



THE ROLE OF MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN SOCIAL PROGRESS IN FITRAT'S TEACHING

Head of the Department of History of the Samarkand State Pedagogical Institute, Acting Associate Professor PhD

Isomiddinov Yuldosh Yusubboyevich

***Annotation** This article examines Abdurauf Fitrat's interpretation of the individual's moral and intellectual development as the fundamental driving force of social progress. According to Fitrat, an educated, conscious, and active individual forms the foundation of transformation and modernization processes within society. The article analyzes Fitrat's theoretical views on education, spirituality, national awakening, and development, as well as his reformist program aimed at improving society through enlightenment.*

***Keywords** Fitrat, moral development, intellectual progress, enlightenment, society, modernization, national awakening, reform, individual, education.*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, the socio-cultural landscape of Turkestan underwent profound transformations driven by processes of modernization, national awakening, and educational reform. One of the leading intellectuals of this period, Abdurauf Fitrat, developed a philosophical and pedagogical concept in which the moral and intellectual development of the individual is regarded as the primary driving force of social progress.

According to Fitrat, no society can advance without the formation of an enlightened, conscious, and active individual. He emphasized that the

spiritual and intellectual growth of each person determines the pace and quality of societal modernization. Therefore, Fitrat viewed education, moral upbringing, and intellectual enlightenment as strategic foundations for building a strong, independent, and progressive nation.

This article explores Fitrat's interpretation of the individual as the central subject of development, analyzing the role of moral and intellectual maturation within his broader philosophical views on education, national revival, and social transformation.

Main part

Fitrat's theoretical framework positions the individual-not institutions or political structures-as the primary actor of societal change. He argued that meaningful transformation becomes possible only when individuals achieve a sufficient level of moral consciousness and intellectual competence. In this regard, moral maturity, which strengthens ethical behavior, civic responsibility, and collective identity, is considered a crucial component of personal development. Intellectual growth, on the other hand, enhances independent critical thinking, scientific reasoning, and the ability to engage in innovation. Enlightenment (ma'rifat) represents the fundamental basis of national progress and serves as the driving force behind a society's advancement. Fitrat's works consistently emphasize that social progress begins with the inner transformation of the individual, and that without enlightened human capital, political or economic reforms cannot produce effective and sustainable outcomes.

The concept of moral development in Fitrat's philosophy is interpreted as the formation of an ethically responsible, spiritually mature, and socially engaged personality. In his works such as

Munozara, Oila, and Rahbari Najot, Fitrat highlights the centrality of ethical norms in building a harmonious society, the importance of nurturing values such as honesty, responsibility, patriotism, and respect for others, as well as the fundamental role of the family and the education system in shaping a morally grounded individual. For Fitrat, genuine moral development forms the spiritual backbone of national identity and the foundation of social harmony.

Fitrat also viewed intellectual progress as a key element of modernization. He believed that scientific knowledge enables individuals to think independently, that intellectual competence prepares them to participate fully in global civilization, and that education serves as a strategic pathway toward national liberation and modernization. By integrating these ideas, Fitrat aligns intellectual advancement with the broader goals of social development, asserting that educated and critically thinking individuals act as essential agents of reform, innovation, and societal renewal.

In Fitrat's worldview, personal development and social transformation are deeply interconnected. He maintained that the more enlightened the individual, the more progressive the society becomes. Moral and intellectual improvement, therefore, contributes to social stability, cultural renewal, and political maturity. According to Fitrat, the true strength of a nation depends on the intellectual capacity and ethical integrity of its citizens. Thus, his approach unifies both spiritual and cognitive aspects of human development into a comprehensive model of societal progress.

According to numerous documents and archival materials from the early twentieth century, after Abdurauf Fitrat returned from his trip to

Turkey in 1914, he began establishing new jadid-style schools and madrasas, where he personally taught subjects such as the history of Turkish and Persian literature, Islamic studies, and Eastern languages. At the same time, he engaged in several new scholarly projects and succeeded in producing a number of important works. One such work is his “Muxtasar Islom tarixi” (“A Concise History of Islam”).

This book was written as a manual for madrasa students. Its simple and accessible style, the harmonious integration of historical and religious processes, and the clarity of its narrative indicate Fitrat’s mastery as a scholar. However, the work appears unfinished, suggesting that the complete manuscript has not reached us. The text does not conclude either logically or chronologically. Some studies argue that the available version is indeed complete and claim that a translation of the work was published in 1915 by the “Gazarov” printing house and is currently preserved in the Moscow Imperial Historical Museum under the catalog number XY 28411.

Fitrat’s “Muxtasar Islom tarixi” differs from other contemporary works on Islamic history in its clear and vivid depiction of events, the patriotic spirit infused throughout the narrative, and the absence of artificial embellishment or excessive theological interpretation. These characteristics reveal the intellectual precision and originality of Fitrat’s scholarly approach.

In 1918, after arriving in Tashkent, Fitrat gathered a group of young intellectuals and founded the “Chig‘atoy Gurungi” literary and scientific circle. Although the society functioned for only three years, it laid the foundation for a new direction in the development of Uzbek language and literature. Modern scholarship recognizes the society as the first

scientific research organization established by local intellectuals in Uzbekistan's history, and it is considered the institutional precursor of today's Writers' Union of Uzbekistan and the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences.

