

EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

VOLUME04 ISSUE11

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55640/eijmrms-04-11-13>

Pages: 77-88



THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN IMPROVING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABOUT ARTICLE

**Key words:** Individual, spirituality, values, national values, universal values, spiritual factors, youth consciousness, worldview, ideological and spiritual factors.

**Received:** 11.11.2024

**Accepted:** 16.11.2024

**Published:** 21.11.2024

**Abstract:** The article analyzes the role of spirituality in the development of personal growth and how individuals with high spirituality act as promoters of national ideology, serving as important tools in the development of society. The article also explores how spirituality helps shape a person's inner world, spirit, and moral values, which play a key role in promoting national ideology—namely, advocating for the interests, history, and traditions of one's nation. Additionally, the article examines the conditions and factors necessary for increasing youth activism, the role of youth in the development of society, the relationship between democracy and spiritual factors, and the importance of spiritual growth for young people.

INTRODUCTION

The role of spirituality in shaping and enhancing personal development is immense, and its importance is closely linked to the development of a person's inner world, moral, and cultural values. Spirituality is the element that defines a person's moral guidelines, cultural knowledge, inner faith, worldview, aspirations, and life goals. Personal development is characterized by physical, intellectual, political, legal, moral, life goals, worldview, social relations, psychological and emotional stability, national and universal values, as well as ecological and aesthetic aspects. These dimensions of development are uneven, meaning they occur at different rates. For example, a person's physical development, as it was

50,000 years ago, remains largely the same today. However, significant positive (progressive) shifts have been observed in the intellectual development of humans, particularly in the evolution of thinking. Spiritual development has also undergone various changes and advancements over thousands of years. Thus, spiritual development and the formation of individual spirituality have evolved over time.

Below is a brief description of the role of spirituality in personal development:

1. **Moral Values:** Spirituality defines a person's moral values. Values such as being ethical, honest, just, and respectful guide a person in both their internal and external environment. A spiritually enriched individual is responsible, compassionate, and helpful in their relationships with others.
2. **Life Goals and Worldview:** Spirituality plays a significant role in determining the goals a person sets in life. A spiritually developed individual leads their life with a clear direction and works diligently to achieve their goals.
3. **Social Relationships:** Spirituality helps an individual find their place in society. In social relationships, a person's cultural and spiritual level impacts their success. A person who values themselves also respects the values of others.
4. **Psychological and Emotional Stability:** Spiritual richness has a positive effect on a person's emotional and psychological state. Spirituality plays a crucial role in coping with stress, difficulties, and obstacles in life, helping individuals respond to challenges with the right attitude.
5. **National and Universal Values:** Spirituality integrates national and universal values, allowing individuals to appreciate their own cultural heritage while respecting the shared values of global civilization. This fosters cultural awareness and a broad, open worldview.

“Personal spirituality is a deep individual and subjective experience that encompasses a person's beliefs, values, and a sense of connection to something greater than themselves”[1].

Spirituality is a deep personal and subjective aspect of human existence, encompassing beliefs, values, and practices related to the transcendent or the divine.

“Personal spirituality is often considered an individualistic aspiration, yet it is not disconnected from the influence of society. The factors shaping an individual are many and varied. For example, genetic, biological-natural, cultural, social life experiences, relationships with peers, and so on all contribute to the formation of the individual. The genetic aspect of a person includes their hereditary foundation,

inherited physiognomy, and behavior from ancestors, while the bio-physiological aspect is determined by individual needs, such as obtaining energy for survival, eating, engaging in sexual relations, and reproduction”[2]. The individual, by nature, is a member of a specific generation that is capable of managing their actions through consciousness and intellect, and is rooted in a social-historical tradition, way of life, and experience. The phenomenon of the individual encapsulates the entire complexity of the human world. In order to understand it fully, extensive research has been conducted throughout various periods. In particular, in the East, the individual has been understood through high moral and spiritual standards and considered the highest creation, a priceless value.

As our first President, I. Karimov, emphasized: “When we talk about forming and nurturing the spiritual world of young people from childhood, based on noble ideas, there is another important issue that should be addressed. This is the matter of creating dolls and toys that align with the interests and emotions of our young children, who, with amazement, seek to find meaning in the world around them. At first glance, this issue might seem trivial. However, if we consider that every child first perceives the world through the objects and items around them, including toys, we realize that their role in a child's upbringing is invaluable. The image of toys is etched in a child's delicate imagination, much like a pattern carved into stone, and it remains in their consciousness for a lifetime. A child's choice of profession, the path they follow in the future, and the ethical and spiritual foundations upon which they build their way of life are undoubtedly influenced by the toys they were exposed to during their early childhood”[3].

