



Research Article

THE SPECIALTIES OF UZBEK COLLECTIVISM CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ethnic and spiritual factors of the Uzbek community, its customs and traditions, such as the organization “Mahalla”, hashar (voluntary group work), wedding, gap-gashtak (party), hospitality, as well as the role of public opinion in strengthening the culture of communication and national identity.

KEYWORDS

Collective, social, culture, mahalla (community), hashar (voluntary group work), gap-gashtak (party).

INTRODUCTION

It is known that in the West individuals view the community as a means of demonstrating themselves, their talents and abilities, achieving certain goals. The community never interferes in the privacy, inner life and psyche of people. In the East, however, the community is generally regarded as proof of social control, and the fact that an individual's regular participation in the community is within the limits of

common ethical standards. Separation from the community is seen as a social alienation of a person. Gert Hofstadter, a Dutch scientist and IBM employee, distinguishes five main dimensions that characterize any culture: Government distance, individualism and collectivism ratio, male and female ratio, avoiding ambiguity and long-term orientation (Hofstadter 2004). According to G. Hofstadter, individualism is



manifested in cultures in which interpersonal relations are sufficiently free. People mostly care only about themselves and their loved ones. Representatives of cultures with a high level of individualism prefer certain tasks and assignments, and the pronoun “I” is of great importance. The culture of the USA, Great Britain, Canada and etc. can be a good example to this.

In culture where collectivism is in a priority, it is important to have a relationship with those who surround them. Representatives of this culture often consider with “we” factor. In such cases, the group that protects the individual (relatives, co-worker) and its values will be of big importance. These individuals can be found in Eastern culture and Latin America (Boldirev, 2009).

Uzbek culture is recognized as a community that stands in front of collectivism and enacts a feasible role. In Uzbek collectivism, the feeling of unity, mutual assistance and cooperation for the strengthening of national identity is a source. The peculiarities of Uzbek collectivism, in particular, consist of cultural aspects such as organization of community “Mahalla”, “hashar” (an activity where people gather and help someone; voluntary work), gap (an activity where group of people organize social gathering), hospitality, neighborhood, family relations, weddings and funerals.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

MAHALLA. The term “Mahalla” is originally derived from Arabic and its English equivalent can be neighborhood or community. “Mahalla” is a social institution and its constituent members deal with each task collaboratively. For instance, weddings, funerals, national holidays are organized together. In order to support each other, members of the “mahalla” raise money and bake pies. Also, the host of the ceremony is provided with the necessary tools, such as a table, chair, saucepans and other necessary things. Mahalla supports the poor, families with many children,

widows and orphans financially. Helping them to get married and to organize circumcision ceremonies is also one of these actions.

Mahalla has a very ancient history, its goals and intentions are regarded as a very important act. Since people have started living as a society they become being aware of each other’s conditions, bad and good days. They work in collaboration with each other. Such cultural treasures of Uzbek people still have not lost its value. Mahalla plays an essential role not only in the development of families and citizens, but also in their upbringing as hardworking, honest and kind people.

In general, the establishment of the institute of “mahalla” dates back to the ancient times. Scientists give different hypotheses about the origin of “mahalla” as is known from the history, “mahalla” has been the core of goodness, basics of education, national traditions and customs. “Mahalla” has a crucial importance in educating people with mutual kindness, generosity, in the formation of a specific community. Mahalla is considered as a local unity among Central Asian cities. There, people live not only on the basis of neighborhood bonds but also on the basis of internal rules, values, moral norms and traditions which have been implemented for hundred years.

After Uzbekistan gained its independence, state ideology assigned exceptional significance to the mahalla as a traditional form of Uzbek grassroots democracy. The mahalla committees have been given very wide-ranging powers, to the extent that by decree of the general meeting the family can be expelled from the mahalla. Today there are more than ten thousand “mahalla” in the entire territory of Uzbekistan. No other institution in Uzbekistan influences like a mahalla, and it is a strict social, economic and political institution of Uzbekistan. Currently, the Government of Uzbekistan relies on the mahalla as one of the means of maintaining its authority. In accordance with Article 105 of the Constitution of the Independent Republic of Uzbekistan, “mahalla”, which had a central-old history, has gained its legal status and its specific “position” in the chapter “fundamental of



local Government” in the Constitution has become of great political and practical importance.

