



THE HARMONY OF THE CONCEPTS OF RELIGION AND PROGRESS IN THE VIEWS OF MAHMUDXO'JA BEHBUDIY

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**Abstract.** *This article analyzes the harmony between the concepts of religion and progress in the views of Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy. As one of the prominent representatives of the Jadid movement, Behbudiy emphasized the importance of knowledge, enlightenment, and modern education in the development of society while maintaining strong religious values. The article examines his works, journalistic activities, and social ideas to reveal the role of religion in social development and its relationship with science and education. It also analyzes Behbudiy's enlightenment ideas aimed at achieving renewal, cultural advancement, and social progress within Muslim society. The study concludes that in Behbudiy's worldview, religion and progress are not contradictory concepts but complementary factors that contribute to the development of society.*

**Keywords:** *Jadidism, religion, progress, enlightenment, education, reform, national awakening, social development.*

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Turkestan had fallen into political, cultural, and economic crisis and was lagging behind in development due to colonial rule. In this context, intellectuals of the region intensified their efforts to liberate society from the colonial domination of Tsarist Russia and to promote social progress. One of the prominent representatives of this process, which went down in history as the "Turkestan Jadid Movement," was Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy. Throughout his activity, he clearly demonstrated that religion and progress are not contradictory concepts, but rather complementary and mutually supportive ones.

Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy was born on January 20, 1875, in Samarkand, into a family of muftis. His father was a major scholar of Islam who authored numerous religious articles and conducted scholarly research. This intellectual environment significantly influenced Behbudiy's worldview. Alongside literature and history, he also studied politics. Sources note that his travels to Mecca, Egypt, and Istanbul profoundly transformed his outlook. He established cooperation with newspapers and journals and began publishing his articles, focusing mainly on educational activities to improve the condition of the people and spread enlightenment.





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In 1899, Behbudiy performed the Hajj and returned with the title of mufti. At the same time, he became a founder and advocate of new-method schools (usul-i jadid) and one of the first authors of new textbooks. More than 200 of his articles in Uzbek and Tajik were regularly published in the newspaper Tarjimon, among which publicistic works such as “The Need of the Nation” and “Not Two, but Four Languages Are Necessary” hold particular significance.

Behbudiy regarded Islam not as a force opposing social progress, but as a means that calls for knowledge and critical thinking. He criticized the harmful consequences of misunderstanding religion and viewed it as the spiritual foundation of the nation. In his opinion, religion does not deny knowledge and enlightenment; on the contrary, it encourages the pursuit of learning. Religious values, he argued, play an essential role in shaping the moral and cultural norms of a nation. This idea is reflected in many of his writings. For instance, he states: “Because we do not know the laws and European customs... In former times, knowing only the Sharia was sufficient. Now it is also necessary to know the laws and regulations.” [1] These words clearly demonstrate his view that religious understanding and secular legal knowledge must be studied together, and that religion and progress are inseparable.

According to Behbudiy, the foundation of progress lies in knowledge, enlightenment, and the mastery of modern professions. Society should not limit itself solely to religious values, but must also study secular sciences and technologies. He emphasized that modern science and technology are crucial factors in a nation’s economic and social development, and that an illiterate society cannot achieve progress. Therefore, the establishment of new-method schools and centers of learning was essential. In his article “The Need of the Nation,” he writes: “If we look at other nations, we see that they have well-organized schools where, alongside religious sciences, secular sciences and disciplines are also taught. For living in this world, secular knowledge and science are necessary. A nation deprived of the science and knowledge of the age will be crushed by other nations.” [2] This quotation clearly expresses the necessity of harmonizing religion and science for social progress.

Behbudiy advocated acquiring religious and secular knowledge not as opposing, but as complementary forms of learning. In his view, religion does not hinder progress; rather, it encourages the pursuit of knowledge. Notably, he repeatedly emphasized that the true progress of a nation lies in raising an enlightened, moral, and modernly educated generation. Especially in the context of his time, his idea that a correct interpretation of Islam could serve social development acted as a rebuttal to those whose misinterpretation of religion had led them into backwardness.

Behbudiy consistently called upon the people to seek education and enlightenment. He expressed through his views that by mastering both religious knowledge and modern professions, it is possible to construct a model of advanced social development. As he wrote: “The science of Sharia is taught in madrasas, and the science of law in Russian





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universities... To enter a university, one must first study for ten years in a gymnasium.” [3] Here again, Behbudiy emphasizes that without acquiring secular knowledge alongside religious education, it is impossible to master modern socio-legal professions.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, in Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy’s views, religion and progress are not mutually exclusive concepts, but rather notions that must exist in harmony. He considered religion the spiritual foundation of the nation, while progress was to be achieved through science, knowledge, and modern professions. At the same time, he believed that a correct understanding of religion combined with the mastery of modern sciences ensures the cultural and social development of the nation. Even today, his ideas remain relevant, demonstrating that maintaining the harmony of religion, knowledge, and progress is a fundamental factor in national development.

### RESOURCES

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