

GAFUR GHULAM AND SADRIDDIN AYNİ: A REMARKABLE EXAMPLE OF UZBEK–TAJİK LITERARY FRIENDSHIP

Ilhomjonov Lutfulla Sultanovich

PhD in Philosophy, Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy

Tashkent State University of Economics

Email: ilhomjonov63@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the literary friendship between the prominent Uzbek poet Gafur Ghulam and the distinguished Tajik writer Sadriddin Ayni as a remarkable example of Uzbek–Tajik literary and cultural relations. Drawing upon archival materials preserved in the Gafur Ghulam House Museum, including photographs, personal correspondence, manuscripts, and memoirs, the study explores the evolution of their relationship from literary acquaintance to a close mentor–disciple bond. Particular attention is given to previously published letters exchanged between the two writers, Gafur Ghulam's commemorative writings dedicated to Ayni, and his message prepared for the celebration of Ayni's 80th anniversary. The article argues that their sincere friendship significantly contributed to strengthening the cultural dialogue and literary cooperation between the Uzbek and Tajik peoples. Their intellectual legacy continues to serve as an important symbol of mutual respect, shared cultural heritage, and enduring friendship between the two neighboring nations.

Keywords: Gafur Ghulam, Sadriddin Ayni, Uzbek–Tajik literary relations, literary friendship, cultural heritage, mentor–disciple relationship, correspondence, archival sources, literary cooperation, House Museum.

Introduction

The friendship and brotherhood between the Uzbek and Tajik peoples date back thousands of years. History demonstrates that their shared past, culture, art, and literature have been closely intertwined, while their kinship has become deeply embedded in both their identity and collective consciousness.

As one writer observed: “The friendship between Abu Ali ibn Sina and Beruni, Ulugh Beg and Qazizoda Rumi, Alisher Navoi and Abdurahman Jami, Toshkhoja Toshtarosh and Muqimiy, Donish and Furqat, Ustod Ayni and Hamza Hakimzoda, as well as the friendships that I and my contemporaries shared with Payrov Sulaymonov, Suhayli, M. Rahimzoda, Dehotiy, M. Tursunzoda, S. Ulughzoda, Rahim Jalil, and many other writers—and, ultimately, the friendship of these distinguished guests with Uzbek authors—constitute a historical reality that has taken deep and enduring root”.¹

Main Body

In particular, the friendship and brotherhood between the People's Poet of Uzbekistan, Academician Gafur Ghulam, and prominent representatives of Tajik literature have played, and

¹ Gafur Ghulam. Literary and critical articles. Tashkent. Science. 1973, 137.



continue to play, a significant role in strengthening the fraternal relations between the Uzbek and Tajik peoples.

A rare and valuable photograph is preserved in the Gafur Ghulam House Museum. It features Sadriddin Ayni, Ghayrati, Rahim Majidi, Gafur Ghulam, Ziya Said, Aydin, Abulqasim Lahuti, and several other distinguished writers and intellectuals. These individuals were participants in the Literary Conference held in Moscow in 1934.²

Another historical photograph preserved in the museum features Gafur Ghulam, Sadriddin Ayni, Abdullah Qodiriy, and A. Dehotiy. The photograph was taken in Tashkent in 1936.

The collection of the Gafur Ghulam House Museum contains numerous photographs, archival documents, letters, and other correspondence, as well as copies of Sadriddin Ayni's works, including *Dokhunda*, *The Death of the Usurer*, *Smert Rostovshchika* (*The Death of the Moneylender*), and *Bukhara*. These valuable materials provide compelling evidence of the sincere friendship between the two writers and their enduring mentor–disciple relationship.

Gafur Ghulam first became acquainted with Sadriddin Ayni in the 1930s. What initially began as a literary friendship gradually developed into a close personal relationship characterized by mutual respect and the traditional mentor–disciple bond. They met frequently at literary conferences held in Samarkand, Tashkent, and other cities, maintaining active creative and intellectual exchanges.

Recalling these years, Gafur Ghulam wrote:

“Our respected teachers, Ayni and Lahuti, regarded my home as their own. Whenever they visited Tashkent, my house was always their place of residence”³

As early as 1935, Gafur Ghulam composed the poem "To Sadriddin Ayni", which he recited at a jubilee celebration held in Tashkent in honor of the distinguished writer. In subsequent years, he dedicated several articles to his mentor, Sadriddin Ayni, including "Dear Teacher," "A Great Test," "Dear Brothers!," and "Our Dear Friends and Relatives."