The first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov mentioned about “mahalla” and said: methods of self-government are very characteristic of the traditions and values of our people, and the “mahalla” (community) has gained great prestige in recent years. In practice, they are responsible for everything on their territory. Today there is no problem that the “mahalla” cannot solve. Attention to the “mahalla” means attention to the development of our society.”

The famous Uzbek writer Otkir Hoshimov explained the term “mahalla” as follows:

Once I talked with the editor of the famous American newspaper. He asked me to explain what a “mahalla” institution is and the reason why Uzbek people respect “mahalla” so much that even a special law on this was adopted.

I am unable to explain what the mahalla is – I said honestly. –Excuse me but anyway you will never understand it. Nobody is to blame for this. It is all is about the formation of a lifestyle.

Imagine, in your country as soon as the child grows up, his father will give him his share (capital). From this day the adult is independent and has to start his own life. If son comes back hopelessly after a month, with failure, father will not let him in. In my country parents bring up their child, help him to get married, build him a house, in addition to this they look after their grandchildren too. So parents sacrifice their lives for their child.

In your country it is considered as a victory of democracy if son takes his father to the court for fifty dollars. If this situation takes place in my country this son will be cursed and execrated.

In your country it is normal if son who lives in Los Angeles cannot come to his father’s funeral because of

his work in the Ministry. In my country if son who lives in Tashkent cannot come to his father’s funeral in Surkhandaryo he will be abjured and rejected from the society.

In your country for example, if a neighbor notices a young girl dating with an unknown boy, and informs about it her father. The father can take him to the court because of the fact of interference in the private life. In my country in this situation a neighbor may not only criticize but also take a neighbor girl to her father. And the father will be grateful for him as he has protected his daughter’s reputation.

In your country, if a man is interested in a guest who is visited by his neighbor. The Neighbor can be annoyed, claiming that this is his private life. In my country, if someone visits his neighbor, he will be definitely informed, even the guest can be invited to the neighbor’s house.

In your country, for example, if a wife, who has been married for ten years says “darling I fell in love with another man and want to split up with you, you can visit your children whenever you want or give them to the orphanage and after this if her spouse punches her in anger, she immediately calls the lawyer and sue him to the court. On the other hand, if the husband no longer loves his wife anymore and wants to leave his family, in practice, no one can force him to live with his wife. And it is considered as a protection of human rights.

In my country, if a wife is fed up with her worthless husband, instead of calling a lawyer or going court she goes to the mahalla. In mahalla no one will discriminate against her rights or advise her to sue her husband. In mahalla she is advised to be patient and not to make her children cry and separate from their father.

They also warn the husband that if he again offends his wife or leaves his children he will be excluded from the Mahalla. In your country, it may be considered as a violation of human rights. In my country, this is the protection of children’s right. (To my mind, it is better



to protect the rights of the child rather than an adult male or female).

I do not know; which attitude is more reliable yours or ours. The great Uzbek scientist Beruniy in his book "India", which was written thousand years ago, claimed that no one can analyze other nations' habits and traditions as they have been created through hundreds of years and has already become a nation's lifestyle.

In your country individualism is in priority however, my nation is based on rules of collectivism. Our people can sacrifice their personal ambitious sake for other people. I see I could not explain what mahalla is, anyway that is all about it (Hoshimov 2015).

