



THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS VALUES IN FORMING ECOLOGICAL CULTURE

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Abstract

The article discusses the transformation of ecological culture and religious values, their role in positively changing people's attitudes towards the environment and Mother Nature, and the importance of tackling global ecological problems and their negative consequences such as water scarcity and global climate change.

Keywords: Ecological culture, Mother Nature, socio-cultural factors, science and technology, global climate change, religious consciousness, transformation.

Introduction

It is well known that the future of our planet largely depends on the ecological culture of the younger generation. Indeed, global ecological problems can only be solved through combined efforts at national and international levels. For this reason, on April 15, 1992, at the UN conference dedicated to environmental issues, the crucial role of environmental education for human life and sustainability was emphasized, and it was proposed to celebrate this date as "Environmental Knowledge Day."

The main purpose of this initiative is to promote environmental awareness, form ecological culture, and inform the population about urgent environmental problems and the state of the environment. Every year, this date is widely celebrated in our country as well, alongside many other nations. In recent years, Uzbekistan has been implementing systematic measures to prevent and eliminate



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ecological problems associated with global development and climate change, ensure public participation, and enhance ecological culture among citizens. In the new edition of the Constitution, the state is obliged to ensure citizens' ecological rights and create conditions for public control in the field of urban planning. The program for transitioning to a "green" economy and ensuring "green" growth until 2030 also reflects citizens' ecological rights and responsibilities. Raising legal awareness and ecological culture in society is one of the main conditions for ensuring the rule of law and strengthening legality. However, the work being carried out in this regard lacks continuity.

In this matter, the participation of families, mahallas, NGOs, and other civil society institutions has not been fully ensured. Therefore, within the framework of the state program for implementing the "Uzbekistan-2030" strategy during the "Year of Support for Youth and Business," a draft resolution of the President titled "On Approving a Special Program for Engaging Youth in Building a 'Green' Economy and Forming a 'Green' Consumption Culture in Uzbekistan" has been developed. According to this document, a Concept for Increasing Ecological Culture among the Population until 2030, as well as an Action Plan for 2024–2026 for its implementation, will be developed with the aim of enhancing ecological culture, engaging the younger generation in the "green" economy, forming a "green" consumption culture, and improving the system of environmental education. The Presidential Decree of May 31, 2023, "On Measures for Transforming the Sphere of Ecology and Environmental Protection and Organizing the Activities of the Authorized State Body" also outlines important tasks related to developing ecological consciousness and ecological culture among the population. In world science, extensive research has been carried out to study the impact of global ecological problems on various spheres of development, environmental sustainability, the nature of ecological relations, and the role of ecological culture in ensuring stability. Theoretical analyses, models, doctrines, and ideas related to ecological culture emphasize the need to improve ecological culture among youth in the era of ecological globalization and to align environmental education with international standards. Therefore, it has become increasingly necessary to study the social mechanisms for raising



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ecological culture among schoolchildren and optimizing the functions of educational institutions and other stakeholders involved in ecological upbringing. In our country, consistent work is being carried out to protect the environment, ensure the rational use of natural resources, improve sanitary and ecological conditions, and achieve the National Sustainable Development Goals until 2030. As the President of Uzbekistan emphasized: “The most important issue is to seriously think about raising ecological culture among the population. Such problems cannot be solved only by administrative means — we can achieve this by cultivating love for Mother Nature and a sense of responsibility in the hearts of the younger generation.” For this reason, developing a modern model for ecological education, implementing it in practice, and substantiating methods for forming an “ecological personality” have become essential. Increasingly deteriorating environmental conditions, the changing nature of ecological relations, and the global scale of ecological problems have significantly intensified scholarly interest in this field. Many scientific studies have been conducted worldwide. For instance, F. Bacon, J.-J. Rousseau, and V. Hiyosle explored the foundations of environmental protection policies; R. Di Silvestro focused on preserving biodiversity; researchers such as M.A. Vostrikova, R.S. Gaysina, and Ye.V. Luneva analyzed changing ecological conditions and the need for rational use of natural resources.

Other scholars, including A. Kumar, Ye.V. Matveyeva, and A.V. Karanda, examined international, regional, and national ecological relations; K.A. Berdenova and G.A. Drobot studied the causes, manifestations, and solutions of ecological problems; V.Y. Vershinina, A.Y. Ignatenko, M.N. Kopilov, S.M. Kopilov, and P.M. Mozias analyzed the characteristics of modern ecological policies. In Uzbekistan, scientific and philosophical aspects of ecology have also been thoroughly studied. Scholars such as H. Ahmedov, S. Mamashokirov, H. Salomova, and O‘. Tilavov addressed national, regional, and global problems of sustainable ecological development and security. A. Berdimurotova and B.N. Omonov explored ecological issues in the Aral Sea region. A.Q. Aymatov, Z.Y. Adilov, S.U. Kistaubayev, Sh.B. Samanova, Z.Sh. Yazdonov, U.G‘. Saidova, X. Juraqulov, F. Qilichev, and A. Qo‘ldoshev conducted dissertations on forming ecological consciousness among individuals.



