



## THE USE OF MUAMMO AS A LITERARY ART FORM IN CLASSICAL UZBEK LITERATURE


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Classical Uzbek literature is notable not only for its ideological and philosophical content, but also for the aesthetic richness expressed through various artistic devices. Among them, letter-based literary arts such as **muammo**, **kitobat**, and **istikhrāj** hold particular value due to their formal, logical, and intellectual complexity. Through these artistic forms, poets demonstrated not only their creative prowess, but also enriched the reader's thinking, evoked unique pleasure, and enhanced the persuasive power of poetic expression.

In the history of classical literature, one of the most complex and intellectually demanding letter-based poetic forms is muammo. Linguistically, the word “**muammo**” is derived from the Arabic “a‘mā,” meaning “*blind*” or “*hidden*,” implying something concealed or cryptic. In classical Eastern literature, including Uzbek literature, muammo involves discovering a hidden name or concept embedded within a short poem. The concealed idea must logically correspond to the theme of the poem and be related to a specific person, event, or phenomenon. Indication or allusion plays a crucial role, and the hinted word is known as “**ism moddasi**” (name substance). The act of solving the muammo is expressed as “**hal(l)**”, meaning “solving the issue.”

Muammo is one of the shorter poetic genres in classical literature. Although muammo has been composed in the forms of *ghazal*, *qit'a*, and even *qasida*, its typical structure consists of one bayt (two lines), or sometimes two bayts in total. If within such a brief form the poet can artistically and aesthetically conceal a name in a way that gives literary pleasure, it becomes a demonstration of the poet's creativity and skill. While muammo first appeared in Arabic literature in the 10<sup>th</sup> -11th centuries, it evolved into a distinct genre in Persian literature by the 14th century. In Turkic literature, the muammo genre gained prominence thanks to great poets such as Alisher Navoi, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, and Muhammad Rizo Ogahiy. Although Navoi wrote about 500 muammos in Persian, 373 of them have survived. His 52 Turkic muammos are included in the “Navodir ush-shabob” collection. He also authored a theoretical treatise on muammo writing, in Persian, titled “**Mufradot**” (“The Alphabet of Muammo”) or “**Risola-i Muammo**”. It is worth noting that “Mufradot” is regarded as one of the most comprehensive treatises on muammo written in both Persian and Turkic literature. In Uzbek classical literature Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur contributed significantly to the development of the muammo genre after Navoi. Though he did not write a separate treatise, Babur mastered the genre's theoretical principles and captivated readers with his skillfully crafted poetic muammos.



During the 19th century in Khorezm, many poets practiced writing muammos. The literary legacy of Alisher Navoi and Babur played the role of a foundational school for this tradition. Muhammadrizo Ogahiy, a worthy successor to these great poets, composed beautiful muammos that contributed to the wide dissemination of the genre among contemporary poets.

Ogahiy, faithfully continuing the traditions of his mentors, wrote around 80 muammos. The scholarly work of Madina Matyoqubova, a researcher of Ogahiy's legacy, has been instrumental in studying these works. Her monographs, *"Ajab ohangu navolar"* and *"Zehn ziynati"*, provide extensive insights into Ogahiy's lyric poems and muammo interpretations.

Research shows that Ogahiy remained true to the traditions of his predecessors not only in style, but also in choosing subjects for his muammos. He innovated within this tradition by structuring his muammos in a unique compositional manner. For example, he began his collections with muammos featuring the hidden name of God ("Allah"), followed by praise poems containing the name "Muhammad." This structured approach left a lasting impression in the realm of muammo writing. Thus, it can be said that the muammo genre reached a high artistic level in the 15th century and further evolved in content and form by the 19th century.

Another key figure in this process is Komil Khorezmi, who occupies a unique place in the history of classical Uzbek literature thanks to his individual style, poetic mastery, and meaningful works. His collection includes three muammos titled **"Kamol," "Khisrav,"** and **"Ibrohim,"** which encode names in poetic form. Analyzing these works reveals not only Komil's poetic skill, but also his refined literary taste.

Research indicates that Komil Khorezmi adhered to the thematic traditions established by earlier masters, as well. It was common in classical literature to hide the names of prophets and great poets in muammos — as seen in Navoi's muammos dedicated to "Khisrav" and "Kamol," and similar works by Babur and Ogahiy. Thus, Komil Khorezmi produced aesthetically and structurally perfect muammos, contributing to the genre's evolution and refinement in Turkic literature.

In conclusion, the formation and development of the muammo genre in classical Uzbek literature owe much to the contributions of Alisher Navoi, Babur, Ogahiy, and Komil Khorezmi. The poetic samples they left behind are still highly valued by readers, literary enthusiasts, and lovers of classical poetry today.

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