In connection with the events taking place in Andijan, the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov at the press conference, which held on May 14, 2005, with representatives of the mass media of Uzbekistan and foreign countries, stated his arguments on expressions of foreign individuals who expressed their critical views on the "mahalla": how much reliable the given expression "mahalla is becoming a Governmental organization which oppresses population" and it is interpreted as a violation of human rights, when spouses, if there is a misunderstanding between them, instead of appealing to court, address to the "mahalla". How do those, who interpret the reliance on "mahalla" (neighborhood) support in the solution of family conflicts as "violation of human rights", understand the articles 64 and 66 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan? Let's remind that one of these substances firmly established that "parents are obliged to bring up and educate their children till adulthood", another said that "adult, labor-worthy children are obliged to take care of their parents". Therefore, every nation, country carries out democracy in its own unique and appropriate way. If this is not the case, it will not serve for development.

The forced "Soviet Union" appearance of democracy is a clear example of this. Failure to recognize this legitimacy is a phenomenon contrary to the law of

democratic development, which brings out harmful socio-political, spiritual consequences."

In general, Uzbek "mahalla" (neighborhoods) has long been able to meet all the requirements imposed on highly organized communities as a social basis of self-government, and now they can also meet. Mahalla has been of great importance in the lives of some families and individuals.

Therefore, among the Uzbek people, the wise transfer of "mahalla" – both father and mother" is widespread.

HASHAR (voluntary group work) – It is a tradition which is widespread among Eastern population, from ancient times it has played important role in the life of Uzbek people. Hashar means to work collectively and act together for one purpose. The hashar is voluntary gathering of people to do a task collectively for someone for free and voluntary. For example, hashar is held to do work in a garden or farm, to build or to repair a house.

In general, all the hard work was done by organizing hashar. In the individual farms people had gardens, farmhouses, fertile lands, and a lot of manual labor and hard-working were required from the peasant. For this reason, the Uzbeks had many children, friends, and relatives.

Hashar was used not only in the form of support for one person by others, but also in the form of individual who helped to the team.

Sometimes a person can work for other people, by herding. For example, there were times when an individual looked after a village herd, by the way of doing hashar (voluntary work). This habit has now also been preserved, which is practiced in many villages.

In the old days the tradition of hashar was helpful, especially, for widows and the poor. In the village rich people are united, and such things like building houses, organizing the circumcision or wedding ceremonies for the poor, widows and orphans were done by the way



of “hashar” (voluntary work).

Hashar also benefited many people in the spring when it came to cleaning the streets, planting, weeding the garden, building roads, beautifying cemeteries, building bridges, arranging public places, building hospitals. The main feature of the “hashar” is that it is carried out gratuitous and for free. The work of “hashar” is performed freely by a group of people. In the old days, the old Uzbek women used the habit of “hashar” in carpet weaving, tailoring, knitting, (cloth) cutting up and sewing before weddings. Therefore, old women move to the house where the wedding is expected.

In Uzbekistan, special attention is paid to the cleaning of the beds that have become muddy from the agricultural work beginning in early spring and to their preparation for the new season. Such work was carried out with the help of “hashar” with the power of the whole village or district people, since the individual farms could not do it themselves. At that time, there were ceremonies of “Loy tutish” (mud keeping) in the valley of Surkhandarya, Kashkadarya and Zarafshan, however in Khorezm there were performances of the ceremony “qazuv” (excavation). Carrying out the ritual of “Loy tutish” was as follows: If a person passed before the bed diggers, then he was given a hoe or a shovel with mud.

The person would either deliver it to the place, then get rid of it, or would have to give a feast to the “hasharchi” (voluntary workers), or would have to extract the ditch of the designated place. He would have to sing if he was a singer, fight if he was a wrestler, make or fix the necessary equipments for digging if he was a blacksmith. If he could not fulfill any of these things, he could dig up the ditch on the designated land and then go his own way (Jabbarov 2005, 101).

In the period of Soviet Union in many cities and villages of Uzbekistan, public buildings, bridges, roads, some small towns were completed by doing “Hashar”. The construction of various structures, including The Great

Fergana Canal, The Tashkent Canal, the Zarafshan Canal, the Kattakurgan, the Kungrad railway, etc., has been restored by means of general-purpose “Hashar”.

