Introduction

One of the prominent Uzbek intellectual poets who lived and created in the centuries following Alisher Navoiy, and who revived Navoi's literary traditions within Khorezmian literature, is Shermuhammad Munis. Munis regarded Navoiy as his spiritual guide and mentor, and consistently pursued a path of devoted literary succession in his own creative work. Munis' [1]:

*So'z ichra Navoyiki jahongirdurur,
Munisga maoniy yo'lida pirdurur*

The following couplet serves as a clear and compelling illustration of our argument.

Munis's genuine discipleship to Alisher Navoiy is most prominently manifested in his activity within the field of lyric poetry. First and foremost, he thoroughly assimilated Navoi's tradition of compiling a divan. The practice of assigning a specific title to the divan, composing a preface, organizing lyrical genres in a strict sequence, and placing hamd (praise of God) and na't (praise of the Prophet) ghazals at the beginning, followed by lyrical and social ghazals, constitute the essential features of Navoiy's arrangement of his collections. Having reached creative maturity, Munis adhered consistently to these principles in compiling his own divan. He titled his collection, in imitation of Navoiy's works, "Munis al-'Ushshaq" ("The Companion of Lovers"). He also composed a special preface in which he presented information about his biography, literary environment, personal experiences, and creative program [2]. Furthermore, he structured the internal organization of his lyrical divan in close accordance with that of Navoiy's collections [3].

2. Materials and Methods

In examining Munis's poetry, one encounters the themes articulated by Navoi, the ideas he advanced, the imagery he employed, as well as similar artistic techniques and other poetic features. It becomes evident that Munis's poetics were formed and refined within the school of Navoi's artistic mastery. The spirit of Navoi permeates all aspects of Munis's творчество, including his personality and worldview. There are certain books that invite repeated reading and intellectual engagement; in moments of creative difficulty or emotional strain, one instinctively turns to them. Such works illuminate the mind, facilitate expression, and bring solace to the heart. In this regard, Navoi's works appear to have served as a sacred and inspirational source for Munis. Therefore, it is not surprising that many ghazals in "Munis al-'Ushshaq" are composed in a distinctly Navoi-like style—this is a natural phenomenon. Munis's numerous nazira and mukhammas compositions emerged as a result of his intellectual and artistic alignment with Navoi and his attempt to approach poetic expression in a Navoi-inspired manner.

3. Results and Discussion

We consider it appropriate to analyze Munis's nazira and mukhammas within studies devoted to the theory of the ghazal. This is because the composition of such works functioned as a distinctive form of practice and preparation in the process of creating original ghazals [4].

"Munis ul-ushshoq" da:

*Fig'onkim, so'rg'ali holimni ul nomehribon kelmas,
Kelur jon og'zima, boshimg'a Isodek ravon kelmas*

There exists a ghazal beginning with the given lines. Upon reading this poem, one is reminded of Alisher Navoi's well-known ghazal with the refrain "kelmadi" ("did not come"). Even in the very first couplet cited, the phonetic and semantic harmony between the refrains "kelmadi" and "kelmas" ("will not come"), as well as the resemblance of the phrase "kelur jon og'zima" ("my soul comes to my lips") to Navoi's expression "keldi jon og'zimg'a" ("my soul came to my lips"), serve as clear evidence supporting this observation [5].

However, this ghazal is neither a direct imitation nor a merely modified repetition of Navoi's poem. Navoi's ghazal with the refrain "kelmadi" is a purely lyrical composition consisting of seven couplets. In contrast, Shermuhammad Munis, in his nine-couplet ghazal, seeks to reinterpret the theme of separation (hijron), striving to present it in a broader and more nuanced manner. While lamenting the separation from the beloved, the poet also incorporates, within a separate couplet, a social reflection on the afflictive nature of his time [6]:

*Zamondin yetti ko'b oshub ishq ahlig'a hajrida,
Zamon solib oshube, ul oshubi zamon kelmas.*

The poet's artistic mastery lies in his ability, particularly in the second couplet, to employ the rhetorical device of tardi aks (inversion: zamon oshubi / oshubi zamon) in order to express his dissatisfaction with his contemporary era without disrupting the overall lyrical tone and emotional atmosphere of the ghazal. It is as if the afflictions of the age are caused by the cruelty of the beloved, while, conversely, the beloved's cruelty itself is a consequence of the hardships of the time.

