



THE ROLE OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF LABOR IN THE EAST IN SHAPING YOUTH ECONOMIC CULTURE

Nabiyev Maksud Abdimannonovich
Independent Researcher at Sharof Rashidov
Samarkand State University

Abstract

This article examines the evolution of the concept of labor in Eastern thought from primitive society to the modern digital era. It analyzes how labor has transformed from a purely physical necessity into an intellectual, creative, and socio-cultural phenomenon. The study highlights the contributions of Eastern scholars, emphasizing the ethical and spiritual dimensions of labor. Special attention is given to the role of labor in shaping human capital and its growing importance in the context of globalization and digitalization. Furthermore, the paper explores how these transformations influence the development of youth economic culture. The findings suggest that the integration of traditional labor values with modern economic realities is essential for fostering responsible, skilled, and self-reliant young individuals.

Keywords: Labor evolution, eastern thought, youth economic culture, human capital, digital economy, labor ethics, globalization, craftsmanship, social transformation, productivity.

Introduction

In the primitive period, the division of labor existed in a simple form based solely on gender and age. At that time, concepts such as “property,” “wages,” or “leisure” did not yet exist. Labor was an inseparable and natural part of life; it had not yet become an object of socio-economic or legal relations. By transforming nature, human beings began to transform themselves as well. The invention of tools marked the emergence of conscious activity, planning, and creativity. It was precisely during this period that labor became the primary



anthropological factor that definitively distinguished humans from the animal world.

Human labor constitutes the foundation of technological development and, more broadly, of cultural progress. In the primitive era, this labor was extremely arduous. It is difficult for us to imagine how much effort a person of the Chellean period invested in producing what now appears to be a very simple cutting tool. Even basic implements such as spears - especially more complex ones like boomerangs, bows and arrows, as well as polished and drilled axes - required prolonged and meticulous work. Observers note that craftsmen among some less developed tribes sometimes spent several months producing a single object.

However, in the primitive period, it was not the quantity but the quality of labor that played a decisive role. Given the limited technical possibilities, careful workmanship and refinement became the most remarkable features of even the simplest objects of that time. Every item - particularly tools and weapons - was created with the highest degree of functional suitability and practical purpose, and at the same time crafted with great care and dedication. It is no coincidence that these objects were often decorated with patterns and drawings whenever possible. In producing tools and weapons, primitive humans engaged in both physical and intellectual labor. Free from coercion, this labor was at once creative in nature.[1] The fact that the word “mehnat” (labor), borrowed from Arabic, originally means “trial,” “hardship,” or “difficulty” is not accidental.[2] It reflects the historical association of labor with strenuous and often compulsory activity. By the Middle Ages, during the feudal period, the nature of labor underwent another transformation. Slavery was gradually replaced by serfdom, whereby peasants were bound to the land. A peasant retained only a portion of the product of their labor, while the remainder was transferred to the feudal lord in the form of taxes or barshchina (compulsory labor service).

At the same time, the development of urban craftsmanship gave rise to new, relatively freer and more creative forms of labor. Guilds (associations of craftsmen) emerged, regulating the labor process, product quality, and the relationships between masters and apprentices. In this context, labor was valued not only as a means of subsistence but also as an expression of professional pride, skill, and craftsmanship.



In the East, labor has long been regarded as the most fundamental and necessary condition of human life. The labor process traditionally encompasses three components: purposeful human activity, objects of labor, and the means of production through which these objects are transformed. This triadic structure defines the essence of labor and elevates it to a primary driver of human development. Labor shapes the individual, strengthens one's will, and enriches the meaning of life. Its role in the formation of moral values is also immeasurable. In the history of Sufism, Bahauddin Naqshband's well-known maxim "Dil ba yoru, dast ba kor" ("Let the heart be with God, and the hands engaged in work") vividly expresses this idea: while the human heart should remain devoted to God, one's hands must be occupied with honest labor.[3] This perspective interprets labor not only as a source of livelihood but also as a foundation of spiritual perfection.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni emphasizes that "the true worth of every individual is determined by the work they are capable of performing conscientiously and with a high level of mastery. Labor is a great duty of human beings, for any desired goal -whether material or spiritual - is achieved through labor".[4] The scholar thus regards labor as the defining factor of a person's true value. According to his view, human dignity is measured by the sincerity and excellence with which one performs one's work. Therefore, labor is not merely a means of subsistence but should be understood as one of the most essential duties of human existence.

The principle of industriousness represents a moral quality that enables individuals to express themselves, realize their potential, and establish meaningful relationships with others through the process of labor. It requires honesty, discipline, enthusiasm, and aspiration, fostering a positive and conscious attitude toward work.[5] Hence, industriousness serves as a fundamental pillar of human development. It protects individuals from both material deprivation and spiritual decline, while giving deeper meaning to life. A hardworking person earns respect within society, leads a life of abundance, and leaves behind a legacy of good deeds and a noble reputation. Muhammad is reported to have said: "The most pleasant and lawful sustenance a person consumes is that which they earn through their own work".[6] This hadith not only condemns living at the expense of others as an undesirable condition but also calls upon individuals to seek lawful



sustenance through their own honest labor. It encourages people to avoid dependency and instead strive for self-reliance through diligent effort.

Husayn Vaiz Kashifi extols labor as a means through which a person's moral purity and sincerity are manifested. According to his view, a good and достойный life is shaped through labor, while craftsmanship is recognized as a true value within society. Craftsmanship is not only a useful form of work but also an effective means of satisfying social needs and transmitting knowledge and experience across generations. Thus, labor, as a moral and cultural phenomenon, occupies a central place in human life. In his work Futuvvatnama-yi Sultani (also known as "The Path of Chivalry"), Kashifi presents valuable reflections on ethical norms and professional conduct characteristic of our cultural tradition. In particular, Chapters 14–15 of the fifth section are devoted to the duty and responsibility of labor in the life of a Muslim. According to the author, every Muslim is obliged to ensure material self-sufficiency in order to meet life's essential needs, and this requires engagement in a particular profession or craft. Therefore, every Muslim is called upon to work and to acquire a profession or skill. These ideas have retained their relevance across different historical periods and continue to hold significance today. In particular, they are especially important in the context of contemporary Third Renaissance initiatives, where the younger generation of New Uzbekistan is encouraged to pursue professions of their own choosing, while also fostering a sense of responsibility and discouraging passive dependence on state or societal support.

Today, in the era of globalization and digital technologies, the concept of labor is once again undergoing a significant transformation. Physical labor is increasingly being replaced by intellectual, creative, and information-based forms of work. The notion of "human capital"—the aggregate of knowledge, skills, and health—has become a key driving force of the modern economy. In a narrow sense, human capital refers to an individual's intellect, health, knowledge, productive capacity, and overall quality of life. In a broader sense, it represents an intensive factor of economic development, encompassing the educated segment of labor resources, intellectual and managerial work, as well as the social and professional environment in which people live and work. These elements must function effectively and rationally to ensure the development of human capital as a productive force.



At the same time, new forms of labor such as freelancing and remote work have emerged, providing workers with greater flexibility and autonomy. These changes are also compelling labor law to adapt. Legislative frameworks, including the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, are now tasked not only with regulating traditional labor relations but also with addressing new, flexible forms of employment. Labor is not merely a physical activity; it lies at the center of economic, sociological, legal, and psychological processes. From an economic perspective, labor is a fundamental factor of production, alongside land, capital, and entrepreneurial ability. The labor market balances the demand for and supply of workforce, thereby determining wage levels and employment rates. Labor productivity, in turn, serves as a key indicator of economic development and is closely linked to technology, skills, and motivation.

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