

THE ROLE OF UZBEK FOLK TALES IN THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of Uzbek folk tales in the spiritual and moral education of preschool children, their pedagogical-psychological significance, and didactic potential. In today's conditions, where issues of spiritual upliftment and national self-awareness are acquiring priority in society, the specific features of instilling folk wisdom into a child's consciousness at the initial stage, when the foundation of personality is formed, are revealed. The article scientifically and theoretically substantiates the mechanisms through which fairy tales influence the formation of a child's worldview, creating initial conceptions of moral categories such as good and evil, kindness and wickedness, justice and injustice.

Keywords: Spirituality, preschool age, Uzbek folk tales, moral education, spiritual and moral values, pedagogical tool, didactic potential, foundation of personality, good and evil, national self-awareness, identification, empathy, "Ilk Qadam" program.

Introduction

The rapid globalization processes occurring in the modern world and the intensification of various ideological struggles in the information space are placing a crucial task before every nation: to preserve its national identity, priceless values, and spiritual-enlightenment heritage, and to pass them on intact to the future generation. In the context of New Uzbekistan, the noble aim of creating the foundation for the Third Renaissance is, first and foremost, inextricably linked with raising a harmonious generation that is spiritually mature, thinks independently, and deeply feels a sense of responsibility for the fate of its Motherland and people. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, emphasized, "If the body of society's life is the economy, then its soul and spirit are spirituality." Instilling this soul and spirit, that is, spirituality, into the human heart and forming their moral immunity begins first of all with the family and the first link of the education system – preschool education.

From a psychophysiological perspective, the preschool age (3-7 years) is considered a unique period when the foundation of the child's personality is built, and the initial buds of their character traits, worldview, and moral criteria emerge. Children at this age struggle to accept abstract concepts and dry admonitions; they perceive the world through bright images, emotional experiences, play, and imitation. From this viewpoint, Uzbek folk tales, which have embodied folk wisdom, life experience, and noble aspirations for thousands of years, serve as an unparalleled and time-tested pedagogical tool in developing a child's spirituality.

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that today, at a time when information technologies,



various cartoons, and virtual games are competing for the child's mind, it is becoming increasingly important to reconsider the scientific-pedagogical foundations of using folklore samples—the pure spring of our national spirituality—and to ensure their effective integration into the modern educational process. Although many scholars, such as Abdulla Avloniy ("Turkiy Guliston yokhud Akhloq" - "Turkic Rose Garden or Morality") [2], J. Hasanboev (Uzbek Folk Pedagogy) [7], and Sh.A. Sodiqova (Preschool Pedagogy), have touched upon the educational significance of folklore in their research, the specific mechanisms of Uzbek folk tales in developing the spirituality of preschool children [6], researching their alignment with the goals of the "Ilk Qadam" state curriculum, and detailing their didactic potential remain among the urgent scientific and practical tasks facing pedagogy today [1].

For a preschool-aged child, the concept of "spirituality" is not a complex philosophical category as it is for adults, but rather manifests through clear and simple moral criteria and behavioral models. These include: being able to distinguish between good and evil, respect for parents and elders, understanding the consequences of industriousness versus laziness, sensing the difference between honesty and dishonesty, and showing kindness and compassion (*mehr-oqibat*), as well as affection for one's home, kindergarten, and neighborhood (as a concept of Motherland).

Uzbek folk tales serve as a unique pedagogical technology to instill these very qualities into the child's mind and heart, not forcibly, but by ensuring their emotional participation (empathy). The pedagogical mechanism of action of fairy tales is, first and foremost, evident in their clear dualistic nature—the depiction of the eternal struggle between good and evil in a clear and child-friendly manner. In all tales such as "Zumrad va Qimmat," "Ur To'qmoq," "Yoriltosh," "Kenja Botir," and "Ochil Dasturkhon," the conflict between the positive hero (hardworking, polite, brave, smart, generous) and the negative hero (lazy, greedy, cunning, cruel, miserly) is clearly manifested. Most importantly, the main leitmotif of folk tales is that good always triumphs in this struggle, and evil is inevitably punished. Although the positive hero may temporarily face difficulties and injustices, he or she ultimately achieves their goal thanks to their perseverance, intelligence, honesty, and hard work. This situation forms a strong belief in justice in the child's worldview and an inner conviction that "being a good person" is preferable and right. This, in turn, serves as a solid foundation for their future moral choices.

The second important psychological mechanism of fairy tales in spiritual education is the child's tendency to identify (equate) themselves with the hero. As L.S. Vygotsky noted, when a child listens to a fairy tale, they are not just a passive observer but become an active participant in the events, a "comrade-in-arms" of the hero. In the tale "Zumrad va Qimmat," the child empathizes with Zumrad's hard work, politeness, and patience, becomes angry at the cruelty of her stepmother and Qimmat, and finally rejoices boundlessly when Zumrad achieves happiness. The courage of the youngest son in "Uch Og'a-ini Botirlar" (The Three Brother Heroes) and the resourcefulness of "Kenja Botir" inspire admiration in the child. This unconscious desire to be like these positive heroes creates a basis for the child to model their own behavior and to internalize (interiorization) their virtues. This process enriches the child's sensory-emotional world and develops empathy in them—the ability to share in others' sorrow and show compassion.

