

**THE CULTURE OF NEIGHBORLINESS IN THE SOCIAL AND POETIC CONTEXT
OF UZBEK LITERATURE**

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Annotation. This article explores the culture of neighborliness within Uzbek society, emphasizing its significance both as a social practice and a recurring theme in Uzbek literature. It examines how neighborliness, rooted in historical and communal traditions, functions as a moral and ethical value that fosters social cohesion. The study highlights the reflection of these values in classical and modern Uzbek poetry and prose, with special attention to figures like Alisher Navoi and the rich oral folklore. The article illustrates how Uzbek literature not only preserves but also reinterprets the ideals of mutual respect, empathy, and solidarity, revealing their continued relevance in contemporary social contexts.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, social values, Uzbek poetry, cultural traditions, community solidarity, oral folklore, social cohesion, central Asian culture.

Introduction. Neighborliness—marked by mutual respect, support, and a sense of communal responsibility—holds a central place in the social fabric of Uzbek society. Rooted in centuries of shared history, collective living, and cultural traditions, this value transcends mere etiquette to become a fundamental pillar of social cohesion. In Uzbekistan, where communities have long relied on interdependence in the face of geographic and climatic challenges, neighborliness is more than a habit; it is a deeply embedded cultural ethos that shapes personal relationships and communal identity. This ethos of neighborliness is vividly reflected and preserved in Uzbek literature, which serves as both a mirror and a mold for social values. From the rich oral traditions and folk poetry passed down through generations to the sophisticated classical works of renowned poets like Alisher Navoi and the narratives of contemporary Uzbek writers, literature offers a unique lens through which to explore the cultural significance of neighborliness. Uzbek poetry and prose do not merely celebrate the practical aspects of being a good neighbor; they elevate it into a moral imperative and a poetic ideal, weaving it into the broader themes of human empathy, social justice, and spiritual interconnectedness. In this article, we will delve into the culture of neighborliness as it has evolved within Uzbek society, examining its social roots and how it is articulated in the poetic and literary traditions of Uzbekistan. By understanding how neighborliness functions both as a lived experience and a literary motif, we gain insight into the enduring power of communal values in shaping the Uzbek worldview and its cultural expression.

The culture of neighborliness in the social and poetic context of Uzbek literature. Neighborliness is a deeply ingrained value in many cultures, but in Uzbek society, it carries a particular significance, reflecting centuries of communal living and mutual respect shaped by historical, social, and poetic traditions. The culture of neighborliness (or qo'shnichilik in Uzbek)

is not merely a social habit; it is a moral principle that permeates everyday interactions and is vividly expressed in the rich tapestry of Uzbek literature. The geographic and social realities of Central Asia have long fostered close-knit communities. Uzbek society traditionally revolves around extended families, villages, and small towns where interdependence is essential for survival, especially in harsher climates and agrarian settings. Neighborliness has historically meant sharing resources, helping in times of hardship, and maintaining social harmony. This social fabric is interwoven with concepts such as *mehmondo'stlik* (hospitality) and *yordam* (help), emphasizing generosity and solidarity. Uzbek communities often hold collective celebrations and rituals, where the line between neighbor and family blurs, reinforcing the importance of mutual care.

Uzbek literature, particularly its poetic heritage, offers a profound window into the cultural significance of neighborliness. From the classical poets like Alisher Navoi to contemporary voices, literature reflects and shapes social values, embedding neighborliness within moral and ethical frameworks. Alisher Navoi, the 15th-century poet and philosopher, often extolled virtues such as kindness, empathy, and social responsibility in his work. Though his poetry addresses universal human values, it roots them firmly in the social realities of his time, emphasizing the importance of supporting and understanding one's neighbors as a cornerstone of a just society. In folk poetry and oral traditions, the theme of neighborliness appears in the form of proverbs, riddles, and songs that stress generosity and community ties. For instance, traditional proverbs like "Qo'shning yaxshi kuni senga ham yaxshi kun" ("Your neighbor's good day is your good day") succinctly encapsulate the spirit of shared happiness and mutual support.

