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THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND CULTURE DURING THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

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Annotation:*This paper analyzes the pivotal role of the intellectual class in shaping Uzbekistan's spiritual, cultural, and educational development during the years of independence. The collapse of the Soviet Union left a moral and ideological vacuum, which the state aimed to overcome through a comprehensive spiritual revival. President Islam Karimov emphasized the importance of overcoming the spiritual crisis and promoting national values. Intellectuals played a crucial role in this process by reviving national traditions, studying historical figures like Alisher Navoi, and contributing to the moral enlightenment of society.*

Annotatsiya: *Mazkur maqolada mustaqillik yillarida O'zbekistonning ma'naviy, madaniy va ta'limiy taraqqiyotini shakllantirishda ziyolilar sinfining hal qiluvchi o'rni tahlil qilinadi. Sovet Ittifoqining parchalanishi natijasida yuzaga kelgan ma'naviy va mafkuraviy bo'shliqni bartaraf etish maqsadida davlat tomonidan keng qamrovli ma'naviy tiklanish siyosati amalga oshirildi. O'zbekistonning Birinchi Prezidenti Islom Karimov ma'naviy inqirozni yengib o'tish va milliy qadriyatlarni tiklash zarurligini alohida ta'kidlagan. Bu jarayonda ziyolilar milliy an'analarni qayta tiklash, tarixiy shaxslar jumladan Alisher Navoiy merosini chuqur o'rganish hamda jamiyatning ma'naviy yuksalishiga hissa qo'shish orqali muhim rol o'ynadilar.*

Аннотация: *В данной статье анализируется ключевая роль интеллигенции в формировании духовного, культурного и образовательного развития Узбекистана в годы независимости. Распад Советского Союза привёл к возникновению духовного и идеологического вакуума, который государство стремилось преодолеть посредством всестороннего духовного возрождения. Первый Президент Узбекистана Ислам Каримов подчёркивал необходимость преодоления духовного кризиса и укрепления национальных ценностей. В этом процессе интеллигенция сыграла важную роль, возрождая национальные традиции, изучая наследие исторических личностей, в частности Алишер Навои, а также способствуя нравственному просвещению общества.*

Keywords: *Spiritual revival, national identity, intellectuals, cultural development, Alisher Navoi's legacy, moral reform, historical heritage, Uzbekistan independence, "Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat" center.*

Kalit so'zlar: *Ma'naviy tiklanish, milliy o'zlik, ziyolilar, madaniy taraqqiyot, Alisher Navoiy merosi, axloqiy islohotlar, tarixiy meros, O'zbekiston mustaqilligi, "Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat" markazi.*

Ключевые слова: *Духовное возрождение, национальная идентичность, интеллигенция, культурное развитие, наследие Алишера Навои, нравственные реформы, историческое наследие, независимость Узбекистана, центр «Маънавият ва Маърифат».*

Introduction. During the years of independence, one of the most important and urgent tasks facing the republic was to eliminate the deficiencies that had emerged in the spiritual sphere of society and public consciousness, to overcome the crisis, and to ensure further development. The urgency of this task lay in the fact that nearly one and a half centuries of colonial rule had led to the erosion of our national identity. Comprehensive dependence on the center hindered the republic's socio-political development, as well as the growth of its national culture and enlightenment. Therefore, the restoration and elevation of spirituality became a matter of national importance.

Methods. In this regard, Islom Karimov emphasized the following about the spiritual uplift of the country: "In order to achieve our noble goals, first of all, we must resolve a great problem that concerns us all that is, we must overcome the spiritual crisis. This is one of the most honorable and at the same time most difficult tasks. It is not easy to accomplish… Spiritual reforms mean freeing ourselves from the chains of slavery and submission, valuing our dignity, restoring the traditions of our forefathers, and becoming worthy heirs to them — there is no task in this world more difficult and more honorable than this" [1]. These ideas of the President acquired important methodological significance for the spiritual uplift of the republic.