Hashar has developed Uzbek people as citizens by maturing their labor courage, initiative and creative ability. In the years of the Second World War, the habit of Hashar helped the Uzbek people a lot. To the front, a lot of necessary things were sent, such as aircraft, tanks, food, and clothes, collected from people.

In the 1966 earthquake of Tashkent, the all-union people's “hashar” left a huge mark in the later life of the capital. All this was a demand of the time, an obligatory necessity, caused by the toughness of the circumstances. The “hashar” carried on for a day or two, in some cases up to several days.

Becoming an integral part of the Uzbek spiritual life, the tradition of “hashar” gained a new meaning in the period of independence and became a national tradition. This is evidenced by nationwide “hashar”, which is held every year on the eve of the Navruz and Independence Day. During the “hashar”, neighborhoods, streets, roads, fields, gardens are cleaned, regulated, planted. Practical assistance is provided to the people with low-income, the poor, the elderly and alone people.

GAP-GASHTAK (party) is a gathering of ancient men and one of the traditions that have been preserved so far. Gashtak was originally formed during the period of fertility (Karabayev 2002, 112-113). A long time ago only men (tribe leaders and dignitaries) gathered together, in order to discuss their plans for the future, kinship issues, moving from one pastureland to another, how to protect the place they were at, and so on.

Some researchers believe that genetically “Gap” (party) is one of the forms of the union of men distributed in primitive societies (Jabbarov 2005, 71).

In ancient times, due to the absence of daily press, radio-television, such places were considered as the source of information, the place of sharing news from



life, politics, enlightenment. Therefore, a part of such “gashtaks” was held in “choyxona” (traditional cafe where males gather and drink tea) or in public places. There were listened to conversations of tourists, foreigners, scholars, poets of foreign countries (Sattorov 1993, 123).

Usually, the “Gashtak” was held from late autumn to spring, when the harvest was picked-until the beginning of crop – planting. “Gashtak” mostly was organized in long night winter months.

Nowadays “Gap and Gashtak” are part of Uzbek life and can be organized at any time and any place. Also, women and children or people of the same age can participate in Gap-Gashtaks. In order to organize Gap classmates, co-workers, friends or neighbors gather at the fixed time. Actually, talks, entertainments, different and delicious cuisine are essential part of any “gap and gashtak”. Usually a gap-gashtak is put on by each person in turn at a regular interval, such as each month or every 15 days. The person whose turn it is to host should prepare a banquet, and the other participators should gather money to contribute to the banquet. People chat, have fun, eat food and discuss important issues at the gap-gashtak.

In addition, there are also “family gashtaks”, consisting of several families. In Tashkent and Fergana, women also organize “gap”. Women of different ages who live in one place alternately meet each other. And this event will last all year round.

DASTURXON (tablecloth) – has an essential role in Uzbek culture. Most Uzbeks do not eat without covering the table. They definitely spread a tablecloth over a table or upon the floor and then eat. Each Uzbek family sets a table three or four times in a day.

When a guest comes the hosts will first of all lay a table for him. When Uzbek lays a table it is definitely rich in colorful food. Uzbek people have several rituals that are always followed weather they lay a table, eat food or clear the table. First, elderly people in the family start first, and then other family members can eat.

Prematurely, different types of soups had been served generally in a big bowl, and then it started being served individually. Other type of dishes are served in one or two big plates (Jabborov 2005, 63).

After dinner the senior members recite a prayer, and only then will the table be cleared and the tablecloth removed. Then the youngest should shake out the tablecloth by its edges in a clean part of the courtyard (Sattorov 1993, 65-67).

HOSPITALITY. One of the most wonderful traditions and proud of national qualities of Uzbek people is hospitality. From ancient times it was considered as a great art to host and set a table. It was considered that a person who set a table must be a noble, tidy and immaculate nature. In addition, the process of decorating the table had also certain procedures and rules. Especially at weddings and gatherings, a person who sets a table, decorates it beautifully, prepares variety of dishes and also provides a complete distribution of delicacy, is always found among the people. The table is obliged to be decorated with high taste in a different way, for weddings and festivals. Because a well-set table raises the mood of the guests, banquet is considered as rationally organized. (Jabbarov 2005, 65).