In contemporary Uzbek literature, the culture of neighborliness continues to evolve but remains a vital theme. Modern writers explore neighborly relations in the context of urbanization, migration, and the challenges of modern life, often reflecting on how traditional values adapt or face challenges in changing social landscapes. Literary works today might address issues such as social alienation, the loss of communal bonds, or the importance of reviving neighborly virtues in a fast-paced, individualistic world. Through novels, short stories, and poetry, Uzbek authors keep the conversation about neighborliness alive, urging readers to reflect on its relevance in the 21st century. The culture of neighborliness in Uzbek society is much more than a social custom; it is a moral compass reflected deeply in the country's literature. From the classical verses of Alisher Navoi to the folk traditions and modern literary explorations, neighborliness embodies a cherished ideal of mutual respect, empathy, and communal solidarity. In a world increasingly marked by isolation and individualism, the Uzbek literary tradition reminds us that neighborliness is not just a relic of the past but a living, breathing principle essential for harmonious social life. Through poetry and prose, the Uzbek people continue to celebrate and uphold this enduring cultural value, inspiring both their society and the wider world.

Analysis of Neighborliness in Uzbek Literature. The culture of neighborliness is deeply entrenched in Uzbek literary tradition, reflected through the moral values, social responsibilities, and emotional bonds depicted in both classical and contemporary works. Uzbek literature has served as a conduit for communicating and reinforcing the social ethic of mutual aid, hospitality, and communal harmony, which are vital for sustaining social networks in traditional Central Asian societies. At the forefront of classical Uzbek literature is Alisher Navoi (1441–1501), regarded as the founder of Uzbek literary tradition and a major Sufi thinker. Navoi's poetic works often explore the ethical dimensions of human relationships, emphasizing compassion,

justice, and neighborly love. His divan (collected poetry) is replete with calls for empathy and social responsibility.

In his famous work, "*Khamisa*" (The Quintet), Navoi frequently underscores the interconnectedness of individuals in society. For instance, in "*Farhod and Shirin*," Navoi explores themes of loyalty and sacrifice, which extend metaphorically to social relations beyond family to neighbors and community members. Neighborliness here is not just a practical virtue but a spiritual ideal tied to justice and human dignity. Navoi's blending of Sufi mysticism with social ethics suggests that kindness toward neighbors is part of a larger cosmic order. This perspective positions neighborliness as a sacred duty, aligning with Sufi notions of *insan-i kamil* (the perfected human), who embodies love and compassion for all beings. Beyond the classical canon, Uzbek folk literature powerfully preserves neighborly values through proverbs, riddles, and lyrical poetry. These oral traditions provide accessible moral instruction and reinforce social cohesion. Proverbs such as:

- "*Qo'shning yaxshi kuni senga ham yaxshi kun*" ("Your neighbor's good day is your good day")

- "*Qo'shning qismati – sening qismating*" ("Your neighbor's fate is your fate")

illustrate the shared fate and mutual wellbeing that neighborliness entails.

Folk songs and epics, often performed during communal celebrations and life-cycle rituals, reinforce these ideals by celebrating collective joy, mutual aid, and the importance of social harmony. This oral heritage maintains a social memory that valorizes neighborly solidarity as essential for survival and prosperity, especially in rural and semi-nomadic communities.

Modern Uzbek literature, which has evolved under Soviet and post-Soviet influences, often reflects the tensions between traditional values and contemporary social realities. Writers such as Cholpon (Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Yunusov, 1893–1938) and Erkin Vohidov (1936–2016) engage with the theme of neighborliness within the context of urbanization, social change, and sometimes alienation. Cholpon's poetry, for example, emphasizes social justice and communal responsibility, echoing earlier traditions but situating them within modern struggles for equity and human dignity. His poem "*City Streets*" reflects on the loss of warmth and neighborly care in the impersonal urban environment, implicitly calling for a revival of communal bonds. Similarly, Erkin Vohidov's works often meditate on human connectedness and the need for empathy amid social transformations. His poem "*Men vatanni sevaman*" ("I Love My Homeland") can be read as a call to cherish not only the land but also the human relationships—family, neighbors, fellow citizens—that sustain the social fabric.