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A review of these sources shows that researchers have studied various aspects of modern ecological processes and state ecological policy in detail. However, they did not address issues related to forming ecological culture among general secondary school pupils in the context of ecological globalization. Therefore, this dissertation places special emphasis on analyzing this specific issue. Any traditional religion holds a special place in human history. There has never been a people without religious consciousness. However, people's attitudes toward religion have evolved over time. Religious interest and knowledge stem from the spiritual needs of every conscious individual. For the Uzbek people, such spiritual needs have held particular importance since the early days of independence. Throughout history, religious harmony and interethnic peace have been essential issues. The unity of such a society is largely rooted in the priceless legacy of traditional religions that freely operate within a secular state.

G.N. Eshanova correctly observes: "The system of religious values is ideally manifested when a person accepts divine laws as sacred values. Religious faith has always been the foundation of human morality." [4.12] Before independence, Uzbekistan had already shaped itself as a secular state. The state has consistently implemented constructive policies aimed at preserving peace and harmony in religious life, adopting numerous programs with active participation of representatives of various religious communities. This is especially relevant today, given the rising number of ethnic and religious conflicts worldwide.

In Uzbekistan, equal opportunities have been created for religious communities to participate in shaping ecological culture through their attitudes toward values. Over the past 30 years of sovereignty, issues related to promoting peace and religious values have remained highly significant. The Uzbek people have long considered religion an essential element of national unity while remaining committed to national values and spirituality. Islam spread to our land peacefully, not through coercion. Although Uzbekistan is a secular state and does not interfere directly in religious affairs, traditional religious values rooted in peace and brotherhood have taken deep roots among the people. According to historians, tolerance in the East has existed since ancient times. For example, during the Kushan Empire, representatives of various religious beliefs lived in harmony; even political rivals often displayed mutual understanding,



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compassion, tolerance, and patience. These qualities have been preserved to this day. This demonstrates that national identity and religious values among the Uzbek people have long remained harmoniously integrated. Examples include circumcision ceremonies, marriage rites, Eid celebrations, mourning rituals, charity, fitr, memorial prayers (fatiha), and others. Religious traditions have demonstrated their vitality. As noted: “Religious values are interpreted in connection with sacred scriptures and teachings. The relationship with God — the Creator, the Ruler, the embodiment of truth, justice, goodness, and beauty — is a value. Among all creatures, man is honored as the Khalifa (vicegerent) of God. A person accepts ethical laws sent by the Creator as sacred values, forming a system of moral norms.” [4.19]

Ensuring the harmony between religious and secular values also contributes to the development of ecological culture. As N.Z. Madaminova states: “Violation of the harmony between religious and secular values leads to the devaluation of values and moral-axiological decline among people.” [2.23] Therefore, one of the main directions of educational and informational work in the field of religion is restoring traditional values. Sh.O. Axrorova rightly emphasizes that religious values often operate in a “nationalized” form and that religious practices frequently align with national customs. She writes that social policy must consider this harmony when studying and developing national values [1.13].

When religion and tradition coexist, religion develops, customs become richer, and the nation internalizes the spirit of faith, accepting it as a value. Our spiritual values are the product of a deep connection between religion and ancestral traditions. Traditional values are among the major factors regulating socio-political relations and stabilizing internal political processes in modern secular societies. Not only in Uzbekistan, but throughout the world, including the CIS countries, this factor receives great attention. Forming national identity and protecting values means ensuring internal stability and safeguarding the state’s foundation. The essence of religious values is peace and harmony. Only in a peaceful environment can a believer fulfill their spiritual duties before the Creator. From the perspective of a secular society, the importance of peace is immeasurable. Both religion and worldly affairs flourish only in peaceful conditions. The spiritual essence of religion gives deep meaning to human life.



Focusing only on the formal aspects of religion while ignoring its essence narrows the true understanding of religion and weakens its social adaptability. Properly appreciating the spiritual potential of religion and using it appropriately elevates society's moral level and strengthens secularism. This requires giving due attention to issues related directly to religious knowledge. Throughout history, humanity has always valued spiritual perfection. The ideal of the "perfect human" is common to all societies and religions. A morally mature person avoids sin from a religious perspective and crime from a legal perspective, striving for moral excellence and serving the common good of humanity. As Sh.O. Axrorova notes: "Social policy must consider the development of religious values in harmony with national values. First, religious values cannot function without elements of national culture; second, they influence the formation of national values; third, many religious principles are ancient clan traditions given sacred meaning; fourth, religious teachings reflect the customs of the region where they originated." [1.13]

CONCLUSION

Therefore, not only specialists in education and information, but also representatives of religious organizations should actively promote universal moral values common to all religions, nations, and humanity. It is essential that every sermon and advice be delivered with consideration of the characteristics and level of development of modern society.

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