Munis's ghazal beginning with the line "Men seni ko'rgach, ko'ngul zor o'ldi, ko'z hayron sango" is composed in resonance with the ghazal of Alisher Navoi that opens with "Ul pari paykarki, hayron bo'lmish insu jon ango." However, beyond the difference in length (Navoi's ghazal consists of seven couplets, whereas Shermuhammad Munis's contains eleven), there exist considerable distinctions between the two works. Navoi's ghazal possesses a lyrical-philosophical character, wherein the lyrical subject's fascination

with the beloved's beauty and longing for union are conveyed through figurative and metaphorical expression. In contrast, Munis's ghazal articulates the lyrical subject's love and devotion to the beloved in a more descriptive manner [7].

In particular, the following lines, which sincerely and elegantly express the self-sacrificing devotion of the central lyrical persona, contribute significantly to the emergence of the ghazal as an independent and aesthetically accomplished poetic work:

*Yetmisham ko'yingg'a jonim tuhfa aylab, qil qabul,
Berma ko'p ozorkim, men bo'lmisham mehmon sango.
Otlanur bo'lsang, mening ko'nglumni javlongoh qil,
Kim, munosibdur base, jono, bu keng maydon sango.
Zaxm urar kipriklaring ko'ksimga qonim to'kkali,
Etmasun nogoh zarar har dam to'kardin qon sango*

The composition of mukhammas based on the ghazals of master poets has traditionally been regarded as one of the principal means of attaining mastery in ghazal writing. Shermuhammad Munis produced a number of remarkable mukhammas inspired by the ghazals of Alisher Navoiy, which serve as clear evidence of this tradition. Navoiy's ghazal beginning with "Tun oqshom keldi kulbam sori..." is widely known among readers. Its popularity stems from its distinctive narrative structure, as it represents an event-based (voqeband) ghazal with a well-developed lyrical plot [8].

The artistic richness of this ghazal also captivated Munis. In the process of composing a mukhammas based on it, Munis not only learned from Navoiy's poetic experience but also sought to further refine and develop the work as an independent artistic creation. For the purpose of comparative analysis, we present the full texts of both the ghazal and the mukhammas below. Navoi's ghazal [9]:

*Tun oqshom keldi kulbam sori ul gulrux shitob aylab,
Xiromi sur'atidin gul uza xaydin gulob aylab.
Qilib mujgonni shabravlar kibi jon qasdig'a xanjar,
Beliga zulfi anbarboridin mushkin tanob aylab.
Quyoshdek chehra birla tiyra kulbam aylagach ravshan,
Manga titratma tushti zarra yanglig' iztirob aylab.
Kulub o'lturdiyu ilkim chekib, yonida er berdi,
Takallum boshladi har lafzini durri xushob aylab:
"Ki, ey zori balokash oshiqim, mensiz nechuktursen?"
Men o'ldum lolu ayta olmadim mayli javob aylab.
Chiqordi shishayi may, dog'i bir sog'ar to'la quydi,
Ichib, tutti manga, yuz nav' nozoso itob aylab:
"Ki, ey majnun, pari ko'rdung magarkim, tarki hush etting?
Takallum qil bu sog'arni ichib, raf'i hijob aylab".
Ichib, faryod etib tushtum ayog'ig'a, borib o'zdin,
Meni yo'q bodakim, lutfi aning masti xarob aylab.
Anikim eltkay vasl uyqusi ishrat tuni mundoq,
Navoyidek netar to subhi mahshar tarki xob aylab*

Munis's mukhammas:

*Bahoroso jamolidin gul ochmoq iktisob aylab,
Musalsal zulfini sunbul kibi purpechutob aylab,
Tutub rasmi jafu tarkin, vafoni irtikob aylab,*

