

**THE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE JADID MOVEMENT AND  
RELIGIOUS VALUES**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the educational foundations of the Jadid movement and its approach to integrating religious values with modern pedagogical principles. It analyzes how Jadid reformers sought to modernize Muslim education through innovative teaching methods while preserving Islamic moral and ethical traditions. The research highlights the role of education in shaping national consciousness, moral character, and social responsibility within Jadid thought.

**Keywords:**

Jadid movement, educational reform, religious values, Islamic ethics, national identity.

**ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ОСНОВЫ ДЖАДИДСКОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ И  
РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЕ ЦЕННОСТИ**

**Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются образовательные основы джадидского движения и особенности интеграции религиозных ценностей с модернизированными педагогическими принципами. Анализируется стремление джадидских реформаторов обновить мусульманское образование, сохранив при этом исламские нравственно-этические традиции. Особое внимание уделяется роли образования в формировании национального самосознания и моральной ответственности.

**Ключевые слова:**

джадидское движение, образовательные реформы, религиозные ценности, исламская этика, национальная идентичность.

The Jadid movement emerged at the turn of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a reformist intellectual, cultural, and educational movement among the Muslim peoples of Central Asia, the Volga-Ural region, and the Caucasus. Its primary objective was to modernize Muslim society through education while preserving religious and national identity. Jadid intellectuals viewed education as the key instrument for social transformation, moral renewal, and resistance to colonial domination. This study examines the educational foundations of the Jadid movement and analyzes how religious values—particularly Islamic ethics—were integrated into their reformist pedagogical vision.

The Jadid movement developed in response to profound social, political, and intellectual crises within Muslim societies under Russian imperial rule. Traditional educational institutions, especially maktabas and madrasas, were increasingly criticized for

their rigid curricula, rote memorization methods, and detachment from contemporary scientific and social realities. Jadid thinkers such as Ismail Gasprinskiy, Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkhanov, Abdurauf Fitrat, and Abdullah Avloni argued that the stagnation of Muslim society was not rooted in Islam itself, but rather in outdated educational practices that had lost their original reformist spirit<sup>1</sup>. Central to Jadid educational philosophy was the concept of *usul-i jadid* (new method), which emphasized phonetic teaching of literacy, structured curricula, and the inclusion of secular subjects such as mathematics, geography, history, and natural sciences alongside religious studies. This approach was not intended to replace Islamic education, but to restore its original purpose: the cultivation of morally upright, intellectually capable, and socially responsible individuals. Jadids believed that Islam encouraged the pursuit of knowledge and rational inquiry, citing Qur'anic injunctions and prophetic traditions that emphasized learning as a religious duty.

Religious values played a foundational role in Jadid pedagogy. Contrary to later ideological misinterpretations, Jadids did not reject Islam; instead, they sought to reinterpret it in light of modern conditions. Islamic ethics—such as honesty, diligence, justice, social responsibility, and respect for knowledge—were presented as essential components of education. Textbooks written by Jadid educators frequently combined moral instruction with religious references, illustrating ethical principles through Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and historical examples from Islamic civilization<sup>2</sup>. One of the key educational principles of the Jadid movement was the integration of national consciousness with religious morality. Jadids viewed language, culture, and faith as interconnected elements of identity. Teaching in the mother tongue was considered both a pedagogical necessity and a moral obligation. By using Turkic languages in education, Jadids aimed to make knowledge accessible to the broader population while strengthening national self-awareness. This linguistic reform was justified not only on practical grounds but also through Islamic arguments emphasizing clarity, understanding, and intention in learning<sup>3</sup>.

The moral dimension of education occupied a central place in Jadid thought. Jadid educators believed that knowledge devoid of ethical grounding could not lead to genuine progress. As Abdullah Avloni famously stated, education was a matter of “life or death” for the nation, and its ultimate goal was the moral refinement of society. Schools were envisioned as spaces where students would learn not only academic subjects but also proper conduct, civic responsibility, and religious ethics.

