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Development of Pilgrimage Tourism as an Important Factor in the Socio-Spiritual Life of Society

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Abstract: The article describes pilgrimage tourism, which is an important factor in the socio-spiritual life of society in Uzbekistan, and its role in the cultural and spiritual development of the country, the role of the industry in the development of the state and society and human development, the measures taken in this direction, the rapid reforms being carried out to enhance its status and enrich it with new content. At the same time, the article aims to further accelerate the theoretical and practical work in this direction, to expand the number of visits of local and foreign pilgrims to the country, study of shrines, protection, the work on their effective use and the problems that need to be addressed.

Keywords: Pilgrimage Tourism, Shrine, State, Society, Spirituality, Tourist, Cemetery, Research, Youth, Islam, Ethics, Ancestors, Heritage, Honesty, National Pride, Pride.

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INTRODUCTION

Along with the reforms carried out in all spheres in our country in recent years, special attention has been paid to the development of pilgrimage tourism, and the acceleration of work in this area has risen to the level of state policy. Indeed, the role and importance of shrines in the formation of spiritual views in the minds of the people, in influencing their psyche, is great. The role of pilgrimage tourism plays an important role in this regard. When talking about the socio-spiritual characteristics of shrines and pilgrimage tourism, it is necessary to describe the place of traditions and ceremonies associated with them. This will further enhance the role of pilgrimage tourism in the social, spiritual, cultural development of society and human development.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

On the socio-spiritual significance of pilgrimage tourism, as in all sectors of tourism, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his Address to the Oliy Majlis called for increasing the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan in 2020 to 7.5 million. It is known that a number of influential foreign media have included Uzbekistan in the list of countries recommended for travel in 2020. It is necessary to take advantage of this opportunity and accelerate the development of pilgrimage tourism, which has great

potential" (Address of the President, 2020) – he emphasized.

The important socio-spiritual significance of the shrines is that these places of worship have encouraged people to be honest and religious, to stay away from filthy paths, and to do good deeds and deeds, such as leaving only the good in themselves. They call for upbringing - morality, friendly relations, respect for relatives, parents, remembering the spirit of the past, children to understand their rights, to glorify human values such as kindness, honesty, justice.

Traditions passed down from ancestors to generations have played an important role in understanding the meaning and description of sacred sites and shrines as the socio-spiritual foundations of skills formed over the years. This is because the formation of irrational worldviews related to shrines, which have played a leading role in the influence of the spiritual lifestyle of our people, has a long history. Sources say that initially, according to Islam, no shrines other than Mecca were recognized. But then the visit to the local shrines, which incorporated elements of the pilgrimage to Mecca, while preserving the local traditions, began to develop. It is obvious that the transformation of holy shrines into a system of special values in the spirituality of the people shows that they are connected with the pre-Islamic historical traditions of the people.

From a spiritual point of view, those who are interested in pilgrimage and pilgrimage tourism, that is, those who come to perform pilgrimage, perform various rituals, religious acts, recite the Qur'an for the souls of passers-by, performing various rituals and ask them to accept their pilgrimage. Therefore, we have analyzed the direct socio-spiritual aspects of the rituals, ceremonies performed in the holy shrines and noted their many similarities and differences.

For example, to this day, legends about mythical and supernatural events related to shrines are widespread among pilgrims. In particular, according to legends, a visitor to the Nurata shrine in Navoi region can spend the night and watch the dawn in the morning, and see the light shining in the sky from the spring. Milk will flow instead of water from a spring near the grave of Uvays Qarani's mother at the Balikli Kol shrine in Namangan province on Friday. There is also a perception among the people that the "yeast stone" in the Safed Boulogne Historical and Architectural Complex will increase if the country is cheap and expensive. But no one has ever seen such supernatural events take place, only in the form of a myth (Gulshani, 2014).