At the same time, negative characters like the cunning fox, the greedy wolf, the lazy and miserly boy (rich man), and the *yalmog'iz* (witch) clearly demonstrate that vices such as deceit, greed,



laziness, and miserliness are not only repulsive but also inevitably lead to punishment and defeat. This serves as a "moral inoculation" (moralnaya privivka), forming a negative attitude towards these vices in the child and a reflex to abstain from them.

The most priceless aspect of Uzbek folk tales is their role as a vehicle for transmitting national values and cultural codes from generation to generation. The texts of these tales deeply encode our people's worldview, way of life, aspirations, and moral ideals. Firstly, this is evident in the attitude towards labor. In tales like "Zarrin Tarvuz" (The Golden Watermelon) and "Mehnat va Rohat" (Labor and Leisure), hard work, farming, and craftsmanship are glorified, while laziness and parasitism are condemned. Through this, a positive attitude towards labor and the virtue of achieving something through one's own efforts are formed in the child from a young age. Secondly, the issue of respect for parents and elders holds a central place in Uzbek folk tales. In tales such as "Ota Nasihati" (A Father's Advice) and "Donishmand Chol" (The Wise Old Man), listening to one's father or an elder and following their advice always leads to a positive outcome—escaping trouble or finding an easy solution to a difficulty. This instills in the child's mind the idea that respect for elders is a guarantee of success in life. Thirdly, in tales ("Aqli Bola" - The Smart Boy, "Oltin Olma" - The Golden Apple), the concepts of honesty and justice are prioritized over deceit and betraying someone's trust; it is emphasized that even a single coin earned honestly is better than treasure obtained dishonestly. Fourthly, folk tales form the initial buds of patriotism. This patriotism is primarily manifested in the images of heroes (botirlar) who are ready to defend their home, neighborhood, and country from evil forces (giants, dragons, invaders). Fifthly, national and universal values such as honoring bread, hospitality, generosity, and unity ("Uch Og'a-ini Botirlar") are integrated into the entire content of the tales. Thus, through fairy tales, the child becomes acquainted with the spiritual heritage of their people, and the initial foundation for their national self-awareness and feelings of love and pride for their Motherland, people, and culture is created.

In the modern preschool education process, particularly within the framework of the "Ilk Qadam" state curriculum, combining traditional methods with innovative and interactive methods when using Uzbek folk tales yields high pedagogical effectiveness. It is not enough to limit oneself to simply reading or telling the tale expressively (though this is also an important stage) [1].

To fully unlock the spiritual and educational potential of a fairy tale, the following methodological approaches are required:

1. Reflective Discussion (Q&A): After listening to the tale, it is necessary to encourage children to think independently and draw conclusions by asking guiding and problematic questions. ("Which hero's actions did you like? Why?", "What would you do if you were in Kenja Botir's place?", "What was the consequence of lying?", "Why did everyone help Zumrad?"). This process activates the child's moral reasoning.

2. Dramatization of the Tale (Dramatization and Role-Playing): Staging the tale with children and performing it in roles helps to more deeply embed the tale's content and its moral standards in their memory. When a child "gets into the skin" of the character they are portraying (positive or negative), they gain a deeper understanding of their emotional experiences and the motives for their actions.



3. Integration with Creative Activity: In accordance with the requirements of the "Ilk Qadam" program, it is important to continue the impressions received from the tale in various activity centers (Fine Arts, Construction-Crafting). By drawing the tale's heroes, sculpting them from plasticine, making applications, or building houses for them, the child creatively expresses the emotional impressions received from the tale, which positively affects their emotional development.

4. Use of Fairy Tale Therapy (Art Therapy) Elements: Fairy tales are not only a means of spiritual education but also a tool for psychological correction. A psychologist or an experienced educator can use purposefully selected tales ("The Lying Shepherd," tales about "The Coward") to address specific behavioral problems in a child (e.g., lying, cowardice, greed, aggression). Through discussion of the tale, the child is helped to see the negative consequences of their actions from an outside perspective and to find ways to correct them.

5. Integrating Modern Technologies: Presenting folk tales not just from a paper book but also through high-quality audio tales, diafilms (filmstrips), theatrical puppet shows, and even high-quality animated films in the national spirit (free from aggression) further increases children's interest.

In conclusion, Uzbek folk tales are not merely an artistic heritage from the past, a form of entertainment, or a literary work; they are a time-tested, powerful pedagogical tool and an inexhaustible source of spiritual education created over centuries, taking into account the most subtle aspects of child psychology. They are of unparalleled importance in planting the seeds of goodness in the hearts of preschool children, forming their spiritual immunity, instilling moral values and behavioral norms, and educating them in the national spirit. In an era where the negative influences of modern technologies, aggressive information flow, and "mass culture" are intensifying, the rational, purposeful, and methodologically correct use of this priceless spiritual treasury of our people in raising our children as spiritually healthy, morally strong individuals who understand their identity remains one of the most important tasks of today's preschool education system.

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