

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ABDURAUUF FITRAT'S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

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Annotation: This article reflects the socio-philosophical essence of the spiritual heritage of Abdurauf Fitrat. Abdurauf Fitrat is recognized as a scientist who made a unique contribution to Uzbek linguistics. The themes of national freedom, the joy of independence and the freedom of the country are put forward in Fitrat's works. Fitrat also made a significant contribution to the development of Uzbek drama. Fitrat is recognized by scientists as having laid the foundation in Uzbek literature and in Uzbek linguistics.

Keywords: "Sarfi" and "Nakhv", the work "Munozara", "The Statement of an Indian Traveler", the work "Family", dramaturgy, enlightenment.

Introduction

Abdurauf Fitrat (1886–1938) stands as one of the most influential intellectuals, reformers, and thinkers of the early twentieth century in Central Asia. His rich spiritual and philosophical heritage occupies a central place in the intellectual history of the region, reflecting the aspirations of a nation striving toward enlightenment, cultural renewal, and national self-awareness. Fitrat's works, which span literature, pedagogy, linguistics, political thought, and social philosophy, reveal his profound commitment to the advancement of society through knowledge, moral education, and the cultivation of a free and conscious individual. The philosophical significance of Fitrat's spiritual legacy is manifested in his humanistic worldview, emphasis on national identity, and belief in the transformative power of education. In his major works such as "Munozara," "Rahbari Najot," "Oila," and "Hind Sayyohi", Fitrat articulates concepts of moral perfection, patriotism, social justice, and the ethical responsibilities of individuals toward their community and nation. His ideas laid the foundation for a new intellectual paradigm among the Jadid reformers, contributing to the formation of modern cultural and philosophical thought in Turkestan. In the context of contemporary philosophical and educational discourse, revisiting Fitrat's spiritual heritage is particularly relevant. His reflections on freedom, enlightenment, cultural progress, and national development provide valuable insights for understanding the challenges faced by modern societies. Analyzing the philosophical dimensions of his legacy not only deepens our comprehension of Central Asian intellectual history but also highlights the enduring relevance of his ideas for fostering patriotism, moral consciousness, and social responsibility among today's youth.

Main part

One of the essential philosophical pillars of Abdurauf Fitrat's heritage is his unwavering belief in human dignity, intellectual freedom, and moral self-cultivation. His writings emphasize that an enlightened individual is the key to societal progress. Fitrat's humanism is

not abstract; it is deeply connected to real social conditions, cultural needs, and the moral responsibilities of individuals.

In works such as “Munozara” and “Rahbari Najot”, he argues that ignorance and stagnation are the primary obstacles to a nation’s development. Therefore, human perfection begins with education, critical thinking, and ethical discipline. Fitrat’s humanistic vision aligns with modern philosophical interpretations that view the individual as a transformative agent of society.

Fitrat’s conception of spirituality (ma’naviyat) is inseparable from morality, ethical behavior, and social responsibility. His philosophical reflections emphasize virtues such as honesty, justice, patriotism, compassion, and respect for cultural heritage.

In “Oila”, Fitrat outlines the essential moral foundations of family upbringing, arguing that moral education begins within the household. In “Sayha” and “Hind Sayyohi”, he explores the ethical role of intellectuals, urging them to work for the enlightenment and liberation of their people.

These ideas demonstrate that Fitrat understood spirituality not as ritual practice but as a comprehensive ethical system aimed at forming a morally responsible, socially active, and nationally conscious individual.

A central component of Fitrat’s philosophical legacy is his emphasis on national identity (milliy o’zlik) and patriotism (vatanparvarlik). For Fitrat, national consciousness is built on language, culture, history, and shared moral values-foundations that enable a nation to preserve its uniqueness while engaging with global civilization.

His linguistic reforms, efforts to modernize the alphabet, and cultural analyses reflect his belief that linguistic clarity and cultural literacy are essential to developing a self-aware and progressive society. Fitrat views patriotism not merely as emotional attachment but as an active moral duty requiring service, sacrifice, and constructive participation in national development.

Fitrat was among the foremost intellectuals who shaped the educational philosophy of the Jadid movement. He consistently advocated for modern schooling, scientific knowledge, critical pedagogy, and the integration of global experience into national education.

In his works, Fitrat argues that moral enlightenment and scientific advancement must go hand in hand. He warns that without proper education, societies risk falling into dependence, backwardness, and ideological vulnerability. These views resonate strongly with contemporary philosophical discussions on education as the foundation of social progress and cultural resilience.

Fitrat’s commitment to rationality (aql), progress, and reform establishes him as one of the most forward-thinking philosophers of his era. His critique of dogmatism, outdated traditions, and blind imitation reflects his belief in reasoned judgment and evidence-based thinking.

