

The Educational and Aesthetic Significance of Reading in The Spiritual Development of Students

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Abstract: This article examines the educational and aesthetic significance of reading in shaping students' spiritual development. It analyzes the role of book reading in developing students' worldview, thinking, spiritual-moral qualities, and aesthetic taste. It also reveals how fiction can help form qualities such as kindness, humanism, patriotism, an appreciation of beauty, and respect for values in students. The article substantiates the development of a reading culture as an important factor in enhancing students' intellectual and spiritual potential.

Keywords: Reading, culture of reading, student, spiritual development, enlightenment, aesthetic education, fiction, book, worldview, thinking, spiritual-moral values, aesthetic taste.

Introduction: Every generation faces the task of studying and mastering the entirety of knowledge created by humanity. The progress of life and the development of society cannot be imagined without this. The only way to accomplish this task is by forming the educational skills and competencies of the younger generation. There is great wisdom in the hadith that says, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." The pursuit of knowledge leads a person toward spiritual and moral perfection. This is precisely why the greatest challenge facing public education comes down to students' educational activity — and it is no coincidence that low academic achievement remains one of the pressing issues that constantly troubles teachers.

A lack of learning skills turns any subject into exhausting labor and an unwelcome obligation. Only a person who has developed learning skills can thoroughly master knowledge. How productive students' interest in and pursuit of the fundamentals of a subject turns out to be depends on the correct choice of teaching methods.

From the moment of birth, a person feels a need for education and upbringing within themselves. This is not merely a psycho-physiological instinct, but a necessity

born of the need to understand the world, to find one's place in life, and a result of the struggle for existence. The pursuit of knowledge, in turn, leads toward spiritual development. The spiritual development of the individual, in its turn, serves to determine the level of society's progress.

The spiritual-moral perfection that our ancestors have striven toward for centuries is, first and foremost, a person's self-awareness, and it is achieved only through education and upbringing. Self-awareness, in turn, opens the path to understanding others — and thus to understanding the world and comprehending its mysteries.

In the spiritual development and self-awareness of the individual, the role of literature — the art of the word — is incomparable. This is precisely why it is spoken of as one of the seven wonders. Fiction, like humankind itself, is ancient and yet ever youthful. Every era leaves its own imprint upon it. Yet its essential content remains one and the same: the human being and their complex spiritual world.

METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the influence of reading on

students' spiritual-moral and aesthetic development, the study employed methods of analyzing scientific literature, pedagogical observation, conversation, surveying, comparative analysis, and generalization. Through the study of scientific-theoretical sources, the pedagogical and educational essence of reading culture was clarified. Using pedagogical observation and conversation methods, students' interest in reading books, their perception of literary works, and the spiritual-aesthetic views forming within them were studied. In the practical part of the research, the influence of fiction on students' worldview, independent thinking, aesthetic taste, moral qualities, and attitude toward national values was analyzed. The results obtained were generalized on the basis of comparative and logical analysis, and the pedagogical possibilities for effectively organizing reading within the educational process were identified.

Analysis of Scientific-Theoretical Literature

Fiction, as the art of the word, helps a person understand themselves — and thereby understand the world — through its capacity to "give rise to thoughts, imaginings, and concepts." By its very nature, it can be called a distinctive mirror of humanity's historical development and an expression of life's experiences. Indeed, a book stands in the position of one generation's spiritual heritage to the next — the counsel and guidance of a person whose life is drawing to a close, given to young people whose lives are just beginning (A. Herzen).

Whichever great mind's life path one examines, one can see that a book illuminated their life from within, like a beacon. Alisher Navoi memorized Farid al-Din Attar's poem "Mantiq al-Tayr" ("The Conference of the Birds") when he was still a child. Yet the idea put forward in this work never left his mind for the rest of his life. Not only did it never leave him — it directed his creative thought toward great endeavors.

The poem "On the Nature of Things" by the Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus, who lived and wrote in the first century BCE, filled Cicero, Virgil, Giordano Bruno, and Bacon with boundless admiration, and played a major role in shaping the worldview of thinkers such as Newton and Lomonosov. Yusuf Khass Hajib's "Kutadgu Bilig," Ferdowsi's "Shahnameh," Alisher Navoi's "Khamsa," and Ahmad Yasawi's life-giving aphorisms

have, for many centuries now, continued to serve the spiritual development of human society. Yet these works open their hearts only to those capable of engaging in dialogue with them. Given this, what, then, is the secret of reading — a thing that at first glance seems so simple?

As fiction and the disciplines concerned with it — as well as pedagogy, didactics, and psychology — developed, this problem became one of the pressing issues facing intellectuals and scholars involved in education and upbringing.

The spiritual development of the individual depends in large part on how correctly this issue is framed. If one considers that 85% of human knowledge is acquired directly through reading books, its importance becomes even clearer.

The path to the book — as a source of knowledge and a means of upbringing — the problem of reading is not an issue that has arisen today. Its roots must be sought from the earliest period of human society, in the performance of examples of oral folk creativity. The history of the concept of "reading" as currently used in literary scholarship undoubtedly traces back to ancient inscribed stone monuments.

