



The Image Of Bukhara In “The Story Of The Indian Traveler”

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ABSTRACT

This scholarly and analytical article comparatively examines Abdurauf Fitrat's work *“The Indian Traveler”* (or a critical text inspired by this work) from the perspective of Western Enlightenment ideas and the Jadid movement of Turkestan. The work provides a critical analysis of the socio-political crisis in the Bukhara Emirate, particularly focusing on the condition of the three social strata of society — the Ulama, the Umara, and the Fuqara. The article reveals that Fitrat sought the causes of the decline of the Islamic world in Bukhara's scientific stagnation and corruption in governance. *“The Indian Traveler”* is evaluated not merely as a geographical description, but as a socio-political manifesto that promotes Jadid ideas such as humanism, social justice, education, and critical thinking, calling the people to awaken from ignorance. The analysis emphasizes the significance of Fitrat's work both in its own period and in subsequent educational processes.

Keywords:

Abdurauf Fitrat, Jadidism, ulama, umara, fuqara, reform

Introduction

The ideas and movement of Enlightenment that began to emerge in Europe after the bourgeois revolutions of the early seventeenth century reached Turkestan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the form of the Jadid movement. In a certain sense, they may be described as a unified path of enlightenment formed on the basis of ideological influence. Among the great figures who promoted these Enlightenment ideas in our homeland through Jadidism, one may cite M. Abdurashidkhanov, M. Behbudiy, A. Avloniy, Cho'lpon, A. Qodiriy, and A. Fitrat as prominent examples. One of the creative figures who gained fame as a Jadid in Turkestan and illuminated this through a number of his works was Abdurauf Fitrat.

European Enlightenment developed the ideas of humanism, which led to the formation of ideas in Fitrat's works that emphasized human freedom, dignity, and rights. The political ideas of European Enlightenment, such as democratic values and the concepts of

freedom and equality, are reflected in Fitrat's writings. In his works, he expressed views on social justice and human rights. A number of his poetic, dramatic, journalistic, and prose works became an “elixir of life” and a “healing balm” through which Enlightenment ideas penetrated into the consciousness and the very lifeblood of the people.

Fitrat's novella *“The Indian Traveler”* belongs to this category of works. Fitrat's ideas on reforming society are expressed in the publicistic treatises *“Munozara”* and *“Bayonoti Sayyohi Hindi”*. Both of these books were first published in Persian in Istanbul. Later, in 1913, they were translated into Russian by a person named A. Kondratyev and published in Samarkand by the Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy publishing house. These two treatises exerted a strong influence on the growth of social thought both in Bukhara and throughout Turkestan (Sharafiddinov O., 1990, No. 5).

In these works, the writer depicted the life of the entire Turkestan region through the events taking place in Bukhara alone, narrating them

through the voice of an Indian traveler, and, as a Jadid, called upon the Uzbek people—whose thinking had been lulled into sleep—to awaken. “*Munozara*” and “*Bayonoti Sayyohi Hindi*” are regarded as the ideological and spiritual foundations of Uzbek prose (Qosimov B., 2004, p. 286). Indeed, in these works, Fitrat reflected spiritually awakening ideas.

The direct impetus for Fitrat's ability to advance such ideas and find the strength to do so was his higher education in Turkey between 1909 and 1913. Through this experience, Fitrat came to understand the necessity of promoting Enlightenment concepts—already significantly advanced in Europe and taking root in the East—within Turkestan as well. While European Enlightenment developed critical thinking, Fitrat also criticized existing social problems in his work “*The Indian Traveler*” and proposed ways to resolve them.

In the work, Fitrat describes the people of Bukhara as follows: “It is with great regret that one must say that the Bukharans not only contributed to the general decline of Islam, but also dragged certain tribes of the Islamic world into the realm of ignorance.” (A. Fitrat, *The Story of the Indian Traveler*, 2012, p. 4). While describing Bukhara as a city that led Islam into decline, Fitrat clearly knew that it was the homeland of the famous “Imam of the Hadith,” Al-Bukhari. Perhaps this sentence is a sarcastic reference by Fitrat to the generations of respected and virtuous people across the Islamic world.