His philosophical position is that societies can only advance through constant reform-educational, cultural, and moral. Thus, Fitrat’s spiritual heritage represents a systematic model of modernization rooted in national values yet open to universal achievements of human civilization.

There have been such great thinkers in human history whose lives, creativity, intellect, and spiritual strength were entirely devoted to improving the well-being of their people and illuminating their future. One of these selfless and enlightened intellectuals is Abdurauf Fitrat. Abdurauf Fitrat is regarded as one of the most outstanding representatives of the Central Asian intelligentsia of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

As a prominent figure of independence-era literature, Fitrat was a versatile thinker who contributed to nearly all forms of literature and art. Through his beautiful poems written in Uzbek and Persian-Tajik, he laid the foundations for the modern syllabic (barmaq) poetic meter.

Born in 1886 in Bukhara, Abdurauf adopted the pen name Fitrat, a word that literally means “creation” [1, p. 5]. In his early youth, he occasionally used the pseudonym “Mijmar” (meaning “incense burner,” a container used for burning fragrant materials), but later remained committed to the pseudonym “Fitrat” throughout his life. It is noteworthy that, although many of his contemporaries were compelled by circumstances to change or use multiple pseudonyms, Fitrat consistently preserved his chosen literary name. Even in official documents, in government service records, and in papers prepared during his arrest, the name Fitrat was used.

Abdurauf Fitrat began his early education in a religious school and later studied at the renowned “Mir Arab” madrasa in Bukhara. Alongside writing fluently in both Persian and Uzbek, he also mastered the Arabic language. His deep interest in the activities of the Jadid movement eventually transformed him into one of its most passionate advocates.

Fitrat himself acknowledged in his writings that he was initially opposed to the Jadids, but later developed a strong interest in their new-method schools and their reformist ideas. His life and creative activity have been described differently in various sources, and especially the period of his life before 1909 is often depicted inconsistently or inaccurately.

Fitrat’s contemporaries who studied his works unanimously acknowledge that, despite his young age, he had already gained significant recognition in the literary circles of Bukhara of that time. The earliest reliable information about Abdurauf Fitrat that has reached us is found not only in his own writings but also in the memoirs and scholarly works of his contemporaries—Ne’matulloh Muhtaram, Sadriddin Ayni, and the prominent early twentieth-century Turkmen intellectual and statesman Zaki Validi Togan [2, p. 7]. For example, Ne’matulloh Muhtaram referred to Fitrat as Hoji Mulla Abdurauf in his works. This was because Fitrat, in his youth, undertook the pilgrimage (Hajj) and traveled through India, Turkey, Arabia, as well as Russian cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Having received his education in Turkey as part of the “Young Bukharians,” Fitrat returned to Turkestan as a widely known and respected figure. His early prose works—“Munozara” (“The Debate”) and “Bayonoti Sayyohi Hindiy” (“Narratives of an Indian Traveler”)—published in Istanbul in 1911–1912, as well as his poetry collection “Sayha” (“The Outcry”), inspired not only the Bukharan intelligentsia but the entire Jadid movement throughout Turkestan. Sadriddin Ayni noted that Fitrat’s single work “Munozara” had an exceptionally strong and productive influence on the intellectual development of its era.

As an active representative of the Jadid movement, Abdurauf Fitrat studied in Istanbul between 1909 and 1913 and worked tirelessly to bring reforms to the social and cultural life of the people of Turkestan. When the Emir of Bukhara refused permission to publish his first book—“Hindistonda bir farangi ila buxorolik bir mudarrisning bir necha masalalar ham usuli jadida xususida qilgan munozarasi” (“A Debate Between a European Scholar and a Bukharan Teacher on Several Issues Concerning the New-Method School in India”)—Fitrat had it printed in Istanbul in 1909. Although published in Istanbul, the work was written in Persian and was later translated into Uzbek by the prominent scholar Hoji Muin. Between 1911 and 1913, the book was serialized in the periodical Turkiston Viloyatining Gazeti.

As one of the leading representatives of Uzbek literature, a major figure of science and culture, a poet, encyclopedic scholar, teacher, linguist, outstanding dramatist, journalist, and enlightened intellectual, Abdurauf Fitrat authored the textbook “An Experiment on Uzbek

Grammar Rules” in the old Uzbek alphabet in 1925. His scholarly legacy is rich and diverse, and many of his works were republished several times until the 1930s. Fitrat’s contribution to the enrichment of Uzbek grammar is immense, and his works have served as foundational sources for mastering the Uzbek language.

In addition, Fitrat, as a musicologist, wrote significant studies such as “Shashmaqom,” “Uzbek Classical Music and Its History,” and “Eastern Music” [2, p. 47].