Between 1920 and 1923, Fitrat held various high-ranking positions in the newly formed Bukhara government. However, due to political accusations, he was removed from office and thereafter devoted the rest of his life exclusively to scholarly research.

After returning from Moscow, Fitrat taught at the universities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent. He also worked in the Uzbekistan State Scientific Research Institute, the Institute of Language and Literature, and the Committee of Sciences of Uzbekistan, contributing tirelessly to national scholarship. During these years, he authored numerous poems, plays, and influential scientific works. Nevertheless, his strong sense of national identity and patriotism displeased the Bolsheviks and the Soviet authorities, who eventually accused him—along with many other reformers—of nationalism.

By the late 1920s, Soviet policy had become increasingly repressive toward free thought and hostile to the jadid intellectuals, leading to widespread persecution of scholars. Fitrat was not spared. As class-based ideological approaches intensified, he was subjected to long interrogations and was ultimately labeled a “nationalist,” “enemy of the people,” and “traitor to the homeland.” Fitrat himself wrote: *“When I was an Uzbek nationalist, I still remained sympathetic toward the Soviet government and its Communist Party.”* Despite this, he was arrested in April 1937 and, along with other reformist intellectuals, was brutally executed on October 4, 1938. Tragically, the official sentencing order was

issued only the following day, on October 5, 1938. In 1957, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR annulled the verdict and declared him completely innocent.

Fitrat was a versatile and extraordinarily productive intellectual. His scholarly and public activities were directed toward awakening the nation from ignorance, stagnation, and indifference; calling people to knowledge, enlightenment, and independence; and inspiring them to strive for a prosperous and free life. Fitrat encouraged the Uzbek people to recognize their historical identity, follow the path of their ancestors' great achievements, build a united and powerful state, and join the ranks of the world's advanced nations. Fayzulla Khojaev, a prominent statesman of that era, wrote: *"The idea of Bukhara's independence was first expressed in a bright national form in Fitrat's works."*

Fitrat's poetry reflects deep love for the homeland, compassion for the suffering of the people, and a call to rise against oppression. For example:

Verse: *Ham mohi mangu osoyishi, izzatu sharafi man, Ham Ka'bai man, qiblai man, chamani man.*

Translation: *She is my moon of eternal peace, my honor and pride; She is my Ka'bah, my qiblah, my very soul and being.*

Many of Fitrat's works have not survived. Reports suggest that his collection titled "Uchqun," published in 1923, has not yet been found. Although Fitrat knew Arabic and Persian well, he preferred to write poetry in simple and clear Uzbek. Some of his plays and writings were never published and disappeared.

In all his works, Fitrat expressed strong devotion to the homeland and the ideal of freedom, repeatedly proclaiming slogans such as "We

will save our homeland. Long live independence!" His poems celebrate the struggle for national liberation and the unbreakable commitment to achieve freedom, even if only for a moment.

Fitrat made substantial contributions to the development of Uzbek dramaturgy. His plays, such as *"Chin sevish"* and *"Hind ixtilolchilari,"* depict the struggle of oppressed nations for independence and their uncompromising resistance against colonial powers. Through these dramatic narratives, he expressed the deep suffering of his homeland, Turkestan. Fitrat's prose also played a significant role in shaping modern Uzbek literature. His numerous stories, filled with reflections on the homeland, nationhood, and independence, serve as valuable historical sources about the turbulent years leading to national freedom.

In conclusion, Abdurauf Fitrat's life and creative work were entirely dedicated to serving his nation, especially during its most difficult times. Placing the interests of the people above everything else, he embodied the qualities of a true patriot and intellectual. Fitrat was one of the first to introduce Uzbek literature to the world stage, enriching it with innovative ideas and demonstrating the expressive power of the Uzbek language. He elevated Uzbek dramaturgy to new heights and became one of the founders of modern literary criticism.

Fitrat's philosophical and critical ideas, highly relevant in his own era, continue to serve as exemplary models even for contemporary philosophical thought. His literary and scholarly legacy remains a significant contribution to the development of Uzbek literature, national culture, and statehood.

After Uzbekistan gained independence, Abdurauf Fitrat was posthumously honored on 25 September 1991 with the Alisher Navoi

State Prize of the Republic of Uzbekistan. A park and house-museum dedicated to Fitrat were established in Bukhara, and his monument was erected there. Several schools and streets across the country now bear his name. Fitrat's role in enriching and developing the Uzbek language remains significant even today, continuing to inspire new generations of young scholars and patriots.

Conclusion

Abdurauf Fitrat's philosophical and pedagogical doctrine presents the individual's moral and intellectual development as the core driver of societal advancement. His emphasis on enlightenment, ethical maturity, and intellectual empowerment reflects a modern, human-centered approach to nation-building.

Fitrat's ideas remain relevant today, highlighting that sustainable progress depends not only on structural reforms but, more importantly, on the cultivation of educated, conscious, and morally responsible individuals. His philosophy demonstrates that the true source of national strength lies in the spiritual and intellectual potential of its people, making human development the key to long-term social transformation.

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