



MORAL TRADITIONS IN UZBEK FOLKLORE

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Abstract

This article discusses the appreciation of moral and national values in folk oral literature and their significance in educating the youth. It also addresses issues such as how moral values shape people's relationships with each other, with their own communities, and with their homeland.

Keywords: Folk oral literature, the epic cycles "Alpomish" and "Gorogly," heroic youth, patriotism, spiritual and moral values, the idea of national independence.

"If we do not place the human being as the highest value,
we will continue to make mistakes."

Sh. Mirziyoyev

Introduction

The oral folk art, considered an ancient form of verbal artistry, reflects the people's ideological, moral, educational, and aesthetic development through centuries of striving for a free and prosperous life, fighting against injustice, and passing down life experiences, while emphasizing the importance of valuing cultural and social values.

It is recognized that "National value is a custom and tradition that preserves the identity of each nation and glorifies its dignity."

When we talk about values, we mean the spiritual and cultural heritage, customs, traditions, and moral standards that have been significant for a people, nation, or society over a long period, passed down from generation to generation. These include universal values such as peace and freedom, as well as nation-specific traits like

hospitality, sanctity of the family, and events, processes, and objects valuable to humans. These values are essential to individuals and humanity, serving the interests and goals of nations, ethnic groups, and social communities, and are thus appreciated and honored by them, encompassing the understanding of natural and societal blessings.

It is known that moral concepts include notions of good and evil, duty, conscience, honor (dignity), happiness, justice, and ideals.

In folk oral creativity, human feelings such as patriotism, loyalty to promises, heroism, good character, manners, and compassion are valued as high moral principles.

The “Gorogly” cycle of epic poems is widespread among many nations and is still performed by bards (bakhshis) in some communities today.

These epics form distinct groups in the epic literature of Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, Azerbaijani, Turkish, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Armenian, Georgian, and Kurdish peoples. Gorogly is one of the beloved epic heroes among Siberian Tatars, Volga Bulgars, Iranian Azerbaijanis, Stavropol Turkmens, and Afghan Uzbeks as well. Some parts of this cycle have also been recorded from the Arabs of Central Asia (Bukhara).

In these epics, Gorogly leads forty warriors and defeats enemy troops; in such battles, he embodies great values such as extraordinary bravery and heroism. In the roles of shepherd, horseman, wandering bard, healer, and soothsayer, he infiltrates enemy ranks and skillfully aids his captured comrades.

The fact that the “Gorogly” epic has become beloved by many peoples is not without reason; it testifies to the exaltation of universal human values.

Among Turkic peoples, “Alpomish” is regarded as the Uzbek people's heroic epic. This epic extensively highlights universal humanitarian values such as good relations among brothers and relatives, strengthening kinship ties, loyalty to family and pledges, love, patriotism, friendship, and fidelity.

While the “Alpomish” epic glorifies the unity and sanctity of family of our people, the “Gorogly” cycle promotes ideas of homeland defense and professional heroism. Both epics are unique masterpieces expressing the bravery and ideals of freedom of the Uzbek people.

A fairy tale is a genre of folk oral creativity or written literature rich in fabric, magic, fantasy, and adventurous events, usually depicting the victory of good over evil. They

reflect the history, spirituality, and ethical views of the people and serve as an educational tool guiding people toward goodness.

In Uzbek epics, the image of the “yalmog‘iz” (old woman) appears as both a symbol of good and evil. For example, in the fairy tale “Zumrad and Qimmat,” the old woman living in the forest is depicted in two contrasting ways: as a kind, caring mother figure towards the polite and well-mannered Zumrad, and as a wicked, rude old woman towards the unpleasant and negative character of Qimmat. In some tales, the (yalmog‘iz) old woman who lives in the mountains, caves, or forest tests the heroes by saying, “If you did not greet me, I would swallow you at once,” (“You are lucky you minded your manners, or I would have had you for breakfast!”) appearing sometimes in a good light and other times in a bad one, depending on the heroes’ behavior and attitude.

Just as something written harshly with a pen can be gently erased with a soft eraser, the proverb “With kind words you can enter a snake to its den and a knife to sheath” (“Soft answer turns away wrath”) illustrates how resolving conflicts through beautiful and polite speech is easy. This idea is artistically expressed in folk oral creativity through literary texture and images. Similar fairy tales with such plots can also be found in the folklore of world peoples. These tales glorify universal virtues such as kindness.

In many fairy tales, it is interpreted that heroes become trustworthy people among others due to their honesty, and that a person who always speaks truth has a face that is always bright.

Historical, religious, or cultural events and figures, passed down orally or in written form from generation to generation, though based on real events, are often exaggerated with legendary elements in folk oral creativity genres known as “rivoyatlar” (narratives). These narratives reflect the customs and beliefs of the people.

For example, consider the narratives about Ibn Sino (Avicenna):

Detecting lies through the pulse (heart’s “beat” or “vibration”).

An emir (ruler) loses a precious jewel and gathers all his servants, asking Ibn Sino to find the thief. Ibn Sino calls each servant separately, placing his hand on their vein (pulse), and begins asking unexpected questions. When it’s the thief’s turn, as soon as Ibn Sino mentions the stolen item, the servant’s pulse changes (similar to today’s polygraph lie detector). Thus, without any torture, the thief was revealed.

In another narrative, a person who digs a pit for someone else ends up falling into it themselves, expressing the idea that wrongdoing does not go unpunished.

Once upon a time, there was a baker who bought a package of butter every day from a familiar farmer. One day, he decided to measure the butter he had purchased. It turns out that there was less butter than expected. The angry baker complained to the judge. The farmer who was summoned for questioning replied:

“Honorable judge, I am a simple man; I have a scale but no weights,” he said.

“So how did you measure the butter for the baker?” the judge asked in surprise.

“Every day I buy a loaf of bread from the baker. When I measure the butter, I put that bread on the other side of the scale,” replied the farmer.

Proverbs – another form of folk oral genres – are concise, meaningful, rhymed words that summarize the people’s experience accumulated over centuries and also carry educational importance. In folk proverbs, moral values such as dignity and humiliation, justice, conscience and insincerity, harmony and discord, courage and cowardice, homeland and patriotism, wisdom and ignorance, friendship and enmity, collectivism and selfishness, knowledge, skills and ignorance, humility and arrogance, kinship and alienation, strength and weakness, bravery and dishonor, hospitality and hospitality, hardworking nature and laziness, kindness and inhospitality, love and infidelity, manners and rudeness, honor and dishonor, generosity and stinginess, hypocrisy and greed, peace and unrest, cleanliness, health and illness, truth and lying, honesty and deceitfulness, insight and lack of insight, honesty and freeloading, good and evil are embodied.

In conclusion, it can be said that folk oral literature is the spiritual treasure of the people; it is a mirror of their life and culture. Legends and tales, proverbs and sayings, blessings and prayers, riddles and songs, jokes and anecdotes, fairy tales and epics, performed by talented representatives of the people and polished by the public over generations, constitute the Uzbek folk oral literature.

Our people’s oral literature is an integral part of our national values and an artistic creation inherited from our ancestors. We believe that studying and mastering this spiritual heritage, and instilling the universal values it embodies into the consciousness of our youth, would support the significant work being carried out by our Leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev to raise the spirituality of young people and preserve our national values.

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