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MAHMUDKHODJA BEHBUDI AND THE JADID REFORM MOVEMENT: MODERNIZATION, EDUCATION, AND WOMEN'S ROLE IN TURKESTAN

Annotation

This article explores the intellectual and pedagogical legacy of Mahmudkhoja Behbudi within the broader context of modernization processes in early twentieth-century Turkestan. It examines the transformation of family and gender relations under colonial conditions, the role of the Jadid movement in redefining women's education, and the conceptual arguments used by Behbudi and his contemporaries to justify educational reforms. The study highlights the significance of women's enlightenment as a strategic factor in the development of society and demonstrates the enduring relevance of Behbudi's pedagogical ideas for contemporary debates on education, social modernization, and gender policy.

Key words: Jadidism, Turkestan, Family and marital relations, Women's education, Social modernization, Gender equality, Pedagogical ideas, Cultural reform, Early 20th century.

МАХМУДХОДЖА БЕХБУДИ И ДВИЖЕНИЕ ДЖАДИДОВ: МОДЕРНИЗАЦИЯ, ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ И РОЛЬ ЖЕНЩИН В ТУРКЕСТАНЕ

Аннотация

Данная статья исследует интеллектуальное и педагогическое наследие Махмудходжи Бехбуди в более широком контексте процессов модернизации в Туркестане начала XX века. В ней рассматривается трансформация семейных и гендерных отношений в условиях колониального управления, роль движения джадидов в переосмыслении женского образования, а также концептуальные аргументы, использованные Бехбуди и его современниками для обоснования образовательных реформ. Исследование подчеркивает значение просвещения женщин как стратегического фактора развития общества и демонстрирует сохраняющуюся актуальность педагогических идей Бехбуди для современных дискуссий об образовании, социальной модернизации и гендерной политике.

Ключевые слова: Джадидизм, Туркестан, семейные и брачные отношения, женское образование, социальная модернизация, гендерное равенство, педагогические идеи, культурная реформа, начало XX века.

MAHMUDXOJA BEHBUDIY VA JADIDCHILIK HARAKATI: TURKISTONDA ZAMONAVIYLASHTIRISH, TA'LIM VA AYOLLARNING ROLI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola Mahmudxoja Behbudiyning intellektual va pedagogik merosini XX asr boshlaridagi Turkistondagi modernizatsiya jarayonlari doirasida o'rganadi. Unda mustamlakachilik sharoitida oila va gender munosabatlarning o'zgarishi, ayollar ta'limini qayta belgilashda jadid harakatining roli va Behbudi va uning zamondoshlari tomonidan ta'lim islohotlarini oqlash uchun ishlatilgan kontseptual argumentlar o'rganiladi. Tadqiqotda ayollar ma'rifatining jamiyat rivojlanishidagi strategik omil sifatidagi ahamiyati ta'kidlanadi va Behbudiyning pedagogik g'oyalarning ta'lim, ijtimoiy modernizatsiya va gender siyosati bo'yicha zamonaviy munozaralar uchun doimiy dolzarbligi namoyish etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: Jadidchilik, Turkiston, oila va nikoh munosabatlari, ayollar ta'limi, ijtimoiy modernizatsiya, gender tengligi, pedagogik g'oyalar, madaniy islohot, XX asr boshlari.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Turkestan, under the Russian Empire, experienced significant social and cultural disruption due to colonial policies. These policies limited local governance, restricted educational opportunities, and constrained women's social roles, creating stagnation in societal development. Traditional Islamic schools, including maktab and madrasas, primarily focused on religious instruction and offered little space for secular knowledge or modern sciences. In response to this stagnation, a group of reformers known as the Jadids, including Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, emerged to modernize education while preserving Islamic values.[2]

The Jadid reformers promoted modern education, literacy, critical thinking, and civic consciousness. They aimed to reform social structures, with a particular focus on family

life, emphasizing the pivotal role of educated women in shaping future generations. The Jadids sought a balance between religious adherence and rationalist, modernist perspectives, advocating for a synthesis of tradition and innovation to foster societal progress.

Behbudi regarded the family as the cornerstone of social development. He argued that neglecting women's education or restricting their social participation weakened societal growth. He challenged prevailing practices such as early marriage, polygamy, and the relegation of women solely to domestic roles, asserting that these traditions hindered moral and intellectual advancement. By advocating for women's education, Behbudi linked family reform directly with national modernization, emphasizing that enlightened mothers would raise responsible and educated citizens capable of contributing

meaningfully to society. Behbudi's educational philosophy was holistic, integrating moral, spiritual, and intellectual development. He argued for accessible education for all members of society, insisting that true national progress required the education of both men and women. His approach was highly innovative for Central Asia at the time, anticipating modern concepts of gender equality in education and promoting a broad-based intellectual awakening.

Promoting women's education and reforming family structures had significant cultural and political consequences. These efforts challenged both colonial dominance and traditionalist resistance, aiming to strengthen Turkestani national identity and ensure cultural continuity despite external pressures. By modernizing educational systems and family life, Behbudi sought to cultivate a morally conscious, intellectually capable, and socially responsible population.

His work laid the foundation for subsequent educational and social reforms in Central Asia, influencing both the Soviet period and post-Soviet developments. His emphasis on women's participation in education, family ethics, and social modernization remains highly relevant today, offering valuable insights for contemporary discussions on gender, education, and national development. Scholars recognize Behbudi as a pioneer of progressive Islamic thought, whose ideas seamlessly combined faith, rationality, and social reform.