Tun oqshom keldi kulbam sori ul gulrux shitob aylab,
 Xiromi sur'atidin gul uza xaydin gulob aylab.
 Etushti boshim uzra yuzdin olib burqa' ul dilbar,
 Kiyib to'n nilgun atlasdin andoqkim, mahi anvar,
 Qilib ayyorvash azmi bila aflokni muztar,
 Chekib mujgonni shabraolar kibi jon qasdig'a xanjar,
 Beliga zulfi anbarboridin mushkin tanob aylab.
 Eshikdin mehrdek kulbam aro yuz birla chun kirdi,
 Odob domonig'a takror izzat durlarin terdi,
 Yuzidin fahm qildum, shafqat osori ayon erdi,
 Kelib o'turdiyu ilgim tutub yonida er berdi,
 Takallum boshladi, har lafzini durri xushob aylab.
 Ne durlarkim, alarg'a joni mahzunim edi maxzan,
 Bo'lub har birisidin benavo ko'nglum ko'zi ravshan,
 Dedi mundoq guharafshonliq asnosida ul purfan:
 "Ki, ey zori balokash oshiqim, mensiz nechuktursan?"
 Men o'ldum gungu lol, aytolmayin mayli javob aylab.
 Mening chun bulbuli mahzun kibi lol o'lg'onim bildi,
 Tabassum zohir aylab, g'uncha yanglig' gul-gul ochildi,
 Qo'lin qo'ynig'a soldiyu, qoshimg'a ro'baro' keldi,
 Chiqardi shishayi may, dog'i bir sog'ar to'la quydi,
 Ichib tutti manga yuz nav' nozoso itob aylab.
 Dedi: "K-ey telba, tokay lol o'lub, yosh to'kkasen ko'zdin,
 Ichib bu mayni de holing hijobin raf' etib yuzdin",
 Men oni ilkidin olib, bo'lub xushhol bu so'zdin,
 Ichib faryod etib tushdum oyoqig'a borib o'zdin,
 Meni yo'q bodakim, lutfi aning mastu xarob aylab.
 Bo'lub Munis muyassar yor ila bir erda o'turmoq,
 Navozishlar ko'rub, komin topib har lahza afzunroq,
 Ichib sog'ar, ayoqig'a tushub ul nav'kim tufroq,
 Onikim eltkey vasl uyqusi ishrat tuni mundoq,
 Navoyidek netar to subhi mahshar tarki xob aylab

In the opening couplet (matla') of the ghazal, the swift approach of the rose-faced beloved toward the lover's dwelling is depicted. From the very first couplet, the narrative description is harmoniously intertwined with the poetic portrayal of the beloved's appearance. The second hemistich conveys that the beloved arrives in a state of excitement and haste [10]. In the first line, the poet compares the beloved's face to a flower, employing the simile "gulrukh" (rose-faced), whereas in the second line, the need for simile disappears, and the face is directly referred to metaphorically as a "flower." The drops of sweat covering the flower-like visage in the intensity of movement and emotion are interpreted by the poet as "gulāb" (rosewater).

In the first stanza of the mukhammas, the narrative dimension becomes more elaborate, and the poetic imagery attains even greater completeness [11]. While Alisher Navoi's opening couplet merely signals the beginning of the moment of union (visol), the initial stanza of Shermuhammad Munis's mukhammas also alludes to the sufferings of separation (hijron) that precede it. The lyrical subject of the mukhammas expresses, with

astonishment, wonder, and joy, that the beloved has abandoned cruelty and embraced fidelity. Descriptions such as “bahorosā jamol” (spring-like beauty) and the intricately curled (purpechutob) tresses further expand the depiction of the beloved’s appearance [12, 13].

The second couplet of Navoi’s ghazal is devoted to refining the portrayal of the beloved. Navoi compares the beloved to a shabrav (night robber). Typically, such a figure commits robbery in pursuit of material gain, whereas here the beloved appears intent on taking the lover’s life. In essence, the poet’s aim is to depict the beloved’s eyelashes and hair; however, in accordance with the demands of poetic artistry, he transforms the beloved into the figure of a shabrav. Before the reader’s eyes emerges an image of a night marauder, girded tightly at the waist, with musk-scented locks and dagger-like lashes poised for attack [14].