Results. "Spirituality is the totality of a person's spiritual and intellectual world. Spirituality is the foundation of the culture of both the individual and society, and the principal factor determining a certain direction in the life of a person and society. Without rich spirituality, it is impossible to build a great state" [2]. Spirituality calls a person toward inner purification and moral elevation; it enriches one's inner world, strengthens faith and willpower, and awakens the conscience. While material things provide a person with physical strength, spirituality grants spiritual nourishment and inner power.

In overcoming the spiritual crisis in society and elevating the spiritual sphere, the work of intellectuals occupies a distinctive place, for intellectuals represent the advanced and educated stratum of the people. "At any time and in any society, the progressive, conscious, and vanguard group capable of leading the people forward is the intelligentsia." They are regarded as active participants in the spiritual life of society [3].

A decisive step toward overcoming the spiritual crisis that had emerged in the republic began with the political report delivered by Islom Karimov at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (June 1990). On that occasion, speaking about the spiritual and moral renewal of society, he emphasized:

"We believe it is no coincidence that our people enthusiastically welcomed the decision to celebrate the jubilees of Navoi, Ulugbek, Babur, Mashrab, Furqat, Qodiriy, and other great sons of our nation. Their legacy has served, and will continue to serve, the flourishing and enrichment of the universal values of the peoples of Uzbekistan. We will do everything necessary to convey their priceless heritage to the people, first and foremost to our youth" [4]

These words signaled the beginning of a period of spiritual purification and renewal in the republic. At the same time, the President assessed the role of intellectuals in the process of spiritual renewal as follows:

"It can be said without any exaggeration that in this great work of spiritually revitalizing the people, our intellectuals must occupy the principal and decisive position. The word of the intellectual resonates in the minds and hearts of the people" [5].

The speech of Islom Karimov served as strong encouragement for the intellectual community. A number of works that had a positive impact on spiritual uplift were published. In particular, P. Qodirov's novel *"Yulduzli tunlar"* ("Starry Nights") was released. With a preface by Academician B. Ahmedov, *"Temur Tuzuklari"* ("The Code of Timur") was published in full in the journal *Sharq Yulduzi* [6].

After Uzbekistan gained independence, the nation acquired the opportunity to cherish, preserve, study, and widely promote the material and spiritual heritage created by our ancestors over the centuries. In 1991, the 550th anniversary of the birth of Alisher Navoiy was widely celebrated in Uzbekistan. Extensive preparations were undertaken across the republic, and the event became a great cultural celebration for the people.

On the eve of the anniversary and in the years that followed, significant efforts were made by scholars of Navoi studies, linguistics, and literary criticism to bring the great poet's literary heritage to the broader public. Special attention was given to publishing a complete twenty-volume collection of his works. In this regard, the research staff of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan demonstrated notable initiative.

At the same time, such masterpieces as *"Farhod va Shirin," "Layli va Majnun,"* and *"Hayrat ul-abror"* were published separately in editions of several thousand copies. In addition, works such as *"Tarixi anbiyo va hukamo," "Munojot,"* and several other popular-scientific [7] publications and gift editions were issued. Among these, particular attention should be paid to Professor Aziz Qayumov's book *"Nodir sahifalar"* ("Rare Pages"), published in 1991, which explored lesser-studied works of Alisher Navoi [8].

Before the anniversary, stage plays and films dedicated to the life and creative work of the thinker were produced. Unlike during the Soviet period, the stage productions focused on studying Navoi's works based on original sources, relying on historical accuracy, avoiding epic and mythological exaggeration, and emphasizing simple human emotions and relationships.

In 1991, the Hamza State Academic Drama Theater of Uzbekistan revisited the play *"Alisher Navoiy"*, originally staged by Mannon Uyg'ur in the 1950s. T. Azizov and Izzat Sulton presented a new interpretation of the *"Alisher Navoiy"* drama, while the renowned director B. Yo'ldoshev staged the drama *"Iskandar"* at the Abror Hidoyatov Uzbek Drama Theater, based on Alisher Navoi's epic *"Saddi Iskandariy"[9]*

On September 24, 1991, the opening ceremony of Alisher Navoi's anniversary took place, followed by an international scientific conference on September 26. In Tashkent, a magnificent monument to the poet and the Navoi Boulevard were established. All celebrations were conducted in accordance with national traditions and the spirit of our culture. The spiritual legacy left by Navoi continues to serve as a significant factor in uplifting society morally under the conditions of independence.