Islamic values were particularly evident in Jadid approaches to character education. Concepts such as *adab* (proper conduct), *ilm* (knowledge), *iman* (faith), and *akhlaq* (morality) formed the ethical framework of Jadid curricula. These values were presented in a modernized pedagogical format, often through stories, dialogues, and practical examples rather than abstract theological instruction. This method reflected the Jadid commitment to making religious education relevant and engaging for young learners<sup>4</sup>. Another significant

<sup>1</sup> Khalid, A. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Fitrat, A. *Educational and Moral Treatises*. Tashkent, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Bennigsen, A., & Lemercier-Quelquejay, C. *Islam in the Soviet Union*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> Frank, A. *Islamic Historiography and Jadid Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

aspect of Jadid educational foundations was the emphasis on social reform through enlightened religious understanding. Jadids criticized superstition, blind imitation (*taqlid*), and misuse of religion for personal gain. They advocated for *ijtihad*—independent reasoning—as a means of reviving Islamic thought and adapting it to contemporary challenges. Education, in this context, was seen as a tool for empowering individuals to distinguish authentic religious teachings from cultural distortions<sup>5</sup>.

Women's education also occupied an important place in Jadid reformism. While remaining within an Islamic moral framework, Jadids argued that educating women was essential for the moral and intellectual development of society. Educated mothers, they believed, would raise enlightened and ethically grounded generations. This position was supported by religious arguments emphasizing the equal spiritual worth of men and women and the importance of maternal influence in early education.

The Jadid movement's educational initiatives were not limited to formal schooling. Newspapers, journals, theater, and literature were employed as pedagogical tools to disseminate knowledge and moral values. Jadid publications frequently addressed issues such as ignorance, moral decay, and social injustice, offering solutions grounded in both Islamic ethics and modern rationality. This multifaceted educational strategy reflected the Jadids' holistic understanding of education as a lifelong and society-wide process. Despite facing resistance from conservative religious circles and repression from colonial authorities, Jadid educators continued to promote their vision of reform. Their efforts laid the groundwork for the modernization of education in Central Asia and contributed to the formation of a new intellectual elite. Although the movement was later suppressed during the Soviet period, its educational and moral legacy continues to influence contemporary discussions on national identity, religious values, and educational reform.

The intellectual foundations of the Jadid educational movement were deeply influenced by global reformist currents within the Muslim world. Jadid thinkers were well aware of educational reforms taking place in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and South Asia, particularly the ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, who emphasized rationalism, scientific inquiry, and moral renewal within an Islamic framework. These transregional connections reinforced the Jadids' belief that Islam and modern education were not contradictory but complementary forces capable of guiding societal progress<sup>6</sup>. A defining characteristic of Jadid pedagogy was its rejection of passive learning in favor of active intellectual engagement. Traditional madrasa education often relied heavily on memorization without comprehension, whereas Jadid schools introduced explanation, discussion, and critical thinking. This pedagogical shift was justified through religious reasoning, as Jadids argued that true understanding (*fahm*) was superior to mechanical memorization (*hifz*). They frequently cited Islamic scholars of the classical period who emphasized reasoning (*aql*) as an essential component of faith and knowledge.

The curriculum developed by Jadid educators reflected a deliberate balance between religious instruction and modern disciplines. Qur'anic studies, basic theology, and ethics were

<sup>5</sup> Lapidus, I. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Hourani, A. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

preserved, but they were taught alongside arithmetic, geography, history, hygiene, and elements of natural science. This interdisciplinary model aimed to produce individuals who were both spiritually grounded and intellectually versatile. Jadids viewed scientific knowledge as a means to fulfill religious obligations more effectively, particularly those related to social welfare, cleanliness, and public health, which they considered integral to Islamic ethics<sup>7</sup>. Textbook production became a central aspect of Jadid educational reform. Unlike traditional religious texts, Jadid textbooks were written in clear, accessible language and tailored to the cognitive level of students. Works such as Munavvar Qori's primers and Avloni's moral readers combined literacy instruction with ethical lessons drawn from Islamic teachings. These texts emphasized virtues such as honesty, discipline, patriotism, and social responsibility, framing them as both national and religious duties.

Another important development within Jadid education was the introduction of teacher training as a professional and moral vocation. Jadid educators believed that teachers were not merely transmitters of knowledge but moral exemplars responsible for shaping the character of future generations. The ethical conduct of teachers was often discussed in Jadid writings, where teaching was described as a form of service (*khidmat*) to both society and religion. This perspective elevated the social status of educators and reinforced the moral dimension of pedagogy<sup>8</sup>.

