

Alisher Navoi

'Farkhad And Shirin'

Immortal Story of All-Conquering Love

By V. ZAKHIDOV

Corresponding Member, Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR

ALISHER NAVOI'S "Farkhad and Shirin," written in 1484, ranks among the world's greatest poetic works. It is a veritable treasure house of the most progressive ideas of the time that reflected the aspirations of the people.

The basic theme of the poem is pure, all-conquering love that transcends the narrow bounds of the personal relationships of two human beings. It is rather the love of men embodying the finest qualities of humanity for the rational, sincere and good.

The brutal feudal system of Navoi's time trampled on all lofty and humane ideals, and in "Farkhad and Shirin" the poet made it his purpose to champion the dignity and rights of men against the ruthless ruling classes of the period.

LEARNS FROM PEOPLE

In his "Farkhad and Shirin" Navoi gave a new interpretation of an ancient eastern legend. Farkhad derives his knowledge and wisdom not only from learned men, but from the common people, and he becomes a great builder. Farkhad comes into possession of the magic "mirror of Iskander" in which one can see his own fate provided he has a certain talisman and has made a pilgrimage to Soorates. After a great many adventures Farkhad finds the talisman in the land of the Greeks and meets the sage, who discloses to him the secret of the mirror.

In the mirror Farkhad sees a strange but enchanting land and a maiden of unusual beauty. The land is Armenia, and the maiden, the Armenian princess Shirin. Setting out for Armenia, Farkhad finds the people there groaning under the burden of inhuman labor, and to ease their lot he hews an irrigation canal through granite rocks. Farkhad engages in battle the shah Khosrau who has invaded Armenia, and deals him defeat after defeat. Finally, however, Farkhad falls victim to Khosrau's perfidy, but Shirin takes her own life to escape being taken hostage by Khosrau. Love triumphs...

The reader of the poem is left in no doubt that Farkhad's sympathies are with the humiliated and oppressed; he is dissatisfied with the environment in which he finds himself and wants to escape from the palace and wealth, become versed in the sciences and accomplish something great and unusual that would be of service to the people. After his travels in Greece and the acquisition of the "mirror of Iskander" which reflected the world and its people and their deeds, Farkhad became the perfect human being that was Navoi's ideal.

Farkhad and Shirin are symbolic of everything fine and noble. To religious mysticism, fatalism and passive submission Navoi opposes the necessity of struggle against evil for the rights of human beings. The poet's heroes do not submit to the cruel realities of social inequality which stifled the noblest aspirations of people, but fight staunchly for the achievement of their radiant goals even if they must perish in the struggle. The power of their love for the lofty and the noble is equaled by their hatred for the carriers of evil and the oppressors of the people. Even as he is dying, Farkhad talks of the need to destroy evil. And when Shirin sees Farkhad's dead body and realizes the hopelessness of her position, she courageously prefers death to captivity.



JUBILEE EDITIONS. These two illustrations come from the special edition of Alisher Navoi's "Khamisa" put out for the quinquenary. Left is Mejnun in the desert and right Farkhad, hewing an irrigation canal through rocks, and Shirin.

—Drawings by V. Kaldalov

His Genius Shines Through the Ages

By L. KLIMOVICH

ALISHER NAVOI, poet, philosopher and scholar, was the founder of Uzbek literature and of the Uzbek literary language. Although the history of Uzbek literature dates back to the first millennium before our era, although many Uzbek delightful legends, stories, tales, songs and wise sayings were created, the Uzbek language was for many centuries ousted by Persian and Arabic, the latter a language utterly alien to the peoples of Central Asia. It was not until the 15th century that Uzbek began to figure again as a literary language. This historical event of signal importance for the entire subsequent development of the literature and culture of the Uzbek people is associated with the name of Navoi, the 500th anniversary of whose birth on Feb. 9, 1441, in the town of Gerat, Uzbekistan, is now being widely observed by the Soviet Union (the 1941 jubilee celebrations were postponed owing to the war).

Alisher Navoi came of aristocratic parentage. His father was the governor of the Khorasan town of Sebezevar, his mother was the nurse of sultan Hussein Baikara (1469-1506). Nevertheless Alisher's childhood and youth were far from peaceful. For several decades following the death of Tamerlane Central Asia was the scene of a fierce struggle for power among his heirs. This struggle had an adverse effect on social life, and the rapid changes in the political situation compelled the Alisher family to move frequently from place to place.

