



THE ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN'S MADRASAHs IN UZBEKISTAN AND THEIR UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

Jakhongirov Yusufbek Sobirjonovich

Andijan State University

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15844578>

Historically, the upbringing of children and grandchildren by mothers has been shaped by Islamic customs and traditions since the arrival of Islam in our region. The education of girls has always been considered significant, with mothers playing a primary role as educators. Before the advent of Islam, during the era of ignorance, men in the Arabian Peninsula viewed the birth of a female child as a source of shame. Infants who were born female were often buried alive, and women faced severe oppression. The sale of women as commodities, the inheritance of daughters' rights as property, and the general disregard for women's humanity reflected a brutal reality where oppression against women intensified.

The arrival of Islam fundamentally changed attitudes towards women. Islamic teachings established a framework for the respect and dignity afforded to women. The Quran, particularly in Surah An-Nisa, elaborates on the status, role, rights, and obligations of women, showcasing the emphasis placed on women's rights and their integral position in society.

The Role of Women in Strengthening Families Amid Global Changes

In today's era of global change, where moral values are under threat, the stability of families cannot be imagined without women. Women are the foundation of the family, the future of our nation, and a driving force for the progress of our homeland, serving as the primary educators of youth. From the early years of independence, attention has been paid to the Islamic education and upbringing of women. Today, this responsibility is carried out by the matriarchs within families and communities.

Historically, while there were madrasahs dedicated to women's education and the pursuit of Islamic knowledge, information about where women received this education and the specifics of their roles has been scant and under-researched. With independence, there has been a revival of national and religious values such as spiritual freedom, gender equality, and freedom of conscience. This revival, coupled with the complex socio-political context of the time, led women to seek Islamic education actively and even mobilized them to advocate for their rights.

On January 10, 1992, more than 140 women gathered for a peaceful demonstration in the "Kokcha" district of Tashkent to voice their demands. This event was reported in various articles and interviews in the "Islamic Light" and "Transoxiana Muslims" journals, marking a significant moment in the early independent republic.

Women's Appeals to the Government and the Establishment of Educational Opportunities

Women have organized peaceful demonstrations to convey their appeals to the government, with one of their main demands being the establishment of women's education in madrasahs. Specifically, they called for the "Abulkasim" madrasah to be placed under the

authority of the Religious Administration of Muslims in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. This would facilitate the opening of a madrasah for women, among other requests.

In response, attention has been focused on the issue of women's religious education in the republic. Initially, women's sections were opened in existing madrasahs, enabling formal education for women. Localities began to establish madrasahs specifically for women. One such institution is the religious school for girls associated with the "Begmur Qozok" madrasah in the city of Karshi. The main goal of our education, as stated by teacher Tutikhon Yuldosh qizi, is to instill faith and belief in our girls and to teach them the religious knowledge that leads to personal development. Currently, over 100 women are participating in our classes.

What sets our madrasah apart from other religious schools is that the girls can also learn a trade in the sewing workshop operating alongside the educational facility. Students come not only from the local community but also from neighboring regions. It is worth noting that the number of applicants significantly exceeds our capacity to accept them. However, our facilities are in dire need of renovation. Therefore, we have opened branches in Ulyanov, Karshi, and Koson districts.

The Challenges of Religious Education for Women in Historical Context

The pursuit of religious education has historically posed significant challenges not only for women but also for men during the Soviet era. In the early years of independence, as freedoms began to emerge, it was natural for many women to aspire to gain knowledge, often attending madrasahs while wearing white headscarves. This increase in their numbers highlighted the need for well-developed teaching methodologies in women's madrasahs, as well as the necessity of qualified female teachers who could provide in-depth knowledge in the foundations of religion, the ethics of Islam, and other subjects.

It was essential to address various issues regarding who would teach these women, the conditions in which they would study, and how to organize the educational environment effectively.

Recognizing the importance of both religious and secular education for women in contributing to the cultural and intellectual development of our nation, one of the first madrasahs to be established was the "Jo'ybari Kalon" madrasah, located among the historical monuments of Bukhara. Looking into the history of this madrasah, it was built in the second half of the 17th century, specifically in 1670-1671, during the reign of Subhonkulikhon. It was established using the inherited wealth of Khoja Abdurrahim Jo'ybor's daughter, Oyposhsha Bib, and began its activities under this name.