Since time immemorial, the family has been regarded as a national and universal value in the Eastern world. The Jadid intellectuals sought to regulate family and marital relations and carried out significant work in this field, fully aware of the incomparable role of the family in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country. However, it can be argued that family and marital relations deteriorated at the beginning of the 20th century, as restrictions on the rights and freedoms of women, and treating them as mere objects—a practice that had become outdated in the life of Turkestan—significantly weakened the family and reduced its social standing. During this period, the political rights of the Turkestani population were also restricted by the Russian Empire; even men, let alone women, were rarely employed in state institutions. Women were largely confined to domestic labor, and literacy was limited, as education often consisted of only the ability to read certain religious texts.

Such challenges represented critical issues requiring conceptual solutions. They were often overlooked in contemporary discourse, even though the intellectuals of the time recognized that “the family ensures the continuity of life, the transmission of generations, and the preservation of sacred traditions, while directly influencing the character of future generations.” These thinkers considered the family as the central institution for education and moral guidance, representing a unique framework that combined political, legal, moral, and religious perspectives. They theoretically justified and highlighted the negative consequences of Russian colonialism and explored ways to save Turkestan from old social orders.

A particularly important aspect of this conceptual framework was women's education, reflecting the progressive and forward-thinking nature of the Jadid approach. Behbudi viewed women's enlightenment as a prerequisite for the development of the family, society, and the nation as a whole, emphasizing that true modernization was impossible without women's participation in education. His ideas about accessible knowledge laid the foundation for subsequent reforms and became an ideological basis for expanding women's rights in the region. By transforming societal attitudes toward women and involving them in education and science, Behbudi underscored that building a strong family foundation and

properly educating the younger generation were essential for reforming society, guiding it toward modern development, and ensuring the nation's future.

The distinctiveness of the Jadid intellectuals' approach to family and women lay in their perception of the problem: they viewed the weakness of the people, their lagging behind global changes, and the lack of freedom, independence, and spiritual vitality as central challenges. They saw the local population's desire for freedom, economic and political independence, and cultural renewal as closely linked to these societal deficiencies.

One of the founders of Jadidism, Mahmudkhodja Behbudi, was also deeply concerned with family matters in Turkestan. His worldview developed during a period of acute social and cultural transformations when the modernization of education became a key task for societal development. For this reason, Behbudi considered education—particularly universal and accessible education—as a fundamental tool for renewing the Muslim East.[6] An especially significant aspect of his pedagogical philosophy was the education of women, which, in the context of a traditional society, was one of the most debated and simultaneously one of the most critical issues. Behbudi emphasized that it was impossible to speak of national progress if half of society remained excluded from cultural and educational life. Women's access to knowledge, in his view, was not only a social right but a strategic condition for forming an enlightened, morally mature, and competitive society.

Thus, the life path and intellectual heritage of Mahmudkhodja Behbudi form an essential foundation for analyzing modernization processes in Turkestan, particularly for studying the transformation of views on women's education as a key factor in societal development. In his article *Hifz-i Sihat-i Oila*, he argued that an individual's attitude toward their own health often determines the well-being of the family and the future of the younger generation. In the early 20th century, Behbudi addressed family and women's issues in his articles. He also highlighted that early marriages—such as a 17-year-old boy marrying a 14-year-old girl in contemporary Turkestani families—were far from ideal, as children at this age could not easily shed childhood habits. He noted that proponents of “total health” recommended marriage ages of 25–30 for men and 20–22 for women.

The Jadids opposed polygamy, prevalent at the time, and expressed their critical stance on this issue. However, in an article in the journal *Al-Islah*, which promoted the ideas of the *Shura-yi Ulama*—a political-religious association of the period—it was noted that while God permitted the Prophet to have multiple wives and ordinary Muslims up to four, justice must prevail among them. Like Ismailbek Gasprinsky, Munavvarkori viewed polygamy as a societal vice that hindered development and considered its elimination a national concern. Social, economic, and cultural life, especially women's issues, were also reflected in works such as Abdulla Avlani's drama *Is Practicing Law Easy?*

In conclusion, Jadidism in Turkestan paid particular attention to family issues in its socio-political and cultural-religious worldview, clearly demonstrating the movement's aim to advance the spiritual and cultural life of the people. These aims were reflected in the Jadids' efforts to define women's place in the family, enhance their social status, ensure their education, promote proper child-rearing, and improve husband-wife relationships based on love, loyalty, equality, and respect. They emphasized the role of the enlightened family in the social, moral, and labor education of the younger generation, clarified the rights and responsibilities of children and parents, and sought to eliminate negative social attitudes

toward women, proposing new approaches to marriage, polygamy, inheritance, and related matters.

In their works, the Jadids demonstrated the incomparable role of women in human history and the family as the main pillar of society. They elevated these questions to a national level and sought to show that a healthy, enlightened family capable of nurturing a well-rounded, mature generation is a crucial factor for the development of the nation. Some of the family issues critiqued by the Jadids remain relevant today.

The analysis of Mahmudkhodja Behbudi’s life and pedagogical ideas reveals his exceptional role in the modernization of early 20th-century Turkestan. As a

representative of the Jadid generation, he not only proposed reforms in the traditional education system but also consistently advocated for the creation of a new cultural and social space based on knowledge, critical thinking, and enlightenment. Therefore, Behbudi’s pedagogical heritage is not only of historical significance but also serves as a relevant guide for contemporary studies in education, social modernization, and gender policy. His conviction that societal progress begins with the enlightenment of each member of society continues to hold significance, particularly in ongoing discussions about the role of women in socio-cultural development.

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