Versatile in Art and Science

Endowed with exceptional gifts, Alisher Navoi was well versed in all the branches of learning known at his time. He wrote in old Uzbek and Persian, knew philosophy, history, poetry, grammar, rhetoric and cosmography, was versed in the exact sciences, in architecture, irrigation and was a connoisseur of music, painting and the art of binding and illustrating manuscript books. From 1469, when Hussein Baikara became the ruler of Gerat, then a big cultural and political center of Central Asia, Alisher Navoi occupied important posts in the government. Under Navoi the cultural and political im-

to the people he concentrated his attention on expressing his ideas in the simplest possible language. He criticized the poets of his time for their ornate style in which the meaning of their work was often lost. Believing that poetry's loftiest purpose was to serve the people, Navoi said: "The principal element in poetry is content, the form does not matter. Verses whose content is uninteresting are of little value to intelligent people... Only he is a diver in the ocean of words who finds the gem of meaning."

NAVAI'S "Khamisa" (Quintuple), which runs to more than 53,000 rhymed lines, is written in the Uzbek language. It consists of five poems the best-known of which are

NAVAI APHORISMS

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Wealth is a blessing only if it is enjoyed by the whole people.

Loyalty and staunchness are brethren.

"Leila and Mejnun" and "Farkhad and Shirin." Nizami, the great Azerbaijan poet (1141-1208), was Navoi's predecessor in the creation of the quintuple form of poetry.

In his fourth poem, "The Seven Planets," Navoi spoke of the vicissitudes of fortune, of misery and violence and the ultimate triumph of life. The subject of this poem is original and completes a cycle of seven short stories inserted in the Quintuple. As in the other works, many of the motifs of this poem bear a close affinity to folklore.

The final poem of the "Khamisa" is dedicated to Alexander the Great. The story of Alexander and his campaign was extremely popular in the East. Navoi depicts Alexander as the ideal ruler, just and generous to his subjects.

One of the most remarkable of Navoi's attributes was his amazing capacity for work. Some of his long poems were written within the space of a few months. The entire Quintuple was written in two years, 1483 and 1484.

NAVAI'S humanist views earned him many enemies. In his capacity as statesman Navoi had to fight reactionaries who opposed him openly and secretly. On more than one occasion slander and suspicion were cast on him. In spite of the eminent position he occupied, the poet was banished from Gerat more than once and an attempt was even made to poison him.

Sought to Apply Ideas in Life

Navoi was a man of tremendous will and energy. "He who has imbibed knowledge but has not applied it, is like the peasant who plows his field but does not sow it." Navoi always sought to carry into life the ideas he believed in and which he propounded in his writings.

The poet's dreams have been realized. His works have found their way to the people. Navoi is known and loved not only in Uzbekistan but far beyond its boundaries. His influence on the development of literature and language in the East is incalculable.

Entire Soviet Union Pays Homage To Uzbek National Poet

Delegations From All Republics Come to Tashkent For Quinquenary Celebrations

From Moscow News Correspondent

TASHKENT, Uzbek SSR—The capital of Uzbekistan is preparing to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Alisher Navoi, the great national poet of the Uzbeks. Poets, writers, translators and journalists from all the other republics of the Soviet Union are streaming into Tashkent to take part in the commemoration on the invitation of the Uzbek Union of Soviet Writers. Delegates have already arrived from Moscow, the Ukraine, the Baltic republics, all the republics of the Soviet East, as well as from different towns and villages of Uzbekistan.

Tashkent is festively decorated. Portraits of the Uzbek poet as well as his maxims and sayings are displayed on most of the city's squares and streets and adorn the facades of many public buildings. Talks and lectures about Alisher Navoi, who is the founder of Uzbek literature, are being held in all the city's clubs, and his works are recited by Uzbek poets before audiences of factory workers and peasants.

During the commemoration all Uzbek theaters will show new plays dedicated to the great poet. The Tashkent Drama Theater has produced a play called "Navoi," another theater is staging a musical drama "Farkhad and Shirin," based on Navoi's poem of the same title, and a third theater is rehearsing a ballet on a theme borrowed from his poems.

IMPOSING EXHIBITION

An exhibition devoted to Navoi and his works is to be opened at the Uzbek Opera Theater, occupying the foyer and two large halls. The exhibition will display paintings, sculptures, placards, ceramic ware, embroideries and other works of art portraying the poet. One of the outstanding exhibits will be a set of porcelain vases made in Leningrad and decorated with portraits of Navoi, scenes from some of his epic works, and Uzbek national ornaments.