The following letter was written by Sadriddin Ayni to Gafur Ghulam in 1936. According to its content, the two writers had planned to travel to Khujand (then Leninabad) together. However, for reasons unknown, Gafur Ghulam was unable to make the journey. Having traveled to Khujand alone, Ayni was astonished by the remarkable changes he observed there and wrote the following letter to Gafur Ghulam:

“Dear Comrade Gafur Ghulam,

Sometimes one's heart is set on doing something, yet, for one reason or another, it never comes to pass. Your sudden decision to accompany me to Leninabad, followed almost immediately by your change of mind, was one such occasion. While I was still in Tashkent, I did not attach much importance to your decision. However, after arriving here, I deeply regretted not insisting that you come with me.

Leninabad bears no resemblance to the old Khujand—it has been completely transformed. Indeed, it truly deserves the name Leninabad. And what about its people? They, too, have changed entirely; every collective farmer seems to be a new person.

Before leaving Tashkent, I worried that I would arrive at Khujand railway station late and wondered what I would do if my telegram had not reached its destination. Yet when I arrived, I

² Gafur Gulom thought-museum fund. KP-2606.

³ Gafur Ghulam. Literary and critical articles. Tashkent. Fan. 1973. p. 170.



was amazed to find a line of automobiles waiting for me. It was hard to believe that such a small city could have so many cars. I even thought to myself, "If only Gafur were here, he would have one all to himself." It reminded me of how I once hurried through the streets of Tashkent carrying my luggage, afraid of missing the train.

As you know, Stalinabad still does not have a decent hotel. I am writing this letter from a room on the second floor of the Leninabad Hotel. Although the hotel cannot compare with the National Hotel in terms of facilities, the panoramic view from my room—overlooking the entire city, the Syr Darya River, and the surrounding mountains—is even more impressive. I have been here for several days. If you still decide to come, it is not too late. You may stay for a while and then return whenever you wish.

Please convey my greetings to Comrade Shoshiy, Sister Aydin, and all those who have not forgotten me. If you happen to see Giyos Khojayeov, tell him that I dedicate the merit of my running on foot with my luggage, so as not to miss the train, to the soul of his late father. Please also extend my greetings to Comrade Beregin.

With comradely regards,

Sadriddin Ayni

21 September 1936

Address: Room No. 19, Leninabad (Khujand) Hotel⁴.

Envelope inscription: 47 Stalin Street, Tashkent. Union of Soviet Writers. Uzbek SSR. Please deliver to Comrade Gafur Ghulam through Comrade Aydin.

Archival note: The letter was handwritten in the Arabic script using black ink and has been preserved together with its original envelope. It consists of two pages. On the reverse side of the archival folder appears an inscription in Gafur Ghulam's handwriting: "Samarkand, Ayni Street. To Ayni." The document measures 17 × 21 cm and is dated 1936.

In 1954, Uzbek and Tajik literature suffered a profound loss with the passing of the bilingual writer Sadriddin Ayni. Deeply grieved by the death of his mentor, Gafur Ghulam wrote the following article in the Tajik language in tribute to his memory:

“Омадану зистану рафтан қонуни ҳаёт аст. Ҳаёти аз саргузарондаи устои муҳтарам Садриддин Айний мазмуни як асари мукамал ро дар бар мигирад. У дар мадрасаҳои тангу тори Бухоро укубатҳои тоқатгудози қашшоқи ва нодори мо бисёр қашида. Заҳри забон ва шиканҷаҳои мутасибон ро бисёр чашида аст.

Бо ҳаракати революционӣ ва маданият дустияш дар назди амир у бад карда аст. Аз зарби чуби онҳо души қавияш ғиғор ва тани азизаш низор гашта буд. Лекин ин ҳама азобу кулфату азобу ҳақорат пеши роҳи иҷоди у ро гирифтани наҷвонист. Балки у камари ҳиммат ро дар роҳи иҷод ва хидмати халқ боз ҳам мустаҳкамтар бастан.