Establishment of the Women's Madrasah in Bukhara

The madrasah dedicated to women was transferred under the auspices of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan on September 1, 1992, marking the beginning of its active operations. Previously, this architectural complex had been repurposed into various abandoned buildings during the Soviet era. Following appeals from devout individuals and an official request from the Religious Administration of Muslims in Transoxiana, the governor of Bukhara Province, D. Yodgorov, issued a decree on June 30, 1992, granting the facility for use as a women's madrasah.

The establishment of this madrasah did not happen spontaneously. It was initiated by letters from women residing in Bukhara city to the chief imam of Bukhara Province, Mukhtorjon Abdullaev, and later supported by petitions signed by 85 women addressed to the

Chairman of the Religious Administration of Muslims in Transoxiana, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, along with repeated appeals to other relevant authorities.

One of the letters addressed to the mufti stated: "We would like to inform you that the pursuit of knowledge in Tawhid is increasing in Bukhara Province, with a significant number of women leading this initiative. Currently, we face a daunting challenge; our men are far from faith, engaged in alcohol consumption, debauchery, and are uneducated. It is extremely difficult to guide them towards the right path. They leave for work at dawn and return late, often exhausted and inebriated, rarely setting foot in the mosque. In such circumstances, the key to calling them towards the right path lies in the true Islamic education of women. If we, the men and women of the Muslims, do not recognize the equal status of women and men in adhering to the teachings of Islam, we share in the sins of those who are neglectful in their faith."

With this understanding, the women united to advocate for the establishment of a madrasah in Bukhara, persuading the regional authorities to support the opening of the "Jo'ybari Kalon" madrasah.

Establishing the Women's Madrasah: Challenges and Developments

In archival documents preserved by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, there is a letter regarding the initiation of the madrasah's activities. It notes that there had been a persistent effort for two years and nine months to open the institution, with plans to commence classes in September. Due to the limited time left, it was highlighted that the madrasah's rooms had been temporarily used as accommodations, with only 9 out of 18 rooms being suitable. The letter requested assistance from the muftiyat, emphasizing that they had managed all these arrangements from their own resources but were unable to sustain the remaining needs.

To support the opening of the madrasah, specific equipment was requested:

1. 45 desks,
2. 100 copies of the Quran,
3. Teaching materials,
4. 100 copies of an Arabic language textbook,
5. 1 typewriter,
6. 10-12 sewing machines,
7. 2-4 cooking stoves,
8. Paper for opening a bank account and other administrative needs,
9. A certificate for the madrasah's operations,
10. Permission to hire teachers and technical staff, including salary allocations,
11. Scholarships for students,
12. Permission for two guards, a director, and an administrative manager to start work from August 1.

This illustrates that establishing a madrasah, especially for women, was fraught with challenges. Given the context of religious yearning and the attempts to reform the religious administration at that time, it was not easy to secure such extensive support for madrasahs.

Additionally, considerable courage was required from the madrasah itself to undertake these efforts. Although the madrasah began operations based on regulations in 1992, the approved regulations by the muftiyat in that year differed from those adopted in 1996. The

earlier regulations included provisions for teaching both religious and practical programs for women, which encompassed:

a) Religious Education:

1. History of Islam,
2. Islamic jurisprudence,
3. Islamic ethics and etiquette,
4. Quranic recitation,
5. Arabic grammar.

b) Practical Training:

1. Sewing and tailoring,
2. Embroidery,
3. Cooking,
4. Culinary skills,
5. Household management.

Educational Structure and Internal Regulations of the Women's Madrasah

The regulations of the madrasah reveal that the students' enthusiasm and commitment to learning Islamic teachings were highly valued. Students were expected to fulfill their responsibilities, such as maintaining their faith, performing the five daily prayers, and fasting during Ramadan as mandatory practices.

The duration of study was set at three years for those who completed the 9th grade and two years for those who finished the 11th grade. Depending on circumstances, evening and part-time programs could also be established with the permission of the Religious Administration.

By 1997, the institution had 179 students, of whom 67 were enrolled in part-time education. The part-time program had primarily catered to married women until it ceased operations in 1998. After the closure of this program, students who had been admitted to part-time studies were integrated into the full-time curriculum based on examinations.

Beyond the official regulations, the students adhered strictly to an internal set of 15 rules. According to these rules, each student was required to contribute 200 hours of work (in areas such as embroidery and sewing) during their studies. The internal regulations also included specific standards concerning the dignity and modesty of female students. For instance, it was prohibited for uncles or male relatives to visit girls living in the dormitory, and they were required to comply with the decisions made by the appointed supervisors; failure to do so would result in expulsion from the program.