Discussion. To further enhance the positive changes in the country's spiritual life, the "Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat" Public Center was established on April 23, 1994. This social organization works with various segments of society. Among the intellectuals active in the center, research is conducted across four main divisions:

1. National and universal values – studying and promoting the ethical and cultural heritage of the nation and humanity.
2. National customs and traditions – researching and preserving traditional practices.
3. Spiritual-educational and forward-looking studies – analyzing spiritual, educational, and moral development prospects.
4. Legal state and civil society, and collection of ideas, programs, and proposals – exploring innovative ideas that define the future of the nation, identifying universal principles of development, and implementing them in practice.

The center's activities include studying the country's educational systems (general, secondary specialized, and higher education), analyzing the state of spirituality, education, religion, and freedom of conscience in foreign countries, and examining issues related to culture, science, and public enlightenment[10].

During its organizational period, councils of the center were established in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as in regions, cities, and districts. These councils included prominent specialists – scholars, educators, elders of local communities, and representatives of the broader public.

Within a relatively short period, the "Ma'naviyat va Ma'rifat" Public Center developed recommendations for organizing spiritual and educational work by conducting various sociological studies and surveys [11].

At the same time, initiatives were launched to strengthen cooperation between public associations, scientific and creative institutions, organizations, and mass media, as well as to organize numerous events, conferences, and exhibitions on spiritual and educational topics. These activities play an important role in accelerating the cultural and educational process, broadly promoting national culture and traditions, and fostering a sense of national pride and dignity.

Intellectuals working at the “Ma’naviyat va Ma’rifat” Public Center, its affiliated “Oltin Meros” International Fund, the journal “Tafakkur”, and the publishing house “Ma’naviyat” have played a leading role in helping people understand their national identity, reviving national-spiritual consciousness, customs, and traditions, studying the rich spiritual and historical heritage, and freeing society from ideologies not inherent to the nation.

It is said, “If you want to awaken a people, awaken its history.” To clarify this point, special attention must be given to the study and use of historical heritage, which is of great importance. Studying historical heritage and using it is connected to the process of conscious human activity. The results of this process can accelerate social progress, including spiritual development. Mastery of historical and cultural wealth and using it in future spiritual activities is especially significant.

Under the conditions of independence, it became possible to study history objectively, free from various ideological pressures. As Islom Karimov stated:

“Humanity has always wanted to know who their ancestors were, their lineage, the village or city where they were born and grew up, and, ultimately, the history of their homeland. Understanding oneself begins with knowing one’s history”.

Conclusion. Indeed, studying and researching history is essential for spiritual uplift. During the years of independence, scholars in the republic, fully understanding the significance of this issue, conducted in-depth scientific and logical studies of historical events, phenomena, and processes from both the past and recent times, and conveyed their findings to the public.

After Uzbekistan gained independence, the spiritual revival and educational development of society became one of the top priorities. In this process, intellectuals played a decisive role. They actively participated in studying historical heritage, restoring national values, and nurturing the moral development of the younger generation. The widespread promotion of Alisher Navoi’s legacy and the activities of the “Ma’naviyat va Ma’rifat” Public Center are vivid examples of this.

Intellectuals led important scientific and practical initiatives aimed at bringing society out of a spiritual crisis and enriching it with new ideas. Their efforts played an invaluable role in strengthening national consciousness and self-awareness. By consistently taking initiatives to preserve and promote the moral and ethical values of the Uzbek people, as well as safeguarding and developing historical and cultural heritage, intellectuals contributed significantly to the spiritual uplift of society.

Under conditions of independence, the opportunity to study history freely and objectively emerged, which played a crucial role in understanding national identity and in educating the new generation.

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