



Article

Methods of Using the Art of Bakhshi in Cultural Events

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Abstract: The present article studies the historical roots, developmental stages and socio-cultural significance of the art of bakhshi in Uzbekistan. Particular focus is placed on the methodological underpinnings of incorporating bakhshi performance into present-day cultural events, such as national holidays, weddings, festivals and educational initiatives. The results of the study emphasize the role of epic traditions, in particular the doston Alpomish, to form moral values, patriotism and national identity among the younger generation. Sevo is held to be alive by the article, which also estimates the value of International Bakhshi Art Festival organized in Termez and state cultural policy initiatives initiated under Shavkat Mirziyoyev era for continuity and improvement of oral folk mastery. Drawing from historical-comparative, ethnographic, and pedagogical methods, the research establishes that using bakhshi art systematically in cultural events is an influential instrument for preserving national spirituality and intangible cultural heritage within globalisation.

Keywords: Bakhshi Art, Doston Tradition, Alpomish, National Identity, Ethnopedagogy, Cultural Events, Spiritual Upbringing, Oral Folk Heritage, International Bakhshi Festival, National Education, Improvisation, Dombra

1. Introduction

Bakhshi is one of the most ancient art forms, having played an important role in transmitting the centuries-old history, customs, spiritual and ethnopedagogical characteristics of our people from generation to generation. Immortal heroes embodying the people's ideal, their patriotic and heroic struggles for the freedom of their homeland, were sung in epic doston on a folk basis at a high artistic level. Such images were refined through the spirit of centuries-long traditions, contributing to the expansion of the bakhshi audience and the broader spread of live performance.

The art of bakhshi is one of the most ancient types of art that has played an important role in transmitting the centuries-old history, traditions, spiritual and ethno-pedagogical characteristics of our people from generation to generation. The images of immortal heroes, embodying the national ideal, patriotism and heroic spirit, are highly artistically sung in folk epics. These images, having been refined in the spirit of traditions formed over the centuries, have created the basis for the expansion of the bakhshi audience and the wider spread of live performing art. Although the art of bakhshi was formed during socio-historical processes and acquired its own aesthetic significance, its brightest flowering and development – especially its manifestation in live epic traditions – falls on the 19th and early 20th centuries. The strong memory, unique talent and improvisational skills of the bakhshi poets of that time played an incomparable role in transmitting ancient epics to subsequent generations. The formation of the Bakhshi poets as true executors of the epic

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tradition, as well as the full development of the methods characteristic of the epic schools, also dates back to this period. Although the art of bakhshi has developed throughout social and historical processes over the centuries, gaining unique aesthetic significance, its flourishing and development in living epic traditions became most visible in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The strong memory, unique talent and improvisational mastery of the bakhshi-poets of that era played an important role in transmitting ancient doston to subsequent generations. The formation of bakhshi-poets as authentic performers of epic traditions and the full development of methods characteristic of doston schools also date from this period [1].

The upbringing of a complete person is a consistent and long-lasting process, and the primary means of meeting society's need for such individuals is national education. National education is the fundamental foundation for a nation's survival as a nation. The socio-political significance of this issue is profoundly revealed in the words of President Sh.Mirziyoyev: "We acknowledged that the economic reforms taking place are being implemented by the state, that the state is the chief reformer. This means we must also recognize that in political and spiritual reforms, in elevating national education, the state must be the chief reformer, and we must substantiate the foundation of spiritual directions through appropriate laws" [2].

National education is a pedagogical process that enriches national identity from generation to generation on the basis of Eastern morality and ethics, providing spiritual and national strength. This process is distinguished precisely by the fact that it fully expresses the characteristics and needs unique to a specific nation. A nation indifferent and disrespectful to national education loses its identity, ultimately strays from its path, sinks into the quagmire of decline, and becomes a victim of 'mass culture' attacks.

The national orientation of education is one of the principles of Uzbekistan's National Programme for Personnel Training. It serves to ensure the organic harmony of education and upbringing with national history, national culture, and people's traditions and customs [3].

Consider this: the doston 'Alpomish,' a masterpiece of Turkic oral folk art, has not lost its charm over the centuries. This is because it extols patience, dedication to the Homeland, honesty and justice. Its heroes promote religious and moral values. That is why 'Alpomish' and other doston were never forgotten by the nation's children, even without a written form.

At the International Bakhshi Festival held in Termez, our President stated: "In this complex era where the negative influence of commercialized 'mass culture' and show business is increasingly growing in the age of globalization, it is no secret that interest in and attention to folk art, which is a part of our national culture, is unfortunately waning." This is the full truth.

Who will bring this masterpiece of oral folk art to the people and to our youth? Cultural and artistic professionals must work together. We must support and widely promote the creative work of young artists who are regularly engaged with our nation's oral folk art heritage [4,5].