However, there is a second aspect of the issue that such views, which have been preserved among pilgrims since ancient times, have been passed down from ancestors to generations, enriching people's spiritual imagination and forming a relationship with their belief in divinity. Or, it is noteworthy that most of the holy shrines are located near natural water bodies, where springs, and fish are sanctified, and legends about the supernatural events associated with them are still widespread today. This will have an impact on the spiritual world of any pilgrim who is interested in pilgrimage tourism and has made pilgrimage tourism and will not be left out of their attention.

According to our research, the idea that sacred fish in sacred water bodies are connected through underground passages was also confirmed by other informants at the shrines we visited. Importantly, scientific research has shown that the main purpose of pilgrims is to visit the place, to get acquainted with the divine, supernatural phenomena there, to pray for the souls of the saints, to find peace of mind and socio-spiritual, to gain mental strength and solve some socio-economic problems.

Or the problems that arise in the socio-spiritual relations of the population, including infertility, which is common in young families, ways to get rid of the disease, in some cases associated with the activities carried out in the shrines. According to reports, there is a perception among the people that if the souls of past saints hope for the living, it will be difficult to have children or get rid of the disease, so they must donate to them and perform the prescribed actions. For this

reason, it has become customary to perform special ceremonies in shrines and offer sacrifices in the spirit of the saints. It is a negative fact that anti-Islamic customs, such as asking for a child by tying a rag to a branch of a spruce or other large tree, are also prevalent, often by pilgrims who come to the shrines.

During the visits to the shrines, one can be sure that when the gender characteristics of the pilgrims were observed and analyzed, it was found that almost 60-65% of them were women. While some informants attribute this to the fact that women are more likely to follow different customs and rituals than men, some informants attribute this to the fact that women face more social and spiritual problems in life than men.

In this regard, ethnologist according to Z. Abidova, the main reason for the pilgrimage is that visiting the shrines has become a part of everyday life for women, the main purpose of the pilgrimage performed by them is to alleviate their troubles to God through the saints, to cure their ailments, and to ask for the well-being of their children by asking for childless children. Another major reason why the majority of pilgrims are women is that while men solve the economic problems of the family, women manage the organizational processes in the family along with raising children. They are also the organizers of all traditions, customs and ceremonies (Abidova, 2018).

So, although visiting holy shrines and shrines is more common among women than men, it is one of the unique spiritual values of our people. According to Islamic teachings, visiting the graves of saints and scholars and the graves of their relatives is a *mustahab* and a good deed. In the early days of Islam, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade visiting graves because he did not abandon the ugly customs of praising the dead, shouting and weeping openly during the time of ignorance. However, after getting rid of these habits, people are allowed to visit in accordance with the established rules so that they can learn from them, soften their hearts, give up vain boasting and pride, thinking that the world is fleeting, and lead their lives in the right direction (Gulshani, 2014).

At the same time, some superstitious rituals, such as circumambulating the tombs seven times, kissing the tombstones and rubbing them on the face, tying various cloths to the trees, and asking for salvation from the souls of the saints, have always been refrained from pilgrims visiting the graves as if they were circumambulating the Kaaba. Because in Islam, such acts are strongly condemned and they are considered polytheistic, misleading people from the faith.

It is better to perform the rituals of the shrines in accordance with the instructions of the Sunnah and

Islamic scholars, that is, not to go around the graves as if circumambulating the Ka'bah, to observe etiquette, to recite the Qur'an and to dedicate one's reward to the souls of the graves. Sources say that it is not permissible to offer sacrifices, cover graves, sit on them, or show disrespect to the past at the shrines of saints. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan has issued a fatwa on the etiquette of visiting cemeteries on this common situation in our daily lives. It states that visiting graves is a Sunnah, and that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "I forbade you to visit graves. Now visit the graves, for it will remind you of the Hereafter" - hadiths are quoted.