After completing his studies in Istanbul in 1913, Fitrat served in several high-ranking positions between 1921 and 1922. Due to circumstances, he lived in Moscow and Leningrad in 1923–1924, where he worked at the Institute of Oriental Languages, teaching Turkish, Arabic, and Persian philology. Fitrat became the first Uzbek linguist elected as a professor at the University of Leningrad (Dorilfunun) and authored his linguistic works “Sarf” (Morphology) and “Nahv” (Syntax). Alongside linguistics, he also produced several historical and orientalist articles and treatises in Persian. His significant contribution to Uzbek linguistics includes clarifying the classification of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and auxiliary words by drawing comparative examples from Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages. Scholars acknowledge that Fitrat’s works represent “the finest examples of 1920s Uzbek linguistics, serving as a solid bridge between the immortal sources of the past and modern linguistic science.”

By the early twentieth century, Fitrat was already known among literary circles for his poetry. After performing the Hajj, he traveled throughout the East and later continued his formal education and literary career in Turkey. His first major work, “Munozara,” was published in Istanbul and secretly brought into Bukhara through various channels [3, p. 102].

According to the Japanese scholar Hisao Komatsu, “Munozara” was first published in Persian in Istanbul in 1911 and later republished in Uzbek and Russian in Tashkent [4, p. 79]. The work depicts the activities of the first Persian-language new-method school established by the Young Bukharians and the disagreements that emerged around it.

Fitrat’s “Munozara” is dedicated to new-method schools and played a key role in reopening such schools in Bukhara. The essence of the work reflects the activities of the first Jadid schools founded by the Young Bukharians and the disputes surrounding them. About twenty years later, Fitrat recalled the writing of this work in one of his articles:

“In 1908, I wrote a work describing the religious fanaticism that prevailed in the Bukhara Khanate, and the system of governance based on it-arrests, executions, stoning, and other daily practices. At that time, even writing a book was considered ‘heresy’. It was then that I wrote my first work. I criticized Bukhara’s system of governance, its educational system, and many official institutions.” [5, p. 121]

Despite being published in Istanbul, “Munozara” was smuggled into Bukhara and became so popular that even importing its original Persian text into the Russian Empire was banned in 1914.

The Uzbek translation of “Munozara” was prepared by Hoji Muin ibn Shukrulloh, a close associate of Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, and printed as a book in Tashkent in 1913. Fitrat later wrote:

“Hoji Muin (1883–1942) translated ‘Munozara’ into Uzbek. The work was first serialized in Turkiston Viloyatining Gazeti in 1912 and published as a booklet in Tashkent in 1913.” [6, p. 79]

However, it must be noted that in this translation many of Fitrat’s original ideas-his Islamic reformist views, and his criticisms of the Russian and Bukharan authorities and conservative clergy-were removed, and Hoji Muin inserted interpretations more aligned with

the policies of Tsarist Russia. For this reason, General N. Ostroumov allowed the translation to be printed in his newspaper.

Abdurauf Fitrat's creative legacy is remarkably multifaceted. He lived with the concerns of his nation, dreamed of independence, and became one of the most exemplary Uzbek intellectuals who devoted his life to national freedom and ultimately fell victim to repression. The diversity of Fitrat's works demonstrates the breadth of his worldview, his multidimensional talent, and his status as a true scholar. His Uzbek and Persian-Tajik writings, with their unique style, opened new directions in twentieth-century literature through their stories and narratives.

After returning from Turkey, Fitrat published several influential works on education in 1915–1916, including "Oila" ("The Family"), "Rahbari Najot" ("Guide to Salvation"), and "A Short History of Islam." In the 1920s, his dramas "Chin Sevish" ("True Love") and "Abo Muslim" were staged.

Across all of Fitrat's works, a single idea stands out consistently: the aspiration for national liberation, independence, freedom, and enlightenment. Gaining increasing recognition for his contributions to education, Fitrat served as the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Hurriya ("Freedom") published in Samarkand in 1916. Although he dreamed of equality and freedom, these aspirations remained unfulfilled.

Conclusion

Abdurauf Fitrat's spiritual and philosophical heritage constitutes a unique synthesis of humanistic ideals, national consciousness, ethical values, and progressive thought. His reflections continue to provide profound insights into contemporary discussions on spiritual development, patriotism, education, and cultural identity.

The philosophical significance of Fitrat's legacy lies in its capacity to inspire intellectual freedom, moral responsibility, and social transformation. For modern scholars and educators, Fitrat remains a guiding figure whose ideas hold enduring relevance for shaping an enlightened, patriotic, and morally grounded society.

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