Take the art of bakhshi as an example: among practitioners of this art, there are some who view it merely as a livelihood and a means of earning income. But this is entirely wrong. A bakhshi performs for hours, playing the dombra; the melody of the dombra and its inner charm add even greater power to bakhshi art.

As our President has emphasized, today we - professionals of culture and art - must ensure the regular participation of bakhshis in every cultural event, wedding celebrations and various holidays. Let us give bakhshi art its rightful place, so that our youth may become acquainted with and grow fond of it. If we do not act today, it will be too late tomorrow.

Indeed, importance has been attached to oral folk art in recent years thanks to the initiative of President Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev. On November 1st, the President signed a decree 'On Holding International Bakhshi Art Festival' [6], which was followed by a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on November 22nd [7]. This included the procedure for conducting the International Mahali Art Festival, and the road map for holding it in 2019. (The festival takes place every two years, and the organizing committee decides when [8]).

The Bakhshi art has received serious attention from many researchers, folklorists and cultural historians in Central Asia and far beyond. There is a large body of literature examining the historical, pedagogical and artistic aspects of this ancient oral tradition.

Among the classics in this domain, d. 1, cited as a source, M. Afzalov's Research, presents an analysis of structural and compositional features of classical Uzbek doston with references to pre-Islamic oral traditions and defines bakhshi performers as living repositories of collective memory [9] (Table 1). In this same vein, T. Mirzayev's oeuvre on the characters of Uzbek epic tradition sheds light on the bakhshi performance schools loci'd and demonstrates semantic divergences between Surkhandarya, Khorezm, and Fergana schools of epic narration [10].

For instance, K. Nazarov has presented the ethno-pedagogical features of bakhshi art and discussed the oral epic instructions as a significance for Uzbek society in terms of moral training; civil mentality support, and vital element in liveliness of their activity being an important trend to provide the citizen sense in them; instilling national consciousness among the Uzbeks are observed few essential purposes [11]. His conclusions resonate with wider Central Asian scholarship indicating that the doston tradition served not just as performance to pass time, but as a sophisticated system of value transmission rooted in community experience.

International scholarship has also played an important role in this exploration of bakhshi art. As comparative studies of V. Zhirmunsky and H. Zarifov [12] dealing with Turkic heroic epics created the theoretical basis for studying Alpomish in the context of world oral literature. Their work showed that the Uzbek epic tradition had typological features in common with other major oral traditions around the world while remaining distinctly national. In more recent times, scholars are exploring issues related to bakhshi art in the context of globalization and modernization. That worry is reflected in research published in the proceedings of the International Bakhshi Festival, held recently in Termez, which has attracted more and more scholarly interest with each passing year, by practitioners concerned about waning transmission of epic knowledge via traditional apprenticeship as a younger generation turns to commercially driven popular culture.

The works of President Sh. Mirziyoyev, especially his speeches and decrees about the revival of national cultural heritage, have furnished a major policy context in which current efforts both scholarly and practical to protect and promote bakhshi art are located. His decree on the holding of the International Bakhshi Art Festival dated 1 November marked an important institutional commitment to preserving this heritage [13].

This body of literature, taken together, confirms that bakhshi art holds a central place in Uzbek cultural identity and national pedagogy and emphasizes the pressing need for systematic methodological approaches to integrating it into contemporary cultural and educational practice.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a multidisciplinary methodological approach, combining elements of historical-comparative analysis, ethnographic observation, and pedagogical research in order to comprehensively examine the methods of applying bakhshi art in cultural events and its role in contemporary spiritual upbringing.

Using the historical-comparative method, the methodological research traced the socio-historical emergence and stages in the evolution of bakhshi art (specific instrumental music - singers) to its elaboration during their most flourishing period of epic oral tradition in 19 and early 20 centuries. Through this method, continuities and transformations in performance practice, audience engagement, and knowledge transmission of doston across generations were identified.

Another key element of the methodology was ethnographic observation and field research. First-hand data included direct observations of cultural events, wedding celebrations and national festivals featuring bakhshi performances – notably the International Bakhshi Festival held in Termez – that offered empirical records of how bakhshi art is currently being assimilated into public cultural life. Alongside these observations, informal interviews with practicing bakhshis, cultural event organizers, and audience members provided qualitative insight into both the challenges and opportunities that exist towards promoting this art form in modern settings..

The pedagogical dimension of the research was informed by an analysis of national education documents, including the National Programme for Personnel Training of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as relevant presidential decrees and government resolutions concerning cultural policy. This policy analysis allowed the study to situate its findings within the broader national framework of spiritual and moral education, demonstrating how bakhshi art can function as an effective instrument of ethnopedagogy when systematically incorporated into cultural programming.

Additionally, a content analysis of selected doston – most notably *Alpomish* – was conducted to identify the specific moral, patriotic, and humanistic values embedded within the epic tradition, and to assess their relevance and applicability to the goals of contemporary national education and cultural upbringing.