The latest jubilee editions of Navoi's works are now on sale in every bookstore of Tashkent. Some of his poems and gazels issued in editions of 10,000 to 15,000 copies were sold out in one day. The bookstores report a sharp increase in the demand for Navoi's poetic works as well as for poetry in general.

The jubilee commission appointed by Uzbekistan's government has worked out a program for the forthcoming celebrations. The Union of Soviet Writers of Uzbekistan and the Uzbek Academy of Sciences will both hold anniversary meetings dedicated to Alisher Navoi's works and epoch; a state public library bearing Navoi's name is to be opened in a new, recently-erected building, and on one of the public squares of Tashkent a foundation stone will be laid for a future monument to the great poet.

The meetings of the Writers' Union and the Academy of Sciences will be addressed by poets, writers and scientists in the field of orientology. During the years of Soviet power Alisher Navoi has won a great many new readers and admirers among the different peoples inhabiting the USSR.

I have talked with the heads of some of the delegations that have already arrived in Tashkent and here is a summary of the information I gathered from them:

Moscow. On the occasion of the forthcoming anniversary four of the leading publishing houses of Moscow have issued Russian translations of Navoi's poems and lyrics. The first four poems of his "Khamisa" (Quintuple) have been translated in full, and the fifth in abridged form.

Leningrad. From ancient manuscripts Leningrad scientists have succeeded in re-

his poems have been published for the first time in Lithuanian translation.

Baku. A jubilee edition of Navoi's "Farkhad and Shirin" has just appeared in the Azerbaijani language. Anniversary meetings are scheduled to be held in all the large cities of the republic. The meetings will be addressed by prominent poets and writers.

Frunze. During the quinquennial celebrations the local Union of Soviet Writers will hold a joint meeting with Kirghiz orientologists. Talks and lectures about the life and works of Navoi are slated to be held in all the principal cities of the republic. Navoi's romantic poem "Leila and Mejnun" has been translated and published in the Kirghiz language. The May issue of the republican literary journal is devoted almost entirely to Navoi.

Kiev. Navoi's "Farkhad and Shirin" has been translated and printed in the Ukrainian language for the first time. Many of the motion picture theaters throughout the Ukraine are currently showing the Uzbek film "Alisher Navoi."

Ashkhabad. In addition to the publication of new translations of Alisher Navoi's poems in the Turkmenian language, there has recently appeared an interesting volume of Turkmenian folk legends concerning the great Uzbek poet. A group of Turkmenistan's best rug weavers, including Aina Nurieva, a deputy to the republican Supreme Soviet, has made a rug portrait of Alisher Navoi framed in a border of antique design. The rug will be presented as a gift to the Uzbek people.

PRIOR to 1948 the works of Navoi were published in the USSR in 26 editions with a total circulation of 220,000 copies, in six different languages. Within the past several months his poems have been translated into at least 10 more languages and printed in no less than 100,000 copies.

Last year I happened to be in Azerbaijan at the time of the 800th anniversary celebrations dedicated to another oriental genius, the Azerbaijan poet Nizami of Ganja. Through the extensive popularization of his works, tens of millions of people, inhabiting the vast stretch of territory from the Pacific to the Carpathians, had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Nizami's poetic compositions. The same thing is now being repeated with regard to Alisher Navoi on the occasion of the quinquenary of his birth. The festival of the Uzbek people has spread far beyond their national borders. Navoi's anniversary jubilee is a gala day of culture for all the peoples of the USSR.

Azerbaijan Academy Holds Navoi Session

BAKU, Azerbaijan SSR—The Social Sciences Department of this republic's Academy of Sciences has held an enlarged session to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Alisher Navoi, the Uzbek poet

made it his purpose to champion the dignity and rights of men against the ruthless ruling classes of the period.

LEARNS FROM PEOPLE

In his "Farkhad and Shirin" Navoi gave a new interpretation of an ancient eastern legend. Farkhad derives his knowledge and wisdom not only from learned men, but from the common people, and he becomes a great builder. Farkhad comes into possession of the magic "mirror of Iskander" in which one can see his own fate provided he has a certain talisman and has made a pilgrimage to Socrates. After a great many adventures Farkhad finds the talisman in the land of the Greeks and meets the sage, who discloses to him the secret of the mirror.

In the mirror Farkhad sees a strange but enchanting land and a maiden of unusual beauty. The land is Armenia, and the maiden, the Armenian princess Shirin. Setting out for Armenia, Farkhad finds the people there groaning under the burden of inhuman labor, and to ease their lot he hews an irrigation canal through granite rocks. Farkhad engages in battle the shah Khosrau who has invaded Armenia, and deals him defeat after defeat. Finally, however, Farkhad falls victim to Khosrau's perfidy, but Shirin takes her own life to escape being taken hostage by Khosrau. Love triumphs...