According to the tradition, a person who came to the Uzbek’s house (familiar or unfamiliar) is invited to the house. No matter, where and under what conditions Uzbek met someone it was obligatory to share food with him. This custom is much more valuable and a special phrase “ko’z haqi” (eye fee/ fee of glance) can prove it. According to this fact, it is believed that if a man bakes bread or prepares food, in front of someone, the person who is standing near has his share (ko’z haqi) in prepared meal. Therefore, even at home, when sweets are cooked, especially during holidays and Eid times, the tradition of distributing a meal to relatives and close neighbors has so far been preserved in many places. It has also become customary to share with their loved ones with vegetables and fruits from gardens. Many of these traditions and superstitions have become a national



tradition in Uzbekistan, and it is now a must to follow them (Jabbarov 2005, 66).

Hospitality is a part of the Uzbek people's lifestyle and is a school of morality and elegance, which has been composed and experienced for many centuries. Hospitality is one of the human qualities. Hospitality is not only about chatting or eating but also getting information about someone or visiting elderly people is also considered as a form of hospitality. Hospitality is a very subtle virtue, it requires high taste, ingenuity and morality from the host.

Hospitality is the basis of greeting, welcoming and communicating. In it, such manifestations as moderation, respect, humility are the priority, they are directed to raise the mood of the guest, to entertain.

A guest is as a respected person. The main reason why the Uzbek people value a guest is that the guest symbolizes goodness, happiness, an end to grudges or resentments. In fact, when the guest arrives, scandals between couple and the children's noise stop. The noise slows down and everyone becomes polite. Moreover, the arrival of the guest is a reason for clarity and purity (Husanov 2009, 86, 88).

In ancient times, in Uzbek houses, the neighbors made a big hole in the middle of the wall. Through this hole, they were informed about each other, when they ate delicacies, they shared with each other. This habit has been preserved until now therefore if guest comes neighbors will share with food in honor of the guest. The proverb "Mehmon kelar eshikdan, rizqi kelar teshikdan" (The guest came through the door, the portion came through the hole), arose because of the influence of this custom. Also, the proverb "Mehmon otangdan ulug'" (The guest is greater than a father) testifies the great importance of the guest in the Uzbek culture. In general, in the dialogue of culture, there was a stereotypical picture of the hospitality of the Uzbek people.

THE CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION is an important component of Uzbek collective culture. Colloquial

culture is the art of applying each language unit on the basis of norms adopted over the years, depending on the circumstances.

Culture of welcoming and greeting. Greeting is a sign of respect for a person, it is the beginning of a relationship of interaction between people, as well as the entry point of communication. The tradition of greeting is taught in Uzbek families from childhood. The young members of the family greet with elderly ones in the morning after washing their face and hands. When the Uzbeks go out into the street, all who come out from the opposite will greet with elderly people even if they do not know each other.

Greeting is an important part in the culture of communication; it has its own unique appearance, proceeding from the national characteristics of each nation. During the greeting in the culture of Uzbek speech, not only the kinship relations or gender, but also the time of the day, the profession of the communicator and those who speak during the conversation are taken into account. In particular, those who in harmony with community participate in the improvement work of "hashar" are encouraged by others "Hormanglar" (do not be tired) and they answer "Salomat bo'ling" (be healthy) or "Bor bo'ling" (be alive). And when they are seen on the threshing ground during harvest, they are encouraged "Hirmonga baraka" (blessing to the threshing) and are answered by them "Umringizga Baraka" (blessing to your life). If you pay attention to this culture of inquiry, both the tone of addressing and the tone of responding are expressed in a way that makes sense, elegance and sympathy for a person. The strength of these words is that they do not hurt someone, even if you say them on anger or acrimony. (Husanov 2009, 85).