Through the integration of these complementary methods, the study aims to produce both theoretically grounded and practically applicable conclusions regarding the effective use of bakhshi art in cultural events, and its potential contribution to the preservation of national identity in an era of intensifying globalization.

3. Results and Discussion

Within the festival framework, scientific-practical conferences on developing bakhshi and doston arts, solo concerts by foreign and Uzbek bakhshi masters, International review competitions of bakhshi-poets, akyns, zhyraus and folklore ensembles, festivals, program demonstrations staged in modern style, exhibitions on the history of bakhshi art, and displays of scientific literature published in Uzbek, Persian, Arabic, English and Russian are held.

Why do doston - performed by bakhshis as examples of oral folk art - not lose their place in society even as time passes? The reason is that in every era, the doston speaks of human virtues, faith and belief, and calls people to uphold them. The listener must be repelled by injustice and strive toward the light. *Ismoilkhon bakhshi*, who continues the school of *Shoberdi bakhshi*, emphasizes that the emergence of this art form goes back to a long history. According to him, in ancient times bakhshis served as leaders of ceremonies among the local sedentary population. The bakhshi engaged in another trade by day, and in the evenings the community gathered to listen to passages from doston [14].

According to *Ismoilkhon bakhshi*, the fortune of bakhshis has awakened and the nearly forgotten art has revived in Uzbekistan. Because when a bakhshi, overflowing with inspiration, plays his *dombra* and performs doston - he also expresses his relationship to both the present and the past with all his heart. The bakhshi only memorizes the key events and main dialogues; all remaining performance is carried out through improvisation. "Notice that in this state, the bakhshi draws lessons from what he observes in state and social life, and enriches the doston" (3.43), he says.

At the International Bakhshi Festival, our President addressed participants: "Folk art, if in its natural place, is humanity's childhood song. The fact that such a unique and great art is currently in need of protection and preservation - this too is the bitter truth of our times" (1.1B).

The art of bakhshi and doston is developed in the regions of Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Samarkand, Khorezm and the Republic of Karakalpakstan, and they differ from one another in their performance styles and repertoires.

Today, the development of our national spirituality cannot be imagined without traditions and values. The fact that Uzbek bakhshis have been productively creating in recent years, achieving new successes, and that many talented young people are entering this field, testifies to its prosperity and bright future.

By examining the ways of employing bakhshi art in cultural events, several key findings were reached. The research demonstrates that bakhshi art preserves its important role not only as a generational memory, but also as an active method of spiritual and educational training in modern social life.

First of all, the consistent insertion of the bakhshi tradition into cultural events makes young people feel more national. Another fact confirmed by the practice is that the involvement of bakhshi in wedding ceremonies, state holidays and world festivals significantly increases interest to epics among listeners, especially for youth. A living evidence of it is the repeated international Bakhshi festival in Uzbekistan's Termez that being held every few years and has shown an increase in the number of festival participants and audience from year to year, reflecting a growing social demand for this art.

Secondly, it turned out that effective methods for introducing bakhshi art into cultural events include: combining epics with modern staging methods, encouraging young bakhshis and restoring the tradition of teacher-student, as well as bringing bakhshi performance to a wide audience using audio-visual technologies.

Thirdly, the role of bakhshi art in the national education system is increasingly being strengthened. Patriotism, honesty, justice and human values expressed in epics such as "Alpomish" serve as an important pedagogical tool in the education of modern youth. The results of the study show that the inclusion of bakhshi art in the cultural programs of schools and universities directly affects the formation of a sense of national pride and historical memory in students.

Fourthly, the role of bakhshi art is also incomparable in terms of resisting the pressure of globalization and "mass culture". As President Sh. Mirziyoyev noted, in the current era, when the influence of "mass culture" in the spirit of commercialism is increasing, returning attention to folk oral art is not only a cultural, but also a socio-political necessity [15].

Thus, the systematic use of bakhshi art in cultural events, its presentation adapted to modern requirements, and support by the state are the main conditions for this art to reach new generations and strengthen national spirituality. Cooperation between specialists in the field of culture and art, pedagogical scientists, and state agencies can further increase the effectiveness of work in this area.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, recording the performances of bakhshis on audio and video tapes, compiling them into books, transcribing songs into musical notation, establishing the production of films based on doston, and developing doston schools are among the primary tasks. After all, doston - which embody literature, poetry, music and spectacle - are an instrument of education and a unique masterpiece of our cultural heritage.

It is necessary to study the deep roots, forms and methods of bakhshi traditions, to establish numerous doston schools, and to create doston that are relevant to life, close to the people and in harmony with our times. It is also necessary to thoroughly study bakhshi

performances, master the bakhshi methods characteristic of different schools, transcribe Khorezm doston into musical notation, and study and develop the unique characteristics of Khorezm, Karakalpak, Surkhandarya-Kashkadarya and Samarkand doston styles and performance schools.

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