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UPHOLDS WOMAN'S RIGHTS

At a time when the ruling feudal-clerical clique and its moral code made woman a slave, Alisher Navoi championed her dignity and rights. "Farkhad and Shirin" contains several splendid portraits of women who are in no way inferior to men in public affairs and government, the sciences and the arts.

The image of Shirin as painted by Navoi is charming. She loves Farkhad with all her soul not only because of his personal qualities, but because he gave her country water by building the irrigation canal.

Stressing the importance of science in the struggle for the prosperity of the people—his Farkhad "studied and investigated all the sciences in the world"—Navoi sends his hero to seek knowledge not in the much vaunted centers of Moslem theology, but in ancient Greece which the poet regarded as having reached the acme of wisdom. Navoi's thesis is that science must serve the people, and when Farkhad sees the masses of slaves toiling to dig an irrigation canal, he hastens to their aid, saying: "What do all my crafts and learning mean to me if I do not apply them in deed?"

This approach to science was of enormous importance at a time when the reactionary clericals and the rulers of the medieval East sought to keep the masses in utter ignorance, and learning was the prerogative of a limited circle of members of the feudal upper class.

One of the finest notes struck by "Farkhad and Shirin" is the theme of friendship among nations. A true humanist, Navoi did not recognize any racial or religious barriers between people. The heroes of his poem are people of different na-

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the latter a language utterly alien to the peoples of Central Asia. It was not until the 15th century that Uzbek began to figure again as a literary language. This historical event of signal importance for the entire subsequent development of the literature and culture of the Uzbek people is associated with the name of Navoi, the 500th anniversary of whose birth on Feb. 9, 1441, in the town of Gerat, Uzbekistan, is now being widely observed by the Soviet Union (the 1941 jubilee celebrations were postponed owing to the war).

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Navoi began to write poetry at an early age. "Navoi," which means "melodious," was the pen-name the poet used for his writings in his native Uzbek language. His real name was Nizameddin Alisher.

Navoi's literary heritage is colossal. His biggest poetical work is the "Khamasa" (Quintuple) consisting of five long poems. Noteworthy also are his four volumes of lyrical verse; a long poem "The Language of the Birds," a moral treatise in prose and verse; "Collection of Rare People," a historical work dealing with men of letters in Gerat at that time; "Struggle of Two Languages," a long treatise comparing the lexicon and grammar of the old Uzbek and Persian languages and proving the virtues of the old Uzbek; "Table of Verse Meter," a book on the rules of verse-writing; "The History of Iranian Kings," and others. The vast majority of Navoi's works have survived to our day, many of them in well-preserved manuscripts dating back to the author's lifetime.

Navoi developed the cultural traditions of his people. He towered like a mountain peak above his epoch. Among other important problems pertaining to the social progress of his people, Navoi solved the problem of creating works of art in the Uzbek language.

In an effort to make his works accessible

to the people he concentrated his attention on expressing his ideas in the simplest possible language. He criticized the poets of his time for their ornate style in which the meaning of their work was often lost. Believing that poetry's loftiest purpose was to serve the people, Navoi said: "The principal element in poetry is content, the form does not matter. Verses whose content is uninteresting are of little value to intelligent people... Only he is a diver in the ocean of words who finds the gem of meaning."

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The originality and independent value of Navoi's "Khamasa" are by no means minimized by the fact that some of his poems bear the same titles and follow the same measure as Nizami's. Navoi deliberately employed the tradition-hallowed images and themes to create a work of art in the old Uzbek language. The unchanging quality of literary images and themes in the medieval literature of the Orient was a reflection of the stagnant nature of society.

Played Evil Forces

The first poem of Navoi's Quintuple, "Consternation of the Righteous," numbers more than 8,000 rhymed lines. In it the poet addresses the ruler and expresses his views on society. In a number of literary miniatures Navoi attacks the bearers of social evil, brands officials for abusing their power and clericals for exploiting the ignorance of the people.

The second poem, "Leila and Mejnun," is the story of unhappy love. It is sometimes called the "Romeo and Juliet" of the Orient although it was written before the Shakespearean tragedy. The first romantic poem about Leila and Mejnun was written in the 12th century by Nizami. From that time the legend took firm root in the countries of the East, became part of oriental folklore and a favorite theme of romantic verse. Navoi's poem shows how the imperfections of feudal society and the cruel laws obtaining at the time ruined the lives of two loving young hearts.