Like Navoi, Munis also focuses in the second stanza on the external appearance of the beloved. More broadly, in the subsequent stanzas of the mukhammas, the thematic propositions established in Navoi’s ghazal are developed progressively. The beloved’s beauty, behavior, manners, speech, and the lover’s emotional state are depicted with such harmony that the lines of Navoi and Munis do not appear separate; rather, they create the impression of a single poetic voice. A closer, independent analysis of the later stanzas further confirms this unity. The mukhammas resembles a tree formed by the grafting of two different fruits that grow together as a single organism [15].

Munis does not disrupt either the internal or external structure, nor the poetic harmony of Navoi’s ghazal. In literary scholarship, such ghazals are referred to as event-based ghazals, narrative ghazals, lyrical novellas, or lyrical narratives. In our view, following Munis’s artistic elaboration, the work assumes the form of a more detailed and richly depicted lyrical narrative.

It is particularly noteworthy that Munis selected for his mukhammas those ghazals of Navoi that had been composed with exceptional artistic mastery. This suggests that he entered into a kind of creative dialogue indeed, a subtle competition with Navoi. For Munis, writing at the level of Navoi’s poetic excellence constituted a form of artistic challenge, prompting him to mobilize the full extent of his inner potential and creative talent.

In “Xazoyin ul-maoniy”:

*Ishq ahli go’ristonida qabrim chu zohir bo’lg’usi,
Farhod oning toshin yutub, Majnun mujovir bo’lg’usi, -*

There exists a ghazal with an exquisite opening (matla’). Merely reading this ghazal provides the reader with profound spiritual pleasure and once again captivates them with the enchantment of the ghazal as a poetic genre. However, when one reads the mukhammas composed by Shermuhammad Munis on the basis of this ghazal, the reader’s spiritual and emotional world is enriched with yet another rare artistic treasure.

A comprehensive, stanza-by-stanza comparative analysis of the mukhammas would require considerable scope. Therefore, we limit ourselves here to highlighting only selected stanzas.

*Kofir ko’zingning xidmatin ixlos ila qilmish ajal,
Xanjar mijangdin aylabon, el bag’rini tilmish ajal,
Qotillig’ingni, ey pari paykar, magar bilmish ajal,
G’amzangdin o’lturmak ishin ta’lim ola kelmish ajal,
Bu nav’ ustod o’lsa, ul oz chog’da mohir bo’lg’usi.*

The seemingly simple word “ajal” (death) appearing in the first line of Alisher Navoiy’s couplet is transformed into a refrain (radif) in Shermuhammad Munis’s mukhammas. In Navoi’s verse, the notion that death has learned its “art of killing” from

the beloved's coquettish glance (*ghamza*) is presented as an unsubstantiated thesis, almost as a generalized poetic assertion. In contrast, Munis elaborates in detail on what exactly death has learned from the beloved's glance. Through the first line, the poet succeeds in revealing two conventional characteristics of the beloved's eyes as depicted in classical lyric poetry.

First, the eyes are described as infidel (*kāfir*) and are accused of robbing the lovers (*'ushshāq*) of their faith. Second, the eyes are characterized as "cruel," "each capable of taking a life," and "bloodthirsty." While Munis alludes to these traditional similes in an ironic manner, he simultaneously seeks to present a distinctive and original depiction of the beloved's eyes.

The comparison of eyelashes to daggers is likewise a conventional poetic device. In the second line, Munis alludes to this tradition while emphasizing its universality—suggesting that not merely a single beloved, but the entire lineage of beloveds, is engaged in "piercing the hearts of people" with their dagger-like lashes. The underlying intent, once again, is to depict the eyelashes themselves.

The third line serves to synthesize the preceding lines and to integrate them logically with Navoi's couplet. Since this is a highly demanding task, Munis employs subtle poetic devices such as internal rhyme to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the line.

In uniting his lines with those of Navoiy and in ensuring the semantic completeness of the stanza, the aesthetic function of the refrain "*ajal*" plays a crucial role. More broadly, Munis's artistic mastery lies in his ability to subordinate a cold, death-associated term such as "*ajal*" to the expression of life-affirming emotional intensity.