The ancient Indian literary monument "Kalila wa Dimna," created in the 3rd–4th centuries CE; "Kutadgu Bilig," written by Yusuf Khass Hajib in 1069; and "Qabus-nama," written by Kaykavus for his son Gilanshah in 1082–1083 — the fact that these works have, across the centuries, been translated into many of the world's languages and republished again and again shows that reading is a matter of state-level importance. Indeed, the history of literature is not merely the history of writers who promoted various ideas and of their works, but also the history of the readers who read those works.

In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that the problem of reading is as ancient as literature itself. Accordingly, valuable thoughts concerning reading are set forth in Mahmud Kashgari's "Diwan Lughat al-Turk," Abu Abdullah al-Khwarizmi's "Mafatih al-Ulum," Yusuf Khass Hajib's "Kutadgu Bilig," Nasir al-Din Burhan al-Din Rabghuzi's "Qisas-i Rabghuzi," Khvandamir's "Makarim al-Akhlaq," and a number of works by Alisher Navoi and Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur. In particular, the author of "Qisas-i Rabghuzi" writes as follows regarding the

reasons for the work's creation:

"...I have a great desire for the stories of the prophets. In every land, among every people, some things are set straight and some are not; some are firmly established, and some are lacking. Some accounts are cut short in their telling, and some fall short of their purpose. Now, should what falls from your shoulder and flows from your pen become, in writing, our 'Qisas al-Anbiya,' it would be fitting to read and worthy to learn from — and when this was suggested to me as a kind of request, however much I burdened myself and held back my own inclination, I resolved that it should be [my] fortune, and so I set about this weighty task... and began the book."

The qualities of the world of books as a source of knowledge and a means of upbringing do not negate one another — on the contrary, they are aspects that lead toward perfection. It is precisely these aspects that also determine its social essence.

As is known, the puzzles of the vast world are without number or count. A person comes to know its mysteries only by relying on knowledge. Indeed, there is great wisdom in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim man and every Muslim woman."

"Knowledge," writes Yusuf Khas Hajib in "Kutadgu Bilig" ("Knowledge That Leads to Happiness"), "closely resembles musk. It is futile to try to conceal either of the two. If you hide musk, its scent will betray it. If you hide knowledge, your tongue will reveal it. Knowledge is, in truth, like inexhaustible wealth. But it has a fundamental difference from other forms of wealth:

Knowledge is wealth, indeed, far removed from ruin,

Yet no thief is able to take it away.

Knowledge and wisdom are a distinctive fetter placed upon a person. A hobbled horse, as a rule, stays far from wicked and unworthy things. Likewise, cherished, fine horses are also often hobbled. The reason a beloved horse is hobbled is precisely out of care for it."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When a writer, through the experiences of the characters they have created and their relationships with others, puts forward a particular idea, they do not merely narrate the lives of those characters — rather, they depict them in an imagistic manner. The imagery in a literary work stirs a person's emotions, leaving the

impression that the reality captured on the page actually took place in life.

If scholarly works save a person from ignorance and heedlessness, works of fiction free them from coarseness and vileness. Both the one and the other are equally beneficial and necessary for people to become enlightened and to attain happiness and well-being.

Given that both scholarly works and works of fiction are beneficial and necessary, why is it that only a certain group of people reads and understands the former, while the latter is read and loved by everyone?

Fiction is the art of the word. The imagistic depiction within it stirs the reader's emotions, enriches their imagination, introduces them to unfamiliar places and people, and in certain cases even determines their future.

The reader must be prepared to grasp the idea of the work — in other words, to accept and absorb the thought put forward by the writer. This is because the content of any work is reworked and recreated anew by the reader in the process of reading. And this, in turn, is determined by each person's culture of reading and level of talent.

"The fate of a writer working on a piece — especially a major work," writes O. Hoshimov, "in some respect resembles the fate of a restless traveler. A traveler, after all, arrives on an unfamiliar island by chance (like Robinson Crusoe). A writer, however, goes there of their own free will. When they come face to face with a blank sheet of white paper, it is as if they have arrived on an unfamiliar island. This island is the work yet to be written. Here, the writer creates its inhabitants — that is, breathes life into the work's characters. Gradually, the writer becomes so accustomed to the island they themselves have discovered, and to the characters they themselves have created, that they no longer wish to leave the 'island' at all. Yet they must, in the end, part with those people, with that 'island.' Of their own free will. Otherwise, they will become unable to discover another 'island.'"

A work that, before its creation, existed in the status of an unfamiliar island for its creator, comes to hold that same status for the reader once it has seen the light of day.

As the reader picks up the work, like travelers who have landed on an unfamiliar island, they become acquainted

with — and interested in — all the details relating to the work's events and the characters' fates; that is, they too undergo hardship. Just as the travelers on the unfamiliar island struggle to survive, readers, through reading the work, seek to study the puzzles of life more deeply and to grasp its essence. Literature, then, teaches life.

CONCLUSION

From what has been set forth above, the following conclusions may be drawn. The prosperity of the homeland and the progress of society are bound up with the cultural and educational level of its citizens. This is precisely why the matter of an individual's spiritual development has, since ancient times, been a matter of state importance, standing at the center of education and upbringing.

The development of the individual cannot be imagined without fiction and literary education. From the earliest moments of a person's life to its very end, literature serves as a sympathetic companion, a kindred spirit, a faithful friend, and a sincere advisor. The great figures of human history have risen to the throne of greatness through the reading of literature — through being well-read. Accordingly, literature's closeness to life gives rise to the very problem of one's relationship and engagement with it — that is, the problem of reading.

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