According to other spiritual and aesthetic values, people who visit the shrine follow certain ethical norms when visiting ancient shrines due to moral customs such as greeting with the right foot and blessing the past, and leaving without turning back after the pilgrimage, views in turn led to the development of codes of ethics for pilgrims. In the spiritual and moral upbringing of pilgrims, inculcating the national spirit in the minds of young people, the shrines awaken in them a sense of national pride and encourage them to get acquainted with the way of life of the great saints and scholars. Therefore, the pilgrimage to the holy shrines and shrines is important for the upbringing of young people in a spiritually harmonious, caring for the heritage of our ancestors, loyal to the motherland.

So, from the point of view of our people's knowledge of pilgrimage as a great spiritual wealth, we have said that shrines serve as an important socio-spiritual factor in the development of pilgrimage tourism, especially domestic pilgrimage tourism. Most importantly, all the shrines have healing springs, surrounded by beautiful nature. In this regard, pilgrimage tourism plays an important role in cultivating spiritual outlook of the people.

In this regard, F. Akchaev lists a number of spiritual factors of sacred shrines. That is, visiting holy places has encouraged people to stay away from evil ways, to be honest, and to leave only good deeds. Analyzing the role of shrines in human life, it can be said that the role of shrines in human life occurs in two forms, spiritual and physical, and the pilgrimage is carried out for the following purposes:

- *in order to restore health;*
- *in order to find spiritual and spiritual comfort;*
- *in order to continue the tradition of patron saints and ancestors;*
- *hope for the future* (to have children, to alleviate difficulties, to ask for the good of the new work he has begun, and among the young to enter school, and so on) (Akchaev, 2019).

That is, the myths and legends associated with the shrines served to educate people in the spirit of patriotism, national pride, courage, honesty, fidelity to

promises, to instill in people such noble feelings as generosity, kindness, compassion for others, the way of life of the saints there, their deeds, their call to enlightenment and knowledge played an important role. The activities of those who possessed such prophecies have long encouraged the people to engage in religious and secular knowledge.

Another important role of shrines in the spiritual life of people and in the life of society is to improve the shrines, not to do extravagant things there, to be afraid of the magical properties of shrines, it is understood that any rituals and ceremonies performed in that very area are of divine importance according to moral, religious rules, and popular beliefs, such as not lying.

In this regard, B. Eraliev, I. Ostonaqulov, N. Abdulakhatovs note a number of the most important socio-spiritual and socio-political aspects of the shrines. They are:

- At the heart of pilgrimage in the way of life of the people is the notion of hope, relief, relief from pain, peace of mind, doing good deeds. "*Let your visit be accepted*", the purpose is to encourage people to do good deeds, to wish them well, to make their dreams come true;
- The shrine strengthens the notion in the minds of the younger generation that the final destination of those who have done good deeds will become a prosperous and sacred place;
- Pilgrimages instill in people a sense of respect for others. Pilgrims who visited the shrine repaired the graves, which were damaged by hot and cold weather, snow and rain, and made them easy to find;
- It has become customary for one person to visit the grave of a deceased person close to him. Gradually, pilgrimage became a seasonal or permanent tradition;
- Pilgrimages and cemeteries are considered to be the spiritual heritage of national and spiritual values as a material heritage of historical memory. They are the means of finding grace and comfort, of learning.
- The shrine of one nation serves as an example and exchange of experience for other peoples who have become tourists, who keep the traditions inherited from their ancestors, such as holidays, festivals and choirs.
- Shrines are an important resource for developing action plans and doing practical work for the local and international tourism system. Pilgrimages increase the historical, spiritual, moral, socio-political knowledge of tourists, they are an open museum, a classroom, a place of spiritual purification, a symbol of the country and the nation, its reputation, spiritual and cultural wealth (Eraliev *et al.*, 2014).

Based on the analysis, it can be said that various factors affect the comprehensive and development of domestic tourism in the country. It should be noted that the abundance of sacred sites and shrines in all regions of the country allows to simultaneously develop this type of tourism on a large scale in all regions. In recent years, the number of foreign and domestic tourists visiting the country has increased due to the above factors.