Munis's lines are thus directed toward concretizing, explicating, and aesthetically substantiating the emotional experience conveyed in Navoiy's couplet:

*Bordur manga zolim iki – gardun biri, dilbar biri,
Ashkim bila ohim erur – Jayhun biri, sarsar biri,
Behad g'amim bor, o'lsa sabb, o'lg'usi ming daftar biri,
Ko'nglum dog'i har nishdin gar bo'lsa bir til har biri,
Yuz til bila o'z holining sharhida qosir bo'lg'usi.*

In Alisher Navoi's couplet, it is difficult to identify the specific sources of suffering ("*har nish*") that afflict the lyrical subject. By contrast, the lines of Shermuhammad Munis provide a clearer specification of these sources. From the opening line, we become aware of two causes of the lyrical subject's anguish: *falak* (in the sense of fate or the times) and the beloved. The second line indicates that, as a result of their oppression, the subject's tears have turned into a river and his sighs into a storm-like wind. The third line emphasizes the boundlessness of the subject's suffering. Thus, the reader is finally able to form a concrete understanding of the pains afflicting the lyrical subject's heart. Remarkably, the lines of the mukhammas are composed in close harmony with Navoi's spiritual and aesthetic sensibilities, matching the level of his taste and poetic refinement.

Munis predominantly developed the life-affirming motifs found in Navoi's ghazals. Like Navoi, he firmly opposed asceticism and world-renunciation. The rind-like (libertine, hedonistic yet spiritually nuanced) moods in Munis's lyric poetry correspond closely to the psychological state of the lyrical persona in Navoi's rind-oriented ghazals. Munis held a particular affinity for Navoi's rind ghazals and composed several mukhammas based on them. These ghazals express a strong inclination toward the affirmation of life, and Munis further intensifies this tendency by introducing into the poetic structure the contrasting figure of the *zāhid* (ascetic), thereby creating a dynamic opposition within the work:

*Tun oqshom kuch bila zohid meni maxmuri rohatg'a,
Berib ko'p tavba, moyil bo'l, der erdi zuhdi toatg'a,
Men andin qutqarib o'zni, kelibmen endi xizmatg'a,*

*Yasa, ey piri bodakim, kelgum kaforatg'a,
Eshitdimkim, meni aylabdurur deb taoba yozg'urdung.*

This feature intensifies the artistic contrast and enhances the vitality and realism of the ghazal.

In refining the artistic composition of his ghazals, Shermuhammad Munis also learned important lessons of poetic craftsmanship from Alisher Navoi. In particular, under the influence of Navoi's philosophical and musalsal (thematically continuous) ghazal with the refrain "yo'q" ("there is none"), Munis composed a ghazal employing the same refrain. Before proceeding to a comparative analysis, we present the full texts of the ghazals. Navoiy's ghazal:

*Yordin ayru ko'ngul – mulkedurur sultoni yo'q,
Mulkkim sultoni yo'q, jismedururkim, joni yo'q.
Jismdin jonsiz ne hosil, ey musulmonlarkim, ul
Bir qaro tufrog'dekdurkim, gulu rayhoni yo'q.
Bir qaro tufrog'kim, yo'qtur gulu rayhon anga,
Bir qarong'u kechadekdurkim, mahi toboni yo'q.
Bir qarong'u kechakim, yo'qtur mahi tobon anga,
Zulmatedurkim, aning sarchashmayi hayvoni yo'q.
Zulmatekim, chashmayi hayvoni oning bo'lmag'ay,
Do'zaxedurkim, yonida ravzayi rizvoni yo'q.
Do'zaxekim, ravzayi rizvondin o'lg'ay noumid,
Bir xumoredurki, anda mastlig' imkoni yo'q.
Ey Navoyi, bor anga mundog' uqubatlarki, bor
Hajrdin dardi valekin vasldin darmoni yo'q*

Munis g'azali:

