

MOTIVATIONS IN EPICS: THE NEED TO PROMOTE THE ETERNAL HERITAGE THAT EMPOWERS YOUTH

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Abstract: This article explores the motives and heroic portrayals in the Uzbek folk epic Alpomish, their significance in the upbringing of the younger generation, and the need to popularize this invaluable spiritual heritage.

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Folk epics are among the most ancient forms of oral literature. The word *doston* originates from Persian and conveys meanings such as “narrative,” “story,” and “history”. As a product of oral creativity, epics are composed in accordance with folklore traditions. For centuries, Uzbek epic tradition has served as a means of preserving the nation’s cultural identity, heritage, and customs. In essence, folk epics are not merely lyrical expressions of love, but also a powerful instrument of culture, enlightenment, and moral education.

The epics embody the spirit of patriotism, courage, and determination inherent in our people and serve as exemplary models for fostering love for the homeland, loyalty, and the protection of national values among the youth. Moreover, Uzbek epics reflect the long-standing historical experience and aspirations of our ancestors, making them an eternal heritage.

The origins of epics trace back to centuries before the Common Era. The epic *Alpomish*, for instance, is an enormous cultural monument that depicts the deep historical roots of the Uzbek people and narrates our national identity. Although the epic took its complete form as a unified oral narrative about a thousand years ago, the most ancient layers of *Alpomish* reflect the artistic interpretation of socio-historical events that occurred in earlier eras. It extols universal themes such as love for the homeland, loyalty, family unity, and moral integrity, which were highly valued among Eastern peoples. As such, *Alpomish* rightfully occupies a distinguished place among the heroic epics of oral literature.

The epic contains numerous motifs with significant educational value for youth. *Alpomish* vividly reflects the unwavering faith, honor, and unity of the Uzbek people, who have always been ready to sacrifice for their homeland. It also includes philosophical insights and motifs related to the historical evolution of society. For example, at the beginning of the epic, the conflict between *Boybo‘ri* and *Boysari*, leaders of the *Qong‘irot* tribe, symbolically illustrates the transition from a clan-based system to statehood. This transition becomes evident when the elder brother demands taxes from his younger brother for the treasury.

One of the most distinctive features of *Alpomish* is the masterful depiction of the protagonist’s heroic journey to rescue *Barchin* from the *Kalmyk* land. Characters such as *Alpomish* who risks his life to save his betrothed and prevent her disgrace among foreigners *Qorajon*, who defends his friend *Hakimbek* despite opposition from his own relatives, and noble female figures like *Oybarchin* and *Qaldirg‘och* embody the highest moral qualities of our nation.

Scenes in which Alpomish overcomes the deceit of the old woman Suxayl and brings his beloved safely home symbolize genuine love and loyalty. Likewise, the episode in which he rescues his estranged compatriots from Kalmyk oppression and returns them to the homeland fosters a sense of honor, dignity, and patriotism.

All these motifs indicate that Alpomish is not merely an epic but a spiritual mirror reflecting the essence of our people's worldview. However, the critical question remains: To what extent are we able to present this spiritual mirror to today's youth? How much are they aware of this cultural and moral universe?

While Alpomish is indeed taught within the established curriculum in educational institutions, and since 2022 extracurricular clubs dedicated to epic performance, maqom, music, theatre, and fine arts have been introduced, these efforts alone may not suffice amid the growing influence of digital media and external information sources. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has emphasized, "The upbringing of the younger generation has always been of crucial importance, but in the 21st century, it has truly become a matter of life and death."

Therefore, identifying effective ways to bring young people closer to heroic figures such as Alpomish has become an urgent task. The most viable solution lies in promoting oral literature through live epic performances, particularly the art of baxshichilik (epic singing), one of the most impactful forms of traditional art. Festivals and public cultural events featuring epic recitations, lyrical chants, and dialogues can significantly enhance youth interest in oral literature.

Even in ancient times long before written sources existed our ancestors used oral literature to transmit values such as bravery, kindness, honesty, patriotism, and friendship. Baxshis were revered as "messengers of goodness." Today too, great strides have been made in promoting this art. Thanks to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's initiatives, the International Epic Singing Festival was established in 2018, and its first session was held in Surkhandarya. This festival aims to preserve, develop, and widely promote the unique traditions of Uzbek epic performance. It is especially noteworthy that in recent years, the art of baxshichilik has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity a milestone achieved through the submission prepared by Uzbekistan's National Commission for UNESCO in 2020.

The establishment of the Baxshichilik School in Termiz, again at the initiative of the head of state, is another significant achievement. Today, the Republican Center for Epic Art, the Foundation for the Development of Baxshichilik, and regional epic ensembles are actively functioning, recording a "golden fund" of epics and lyrical chants performed by talented folk artists. Numerous scholarly expeditions, publications, and conferences have been organized; documentary films and monographs about renowned baxshis have been created; and epic performance classes and clubs operate in educational institutions.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has rightly stated: "Epic performance is our national pride. The noble values embedded within it must be conveyed to the people." If we fail to protect this unique art today, tomorrow may be too late and future generations, as well as history, will not forgive us.

Therefore, the broad promotion of heroism in our epics especially through the voices of baxshis at biennial festivals dedicated to the moral development of the youth is of paramount importance. To nurture patriotism, loyalty, integrity, and honor in young people, it is essential to fully utilize the potential of the baxshichilik schools established six years ago. Organizing large-scale competitions and cultural events among students of these schools, where they

reenact the heroic figures of our epics, will undoubtedly inspire young people to emulate noble characters such as Alpomish.

Indeed, “the prosperity of every nation and the peace and tranquility of every state depend on the proper upbringing of its youth.”

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