



CHILD REARING IN BABUR'S FAMILY

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Abstract. The works of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur embody profound and multifaceted ideas concerning the upbringing and education of children, reflecting both his personal experience as a ruler and his broader humanistic worldview. Babur's literary and historical legacy demonstrates that he regarded education not merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as a comprehensive process aimed at shaping moral character, intellectual capacity, and cultural awareness. This article explores Babur's views on child rearing within the royal family, emphasizing the principles he considered essential for preparing future leaders and responsible members of society.

In particular, this study analyzes the lexical and semantic features associated with education and upbringing in Babur's major works, especially *Baburnama*, as well as his didactic treatises and personal letters. Through a linguistic and semantic examination of these texts, the article reveals how Babur employed specific vocabulary, metaphors, and stylistic devices to convey pedagogical ideals and moral guidance. The analysis demonstrates that Babur's discourse on education is systematic and purposeful, reflecting a coherent educational philosophy rooted in both Islamic ethics and the cultural traditions of his time. As a result, Babur's views on child upbringing remain valuable not only as historical insights but also as enduring contributions to the study of educational thought.

Keywords: education, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, dynasty, Baburids, India, culture, literature, upbringing.

INTRODUCTION

In the firmament of science and literature, if every great poet and accomplished scholar is likened to a shining star, then Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur and his descendants the Gurkani or Baburid dynasty may rightfully be compared to an entire galaxy. As noted by the prominent Indian statesman and historian Jawaharlal Nehru, "Babur was a great patron of art and literature, and the Baburid court was magnificent, wealthy, and unparalleled in splendor" (as cited in *The Baburnama in English*, 1922, p. 799).

Such a court and such a cultural environment do not emerge spontaneously. If kings and princes are not themselves scholars, poets, or cultured individuals, they are unlikely to devote serious attention to the development of science and culture. Babur, however, together with his four sons Humayun, Kamran, Askari, and Hindal and his daughter Gulbadan Begum, were all figures who left a profound mark on history. They were poets, historians, and individuals deeply engaged in learning and the arts (O'zME, 2000).

All of Babur's descendants followed in the footsteps of their forefathers and made significant contributions to the advancement of science and culture as distinguished poets, writers, and scholars.

METHODOLOGY

According to *Baburnama*, Babur constantly reflected on the education and upbringing of his children and consistently encouraged them to study and acquire knowledge (Babur, 1960/1989). He composed the treatise *Mubayyin* in verse specifically to instruct Humayun and Kamran in religious matters. Babur's letters to his sons Humayun and Kamran are likewise devoted to issues of education and moral refinement.

In a letter addressed to Kamran, Babur writes:

“To my noble and fortunate son Muhammad Kamran Mirza, after sincere greetings of affection: I have learned that you have devoted yourself to studying together with your companions and attendants. This has brought joy to my heart and peace to my mind. I hope, by the grace of God, that you will attain perfection and excellence in all abilities and virtues.”

Similarly, in a letter to Humayun, Babur critically addresses his son's writing style and diligence:

“You write letters as I have told you, yet you yourself do not read them. If you had reflected while writing, you would not have been unable to read them. And had you been unable to read them, you would surely have corrected them. Your writing can be read only with difficulty, and it is excessively obscure... Although it may be deciphered with effort, your intended meaning is not fully clear because of the complexity of your expressions. This, it seems, is due to negligence in writing. You strive for artificial elegance, and therefore your words become obscure. Henceforth, write plainly, clearly,

and without affectation this will ease your own effort and that of the reader as well" (Babur, 1958; *The Baburnama in English*, 1922).

These passages clearly demonstrate that Babur regarded it as both a paternal and royal duty to ensure that his children grew up as morally upright and intellectually accomplished individuals. He personally selected books for them, authored instructional works for their education, encouraged them to read and learn, and carefully corrected their orthographic and stylistic errors. Babur consistently urged his children to write accurately, simply, fluently, and without unnecessary embellishment, thereby emphasizing clarity of thought and expression as essential components of education (Bobur. *Tanlangan asarlar*, 1958; Bobur. *Asarlar*, 1965–1966).

Naturally, Babur's efforts did not prove futile. All four of his sons, his daughter, his grandchildren, and their descendants gained renown in the fields of science and the arts, poetry, and literature. From the Gurkani or Baburid dynasty, numerous *sahib-divan* poets, historians, jurists, as well as religious and secular scholars may be identified through biographical anthologies (*tazkiras*) (O'zME, 2000). Enumerating all of them or offering even brief remarks on each would require considerable time and could itself constitute the subject of an entire book. Therefore, this study focuses only on Babur's children who were active as poets and historians, providing a few illustrative examples from their works.

Babur's eldest son, **Nasir al-Din Muhammad Humayun**, was born in Kabul on the fourth night of the month of Dhu al-Qa‘da in 913 AH (1507). His mother, **Maham Begim**, was the daughter of a noble closely associated with the household of Sultan Husayn Bayqara. Following Babur's death, Humayun ascended the throne of Delhi and ruled for twenty-six years. He passed away in Delhi on the 14th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal in 963 AH (1556) (Bobur, 1960/1989; *The Baburnama in English*, 1922).

