



THE ROLE OF MAHMUDKHO'JA BEHBUDIY IN THE ACTIVITY OF THE JADID SCHOOLS

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Abstract. *This article examines the contribution of the Jadid reformer and enlightener Mahmudkho'ja Behbudiy to the establishment and development of new-method (usul-i jadid) schools in Turkestan in the early twentieth century. Drawing on Behbudiy's own pedagogical and publicistic works, the study reconstructs the two-stage structure and year-by-year curriculum of his school, the system of annual public examinations, the textbooks he authored, and his broader vision of education as the foundation of national progress. The article shows that, despite the resistance of both the tsarist colonial administration and the conservative clergy, Behbudiy turned the new-method school into an instrument for training a modern, secularly and religiously literate generation in Turkestan.*

Keywords: *Mahmudkho'ja Behbudiy, Jadidism, usul-i jadid school, Turkestan, educational reform, textbook, curriculum, enlightenment, native-language instruction.*

INTRODUCTION

Just as the name of Ismoilbek Gaspirali – who brought a genuine revolution to the spiritual life and schooling of the Eastern peoples and became a true pride of the Turkic nations through the “usul-i jadid” (new method) he devised – occupies a great place in history, so too the name of Behbudiy occupies a broad place in the schooling and enlightenment of Turkestan. He is considered one of the first propagandists and practitioners of organizing schools of this new type in the region. In this sphere Behbudiy learned many new approaches from Ismoilbek Gaspirali. The newspaper “Tarjimon” became an essential means for Behbudiy to grasp the situation of the day. Among the lines printed in its early issues were: “When we see a single wretched pauper we feel pity; when we see a dying soul our heart aches with sorrow; even the suffering of an animal stirs our compassion. Yet we fail to see the unparalleled torment that not one but thousands of people – an entire nation – endure from ignorance.” Later, the pages of “Tarjimon” gave broad space to founding new schools and disseminating advanced



ideas. On the one hand this defended the kinship of nations, and on the other it revealed a general democratic character; for this reason Behbudiy chose Gaspirali's path, sought his counsel, and became his like-minded comrade.

MAIN PART

Behbudiy as an organizer of new-method schools

Behbudiy studied from Gaspirali – from his works and articles – the necessity of the “usul-i jadid” school, its rules and regulations, the lessons to be taught, the manner of examinations, how the school should be organized, what equipment it required, the duties of teachers, and questions of their provision, among many other matters. On this basis he devoted all his strength to establishing “usul-i jadid” schools in Turkestan. He showed dedication not only in founding them but also in supplying them with books. In the old-town part of Samarkand he opened a free library, a reading room, and a school in his own courtyard, and he moved the new-method school of the renowned pedagogue Abdulqodir Shukuriy into his own courtyard.

In 1918, when the Council of Muslim Workers and Peasants was formed in Samarkand, Behbudiy was appointed commissar of education. He then further expanded the network of new schools, developing such undertakings as drawing up curricula, creating new textbooks, and opening teacher-training courses.

Mahmudkho'ja Behbudiy wrote a number of textbooks for the “usul-i jadid” schools. Books such as “Mukhtasari tarikhi islom” (A concise history of Islam), “Madkhali jug'rofiyai umroniy” (An introduction to the geography of population), “Mukhtasari jug'rofiyai rusiy” (A concise geography of Russia), and “Amaliyotchi islom” were taught as textbooks.

Everyone had the right to study in the “usul-i jadid” schools. At that time the tsarist officials would seize on any pretext to close the new-method schools in Turkestan at once, because the imperial government did not wish the “alien people” to become even partly educated or to study secular knowledge. The new-method schools were disliked not only by the imperial government but also by the local clergy and the teachers of the old schools, who spread the propaganda that these schools “undermine the religion of Islam” and that their teachers were “infidels.” Despite such views and obstacles, Behbudiy and his comrades carried on the education of the children of Turkestan in the “usul-i jadid” schools with great vigour.



The two-stage structure and curriculum of Behbudiy's school

Instruction in Mahmudkho'ja Behbudiy's "usul-i jadid" school was conducted in the following order. The school consisted of two stages. The first stage was called the primary (ibtidoiy) part, with a course of study of four years.

First year: Persian and Arabic writing and reading were learned; suras were memorized; arithmetic was taught. Over the year pupils mastered writing and reading in full.

Second year: the Haftiyak; lessons on faith and creed; and poems and qasidas in Persian, Turkic, and Arabic.

Third year: the Holy Qur'an, Islamic worship, tajwid, admonitions from Sa'diy; Persian and Turkic were taught thoroughly, with essays composed in them; and necessary practical matters of arithmetic such as division and record-keeping were taught.

Fourth year: the noble Qur'an, detailed tajwid, Persian and Turkic verse and prose, ethics, the Turkic and Persian languages, arithmetic, history, and geography. Pupils who completed these four grades were assigned by the teachers themselves: some were kept for the second stage, some – according to their attainment – were sent to a madrasa, some, at the child's own wish, were sent to European schools, and others were directed to work for a living.

The second stage of the school was the rushdiya, to which those who had completed the four grades of the primary part were transferred. The content of the lessons and subjects taught at this stage was as follows.

First year: Arabic, geography, optics (shafaqiya), Persian, brief translation exercises, the history of the prophets and the history of Islam, Sa'diy's "Guliston," and the Turkic language.