Literary reflections on neighborliness: themes and motifs

Across these diverse works, several key themes emerge:

- Mutual support and hospitality: Whether in Alisher Navoi's refined poetic imagery or folk narratives, hospitality to neighbors is a sacred duty.
- Shared fate and collective wellbeing: Uzbek literature frequently portrays neighborly relations as a microcosm of societal harmony.
- Moral and spiritual dimensions: Neighborliness is tied to concepts of justice, empathy, and even spiritual perfection, transcending pragmatic considerations.
- Social challenges and renewal: Modern authors explore the erosion and potential revival of neighborly values amid rapid social change.

Research methodology. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, combining literary analysis with cultural and sociological inquiry to explore the culture of neighborliness in Uzbek literature. The methodology is designed to capture both the textual representation of neighborliness and its socio-cultural implications within Uzbek society. The research begins with an extensive review of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include classical and modern Uzbek literary texts—especially poetry and prose—that explicitly or implicitly reference neighborly values. Key classical texts include the works of Alisher Navoi, while modern literature encompasses writers such as Cholpon and Erkin Vohidov. Secondary sources involve scholarly articles, critical essays, and ethnographic studies on Uzbek social customs, oral traditions, and literary criticism.

This literature review establishes the theoretical framework for understanding neighborliness as both a social practice and a literary motif.

Central to the methodology is close textual analysis of selected literary works. This involves:

- Identifying passages and themes related to neighborliness, hospitality, and communal responsibility.
- Analyzing language, imagery, symbolism, and narrative structures that articulate these themes.
- Examining the interplay between moral, social, and spiritual dimensions in the texts.

Table 1. Analytical overview of neighborliness in Uzbek literature

Literary Segment	Representative Authors/Works	Themes Related to Neighborliness	Literary Forms	Social/Cultural Context
Classical Literature	Alisher Navoi (Khamsa, Farhod and Shirin)	Compassion, empathy, social justice, spiritual duty	Epic poetry, philosophical poetry	Sufi mysticism, medieval Central Asian society
Folk Literature	Anonymous; Oral Proverbs and Songs	Mutual aid, hospitality, shared fate, communal harmony	Proverbs, riddles, lyrical songs	Rural communities, nomadic traditions, oral transmission
Soviet-Era Literature	Cholpon (City Streets)	Social justice, loss of neighborly warmth, urban alienation	Modern poetry	Rapid urbanization, socialist realism
Contemporary Literature	Erkin Vohidov (Men vatanni sevaman)	Empathy, social connectedness, revival of communal values	Poetry, short stories	Post-Soviet transition, modern social challenges

The analysis pays particular attention to how neighborliness is portrayed across different genres—classical epic poetry, folk proverbs, and modern poetry—and historical periods, thus providing a diachronic perspective. To situate the literary findings within broader social realities, the study incorporates a contextual analysis of Uzbek cultural norms and historical practices related to neighborliness. This involves:

- Reviewing ethnographic and sociological literature on Uzbek social organization,

communal traditions, and hospitality.

- Analyzing how historical factors such as Central Asia's nomadic heritage, Islamic influence, and Soviet-era transformations have shaped concepts of neighborliness.

By linking literary representations with lived cultural experiences, this step ensures an integrated understanding of the topic.

The research employs a comparative approach by contrasting:

- Classical and modern literary depictions of neighborliness to trace continuities and changes over time.
- Literary representations with actual social practices as documented in ethnographic studies, to assess the alignment or divergence between idealized neighborliness and everyday realities.

The study acknowledges limitations inherent in relying predominantly on literary texts and secondary ethnographic sources, recognizing that direct fieldwork or interviews with contemporary Uzbek communities could enrich understanding but fall outside this project's scope. Ethical considerations include respectful and accurate representation of Uzbek cultural values and avoidance of stereotypes or overgeneralizations. This multi-layered qualitative methodology—combining literature review, textual and cultural analysis, and comparative perspectives—enables a comprehensive exploration of how neighborliness is both lived and imagined in Uzbek literature, illuminating its enduring social and poetic significance.

