

103-YEAR-OLD READER (ESSAY)

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In our country, the development of reading culture and book-reading traditions, as well as expanding reading practices among people of different ages in the remote regions of the Republic, has become an important matter.

As proof of my words, it is worth mentioning the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of December 14, 2020, No. 781, *“On approval of the National Program for the Development and Support of Reading Culture for 2020–2025.”*

Are you surprised by the title of my article?

– Of course, you are amazed to hear that at the age of 103, a person still enjoys reading books, loves poetry, and listening to it. In my more than 40 years of professional activity in the field of libraries, I have never been so excited. That is why I set out to personally meet this elderly reader, who lives in the beautiful, scenic, and remote mountainous villages of Yakkabog'.



As we approached the village of “Khonaqa,” we asked the locals about 103-year-old grandmother Toshoy Quدراتova. Their faces lit up with pride, and they gladly guided us to her house. Can you believe it? She herself came out to greet us, her “unexpected guests,” and warmly invited us into her home. In her long prayers, grandmother Toshoy wished for peace in our country, good health and leadership for our President, tranquility and harmony for our people, and a peaceful and united life for the younger generations.

After the prayers, when we handed her the gifts we had brought – a headscarf and books such as *Alisher Navoi*, *Baburnama*, *Temurnama*, and Abdulla Qodiriy’s *“O’tkan kunlar”* (*Bygone Days*) – she rejoiced like a child, kissed each book one by one, and pressed them to her chest with great affection.

Grandmother Toshoy then recalled the memories of her long life: Her father, Khushbuvo, and her mother, Dunyo momo, were both educated and literate people of their time. Her husband, Mixli bobo, also had a sound worldview, was knowledgeable, and lived in harmony with her.



Speaking about her children – Khadicha, Norbibi, Suvonqul, Suyunqul, and Boyqobil Mixliyev – she mentioned them with pride and tenderness. She and Mixli bobo had raised them to be well-mannered, hardworking, and kind-hearted. Today, she has 48 grandchildren, 116 great-grandchildren, and 53 great-great-grandchildren. She emphasized that her children had worked in education, medicine, and agriculture, and are now retired.

After our meeting with this great family, she glanced at the books in her hands, looked at her son Suvonqul bobo, and said:

– “*My son, will you read to me?*”

Her son nodded his head in agreement:

– “*Yes, yes, of course.*”

It turns out that grandmother Toshoy had made it a family tradition to buy books, newspapers, and magazines from her pension every month.



She also remembered how her husband had participated in World War II, while she herself, on the home front, had woven carpets, knitted socks for the soldiers, prepared dried mulberries, walnuts, and raisins, and collected herbs and tortoise shells to send to the front. She stressed that we must truly value the peace and tranquility of today.

Then, grandmother Toshoy pulled a *chanqovuz* – a traditional musical instrument – from her pocket and began to play a soft, melancholy tune. Everyone present fell into deep thought. When the melody ended, she began humming lullabies she used to sing to her children:

Alla aytay, jonim, bolam, yumgin ko'zingni alla yo alla,
Mehr to'la yuzingga men qurbon bo'lay alla yo alla,
Senga boqsam ketar alam ham g'amlarim alla yo alla,
Yuragimning bir parchasi sensan, bolam, alla yo alla.

Listening to the lullaby, all of us recalled the lullabies our mothers once sang to us, and we felt a sweet sense of nostalgia. To this day, grandmother Toshoy still reads a little, using her glasses...