Батуфайли раҳбари ва ғамхории бениҳояти партияи кмунисти ва ҳукумати совети доираси жаҳонбинии ин пири пӯрдон то рафти васеътар гардида муносиби талаби халқу замон асарҳои пӯрқиймат бамайдон овард ва баҳазинаи илму маърифати совети дурдонаҳои бибаҳо дохил намудки, онҳо абадий зиндаанд ва зинда хоҳанд буд.

Жудои аз Айний барои тамоми халқҳои маърифатпарвари жаҳон, хусусан барои халқи иҷодкори совети ва аз он жумла барои халқи ўзбек ҳам мусбати бисёри вазнин мибошад. Чунки устод Айний бо илму маърифату иҷоди васеи худ дар роҳи мустаҳкам кардани

⁴ Gafur Ghulam: Unpublished works and letters. Gafur Ghulam Publishing House. Tashkent-2024. Pages 88-89.



сулҳи жаҳоний ва дар роҳи барпо кардани бахти олии инсоний–коммунизм то дами охираш бо халқи совети ҳамкор ва ҳамнафас буд.

Гарчи имруз дили азизи ин донишманди бузург аз тапиш монда аст, ва лекин асарҳои илмӣ, адабӣ ва тарихӣ у иҷод карда барои халқи совети мерос гузошта аст. Ҳамчунин университети мукаммали фан ва адабиёт мибошадки, абадӣ зинда ва дар сийнаи мо барқарор хоҳад монд. Устои муҳтарам, мо шогирдони шумо дар назди илму дониш ва иҷод ва санъати шумо сар базир афканда мигуёмки, кори шуморо насли навраси халқи совети давом хоҳад дод. Осида беҳобидки, номи шумо зинда аст, то абадул абад!" (In English: "Coming into the world, living, and departing from it is the immutable law of life. The life story of our esteemed teacher, Sadriddin Ayni, embodies the substance of a complete and remarkable work. During his years in the narrow and austere madrasas of Bukhara, he endured the severe hardships of poverty and deprivation. He also suffered the bitter words and persecution of religious fanatics.

His revolutionary ideals and commitment to enlightenment and culture brought him into conflict with the Emir. He was subjected to physical punishment, leaving his strong shoulders wounded and his body weakened. Yet neither suffering, hardship, nor humiliation could hinder his creative work. On the contrary, they strengthened his resolve to devote himself even more wholeheartedly to literary creation and to the service of the people.

Thanks to the leadership and boundless support of the Communist Party and the Soviet government, the intellectual horizons of this wise scholar expanded considerably. Responding to the needs of both his people and his era, he produced works of enduring value, enriching the treasury of Soviet scholarship and culture with priceless literary and scholarly masterpieces that remain alive today and will continue to live forever.

The loss of Ayni is a profound tragedy for all enlightened peoples of the world, particularly for the creative peoples of the Soviet Union, including the Uzbek nation. Through his extensive scholarship and literary achievements, he worked tirelessly until the very end of his life to strengthen world peace and to strive for the highest ideals of humanity, together with the Soviet people.

Although the noble heart of this great scholar has ceased to beat, the scientific, literary, and historical works he created remain a precious legacy for future generations. His rich body of work constitutes a complete university of knowledge and literature that will live forever in our hearts. Dear Teacher, we, your students, bow our heads before your knowledge, creativity, and artistic genius, and pledge that the younger generation will continue the noble work to which you dedicated your life. Rest in peace, for your name will live forever.")⁵

Although Sadriddin Ayni passed away, his powerful literary legacy has never faded. His intellectual influence has endured through the works of his distinguished disciples, including Gafur Ghulam, Oybek, Abdullah Qahhor, Mirzo Tursunzoda, Sotim Ulughzoda, and Rahim Jalil, who continued their mentor's literary mission by producing numerous outstanding works. His birthdays and anniversary celebrations continue to be commemorated in both brotherly republics. In 1958, the 80th anniversary of Sadriddin Ayni's birth was widely celebrated in Tajikistan. Although Gafur Ghulam was invited to participate in the jubilee festivities, he was unable to attend because of official responsibilities assigned by the Academy of Sciences. Instead, he sent

⁵ Gafur Gulom. Complete collection of works. Volume XII. Uzbek SSR "Fan" publishing house. Tashkent-1990. Pages 176-177.



a letter to his close friend, the renowned Tajik poet Mirzo Tursunzoda, asking him to read it aloud during the ceremony.