In the work, the author divides the population of Bukhara into three groups: the Ulama, the Umara, and the Fuqara. At the beginning of the Ulama section, he elevates the soil of Bukhara, which produced great scholars such as Ibn Sina and Farabi, and at the same time exposes the true face of the contemporary “ulama,” providing evidence that they have brought shame to Turkestan:

“The most respected group among the Bukhara clerics is completely unaware of true knowledge today. They study for twenty years, teach for another twenty, then attain the position of mufti, yet still struggle to read Arabic books. They prefer their Farsi fiqh books, interpret the verses as they please, and fabricate

hadiths.” (A. Fitrat, *The Story of the Indian Traveler*, 2012, p. 6).

In the chapter on the “Umara,” Fitrat equates the ignorant rulers of the country with a “herd.” The term “herd” typically refers to a group of animals; the author similarly compares a group of ignorant and unwise people to a flock of animals:

“The most respected group among the Bukhara clerics is completely unaware of true knowledge today. They study for twenty years, teach for another twenty, then attain the position of mufti, yet still struggle to read Arabic books. They prefer their Farsi fiqh books, interpret the verses as they please, and fabricate hadiths.” (A. Fitrat, *The Story of the Indian Traveler*, 2012, p. 7).

Through these statements, it is implied that Turkestan was far from democracy and justice. These are the observations and sharply critical conclusions of a person who traveled to Bukhara and introduced himself as the “Indian traveler.” The text vividly, albeit bitterly, depicts the condition of the three main social strata in the Bukhara Emirate: the Ulama, the Umara (rulers), and the Fuqara (people). These critical views are closely aligned with the ideas presented in contemporary Uzbek Jadid literature, particularly in Abdurauf Fitrat's work *Munozara*.

The author's initial commendatory impressions of Bukhara disappear upon entering the city, replaced by profound despair. The main conclusion is that the Bukharans “contributed to the general decline of Islam” and even dragged other tribes into the “realm of ignorance.” This idea was central to the intellectuals of Turkestan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Bukhara, the eastern stronghold of Islam, had lost its historical role and become a source of scientific and educational stagnation. Jadids, especially Fitrat, considered Bukhara primarily responsible for the general decline of Turkestan. The traveler's observations fully correspond to the concept of tracing the causes of Islam's decline from within Bukhara.

The ruling class is referred to as “herds full of terror,” and their style of governance is

condemned as cruelty and plunder. This "herd" consists of two bad categories:

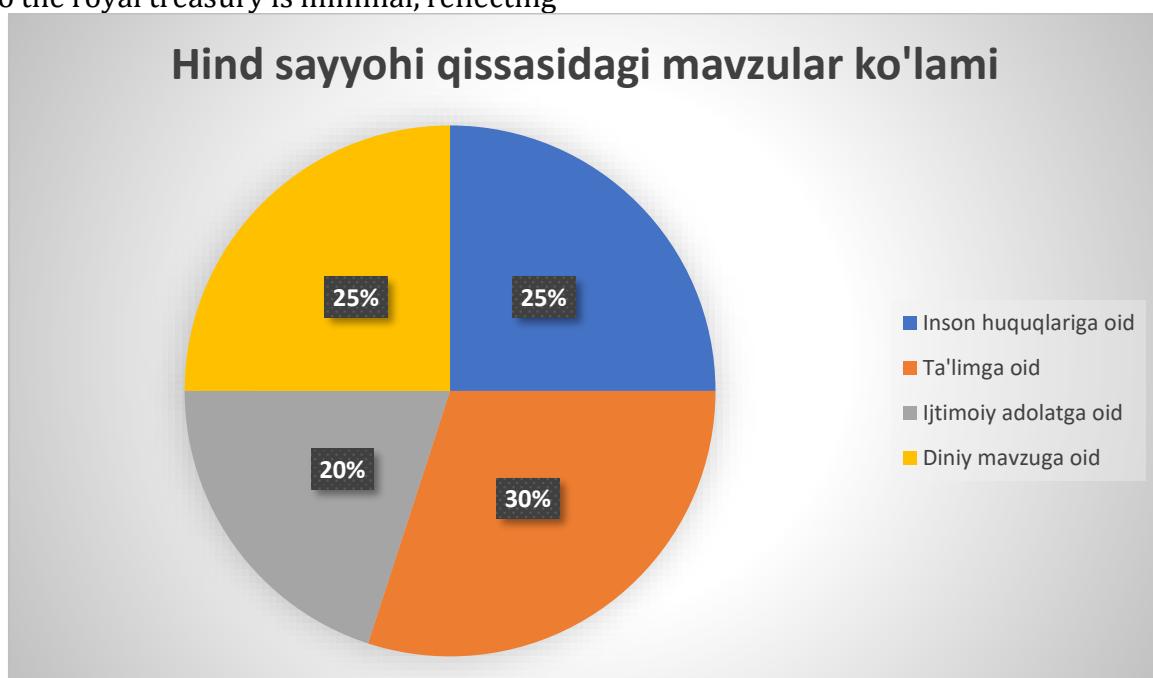
- Ignorant princes: They grew up during their fathers' rule in "vice, depravity, and nonsense," and were deprived of literacy.
- Attars and shopkeepers: Those who gained positions of power through trade, considering knowledge and virtue not as human qualities.

