

# The Spirit of Jadidism And Its Role in The Formation of the “New Uzbekistan”

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**Abstract:** The article examines the key ideas of Jadidism, such as the integration of Eastern traditions with Western achievements, the role of education in overcoming backwardness, and strengthening national identity. Special attention is given to the philosophical interpretation of Jadidism as a dialectical process between the old and the new, as well as its relevance in the reforms of the “New Uzbekistan”.

**Keywords:** Jadidism, enlightenment, modernization, New Uzbekistan, national identity, education, Central Asia, Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Abdurauf Fitrat, dialectics, reforms, culture, Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

**Introduction:** Jadidism, which emerged at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries as a movement for enlightenment and modernization of Muslim societies within the Russian Empire, left an indelible mark on the history of Central Asia, including the territory of present-day Uzbekistan. Inspired by the ideas of Ismail Gasprinsky and embodied in the works of thinkers such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Abdurauf Fitrat, and Munavvar Qori, it became a symbol of the aspiration for progress, education, and national self-awareness [4, p. 15]. Today, as Uzbekistan undergoes a period of reform under the slogan “New Uzbekistan,” the spirit of Jadidism gains new relevance, becoming a philosophical foundation for understanding the country's path to progress and prosperity.

At the core of Jadidism lies the idea of synthesis—the integration of traditional Eastern values with the achievements of Western civilization. The Jadids viewed education as the key to overcoming backwardness, ignorance, and social prejudices [6, p. 45]. Their philosophy was based on the belief that knowledge and enlightenment could transform society while preserving its cultural identity. This was not merely a pragmatic approach to reforms but also a profound worldview that emphasized the role of human beings in a world where spirituality and reason must go hand in hand.

Jadids such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudi and Abdurauf Fitrat actively introduced new-method schools (Usul-i

Jadid), where education was conducted in the native language using modern approaches borrowed from Europe [7, p. 112]. For example, Behbudi, in his articles published in the newspaper Oyna (Mirror), called for reforms, stating that “the enlightenment of the people is the path to their freedom and dignity” [8, p. 78]. Their philosophy combined Islamic values with the ideas of the European Enlightenment, leading to the emergence of Jadidism in the history of Central Asia.

Jadidism can be seen as a dialectical process: a struggle between the old and the new, between tradition and progress, between openness and engagement with the world. In this sense, it anticipated the modern challenges of globalization, where nations must find a balance between preserving their national identity and integrating into the global community. As the German philosopher Hegel wrote, “Dialectics is the driving force of development” [9, p. 89], and Jadidism became precisely such a force for Uzbekistan in the early 20th century. In that period, the Jadids were among the first to recognize the necessity of transforming society through education, art, and political reforms [4, p. 23]. Their efforts in creating national literature, theater, and print media laid the foundations for cultural revival, making their ideas relevant today in the process of building the “New Uzbekistan”.

Modern Uzbekistan, having proclaimed its course toward the creation of the “New Uzbekistan,” relies heavily on the same principles promoted by the Jadids:

the development of human capital, the preservation of national identity, and the establishment of a just society [1, p. 5]. Reforms in education, the support of science and culture, as well as the pursuit of openness and international cooperation, resonate with the ideals of the Jadids, who once dreamed of a prosperous and enlightened homeland.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, consistently emphasizes the importance of remembering the Jadids for the future of the country. In his speech at the session of the Republican Council on Spirituality and Enlightenment on December 22, 2023, he stated: "We must respect the Jadids, their selfless efforts for the enlightenment and progress of the people. Their ideas are a spiritual heritage that inspires us to build the New Uzbekistan. Without recognizing their contribution, we cannot move forward" [2, p. 3].

In another speech, at the international conference "Jadids: National Self-Consciousness, Ideas of Independence, and Statehood" on December 10, 2023, the president remarked: "Our current reforms to build a just, free, and prosperous society in New Uzbekistan are fully aligned with the noble ideas and programs of the Jadids" [3, p. 2]. These words reflect a deep philosophical connection with history: the Jadids are not just historical figures but also spiritual guides.

One of the key aspects of Jadidism was the struggle for national identity. The Jadids sought to overcome colonial oppression and internal stagnation, laying the foundation for cultural and political revival [5, p. 67]. They established new-method schools, published newspapers and journals, and developed theater and literature in the native language, thereby strengthening national unity and self-respect.

In the context of "New Uzbekistan," this mission takes on new significance:

**1. Education as the Liberation of the Spirit:** The Jadids saw new-method schools not just as tools for transmitting knowledge but as a means of awakening national consciousness. Today, this can be interpreted as the necessity of fostering critical thinking and a creative approach so that language and traditions do not remain mere museum exhibits but live in dialogue with modernity. Philosophically, this resonates with Hegel's idea of self-consciousness, which arises through education and the overcoming of alienation.

**2. Language as the Being of the Nation:** The development of literature, theater, and media in the native language, as the Jadids did, is not only about preserving identity but also about affirming the people's right to their own voice. In Heideggerian terms, language is the "house of being," and

strengthening it in "New Uzbekistan" becomes an act of existential resistance against global homogenization. A key recommendation here is to support the creation of cultural content that synthesizes traditions with universal values.

**3. The Dialectic of Past and Future:** The Jadids' struggle against colonial oppression and internal stagnation reflects the philosophical idea of progress through the negation of negation. In the modern context, this means that "New Uzbekistan" must not only preserve history but also reinterpret it, drawing lessons for building the future. It is recommended to foster public discourse where the past is not a burden but a source of strength.

**4. Unity as an Ethical Goal:** The respect for national unity mentioned earlier can be interpreted through Levinas' ethics—responsibility for the Other as the foundation of community. In the context of globalization, this requires not isolation but openness, where national identity is strengthened through dialogue with the world. Practically, this can be expressed through the support of cultural initiatives that unite different generations and regions.

The mission of Jadidism in a philosophical sense is not only a struggle for identity but also an eternal quest for harmony between individual freedom and the destiny of the nation. In "New Uzbekistan," this can serve as the foundation for a policy that looks toward the future, drawing strength from its roots without being constrained by them.

Philosophical Jadidism can be interpreted as the pursuit of spiritual freedom through knowledge [4, p. 30]. Their activities aimed at liberating minds, which is especially relevant for modern Uzbekistan, where the focus is on educating a new generation—knowledgeable, proactive, and patriotic. Despite the historical distance, the ideas of Jadidism remain relevant in the face of contemporary challenges such as globalization, digitalization, and social transformation.

The spirit of Jadidism is not only a historical legacy but also a living philosophy that inspires Uzbekistan on its path to "New Uzbekistan." It embodies the idea of harmony between past and future, tradition and innovation, national identity and global aspirations.

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