However, it should be noted that there are problems with the promotion of this form of tourism during the pilgrimage season, which are allowed by visitors during the visit, and problems with the organization of the pilgrimage process (aspects that need to be addressed by local authorities). Experts note that the Uzbek people still have ancient animistic views on the belief that trees, which are considered sacred by the Uzbek people, live in them, or fetishism based on the sanctification of things, objects, animals and plants. Even the fact that the trees and plants in the shrines are sanctified, the idea that cutting and plucking them will harm people has remained in the minds of the people. All of these are traces of ancient religious beliefs that existed before Islam and have survived to the present day.

Research has shown that the following negative aspects are often observed by visitors at shrines:

- Not coming to the pilgrimage in appropriate attire, organizing various ceremonies and polluting the environment during the pilgrimage;
- Wasting food at the shrine, sometimes arranging ceremonies for each other;
- Prohibited rituals (tying a piece of cloth to trees, lighting a lamp, throwing objects into spring water and removing it from grave soil) include damaging plants and trees in the area of the shrine.

For example, among the Uzbek people, some people still sanctify sacred trees and shrubs, maple, spruce, mulberry, jiid, resin, pistachio, walnut, apricot, cherry, willow, poplar, elm, and others. They tie various rags and other things to them and ask them for salvation. Even the custom of lighting lamps in such holy places has been preserved. When reporters were asked why it was customary to wrap cotton in sacred tombs and burn sticks dipped in the ashes, they replied, "The more the oil in the tomb burns, the more it smells on the souls of the ancestors in the tomb and our prayers are answered". However, according to the rituals of pilgrimage and the books on the etiquette of pilgrimage, it is stated that lighting a lamp or a candle in graves is a bid'ah. That is, such customs are merely manifestations of a pre-Islamic religious belief.

In general, research has confirmed that raising the spiritual level of the people in Uzbekistan on the basis of pilgrimage tourism, along with many other

means, depends on the effectiveness of reforms in the interests of citizens and mankind. In this regard, the policy of the state aimed at increasing the role of pilgrimage tourism in the formation of human national identity, spirituality and national pride is reflected in the following aspects:

- first, that pilgrimage tourism is in line with religious and universal spiritual values, based on the needs of raising and developing our national spirituality;
- secondly, the socio-moral methods and means of developing pilgrimage tourism should be based on democratic principles and have a strong regulatory framework;
- thirdly, as an important component of the national spiritual culture, it should serve the civilization of mankind;
- fourth, it is important to coordinate the activities of government agencies, local governments and socio-political institutions responsible for the development of pilgrimage tourism.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, if we consider the role of the state in the field of spirituality in the context of the development of pilgrimage tourism, the content of its spiritual, socio-political activities becomes more specific. That is, if the state can not create methods and means to ensure legal, spiritual and moral support of reforms in any area at the level of state and universal criteria, the expediency of the preservation of shrines will not be effective. It is this task that in Uzbekistan today it is necessary to harmonize the relationship between the state and the shrine, to become a criterion for assessing its main reform activities in the field of spirituality.

In general, based on the socio-spiritual characteristics of shrines and pilgrimage tourism, it is worth noting the following conclusions in this article:

First of all, the pilgrims who visited the holy shrines through pilgrimage tourism confirmed that due to respect and reverence for the saints, these places of spirituality encourage people to be honest and pious, to stay away from unclean ways, and to leave only good deeds. He showed that the pilgrims were encouraged to glorify human qualities such as upbringing, moral skills, mutual friendship, mutual kindness, honesty, justice;

Second, the shrines express the spirituality and psyche of the people, and through pilgrimage tourism, the myths and legends that have been passed down through the centuries, confirming that various wise stories have been preserved in the folklore. At the same time, the appearance of the now-forgotten traditions confirmed that it was precisely in the shrines that the syncretism continued with new traditions;

Thirdly, the rituals performed at the shrines confirmed that the roots of various rituals go back to ancient times, so the shrines serve as an important object of study for specialist scholars. Because shrines are a divine address in the minds of people as a source of goodness, calling them to mercy.

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