*Bu ne hijron shomi erdikim, aning poyoni yo'q,
Vasl subhining tulu' etmak dame imkoni yo'q.
Yorsiz xayli balo torojlar solg'on ko'ngul
Go'yiyo bir kishvaredurkim, oning sultoni yo'q.
Gulshani komim xazon o'lmish sarosar, o'ylakim,
Bargi ham yo'qtur demaykim, bir guli xandoni yo'q.
Zavqi diydoru jamoli shohidu taofiqi ishq,
Har ko'ngulkim, anda yo'qtur, paykaredur, joni yo'q.
Davrdin har dam etar osib, o'lur rasvoyi dahr,
Ulki, rozi chehrasidin pardayi kitmoni yo'q.
Oshiqekim, yori ollida demas ahvolini,
Bulbuledurkim, chamanda nolavu afg'oni yo'q.
Johu faqr, ey Munis, andoq zid erur bir-biriga,
Kim, bu mavjud o'lmag'ay to qilmag'uncha oni yo'q*

It is evident from the content of the texts that both works are love-philosophical ghazals in terms of theme. They are also equal in length, each consisting of seven couplets. In their philosophical-aesthetic content and system of imagery, the two ghazals are remarkably close. The love-based ideological concepts of the two great poet-lovers are likewise aligned. The ghazal of Shermuhammad Munis may be seen as a philosophical and artistic continuation and refinement of the ghazal by Alisher Navoi. From a scholarly classification perspective, Munis's ghazal could be evaluated as a nazira (response poem)

or *tatabbuʻ ghazal*. However, in our view, it is difficult to assert definitively that Munis intentionally composed it as a direct *nazira* to Navoi's *ghazal*. No individual couplet or line from Navoi's work has been reproduced verbatim as a structural basis for the new *ghazal*.

In the process of artistic creation, there exists a particular psychological (spiritual) condition whereby a work that deeply appeals to the author captivates the imagination and continues to circulate persistently within it. The meaning, ideas, emotional tone, and artistic imagery of such a work do not leave the creator. The poet remains under its influence and cannot fully detach from it. When embarking on the creation of a new work, this internalized influence may even "pursue" the author. It is likely that such a psychological process occurred during the composition of this *ghazal* by Munis. He initially set out to compose an entirely new *ghazal*, as is evident from its opening lines. However, the influence of Navoi's *ghazal* seems to have asserted itself involuntarily, guiding the continuation of the poem within the framework of this literary influence.

The philosophical-aesthetic generalization found in the first line of Navoi's *ghazal*—"the heart separated from the beloved is like a kingdom without a sovereign"—serves as the basis for an expanded formulation in the second couplet of Munis's *ghazal*, where the heart, ravaged by calamities, is likened to a country deprived of its ruler. In the second couplet of Navoi's *ghazal*, a lifeless body is compared to barren soil in which neither flowers nor basil can grow. Correspondingly, in the third couplet of Munis's *ghazal*, the heart—whose garden of aspirations has entirely withered—is likened to a land devoid of both green leaves and blossoming flowers. The fourth couplet of Munis's *ghazal* also follows the logical progression of Navoi's verses. However, in the subsequent couplets, the philosophical reflections develop independently. These contain deeper generalizations not explicitly present in Navoi's *ghazal*.

For instance, according to the generalization expressed in the sixth couplet, a lover unable to express his state before the beloved is akin to a nightingale in a garden that remains silent, neither lamenting nor singing. In the concluding couplet, it is asserted that the innate human inclination toward wealth and the condition of spiritual poverty (*faqr*) are mutually contradictory to such an extent that one cannot be attained without renouncing the other. That is, a seeker on the spiritual path must abandon material wealth and status in order to attain *faqr*, while one attached to worldly possessions cannot become truly poor in the spiritual sense. More precisely, wealth and spiritual poverty cannot coexist within a single being.

4. Conclusion

In terms of compositional structure, Navoi's work represents a *musalsal* (thematically continuous) *ghazal*. Some couplets in Munis's *ghazal* also display a sequential structural quality; however, this continuity is not maintained consistently throughout the poem. Therefore, it may be concluded either that Munis did not intend to compose a fully *musalsal ghazal*, or that he did not entirely attain the level of Navoi's poetic mastery in this regard. In general, the mentor–disciple relationship between Navoi and Munis can be approached from multiple perspectives, yielding interesting evidence and significant conclusions. This topic, in itself, may serve as the subject of an independent scholarly investigation.

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