

## THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BUKHARA AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the education system in the Bukhara Emirate at the end of the 19th century. It discusses the structure of schools and madrasas, curricula, the activities of teachers, and the role of education in society. The article also examines the initiatives of reformist intellectuals in the field of education and their contributions to the development of modern science. Based on historical sources, the article reveals the differences between traditional and modern educational approaches at the end of the 19th century.

**Keywords:** Bukhara, 19th century, education system, madrasa, school, reform, Jadidism, traditional education, curriculum, science and education.

At the end of the 19th century, the development of culture among the indigenous population of Bukhara was considered crucial. When examining the level of culture, troubling conditions are evident. The education process in schools and madrasas was organized in such a way that young people spent 20-25 years learning only religious subjects and Arabic grammar, deprived of the opportunity to engage in other subjects. Moreover, secular subjects that had been taught in previous centuries were also removed from the curriculum. The Manghit dynasty inflicted a serious blow to the education system. Zealous court officials, in an excessively conservative mood, obstructed any new ideas by all available and unavailable means. Despite the numerous buildings intended for schools and madrasas in Bukhara, according to Ahmad Danesh, "the madrasa rooms had turned into storage places for straw carried by donkeys and grain warehouses for bakers."<sup>1</sup>

According to the historian Sodiqkhodja Gulshani, the author of *Shahona Tarikh* ("History of Humayun"), there were 199 active madrasas in Bukhara at that time, constructed from stone, with many classes containing up to 50,000 students. Abduraouf Fitrat, in his *Story of a Hindu Traveler* (Narrative of the Indian Traveler), mentions that there were about 200 madrasas in Bukhara and lists the names of 72 of them. Muhammadjon Baljovani states that there were nearly 400 madrasas, mausoleums, and study rooms (corikhonalar) in Bukhara, and

<sup>1</sup>Ахмади Дониш. Рисола ё мухтасаре аз таърихи салтанати хонадони Мангития (Исторический трактат или коротко об истории царствования мангитской династии). - Душанбе: Сарват, 1992.- 8 с.

he tries to recall the names of the most famous ones from his knowledge. The above-mentioned scholar lists more than 78 madrasas<sup>2</sup>.

In Bukhara schools, Arabic, logic, and rhetoric were taught. Mathematics and literature were not mandatory, and individuals could independently learn these subjects if they wished. Tajik language was not taught at all. Curricula and textbooks remained unchanged. Graduates of elementary schools could end up illiterate. In madrasas, with the help of an assistant teacher, books like Avamil and Qofiya were studied. This process lasted three years. After that, students worked with more experienced teachers, studying books such as Sharh-i Mulla (the book of Abdurahman Jomiy) and a logic book called Shamsiya. This period lasted five years. Following that, they studied commentaries on the book Shamsiya, which lasted another year. In the following four years, they studied the commentary on Nasafi's Aqaid (theology). In the next two years, they studied Takhzib (logic and metaphysics). In the final two years, they focused on Hikmatul Ayan (a philosophy book), and the final two years were dedicated to the study of Mulla Jalol (a theological book), thus completing the madrasa education. The teaching system and the textbooks remained unchanged for four or five hundred years, dating back to the Timurid period. It is known that for learning any language, two years would suffice if the lessons were organized properly.

However, Bukhara students spent 8 years in madrasas, learning only a few easy Arabic terms and the rules for pronouncing them correctly. Students would sit in rows before the teacher, and if the number of students was large and the room small, they would be squeezed together. Each group had a preacher who would read out sections from the book being studied. For instance, Jomiy's works were also explained in this way. His works were not taught separately but had been forgotten in textbooks written four hundred years ago, and no one had made an effort to correct this error. Nonetheless, among the graduates of Bukhara madrasas, there were educated individuals. According to Sadridin Aini, such people were "like rare plants in the desert"<sup>3</sup>. These individuals did not engage in theological debates but strived to gain knowledge with perseverance. However, even these educated individuals often returned to the madrasa environment and aspired to become teachers in a madrasa, gathering numerous students, leading discussions, and striving for fame as a prominent teacher. Among these students, there were those who could not understand the substance of the lectures or debates.

Abduraouf Fitrat, a representative of the Jadid movement, describes some famous teachers in madrasas, particularly the chief judge Mir Burkhoniddin, as follows: "The most surprising thing," he writes, "was his complete illiteracy and incompetence as a judge, despite being in charge of enforcing Muslim customs. However, he never missed a day of teaching in the madrasa." The teachers and students in the madrasa consisted of four to five teachers and their regular attendees who attempted to use the lectures for their own ulterior motives. The lecturer would begin reading a passage from the book, and immediately, the speaker (the chief judge) would interrupt, discussing the passage and beginning debate with the teachers. This debate would be joined by the madrasa students, and as a result, real disorder would begin in

<sup>2</sup> Мукаммадалй ибни Мухдммадсайиди Балцувонй. Таърихи нофey (Полезная история).- Душанбе: Ирфон, 1994. -13 с. Перс. яз.

<sup>3</sup> Аини С. Бухара. (Воспоминания). В.2-х кн.- Душанбе: Ирфон,1980.-кн.1.-143 с.

the classroom, and the lesson would end. Danesh describes a real debate in a madrasa where the participants would try to prove their correctness without listening to each other, resulting in the students failing to gain the necessary information.

Sharifjon Makhdom Sadri Ziyoy, in his treatise *The List of Madrasa Names in Sacred Bukhara*, lists 204 madrasas in detail, providing information about the number of rooms in each madrasa, their location in the city, and during which Amir's reign they were built. According to the Hungarian traveler and researcher Armeni Vamberi, who wrote *A Journey through Central Asia*, "Many eager young people filled the numerous madrasas, but without the necessary information, they would acquire high levels of ignorance and duplicity<sup>4</sup>".

Sadriddin Aini, who had firsthand experience with the Bukhara school system, reflected on his own experiences and conveyed the opinions of Ahmad Danesh, criticizing the educational situation. He expressed that "commentaries and interpretations had become so excessive that the essential lessons never even reached the students. Over the course of 18-20 years of studying, students would spend their time studying only a few books like 'Introduction,' 'Advice,' and 'Mulla's Commentaries' without ever engaging in subjects like mathematics, geometry, history, or medicine, which had disappeared from the curriculum." In primary schools, boys were admitted at the age of 5-6, while girls could only attend private schools where female teachers taught religious subjects. Girls were not required to finish madrasas. Although official Islam and the Qur'an did not oppose women's education, religious scholars and even some scholars opposed girls attending schools. Both Ahmad Danesh and Sadriddin Aini had their early education in girls' schools. Later, they attended schools for boys, where a single teacher simultaneously taught students of various ages, and children from poor families had no opportunity to study in such schools. There was no official timetable for lessons. Most students memorized texts without understanding their meaning. The teaching method in Bukhara schools extinguished students' desire to learn, and despite years of education, many students did not gain the necessary knowledge.

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<sup>4</sup> Рацабов З. Ш. Маорифпарвар Ахмади Дониш (Просветитель Ахмад Дониш).- Душанбе: Ирфон, 1964.-46 с.