Second year: Arabic, oral practice, history, Islamic ethics, the Turkic language, arithmetic, Persian script, and so on.

Third year: Arabic, arithmetic, penmanship, history, the Turkic language, and Russian as well.

Fourth year: Arabic, Russian court documents, district-office documents, the Turkic language and literature, health, "school and life," ethics without love and affection, and many other practical lessons.



Examinations and the outcomes of schooling

At the end of each year solemn examinations were held in Behbudiy's school, to which parents and other guests were of course invited. This served, first, to promote the "usul-i jadid" schools more widely and to demonstrate their order of study, and second, to make the school part of life – that is, to realize the unity of family and school. A pupil who had completed the eight grades, that is, both stages, could speak and write freely in Arabic, Persian, and Turkic; could also read and converse freely in Russian; was capable of working in any of the administrative offices of Turkestan; could teach in a school, engage in commerce, and even work as an editor. Letters of invitation to the annual examinations were sent to representatives everywhere; yet many did not come, being unwilling to see the school's successes. Behbudiy used to say: "Let them come and see; if it is sound, let them help it flourish; if it is unsound, let them prove it with evidence ... in our aim there is nothing but service and devotion to the nation."

Establishing the "usul-i jadid" school was not easy. For this purpose Behbudiy and Shukuriy studied the schools of all the developed Muslim cities. In such a colonial period, Behbudiy suffered many blows for the sake of opening a hearth of knowledge and enlightenment in his own courtyard for the future of Turkestan. Nevertheless, the long-suffering teacher firmly defended the "usul-i jadid" school. When tsarist Russian inspectors came to inspect his school, he hid the books of geography, history, and arithmetic beneath the trough of the stable.

Behbudiy was a teacher with his whole being. He himself taught geography and history to the senior pupils, and presented the various new books he had brought from Egypt, Turkey, Kazan, and elsewhere to the senior pupils, to the best students, and to the teachers. Whatever he did, he did for great Turkestan and for the youth who were its future. He held to the conviction that the school is the foundation of ethics and upbringing, the head and beginning of all knowledge, the spiritual fountain of happiness and of the virtuous person.

Behbudiy's publicistic legacy and educational vision

In this field Behbudiy delivered hundreds of articles in the press – in such organs as "Turkiston viloyatining gazetasi," "Taraqqiy," "Khurshid," "Shuhrat," "Osiyo," "Turon," "Hurriyat," "Oyna," "Samarqand," "Mehnatkashlar tovushi," "Ulug' Turkiston," "Najot,"



“Tirik so‘z,” “Tarjimon,” “Vaqt,” and “Sho‘ro.” These articles were devoted chiefly to the progress of instruction and education, addressing the importance of the new-method schools, their systems of teaching, the development of modern enlightenment and culture, the benefit of secular sciences, and the cultivation of the perfect human being.

Behbudiy left a rich publicistic heritage on education, upbringing, and their problems, including such works as “Imon va islom,” “Ikhtiyoji millat,” “Bukhoroda usuli jadida,” “Hurriyat – ozodlik – erkinlik,” “Tahsil oyi,” “Ikki emas, to‘rt til lozim” (Not two but four languages are necessary), “Millatni kim isloh etar,” “Yoshlarga murojaat,” “Vatanparvarlik kerak,” and others. His textbooks written for the new schools became a major event in the reform of schooling, and at the time they were widely applied in theoretical, scholarly, and practical respects. His work “Kitobatul atfol” (A children’s letter-writer) was published several times in its day; it included nearly forty specimens of Persian and Turkic compositions and taught the writing of certificates and other administrative documents.

Behbudiy described the condition of the madrasas of the time in his 1907 article “Faryod Turkiston”, observing that an ignorant teacher might be chosen for a madrasa of twenty pupils, and an ignorant judge elected on the word of a handful of village headmen; he noted that eighty per cent of these teachers, muftis, and judges were elderly, and asked what knowledge and upbringing they could possibly give to the young.

Behbudiy saw the future of Turkestan in its new cadres, its specialists, and its educated youth. For this reason, in every article he wrote, he raised the question of training cadres able to meet the demands of modern progress. He explained the need to develop trade widely, to open banks, and to increase the national income: “If we wish to build, we need a project and a plan, and so we will need engineers – yet we still do not know the science of engineering.” He lamented that the products grown in Turkestan were carried off to European markets at low prices, and wished that specialists capable of trading in those European markets would emerge: “The fruit of Turkestan, its grain, its stone, its soil ... are taken to the European market. Europeans come, buy them at a low price, and carry them off. We do the labour; they reap the profit.” Therefore, Behbudiy maintained, one who would trade with Europe must first study the knowledge of the age – for this is at once the spirituality, the upbringing, the economy, and the enlightenment of a nation’s progress.



CONCLUSION

Mahmudkho'ja Behbudiy was one of the foremost founders and theorists of the new-method school in Turkestan. He not only established “usul-i jadid” schools but also designed a coherent two-stage curriculum, authored original textbooks, instituted a system of public examinations that bound family and school together, and supplied the schools with books. Through his pedagogical practice and his extensive publicistic activity he advanced the conviction that modern, native-language education was the indispensable foundation of national progress. Despite the combined opposition of the tsarist administration and the conservative clergy, Behbudiy's work laid important groundwork for the renewal of education and culture in early twentieth-century Turkestan.

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