The theme of fidelity in love is treated of in Navoi's third poem of the "Khamasa," "Farkhad and Shirin," based on a medieval Eastern tale about the Armenian queen Shirin and Khosrau Parvase (591-628), the Shah of Iran.

In his fourth poem, "The Seven Planets," Navoi spoke of the vicissitudes of fortune, of misery and violence and the ultimate triumph of life. The subject of this poem is original and completes a cycle of seven short stories inserted in the Quintuple. As in the other works, many of the motifs of this poem bear a close affinity to folklore.

The final poem of the "Khamasa" is dedicated to Alexander the Great. The story of Alexander and his campaign was extremely popular in the East. Navoi depicts Alexander as the ideal ruler, just and generous to his subjects.

One of the most remarkable of Navoi's attributes was his amazing capacity for work. Some of his long poems were written within the space of a few months. The entire Quintuple was written in two years, 1483 and 1484.

NAVOI'S humanist views earned him many enemies. In his capacity as statesman Navoi had to fight reactionaries who opposed him openly and secretly. On more than one occasion slander and suspicion were cast on him. In spite of the eminent position he occupied, the poet was banished from Gerat more than once and an attempt was even made to poison him.

Sought to Apply Ideas in Life

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The poet's dreams have been realized. His works have found their way to the people. Navoi is known and loved not only in Uzbekistan but far beyond its boundaries. His influence on the development of literature and progressive social thought in Central Asia, in Azerbaijan and the entire Near East, cannot be overestimated. The Azerbaijani classic Muhammad Fizuli, the great Turkmenian poet Makhtum-Kuli, the founder of Kazakh literature Abai Kunanbaev, the founder of Kara-Kalpakian literature Berdak and many other poets and prose writers number him among their teachers. Navoi's heroes—Farkhad, Shirin, Leila, Mejnun, Bakhrum and Diyavaram—have been given a new lease on life in the works of Uzbek, Turkmenian and Tajik folklore. Many mountains, rivers and settlements in Central Asia have been named after them. One of the biggest power developments now under construction in Uzbekistan under the post-war five-year plan bears the name of Navoi's hero Farkhad. Modern poets and prose writers draw inspiration from Navoi's writings.

The first scientific study of Navoi's works was made by Russian scholars. In a dissertation delivered in 1856 at the Oriental Languages Department of the St. Petersburg University, M. Nikitsky gave a high appraisal of the poetry and statesmanship of Navoi. From that time on Navoi's writings began to be included in the textbooks of Russia's higher schools.

It was only in Soviet times, however, that a thorough scientific study of the works of Navoi was made. Soviet scholars have exposed the unscientific "theories" held by bourgeois scientists and bourgeois nationalists who have tried to minimize the significance of the Uzbek people's great poet. Navoi's writings are being translated into Russian and many other languages of the Soviet Union and are being made accessible to the average Soviet reader.

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Leningrad. From ancient manuscripts Leningrad scientists have succeeded in reconstructing Navoi's epic poem "Woosers of Hearts" in its original form, eliminating all later distortions. It has been published in the old Uzbek language and consists of three parts interspersed with aphorisms and maxims. Copies of the book have been flown to Tashkent by plane.

Vilnius. "Navoi," a novel by the contemporary Uzbek writer Aibek, has been translated and published in the Lithuanian language in many thousands of copies. The May issues of Lithuanian newspapers and magazines devoted to literature and art are dedicated chiefly to Alisher Navoi and his poetry. Fragments from some of

orientalologists. Talks and lectures about the life and works of Navoi are slated to be held in all the principal cities of the republic. Navoi's romantic poem "Leila and Mejnun" has been translated and published in the Kirghiz language. The May issue of the republican literary journal is devoted almost entirely to Navoi.

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Azerbaijani Academy Holds Navoi Session

BAKU, Azerbaijan SSR—The Social Sciences Department of this republic's Academy of Sciences has held an enlarged session to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Alisher Navoi, the Uzbek poet and thinker. The meeting heard papers on the life and work of Navoi and on ancient manuscripts of his works preserved in the institutes and museums of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. A message of greetings was sent to the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.

The Academy's collection contains 21 Navoi manuscripts, the most valuable being a 15th-century manuscript, copied in 1486 during the lifetime of the poet. This unique relic has been sent with the Azerbaijan delegation to the Navoi commemoration in Uzbekistan as a gift to the Uzbek people.



NAVOI AND HIS PUPIL. Still from film devoted to the life of Uzbekistan's greatest poet. This film merited a Stalin Prize