

SPIRITUALITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Spirituality plays a crucial role in the development of a stable and prosperous society. It shapes the moral, ethical, and intellectual fabric of individuals, fostering a sense of justice, compassion, and responsibility. This paper explores how spirituality serves as the foundation of societal growth by promoting harmony, cultural richness, and individual well-being. By examining historical examples, it is evident that societies grounded in spiritual values are more likely to experience peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development. The research also highlights the importance of spiritual education in safeguarding youth from negative influences and ensuring their holistic growth. In conclusion, spirituality remains an indispensable pillar for the progress of any society, guiding its citizens toward moral and ethical excellence.

Keywords: Spirituality, societal development, moral values, cultural heritage, youth education, social cohesion, sustainable development, spiritual education,

Introduction. The development of any society relies not only on economic progress but also on the moral and spiritual growth of its individuals. Spirituality, as the essence of human existence, influences how people interact with one another and contribute to the larger social fabric. Throughout history, it has been demonstrated that societies rooted in spiritual and ethical values are more likely to prosper, maintaining social harmony, peace, and a sense of purpose among their citizens.

In the contemporary era, characterized by rapid globalization and technological advancements, the role of spirituality in societal development is becoming increasingly significant. The challenges of modernity, such as moral degradation, social fragmentation, and the rise of extremism, call for a renewed focus on spirituality as a means of addressing these issues. By fostering a deep connection to spiritual values, individuals can navigate the complexities of modern life with a stronger moral compass, thus contributing positively to their communities and nation.

This paper aims to explore the fundamental role of spirituality in societal development, examining its impact on social cohesion, moral education, and individual well-being. It also discusses the initiatives taken by the state and educational institutions to integrate spirituality into the fabric of society, particularly focusing on the upbringing of the younger generation. By addressing the pressing need for spiritual education and guidance, the paper highlights how spirituality serves as the foundation for building a more prosperous, just, and harmonious society.

The study of human history shows that wherever justice, morality, diligence, culture, and thus spirituality prevails, there is peace, knowledge, prosperity, and tranquility in that land, and history proves that it is possible to create abundance in such places. Moreover, based on our own life experiences, we have witnessed that a person with strong spirituality will never face humiliation or hardship in life. This is because a spiritual person avoids actions that lead to disgrace, and with their moral virtues, they attract people to them in such a way that others long for their conversations and advice. In their presence, people feel free and happy. A person, at any age, is in need of spirituality, just as their body needs food when hungry, rest when tired, warmth when cold, or relief when overheated. Similarly, their soul craves good conversation, advice, an engaging book, pleasant music, and kind words. Every nation, just as it has its economic needs, possesses

its own spiritual values. During the period of independence in our country, the spiritual upliftment of society has become a priority of state policy. In this regard, the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-3160, dated 28.07.2017, 'On Enhancing the Effectiveness of Spiritual and Educational Work and Raising the Sector to a New Level' and the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-4307, dated 03.05.2019, 'On Additional Measures to Increase the Effectiveness of Spiritual and Educational Work' were adopted.

In the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-5040, dated 26.03.2021, 'On Measures to Fundamentally Improve the System of Spiritual and Educational Work' it was noted that despite the broad reforms and development projects being implemented in our country, there is no unified system for changing the mindset and worldview of our people, nor for organizing spiritual and educational processes. Moreover, sufficient organizational, practical, and research work is not being carried out to protect our people, especially the youth, from spiritual threats. In this regard, the foundations for establishing effective social partnerships between state institutions, civil society institutions, the media, and the private sector were developed.

On January 19, 2021, under the leadership of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a video conference was held on fundamentally improving the system of spiritual and educational work and strengthening the cooperation between state and public organizations in this field. During the conference, the President defined the role of spirituality in society and human life as follows: "If the body of society's life is the economy, then its soul and spirit are spirituality. Since we have decided to build a New Uzbekistan, we rely on two solid pillars. The first is a strong economy based on market principles. The second is strong spirituality, based on the rich heritage and national values of our ancestors." [1, p. 1] This definition holds profound meaning and essence that every individual and specialist must understand.

The human psyche is both delicate and complex, encompassing multifaceted phenomena. For a person to be spiritually rich, they must first have a well-formed understanding of our national historical values, customs, and traditions, which form the foundation of our spiritual treasure. Moreover, they must possess knowledge in fields such as science, economics, politics, law, morality, aesthetics, religion, philosophy, as well as a properly formed national ideology. If there is a deficiency or flaw in any of these aspects of a person's spirituality, similar shortcomings will appear in their psyche, reflecting spiritual flaws. This is why, in our nation, it has been emphasized that a person must be nurtured and educated from early childhood until the end of their life.

The videoconference held by our President on the issues of 'Improving the System of Spiritual and Educational Work' has become a guideline for all of us, as it highlighted the problems in spirituality, their shortcomings, and solutions.