A culture of communication in everyday life. In everyday life, when Uzbeks are in a relationship with people around them, they try to show kindness and delicacy to them. They strive to share the joy of others, to sympathize with their grief. Naturally, such a feature is reflected in decent words and phrases, which are used mainly in the culture of communication. For



example, on holidays, at weddings, on a good day, they say to their loved ones they say “Muborak bo’lsin!” (let them be blessed!) and answered by them “birga bo’lsin” (be with us) or “sizga ham nasib qilsin” (let it be with you too). The sympathy is expressed to the person who lost a loved one: “Khudo sabr bersin” (let God give patience), A person who is sick is wished “Khudo shifo bersin” (let God heal you).” or a sneezing person is said “Sog’ bo’ling” (Bless you).

It can be seen that the Uzbek culture of communication includes many moral qualities such as politeness, respect, self-esteem, generosity, kindness, care and encouragement.

PUBLIC OPINION. One of the most essential features of Uzbek cultural collectivism is the public opinion. It is known that custom, traditions and rituals, are tightly connected with the social mind which has a special state in the community. Mostly, the public opinion is formed during the traditional holidays or ceremonies. Furthermore, public opinion also has a significant impact on strengthening people’s rituals in social life.

Public opinion, which is manifested in the process of ceremonies and holidays, formed on the basis of people's dreams, interests, beliefs and feelings, becomes much stronger. At the same time, it is also natural that a number of problems arise, as national traditions and public opinions are intertwined and colliding areas of events.

Specially:

1. The formation of public opinion during rituals and traditions and its influence to the development.
2. The formation of public opinion in the process of rituals, traditions and holidays, occurs with the help of social, cultural, educational, spiritual factors. It is known that in the long historical process, ceremonies, weddings and celebrations were not only important and social events but also a means of finding news, exchanging views, debating.

Among other rituals, wedding ceremonies are characterized by a high degree of originality and the degree of exchange of public opinion. Because wedding ceremonies consist of mutual communication and exchange of views from the moment they are planned to the end. Topics that can be discussed during wedding ceremonies can be divided into the following categories:

- Issues related to upcoming events and interactions;
- Daily issues related to marital concerns;
- Local, private issues related to family and personal problems;
- Secular and universal problems;
- Conversations on issues of internal and foreign policy of the country (Bekmurodov 2010, 109-110).

In general, public opinion plays an important role in the life of the Uzbek people. Especially in the spiritual life of the neighborhood or rural population, the idea of neighbors or local people will have great power. The opinion of the community, which has become a habit, is certainly taken into account.

THE RESULTS

The foundations of collectivism, whose deep roots go back to the traditional life of ordinary community, are historically characteristic of the people of Uzbekistan. Hospitality, generosity, kindness to others, sympathy for the grief of others, a sense of mutual assistance, is the main norms of cultural and moral relations of Uzbek people.

Uzbek culture is based on collectivism and its main criterion is moral maturity. And moral maturity embodies such qualities as self – honesty, conscience, generosity, compassion, kindness.

Uzbeks have been aware of each other's situation,



grief and joy since ancient times. They always cooperate and work together. Such human qualities of the Uzbek people have not lost their value even now.

Public relations have become an important factor in the strengthening of national identity by integrating feelings of collectivism and unity, traditions of mutual assistance and cooperation into life. Until now, the local traditions have been significantly improving in a new, modern spirit, strengthening family-household relations, becoming a sympathizer and a co-host in all wedding performances and celebrations, and serving in mutual assistance and support. Local social consciousness has become a decisive factor in the management of such issues of decency as respect for the elderly and young, especially the care of older people, the maintenance of harmony in family relations.

In general, collectivism in the Uzbek mentality is explained by a greater dependence on ethnic and spiritual factors than on professional or economic factors. "Self-denial for the benefit of others" is one of the main features of the Uzbek community.

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