Dear Friend Mirzo,

After my greetings, I wish to inform you that I have completed the task you entrusted to me and am sending it to you. I kindly ask you to read this brief letter at the meeting on my behalf. Please convey my warm greetings to your family and to all our friends.

Yours sincerely,

Gafur Ghulam

9 April 1958

Dear Friends and Brothers,

Today we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the birth of Sadriddin Ayni, the great teacher of both Tajik and Uzbek literature and a classic of our fraternal literary traditions. Gathered here are not only my fellow writers but also my relatives, friends, and brothers in spirit, united to honor the memory of our great bilingual master.

Unfortunately, because I have been entrusted with important duties by the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, I am unable to attend this distinguished celebration in person to pay tribute to my beloved teacher, my lifelong mentor, and the cherished grandfather of my children. Nevertheless, as I imagine the faces of the friends assembled here, I once again see before me the noble image of our great master.

There are few readers across one-fifth of the world, throughout the East, and even in the democratic countries of Europe who have not read his works or, at the very least, heard of him. His poems, epics, novellas, and scholarly studies, written in his capacity as an eminent academician, constitute an invaluable treasure. In particular, his contributions to illuminating the literary history and cultural heritage of the two brotherly peoples—the Tajiks and the Uzbeks—are of immeasurable significance. Most of those gathered here are well acquainted with these works, many of which have become part of our collective memory. His writings revealed the immense creative power of literature and directed it toward serving the interests of the people.

I take great pride in the fact that many of the letters addressed to me by our respected teacher, as well as poems, epics, and valuable manuscripts written in my own home, are carefully preserved in the Museum of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. I also hope that copies of these precious documents will soon be presented to Tajikistan.

I am equally proud that whenever our teacher visited Tashkent, he always regarded my home as his own. Likewise, whenever I travelled to Samarkand, I would visit his home to learn from him and seek his guidance. I believe that many of my dear friends are present today, including Mirzo Tursunzoda, Sotim Ulughzoda, Rahim Jalil, Dehotiy, Suhayl, Muhammadjon Rahimzoda, Jalol Ikromi, Kamol Ayni, Qosim Niyozzi, and many others.

The sincere friendship between Uzbek and Tajik writers is as genuine and enduring as that between our great masters Alisher Navoi and Abdurahman Jami. It is my heartfelt wish that this friendship will continue to flourish and grow stronger.

Long live the Tajik people, who have given the world such great classical figures as Firdawsi, Rudaki, Nasir Khusraw, Kamol Khujandi, and Sadriddin Ayni.



I sincerely apologize to my brothers and friends for my inability to attend this memorable celebration in person”⁶.

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Conclusion

The literary friendship between Gafur Ghulam and Sadriddin Ayni represents one of the most significant examples of cultural cooperation between the Uzbek and Tajik peoples. Their relationship extended far beyond personal friendship, developing into a lasting intellectual partnership founded on mutual respect, shared artistic values, and a common commitment to the advancement of literature.

The archival documents, photographs, letters, and memoirs preserved in the Gafur Ghulam House Museum provide valuable historical evidence of this close relationship. These materials demonstrate that the collaboration between the two writers contributed not only to the enrichment of Uzbek and Tajik literature but also to the strengthening of long-standing cultural and spiritual ties between the two nations. Their correspondence and commemorative writings reveal the depth of their mutual respect and illustrate how literary dialogue served as an effective means of promoting intercultural understanding.

Furthermore, Gafur Ghulam's tributes following Ayni's death and his message prepared for the celebration of Ayni's eightieth anniversary testify to the enduring influence of his mentor on subsequent generations of writers. The continuation of Ayni's literary traditions by his students further confirms the lasting significance of his intellectual legacy.

In conclusion, the friendship between Gafur Ghulam and Sadriddin Ayni should be regarded not only as a personal relationship between two outstanding literary figures but also as a symbol of the historical friendship, cultural solidarity, and literary cooperation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Their legacy continues to inspire contemporary efforts to strengthen intercultural dialogue and preserve the shared cultural heritage of the two neighboring countries.

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⁶ Gafur Gulom. Complete collection of works. Volume XII. Uzbek SSR "Fan" publishing house. Tashkent-1990. Pages 176-177.