Like his father, **Humayun Mirza** was a gifted poet. Although the demands of kingship and his continuous struggles against internal and external enemies including conflicts with his brothers and the Lodis left him little time for literary activity, he nonetheless left behind a *divan* consisting of ghazals, quatrains (*rubā‘iyyāt*), fragments, and other poetic pieces, composed mainly in Persian. This *divan* was edited and published in India under the supervision of Dr. Hadi Hasan, and selections from it are also cited in various *tazkiras* (Bobur, *Tanlangan asarlar*, 1958).

Samples from Humayun Mirza's Poetry

Persian (original):

*Hardam zi firoqi tu malolest maro,
Har rūz zi hijrāni tu sōlest maro,
Hōlest ba g‘urbatam ki natvān guftan,
Subhānalloh, g‘arīb hōlest maro.*

Meaning:

“At every moment I grieve from separation from you;
Each day of your absence feels like a year to me.
I cannot describe my condition in exile
Glory be to God, how strange my state is.”

*Ey, manzili mohi alomat avji Surayyo,
Rūyi zafar az oyinai tig‘i tu paydo.*

Meaning:

“O you whose banner rises to the heights of the Pleiades,
Victory shines reflected in the mirror of your sword.”

*Menki bulbuldek gulidin kuymisham ohang ila,
O‘t solibtur jonima ruxsorai gulrang ila.*

Humayun Mirza's literary legacy has not yet been fully recovered. Recently, two of his couplets were discovered in Sadiqi Kitobdor's *Majma‘ al-Khavas*. These verses read:

*G‘ariyblig‘ g‘amidin mehnatu malolim bor,
Bu g‘amdin o‘lmaka yetdim, g‘ariyb holim bor.
Visoli davlatidin qyrilib ne-ne mahzun,
Tirikmenu bu tiriklikdin infiolim bor.*

These lines further testify to the depth of his poetic sensibility and his reflections on exile, loss, and suffering.

Babur's second son, **Muhammad Kamran Mirza**, was born in 914 AH (1508). His mother, **Gulrukhan Begim**, was the daughter of a Turkmen noble. During Babur's lifetime, Kamran Mirza ruled over Kandahar and Kabul, and after Humayun's accession to the throne, he was also granted the province of Punjab. However, disputes and conflicts soon arose among the brothers, forcing Humayun to seek refuge in Iran. Kamran Mirza

subsequently proclaimed himself ruler in Afghan territories. After Humayun regained the throne, Kamran Mirza was blinded in 960 AH (1553). He later set out on pilgrimage to the Hijaz, performed the Hajj three times, and during his fourth pilgrimage passed away at ‘Arafat on the 15th of Dhu al-Hijja in 964 AH (1557). He was buried in the Mu‘alla cemetery near the tomb of Khadija al-Kubra (*The Baburnama in English*, 1922; O‘zME, 2000).

Kamran Mirza was a remarkably talented, eloquent, and spiritually inclined poet with a dervish-like disposition. A complete *divan* consisting of lyrical ghazals, quatrains (*rubā‘iyāt*), occasional poems (*qit‘as*), masnavis, and single couplets (*fards*) composed in both Uzbek and Dari has survived from him. The Persian poems from this *divan* were published in India by **Muhammad Mahfuzulhaq**, while the Uzbek poems were published in Uzbekistan by **Saidbek Hasan**. A full scholarly and critical edition of Kamran Mirza’s *divan*, as well as a comprehensive study of his life and literary activity, was prepared by the author of the present article in 1999 (O‘zME, 2000).

It is particularly noteworthy that among Babur’s children, **Kamran Mirza alone consistently followed his father’s path by composing poetry primarily in the Uzbek language**. In contrast, later generations after Babur predominantly wrote in Persian and thus contributed more to the development of Persian literature (Bobur, *Asarlar*, 1965–1966). Below is a sample from Kamran Mirza’s poetry (several of his works have previously been published in periodicals):

Original:

*Ahbobqa xushturur rafiq o ‘lsa kishi,
Imdod ila homiy tariq o ‘lsa kishi,
Islom eliga jon bila tarvih qilib,
Bir-birga bu besh kun shafiq o ‘lsa kishi.*

Meaning:

“It is a joy for friends when one is a loyal companion;
It is a blessing when one becomes a helper and protector on the path.
Reviving the people of Islam with one’s very soul,
It is a virtue if, in this fleeting world, people show compassion to one another.”

Askari Mirza, Kamran Mirza’s younger brother, was born in Kabul in 922 AH (1517). After Humayun Mirza ascended the throne, he granted Askari Mirza the

province of Sunbul. However, Askari later joined his brother Kamran in rebellion against Humayun. Facing defeat, he set out on pilgrimage in 961 AH (1554), but did not reach his destination. He passed away en route to the Hajj, at a location between Damascus and Mecca, and was buried there (*The Baburnama in English*, 1922; O'zME, 2000).