In the initial years of independence, the first graduates of the Jo'ybari Kalon madrasah received the qualification of "Old Uzbek Script and Labor Instructor." The curriculum for the first year emphasized specialized subjects, including:

- Quranic Recitation and Tajwid: 144 hours,
- Aqeedah (Islamic Creed): 72 hours,
- Khusni Khat (Old Uzbek Script): 72 hours,
- Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence): 72 hours,
- Mutala (Literature): 72 hours,
- Hadith Studies: 108 hours.

From the second year onward, subjects such as Tafsir (Quranic Interpretation), Sarf (Morphology), Nahw (Syntax), and Persian language were introduced, each with 72 hours of

instruction. In the third year, the Tafsir course, focusing on Altynkhon Tura, included a total of 72 hours, which increased to 144 hours in the fourth year.

In addition to theoretical subjects like Islamic history and general education subjects such as pedagogy, ethics, English language, and the history of Uzbekistan, practical subjects were also included. These comprised 108 hours for embroidery, 72 hours for cooking, and 144 hours for labor studies.

The average monthly salaries for educators in the 1995-1996 academic year varied based on qualifications and experience, ranging from 400-500 som for teachers, 800 som for directors, 750 som for academic leaders, and 200 som for support staff.

History and Development of the Khadija Kubra Madrasah

Another significant Islamic educational institution for women in the region is the Khadija Kubra Madrasah, which has its own unique historical significance. This madrasah began its operations in 1993 under the name "Eshon Bobokhon" as a women's Islamic educational institution.

The establishment of this women-specific Islamic educational institution was sanctioned by the decision No. 96 of the Supreme Council of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan dated November 23, 1993. Based on the decision No. 34-R of the Tashkent City Administration dated February 19, 1992, a building located at 48 Gani Mavlonov Street in the Yunusabad district was allocated for the activities of this educational institution.

The curriculum of the institution was designed based on the knowledge level of the admitted students. One of the main challenges faced by this madrasah, similar to other educational institutions, was obtaining a license to legally continue teaching religious and secular subjects. A fundamental requirement of the institution was to provide additional vocational training for girls and to incorporate secular subjects in line with contemporary demands.

In the early years of independence, another significant issue was the lack of qualified teachers with higher education or specialized diplomas in the subjects offered. Prior to independence, there had been no educational establishments specifically for women that taught religious subjects in the region. Women typically acquired religious knowledge within hereditary families, passed down from generation to generation, where daughters learned from their fathers or mothers.

One of these notable families was the Bobokhon family, represented by the esteemed matriarch, Safiyahon Khoja. Her scholarly mother, Torakhon Pasha, was well-educated, and her mother, Salomatkhona, taught the Quran with Tajwid, along with the principles of national customs, religious traditions, and ways of life.

The establishment of this madrasah can also be attributed to the initiatives of the family representatives. During the 1993-1994 academic years, 58 students were enrolled in the daytime department, 38 in the part-time department, and 41 in the preparatory department. By the 1998-1999 academic year, a total of 20 teachers were working in the institution. In total, 209 students were enrolled across both the daytime and part-time departments, with 154 in the daytime and 55 in the part-time department. However, from the 1996-1997 academic year onward, the part-time department was closed, leaving only the 3rd and 4th-year courses available.

The preparatory courses lasted one year, serving as the initial training ground for many women in the republic who sought to acquire fundamental religious knowledge. Due to a lack

of systematic record-keeping about those who studied in the preparatory courses, information regarding these students is limited.

Evolution of the Eshon Bobokhon Madrasah to Khadija Kubra Madrasah

The Eshon Bobokhon Women's Educational Institution was officially renamed "Khadija Kubra" as per the decision No. 295 issued by the Council of Scholars of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan on July 15, 1998. Since 1998, this madrasah, along with another women's madrasah in the region, has been operating under a special license.

The primary objective of these madrasahs is to prepare specialists who are well-versed in the history and theories of religions, have a solid understanding of the foundations of Islam, are nurtured in the spirit of patriotism and community service, possess specialized secondary education, and have proficiency in the Arabic language.

Additionally, the Khodja Bukhari Madrasah in the Kitob district of the Kashkadarya region also has a focus on women's education. Between 1992 and 1997, efforts were made to establish women's programs in madrasahs.

In Tashkent, the Kokaldosh Madrasah also opened a women's department. According to Yusufkhan Mahmudov, the rector of the Kokaldosh mosque, in the 1995-1996 academic year, there were 55 students in the first year and 24 in the second year of study. However, starting in 1998, the women's department at Kokaldosh was closed. The students there were considered to have acquired sufficient initial religious knowledge and were not issued any certificates.