As infants gradually grow, their curiosity about the surrounding environment increases. They begin to want to touch and bite things. There are always numerous questions in their minds. In order to cultivate positive emotions in children, such as friendship, love, and affection, it is important to provide them with toys. A child who grows up playing with toys will undoubtedly become a good person in the future. However, attention must be given to the fact that toys should promote positive values. Nowadays, many toys available in the markets are contrary to our spiritual values. Our first president highlighted this issue, stressing the importance of the types of toys children are exposed to.

“There are many factors and means for developing personal spirituality. One of the most important and enduring values of the Uzbek people, which has existed from ancient times to the present day, is the high respect and honor for parents. For a child, there is no one more beloved, dear, and honorable than their parents. Parents are the child's support and an endless source of wealth”[4].

Parents give their children everything, never withholding anything from them. This is one of the great qualities bestowed by nature. In Uzbek culture, it is considered a sin to pass by elders, including parents, without greeting them. Respecting parents, being forever loyal to their selfless service, and seeking their blessings is a child's duty. These are among the most important demands of our national values.

“We must admit that during the Soviet era, our national values regarding the respect for elders and parents began to fade somewhat. In some of our youth, there is a noticeable decline in the respect for older people, for venerable elders, and in the willingness to listen to their advice. Perhaps people from other nations may not pay much attention to this, but for us, Uzbeks, it is something we cannot ignore” [5].

In the homes designated for the elderly, it is intolerable that parents, still alive and well-off, are abandoned by their children. From time to time, we hear of cases where children raise a hand against their parents or commit even worse crimes. This is not just a simple flaw; it is a profound degradation, an affront to our national values, and a loss of humanity. Naturally, one might ask: What is the root cause of such behavior? What is the reason behind such disgraceful acts that stain our national honor?

During the Soviet era, instead of promoting the wisdom, advice, and rich traditions of our ancestors, they were constantly criticized, vilified, and labeled as superstition or backwardness. Our cultural heritage regarding national upbringing was neither studied nor promoted. Instead, European and Russian models of education and upbringing were glorified, pushing our youth further away from our own national values. As a result, we began to lose the invaluable life lessons passed down through generations, including those related to religious ethics, family values, and community ties. However, with the achievement of independence, we have begun to address these issues, and significant efforts are being made to eradicate these negative tendencies.

Respecting one's parents is considered both a child's duty and a responsibility to society. The following Eastern traditions for honoring parents are not only important but also a moral obligation for all of us:

- Providing food for parents,
- Dressing them neatly and appropriately,
- Taking them to a doctor when they are sick,
- Bringing them the necessary medicine,

- Regularly inquiring about their health and well-being,
- And, most importantly, refraining from showing any signs of frustration or discontent in their presence.

These actions are fundamental duties in honoring our parents, and they reflect the deep respect ingrained in our national and cultural values.

A child must avoid doing anything that displeases their parents, such as drinking alcohol or associating with bad company. If parents say not to do something, it is important to heed their advice and not engage in those actions. When walking on the street, it is proper to avoid walking ahead of one's father. One should never reach for food or sit at the table before their father does, nor should one sit down before their father. It is also inappropriate to stretch one's legs or lie down in front of one's father. Responding to parents when they call, without hesitation or delay, is a child's duty. In doing so, the child gains the satisfaction of their parents. A child who earns the approval of their parents will find blessings in their life; everything will go well for them, and they will achieve their goals. On the other hand, a child who does not have their parents' approval, even if they work hard all day, will struggle, and their efforts will not bear fruit. When it comes to marriage, obtaining the approval and blessing of one's parents is of great importance. All of these actions are like a treasure-precious gold-for us. They lay the foundation for our future lives. This world is a reflection of the next; whatever you sow, you will reap. Whatever you do for your parents, it will be returned to you through your children. This is a law of nature, and it is undeniable.

As we discussed the child's duty to their parents above, it is equally important to recognize the enormous responsibility that parents have toward their children. A child's future spiritual development depends greatly on the upbringing and guidance provided by their parents. Every parent must fully embrace their paternal or maternal responsibility and recognize their duty toward their child. "During the Soviet era, national and spiritual education was sidelined for a long time. As a result, the responsibility of parents in raising their children diminished, and this is no secret to anyone"[6].