This is especially important in today's era of globalization, where different cultures and conflicting worldviews collide. Spirituality serves as a tool for a person's psyche, helping them to understand themselves, develop their taste and wisdom, distinguish between justice and deceit, goodness and evil, beauty and ugliness, patience and ignorance, and to set high goals and aspirations, striving to achieve them with intelligence and determination.

Let us consider the educational influence of the traditional Uzbek neighborhood, known as the **mahalla**, as mentioned by our President. The proverb, 'One child is the responsibility of seven neighborhoods' reflects the idea that an Uzbek child is never left unattended; thousands of people are responsible for their upbringing and supervision. Even if a child does not belong to one of the seven neighborhoods, when elders saw a child wandering aimlessly in the street, they would ask, 'Why have you been walking around for so long? Who are you looking for? Whose child are you?' They would identify the parents and warn them that their child was roaming the streets without reason [2, p. 3]. Of course, parents, who were often busy working, would thank the elders

and increase supervision of their child, preventing them from falling into wrongdoing. This simple example of our national values is an effective method of preventing juvenile delinquency and crime. Now we all recognize how crucial it is to revive these values.

Today, with the rise of information technology, various extremist and terrorist groups, masking their true intentions, use different websites to recruit young people. To protect our youth from such threats, we must first teach them the true essence of Islam, explaining that it is a religion of knowledge. Secondly, as our President has stated, we need to instill in young people that 'the ideology of the New Uzbekistan we are building is based on goodness, humanity, and the ideas of humanism. When we speak of ideology, we first mean the education of thought, the education of national and universal values. These values are rooted in the centuries-old understanding and values of our people' [3].

For this, we must first explain spiritual education to young families planning to marry in 'Family Centers'. During the videoconference on 'Improving the System of Spiritual and Educational Work' and in earlier speeches at the Youth Forum, our President raised concerns about the high number of divorces among young families, stating:

"Our people have always considered the family sacred and have always protected and preserved it. The stronger the family, the more stable society becomes.

We must not forget: peace and harmony in our homes are directly related to a healthy environment within the family and to preparing our young girls for family life as they stand on the threshold of independent living.

Unfortunately, due to our negligence and indifference to this important issue, 25,000 divorces have been recorded among young families in the past 11 months. This negative situation should seriously alarm and deeply concern us all.

Just think about it: 25,000 divorces – if each family has at least three members, that means the lives of 100,000 people have been ruined! As a result, countless innocent children will become living orphans. How many lives will be disrupted, leading to suffering and hardship?" [4, p. 3]

This is why it is essential to organize educational discussions with young people about to marry, involving psychologists, philosophers, experienced elders, and mothers under programs such as 'Parental Advice', 'Family Guidance', 'Life Lessons', 'Children: The Crown Jewel of the Family', and 'My Child, My Future'.

In schools, depending on the intellectual level, worldview, and psychology of each class, students should be taught about ethics, morals, national values, family values, Islamic spirituality, and their relationships with parents, teachers, elders, siblings, relatives, neighbors, and friends. Additionally, students should learn the etiquette of seeking knowledge, cultural communication, speaking, listening, dining, expressing opinions, greetings, maintaining health, and other spiritual qualities in-depth, step by step.

Everyone in the educational institution is equally responsible for spiritual education; there should be no excuses like 'I'm not a specialist'. Every subject teacher must integrate spiritual values into their lessons using books on ethics and morality. The class teacher should focus on this during spiritual sessions, and the school's youth organizer and spiritual instructor should work together systematically. However, spiritual education should not be repetitive or contradictory. Furthermore, scholars, writers, and scientists associated with schools must have their own unique educational plans, based on the school's spiritual environment and the community in which the school is located.

In the *mahallas* (neighborhood communities), it is also essential that intellectuals assigned to the area explain to young parents about child upbringing, the roles of the mother and father, the factors that negatively affect children's upbringing today, the types and dangers of these factors, and of course, the conditions that our President is currently creating for the development and

perfection of children, based on evidence. In this promotion, laws and regulations reflecting the essence of our state's youth policy should be used, as well as ready-made materials like Tohir Malik's *"The Story of Humanity"*, the late Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf's *'Happy Family'*, and Fitrat's *'Family'*. These three directions should be pursued simultaneously, complementing each other and remaining continuous because "there are no breaks in education". Only in this way will spiritual education yield good results; otherwise, the education will become one-sided again.

Touching upon the issue of raising young people in the spirit of patriotism and national pride, and the importance of teaching history well and expanding research in this field, our President said: *"We must write our national history with a national spirit. Otherwise, it will not have an educational impact. We need to teach our youth to learn from history, to draw conclusions, and to arm them with historical knowledge and thinking"*. [5, p. 2]

In conclusion, we can say that responsibility for increasing our country's prestige in the world, being informed and supportive of the country's internal and external activities, not being indifferent to universal problems facing the people of the world, understanding the harmony of national and universal interests, and recognizing that humans are a part of nature and bear responsibility for its preservation—all these qualities are unique to a spiritually rich person.

References:

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