It is noted that students from neighboring republics also attended the Kokaldosh Madrasah. The closure of the women's department there was primarily due to the operational presence of the Khadija Kubra Madrasah in Tashkent and the lack of qualified specialists, as well as the conditions within the madrasah itself.

Women's Islamic Educational Institutions in Uzbekistan

In recent years, the "Women's Department" of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan (UMI) has been actively addressing various issues faced by women in religious education. The inquiries received often center around how to pursue religious education effectively.

The Women's Department operates in seven main areas:

1. **Promotion and Advocacy Activities**
2. **Addressing Inquiries**
3. **Publication Work and Appearances in Mass Media**
4. **Educational Initiatives**
5. **Conversations and Meetings**
6. **Activities Related to Women**
7. **Research Directions**

From 1999 to 2009, the Khodja Bukhari Madrasah in Kitob city, Kashkadarya region, had an active women's department, accepting around ten women each year for religious education. Over these years, nearly 100 women graduated from this Islamic secondary-specialized institution. However, due to various challenges, the admission of women was halted.

As of 2010, only two women's Islamic educational institutions continue to operate in the country: the "Khadija Kubra" Madrasah in Tashkent and the "Juybari Kalon" Madrasah in Bukhara. Since 2003, graduates of these madrasahs have been awarded state-standard diplomas, allowing them to pursue further education at any higher educational institution in

the republic. Additionally, those wishing to continue their studies in religious sciences can apply for admission to the Women's Department of the Tashkent Islamic Institute based on competitive selection.

The table indicates that one of the unique characteristics and challenges of women's madrasas is the professional component of their graduates. The introduction of positions such as advisors on religious-educational and moral-ethical upbringing in local communities, as well as the assistant to the regional imam-khatib for women's issues, has not yet fully resolved this problem.

Candidates for these positions must have higher education, at least ten years of experience in the educational and social fields, knowledge of Islam, and must be respected and trusted members of the community.

In today's world, various extremist and terrorist forces operate under the guise of religion in different parts of the globe and on the internet, increasingly targeting women and youth. There is a growing demand for specialist women who can stand against such forces, understand the true essence of Islam, and communicate it effectively to others. The data from the above table suggests a lack of proactive engagement from graduates of women's madrasas in addressing these issues.

Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly study proposals to strengthen the activities of women's madrasas. Given the attention paid to women's education in our country, and the conditions being created by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and supporting organizations, it is clear that representatives of this field play a crucial role in the socialization of women.

The goals include restoring national-religious values and rituals in regions, correctly interpreting religious issues among women, explaining the essence of ongoing religious and educational reforms in our country, promoting a healthy lifestyle within families, and improving the effectiveness of targeted measures for social protection of motherhood and childhood.

In this context, the role of official women scholars in local communities is significant. Therefore, there is a strong focus on ensuring that graduates of madrasas for women possess both religious and secular knowledge, as well as additional skills, enabling them to contribute effectively to society.

One of the operating women's madrasas in the republic is the Jo'ybari Kalon, which from the 1992-1993 academic year to the 2005-2006 academic year enrolled 452 students, of whom 335 graduated and embarked on independent lives. The discipline of studies was a focal point for the teaching staff. Many students left the program due to violations of academic discipline and other reasons. About 80% of the students strengthened their knowledge through additional circles.

From the 2006-2007 academic year to the 2015-2016 academic year, 130 students studied and graduated, with 17-19 teachers providing instruction. During these years, significant improvements were made at Jo'ybari Kalon, including enhancing the learning environment and elevating the madrasa's overall appearance. Efforts to supply students with literature improved, and the library's resources expanded, with over 10,000 titles, including specialized and textbook materials, as well as various social, political, and literary works, made available to students.

Additionally, the madrasa features a 100-seat cafeteria, a 25-seat recreation room, eight classrooms, a 15-seat cultural room, a 16-seat computer room, a sports ground, a mosque, a

reading room, and a newly renovated two-story dormitory equipped with modern facilities and heating sources, as well as a medical room, washrooms, and food storage areas for students.

Currently, the Jo'ybari Kalon mid-level Islamic educational institution has increased its quota to 30, compared to previous years. Moreover, there is a growing interest among graduates to continue their studies at the Tashkent Islamic Institute and the Mir Arab Madrasa.