However, in my view, the education provided by parents plays a crucial role in the upbringing of children and in shaping the spiritual and moral character of future generations. Every parent must understand that the process of a child's upbringing occurs in several stages, and it is essential for them to be actively involved in each of those stages to ensure proper development.

The first stage is lineage education, or the upbringing of the child, which should begin even before the child is born. This means that the future mother and father must consider their health and well-being, as they are responsible for the future of the child they intend to raise. Parents who want to have children must take their responsibility seriously by improving their own health and preparing themselves for the task of raising their future offspring.

The second stage is care during pregnancy. This is an extremely important and critical phase. In developed countries, it is believed that the fate of the unborn child is determined to a large extent (about 60%) by the care provided during pregnancy. The actions taken by parents during this period are essential and should be carefully considered. The third stage is the period from birth to age 6-7. By this time, the foundations of the child's spirituality begin to take shape. It is during this period that parents must nourish and nurture these spiritual foundations, helping them grow and develop further.

Spiritual maturity can begin with something as simple as singing lullabies to the baby, dressing them appropriately, and feeding them with lawful (halal) food. As Hazrat Bahouddin Naqshband said, "Good character and actions in a person stem from consuming lawful food"[7]. This means that when parents nourish their child with halal food, the child will grow up to be spiritually pure and righteous. As our people say, the upbringing of the child should begin before birth, with the parents and all family members being united in their effort to create a healthy, nurturing environment.

In the world, everything is created in pairs. Living as pairs is a law of nature. However, living as a family, with the responsibilities of parenthood, is something that is unique to the human race. "The family has always been regarded as the cornerstone of society throughout the history of mankind. God Almighty, through His prophets, has emphasized the importance of the family, and revealed divine guidance for ensuring its stability. Family life has not only been seen as the foundation of a single nation, but has also been elevated to the level of a universal political structure for all of humanity"[8].

The family is the first and primary unit of society, its atom. Society is made up of these small atoms. Husband and wife – the union of two living beings, two worlds – create a third world, which is the family. If the family is peaceful, harmonious, and united, the world will be peaceful and prosperous. Otherwise, life turns into hell, and the family becomes a prison, and the suffering is not only borne by the husband and wife but also by their children and loved ones. Allah Almighty, in the Qur'an, emphasizes that marriage and the establishment of a family are the Sunnah of the Prophets, saying: "Indeed, We have sent many prophets before you, and to them We gave wives and descendants"[9].

The family should be based on purity and cleanliness, mutual love, loyalty, and faithfulness. This is an important factor for the upbringing of children.

According to family etiquette, elders should not be seen by children, adult children, or daughters-in-law in an exposed manner, should not act in a childish manner, and should not speak inappropriate words. One should not go out in home clothes. The virtues of the Uzbek family are many, and although they are not codified in laws, there are customs and requirements that have become our national values. It is both a duty and a responsibility for our children to adopt them.

Allah Almighty speaks about the sanctity of the family in the Qur'an: "And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought"[10].

Thus, the family is the fundamental unit of society. The education instilled within the family – the concepts and ideas about the homeland, the people, independence, and freedom – leave an indelible mark on the child's tender heart for life. Only when the family is strong, peaceful, prosperous, and healthy can stability in society be achieved.

In our independent Republic, the special attention given to family relations can be seen in the adoption of the "Family Code" during the 11th session of the first convocation of the Supreme Assembly. The state's policy aimed at strengthening the role of the family will undoubtedly play a significant role in enhancing the spiritual development of our children.

Literature and the arts possess wonderful qualities that enrich the spiritual world of the citizens of our independent republic, allowing them to enjoy all the beautiful things in life. Spirituality, high-quality artistic, and captivating literary and artistic works have the ability to quickly reach the hearts of people, deeply influence their aesthetic emotions, and encourage them to reflect on life events. Therefore, it is of great importance to make use of the artistic impact of literature and the arts in shaping individuals' high spiritual and moral character as widely as possible. "The strength of literature and art lies in its accessibility and emotional impact on the inner – spiritual world of people. In educating a spiritually mature generation, it is important to take into account this characteristic of literature and art"[11].

In spiritual education, the wide use of the rich spiritual heritage of the Uzbek people can be a key factor in increasing its effectiveness and influence. In the spiritual upbringing of our youth, utilizing the works of classical poets and writers such as Yusuf Khas Hajib, Ahmad Yugnaki, Ahmad Yasawi, Lutfi, Alisher Navoi, Abdurahman Jami, Mashrab, Muqimiy, Furqat, Abdulla Qodiriy, Cholpon, Usmon Nasir, and



others plays a significant role in enriching their hearts and spiritual worlds. The rich artistic and spiritual legacy they left us stands out with its deep philosophical meaning and ethical direction.