The relationship between religion and reform was further articulated through Jadid critiques of clerical conservatism. While respecting religious scholarship, Jadids opposed rigid interpretations that hindered social development. They distinguished between immutable religious principles and historically conditioned practices, arguing that Islam permitted adaptation in educational methods. This distinction allowed Jadids to advocate for innovation without positioning themselves outside the religious tradition, a strategy that strengthened the legitimacy of their reforms among the broader population<sup>9</sup>. Jadid educational thought also placed strong emphasis on ethical citizenship. Education was seen as a means to cultivate socially conscious individuals who understood their responsibilities toward community, nation, and humanity. Religious values such as justice (*adl*), compassion (*rahma*), and collective responsibility (*mas'uliyya*) were linked to civic behavior. Through this synthesis, Jadids contributed to the early formation of modern civic identity grounded in Islamic moral principles rather than secular nationalism alone.

The use of print media significantly expanded the educational impact of the Jadid movement. Newspapers and journals such as *Taraqiy*, *Sadoyi Turkiston*, and *Oyna* served as informal educational platforms that reached audiences beyond the classroom. Articles often addressed educational reform, moral decline, and misinterpretations of religion, offering didactic narratives that combined religious reasoning with social critique. This media-based pedagogy reinforced the Jadid belief that education extended beyond formal institutions into the public sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> DeWeese, D. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*. University Park: Penn State Press, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Keller, S. *To Moscow, Not Mecca*. Westport: Praeger, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, F. *Islamic Reform and Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

A notable innovation in Jadid educational practice was the use of theater as a moral and pedagogical tool. Jadid playwrights employed drama to illustrate ethical dilemmas, social injustice, and the consequences of ignorance. These performances frequently incorporated religious symbolism and moral lessons, making abstract values tangible and emotionally resonant for audiences. Theater thus became an extension of religiously informed education adapted to modern cultural forms<sup>10</sup>. The suppression of the Jadid movement in the early Soviet period disrupted its institutional development but did not erase its intellectual legacy. Many Jadid educational principles—such as mother-tongue instruction, integrated curricula, and moral education—were later adopted in modified forms. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes the Jadids as pioneers of an indigenous model of educational modernization that sought harmony between religious values and intellectual progress.

### **Conclusion**

The Jadid movement represents a pivotal moment in the intellectual and educational history of Central Asian Muslim societies. Emerging under conditions of colonial domination and internal stagnation, Jadid thinkers articulated a reformist vision that placed education at the center of social transformation. Their educational philosophy was neither a rejection of religious tradition nor an uncritical adoption of Western models, but rather a deliberate synthesis of Islamic values and modern pedagogical principles. The educational foundations of the Jadid movement were grounded in the belief that Islam inherently supports knowledge, reason, and moral development. By advocating the *usul-i jadid* method, Jadid educators reformed teaching practices while preserving the ethical core of Islamic education. The integration of religious instruction with modern sciences reflected their conviction that spiritual integrity and intellectual progress were mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. Religious values played a central role in shaping Jadid pedagogy. Concepts such as morality (*akhlaq*), proper conduct (*adab*), social responsibility, and justice were embedded in curricula, textbooks, and extracurricular educational activities. Jadids emphasized that education without ethical grounding would fail to produce meaningful social change. Their approach to moral education, rooted in Islamic teachings yet adapted to contemporary realities, contributed to the formation of socially conscious and ethically responsible individuals.

Another significant contribution of the Jadid movement was its emphasis on national consciousness within a religious framework. Mother-tongue instruction, cultural revival, and ethical citizenship were presented as both national and religious imperatives. Through this synthesis, Jadids laid the intellectual groundwork for modern identity formation in the region without severing ties to religious heritage.

Despite political repression and institutional suppression during the Soviet period, the educational ideas of the Jadids endured. Their legacy continues to inform contemporary debates on education, religion, and national development. The Jadid experience demonstrates that educational modernization rooted in religious and cultural values can serve as a sustainable model for societal progress. In this sense, the Jadid movement remains a relevant and instructive example for modern educational reform efforts in Muslim societies.

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