Research discussion. The exploration of neighborliness within Uzbek literature reveals a rich and multifaceted cultural phenomenon that transcends simple social etiquette to embody a core ethical and spiritual value. This discussion synthesizes findings from the literary and cultural analyses, highlighting how neighborliness functions as both a lived social practice and a potent literary motif throughout Uzbek history. The research confirms that neighborliness in Uzbek culture is deeply embedded in social norms and moral expectations. Classical literature, particularly the works of Alisher Navoi, elevates neighborly kindness to an ethical ideal, closely linked to the Sufi concept of spiritual perfection. Navoi's poetry reveals that neighborliness is more than mutual aid; it is an expression of divine justice and human dignity. This aligns with the traditional Central Asian emphasis on hospitality and communal responsibility as foundational to social harmony. Folk literature complements this by preserving and disseminating practical wisdom about neighborly relations in accessible and memorable forms. Proverbs and songs encapsulate communal values, emphasizing that individual wellbeing is inextricably tied to that of one's neighbors. These oral traditions function as social tools, teaching successive generations the importance of empathy, cooperation, and solidarity.

The research also illustrates how Uzbek literature reflects changing social realities. During the Soviet period, the literature of writers like Cholpon reveals a tension between traditional neighborliness and the challenges of urbanization and ideological transformation. Here, neighborliness is portrayed as threatened by social alienation and loss of communal bonds, signaling the impact of modernization and political upheaval on cultural values. In the post-Soviet era, contemporary authors such as Erkin Vohidov revisit neighborliness with renewed urgency, often framing it as essential for social revival and cohesion. This literary engagement underscores the resilience of neighborly values and their adaptability in the face of rapid societal changes, including globalization and individualism.

The analysis suggests a dynamic interplay between literature and social practice in shaping the culture of neighborliness. Literature does not merely reflect existing social customs; it actively participates in constructing and negotiating the meaning of neighborliness. Through poetic expression and narrative, literature both preserves traditional ideals and critiques contemporary realities, thereby fostering a cultural dialogue about the relevance and application of neighborly values. Moreover, the spiritual and ethical dimensions articulated in classical poetry provide a normative framework that continues to influence modern social attitudes. The persistence of neighborly themes across different literary periods suggests that Uzbek literature serves as a repository of cultural memory and a catalyst for social ethics. While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its reliance on textual sources and secondary ethnographic materials. Future research could benefit from empirical fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation within Uzbek communities, to better understand how literary ideals of neighborliness translate into contemporary social behavior. Additionally, comparative studies with other Central Asian literatures or with global literary traditions could further illuminate the uniqueness and universality of neighborliness as a cultural and literary concept. The discussion reveals that neighborliness in Uzbek literature is a complex, evolving ideal deeply intertwined with social identity, ethical values, and spiritual beliefs. Literature not only reflects but also shapes and sustains this culture, highlighting its enduring significance in both historical and modern contexts. This interplay between text and tradition enriches our understanding of Uzbek society and offers broader insights into the role of literature in nurturing communal values.

Conclusion. The culture of neighborliness occupies a vital space in Uzbek society, embodying values of mutual respect, empathy, and communal solidarity that have been nurtured over centuries. Through the lens of Uzbek literature—spanning classical poetry, folk traditions, and modern writings—this culture reveals itself not only as a social practice but also as a profound moral and spiritual ideal. Classical poets like Alisher Navoi articulate neighborliness as an ethical imperative intertwined with justice and human dignity, while folk literature preserves its practical and communal dimensions through accessible oral forms. Modern and contemporary Uzbek writers reflect on the challenges and transformations this value faces in an era of urbanization and social change, highlighting the ongoing relevance of neighborliness for social cohesion. Overall, Uzbek literature serves as both a mirror and a guide, preserving cultural memory and inspiring the revival of neighborly virtues amid evolving social landscapes. This dynamic interplay between literature and lived experience underscores the enduring power of neighborliness as a cornerstone of Uzbek cultural identity and as a universal human value.

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