Like his father Babur and his brothers, **Askari Mirza** was also a man of notable talent. It remains unclear whether a complete *divan* of his poetry has survived; however, several biographers (*tazkirachis*) attest to his poetic skill and cite samples of his refined verses. Below are a few examples from his poetry:

Original:

*Ey Askariy, ar masti mudomi xush bosh,
Var mu 'taqidi bodavu jomi xush bosh,
Gufti:ba xarobot nabosham be u,
Bo yor agar darin muqomi xush bosh.*

Meaning:

“O Askari, if you are constantly intoxicated, rejoice;
If you believe in wine and the cup, then rejoice.
You said you cannot exist in the tavern without her
If you are in this place with the beloved, then rejoice.”

Original:

*Chunun ki xo 'y giriftam ba oshnoyi tu,
Halok mekunadam mehnati judoyi tu.*

Meaning:

“Since I have grown accustomed to your companionship,
The sorrow of separation from you destroys me.”

Hindal Mirza was born in Kabul in 925 AH (1520). He was given the name *Hindal* because Babur, having set out with the intention of bringing the Indian territories under his control and having conquered several provinces of India, learned of Hindal's birth at that time and, following an auspicious custom, named him Hindal (*The Baburnama in English*, 1922; O'zME, 2000).

Although Hindal Mirza's biological mother was **Dildar Begim**, he was raised under the care of **Maham Begim**. As a result, during conflicts among the brothers he consistently supported **Humayun Mirza** and rendered him assistance. In one of these battles, in 958 AH (1551), near the city of Jalalabad, Kamran Mirza's forces launched

a nighttime attack on Humayun's camp, during which one of the soldiers, failing to recognize Hindal Mirza, killed him. His body was brought to Kabul and buried at **Bagh-i Babur**, at the feet of his father Babur (*Bobur*, 1960/1989; O'zME, 2000).

A number of *tazkirachis* describe **Hindal Mirza** as a powerful and refined poet and cite elegant examples of his poetry in their biographical anthologies. The following verses further attest to Hindal Mirza's mature talent and poetic mastery:

Original:

*Z-on qatrai shabnam ki nasimi sahari,
Az abr judo kunad ba sad jilvagari,
To bar ruxi gul chakonad, ey, rashki pari,
Haqqa ki hazor bor pokizatari.*

Meaning:

“Compared to that drop of dew which the morning breeze,
With a hundred graces, separates from the cloud
And sprinkles upon the face of the rose
O envy of the fairies, truly you are a thousand times purer.”

*Sarvi qadi tu moili ahli niyoz nest,
Nozest dar sari tu ki dar sarvinoz nest.*

Meaning:

“Your cypress-like stature does not incline toward the humble; There is such coquetry in you as is not found even in the proud cypress.”

Gulbadan Begum

Gulbadan Begum, Babur's virtuous and well-educated daughter, was born in Kabul around 932/933 AH (1526/1527) to Dildar Begim. Like her brother Hindal Mirza, she was raised under the care of Maham Begim. For this reason, she later authored *Humayunnama*, a work dedicated to **Humayun Mirza** (O'zME, 2000).

Although she lost her father at the age of four, Gulbadan Begum inherited Babur's talent for historiography. *Humayunnama* is devoted to events that occurred during Humayun's reign and was intended to cover the period from 937 to 963 AH (1530–1556). However, due to the loss of the final pages of the manuscript, the work remains unfinished, ending with the episode concerning the blinding of Kamran Mirza. The Persian text of *Humayunnama*, together with its English translation, was published in

London by A. Beveridge, while the Uzbek translation accompanied by the Persian text was published in Uzbekistan by S. Azimjonova (O‘zME, 2000; *The Baburnama in English*, 1922).

Despite its partiality Humayun is highly praised while Kamran is severely criticized. *Humayunnama* may nevertheless be regarded as one of the most precise and well-documented sources reflecting the period. Many biographers and historians have emphasized its conciseness, fluent style, and high degree of eloquence and rhetorical refinement.

Gulbadan Begum lived a long life. In 983 AH (1576), she performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. She was held in great respect by both Humayun and Akbar, and after her death her body was taken to Kabul, where she was buried (O‘zME, 2000).

CONCLUSION

As noted above, Babur Shah’s grandchildren and their descendants likewise inherited his poetic talent and continued the traditions of poetry and literature within the Gurkani (Baburid) family. For example, the names and works of **Gulrukha Begim**, the daughter of Kamran Mirza, and his son **Abulqasim Shavkati**, as well as **Akbar**, **Shah Jahan** and his consorts, **Zebunnisa Begim**, the daughter of Aurangzeb, **Bahadur Shah Zafar**, and others are mentioned in various biographical anthologies (*tazkiras*) (O‘zME, 2000; *The Baburnama in English*, 1922).

Thus, Babur Shah bequeathed to his descendants not only a great empire and one of the most magnificent cultural eras in history, but also the talents of poetry and historiography, along with a deep commitment to learning and an appreciation of the arts. Through these enduring intellectual and cultural qualities, the name of the Baburids (Gurkanids) was immortalized in history.

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