In recent times, the educational processes at the Khadichai Kubro Islamic Secondary Special Education Institution in Tashkent have significantly improved, and there have been noticeable changes in its staff training system. Particularly, the upgrade of the conditions created at this institution and its relocation to a new building indicates progress in the field. However, due to the institution's location in the capital, the high demand for women to study at this educational establishment remains a concern. Recently, there have been about 30-40 applicants for each available spot, demonstrating a growing desire among women to receive religious education.

To facilitate women's access to religious education, Quran courses have been established alongside all Islamic secondary special educational institutions in the republic, with appropriate teaching methods implemented. To date, nearly 800 women have graduated from Khadichai Kubro and are actively working in various fields across the country.

In recent years, gender policy has been prioritized in the republic, ensuring the participation of women in social and political life, with the belief that "Educating women is key to creating an informed, enlightened, and capable society." The Department for Women's Affairs at the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers, the Women's Department of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, and the assistants for women's issues from the chief imams of Tashkent city and the regions have been actively engaged in enhancing the knowledge of women working in the religious field. They organize seminars and training sessions based on planned strategies and implement priority tasks under the concept of combating ignorance through enlightenment in the religious-educational sphere.

In this context, the need to modernize women's religious education according to current demands has emerged. The Islamic civilization center in Uzbekistan, the newly established international research centers, the International Islamic Academy, the Women's Department of the Tashkent Islamic Institute, the Women's Department of the Mir Arab Higher Madrasa, and other middle-special educational institutions in this field should strengthen their cooperation to ensure the dissemination of pure Islamic teachings to the broader public. Furthermore, addressing the delicate issues related to women in Islam and developing research on women's issues in Islamic studies will help nurture capable and knowledgeable scholars, as required by the times.

References and Sources:

1. "Women in Chodra" // Journal of the Muslim Community of Mavaraunnahr. January-March, Issue 1. – p. 12
2. Polat Jozilov "Both Education and Work" //. "Khalq Sozi" Newspaper, March 25, 1992. – p. 4
3. Zamirakhon Majidova "A History of a Madrasa" // "Imam Bukhari Lessons" Journal, 2009, Issue 3. – p. 235

4. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Compilation volume for Juybari Kalon, 1991-1999. (Page numbers not numbered)
5. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Application from the madrasa director, education director, and economic director to the Chairman of the Religious Administration of Mavaraunnahr, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf regarding the start of madrasa activities.
6. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Regulations of Juybari Kalon Madrasa, Article II, Section 2.4, 1992.
7. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Article IV, Section 1 of the Madrasa Regulations approved in 1992.
8. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Regulations of Juybari Kalon Madrasa, Article VI, 1992.
9. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Section 7, parts a, b, d of the internal regulations of the madrasa.
10. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Information about the "Eshon Bobokhon" women's secondary special Islamic educational institution under the Mavaraunnahr Muslim Administration.
11. Usmonkhodjaev Amirsayidkhon. "The Devotees of Our Religion." – Tashkent: Publishing House of Tashkent Islamic University, 2010. – p. 338
12. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Information about the "Eshon Bobokhon" women's secondary special Islamic educational institution.
13. [Electronic resource:] [//madrasa.uz/uzbda-ishlab-turgan-madrasalar/491-xadichai-kubro-madrasasi.html](http://madrasa.uz/uzbda-ishlab-turgan-madrasalar/491-xadichai-kubro-madrasasi.html)
14. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. Certificate of state registration of religious organizations by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 23, 2019, 3p-number.
15. Uzbekistan National Archive, M-37 collection, 1st list, 2561 compilation, pages 205-206.
16. UzPAA 975 collection, 30th list, 155th compilation, page 120. From the first quarter report of the Muslim Board for 2002.
17. UzPAA M-975 collection, 30th list, 2804 compilation, page 204.
18. A. Mansur, I. Usmonov "Light of Enlightenment:" // A guide for assistants to the chief imams of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Tashkent city, and regions on women's issues. – Tashkent: "TIU" Publishing House, 2015. p. 29.
19. Archive of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan. "Annual Reports of the Juybari Kalon Women's Secondary Special Educational Institution in Bukhara City," 3d list, 413th compilation.
20. UzPAA M-975 collection, 30th list, 2803 compilation, page 154.
21. [Electronic resource] <http://juyborikalon.uz/uz/news/3>
22. Mirziyoev Sh.M. "The Strategy of New Uzbekistan." – Tashkent: "O'zbekiston" Publishing House, 2021. – p. 250.