“In the works of our classical artists, qualities necessary for human beings, such as honesty and purity, righteousness, not coveting others' rights, not betraying, humanity, patriotism, hard work, piety, faithfulness, living with halal sustenance, and respecting parents, are expressed at a high artistic level”[12]. In spiritual education, it is also highly beneficial to use the works of writers like Pirimqul Qodirov, Odil Yoqubov, Sayid Ahmad, and Otkir Hoshimov; as well as the works of poets such as Abdulla Oripov, Erkin Vohidov, Oydin Khojjiyeva, and Omon Matchon. Discussions and debates about the characters' behavior, morals, and spiritual world in these literary works would have a great impact.

In spiritual education, the role, place, and significance of theater art in influencing people's minds and spirits are limitless. We can compare theater art to a sword with two sharpened edges. On one hand, it brings light to people's hearts, guiding them towards higher spirituality, while on the other hand, it combats ignorance, spiritual poverty, and darkness in the human heart.

“Like other forms of art, theater art, with its figurative and artistic nature, has the ability to emotionally influence the human heart, deeply enter its spiritual world, and thus enrich the individual's inner world. Strengthening independence and nurturing people in the spirit of high morality requires the effective use of theater art's unique characteristics. Unfortunately, it is surprising that our people, including our youth, do not have a sufficiently strong interest in theater, cinema, or other forms of art”[13]. Theater is a field that vividly reflects the reality of our lives, the aspirations, interests, and actions of people. It uniquely combines speech, music, and gesture to influence the human heart. This is why using the special qualities of theater and cinema art in spiritual education can undoubtedly yield great results. However, it is crucial that we use these forms of art effectively.

In achieving spiritual education and in influencing the hearts of individuals, special attention must be given to utilizing the opportunities provided by television. Just as our people eagerly await shows like “The Words of Fathers – the Eyes of Wisdom”, they are in need of art and literature that promote spiritual elevation - works that encourage courage and nobility, spiritual beauty and moral purity, grandeur, refinement, and our moral values. This is because such works not only elevate our spirituality, but they also serve as one of the primary means to inspire our youth in acquiring knowledge, contributing to the progress of the nation and homeland, showing selflessness, and providing joy and inspiration.



“In carrying out educational work and instilling the ideas of national independence into the minds of our youth, it is important to highlight the practical work being conducted by the National Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment. Effective work is being carried out in the regions and in the city of Tashkent. In particular, organizing meetings between students and prominent figures of our literature and arts, and holding various scientific and practical conferences with the participation of renowned scholars, are highly important endeavors. Furthermore, it is worth emphasizing the publication and widespread promotion of scientific and popular works dedicated to spirituality, education, and teaching. This council has been contributing to the overall work on education being carried out in our country”[14].

When determining a person’s place in society, the role of spirituality is considered incomparable. The reason for this is that a spiritually rich person is always at the forefront, held in high respect and admiration. Whether a person is rich, middle-class, or poor, if their inner spiritual world is beautiful, they will have many close friends and loved ones. Most people in society wish to engage in conversation with individuals whose inner spiritual world is beautiful, as it provides spiritual nourishment and peace to the soul. The conversation with such a person brings calmness to one’s inner world and spirit.

How to educate a highly spiritual person? For this reason, it is essential to provide proper education and upbringing to a child from infancy. In the process of a child's growth and development, upbringing is considered the most important factor. Education is the true school of life. Upbringing is the shortest path to raising virtuous people who will be beneficial to society. Education and upbringing cannot be separated - this is the Eastern perspective, the Eastern philosophy of life.

In reflecting on this, I remember the profound words of Abdulla Avloniy: “Upbringing is, for us, a matter of either life or death, either salvation or destruction, either happiness or calamity”[15]. The words of our great enlightener, spoken at the dawn of the century, were as important and urgent for our nation then as they are now — in fact, they may be even more relevant today. When our great Jadid leader made this statement, he was absolutely right. Even though a century has passed since these words were spoken, their significance has not faded in the least.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, spirituality is a fundamental factor in personal development, shaping an individual's goals, aspirations, moral qualities, and their relationship with society. It has the potential to be a driving force for the advancement of society. To cultivate such qualities, we need spiritually strong and

harmonious families in our society. Only those families that are spiritually enriched can raise individuals with strong morals and values.

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