The Umara "have never attended school and have never heard the laws of governance." They do not know, nor even think about, how a nation can progress, how a country can prosper, or the rights of the people. They consider the provincial government as "the threshold of hellfire" or "a source of plunder" and mercilessly exploit the population. The portion of the loot given to the royal treasury is minimal, reflecting

bribery and the lack of oversight in the central administration.

In contrast, the traveler exonerates the Fuqara, the common people, from blame: "These poor people are not at fault; they are capable in every respect." However, they are unaware of their own capabilities. The people's condition is the result of oppression by the previous two strata. They are simply the victims of tyrants and are oblivious to their opportunities and rights.

Furthermore, the general content of the work is organized around themes and perspectives concerning education, human rights, and social justice. The thematic aspects of the work can be explained statistically through the following diagram:



"Munozara" Work

The work "Munozara" carries the same idea as "The Indian Traveler." Regarding this work, Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, in his article "On Munozara," provides the following remarks:

"In a debate and conversation between Farangi Efendi and the Bukhara teacher regarding the necessity of modern ('Usuli jadida') schools and contemporary subjects of study for the Bukharans, a treatise in Persian entitled 'Munozara' was compiled and published. We have observed that it is indeed beneficial for the Bukharans. I express my sincere gratitude to the editor of this important debating treatise, composed in the language of Farangi and the teacher. God willing, this treatise will awaken the Bukharans, and the editor of 'Munozara' will be remembered with mercy."

In the work, Farangi and the Bukhara teacher engage in a discussion on various topics:

Farangi: ...Now, please tell me, are all two million people learned?

Teacher: No, it is impossible for all to be learned; even if they all became scholars, other work would be left unattended.

Farangi: Are half of them learned?

Teacher: No.

Farangi: Is a quarter of them learned?

Teacher: No, the remaining seventy thousand townspeople are unlearned commoners.

Farangi: Do these commoners have basic literacy?

Teacher: Alas! We do not even consider them as people. Ask me about those seventy thousand townspeople... (A. Fitrat, *Munozara*, 2000, p. 5).

During this conversation, it is revealed that even among the seventy thousand so-called educated townspeople, literacy was not complete. Fitrat exposes this without mercy during the discussion. The work deeply analyzes the educational stages in Bukhara at that time, the subjects taught, and issues of religion and social life, providing substantial evidence.

In his article on the work, Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy emphasizes the truth of Fitrat's words, noting that "the author mentioned in all matters that the Bukharans should learn Russian," highlighting that the concerns of the Jadids were united. Fitrat was a creator who could speak fearlessly about the shortcomings of society.

Results

"*The Indian Traveler*" is considered an important work reflecting Abdurauf Fitrat's humanistic views. The author introduces Bukhara with its unique culture and historical heritage. Through this work, Fitrat emphasizes human freedom, the importance of education and knowledge, and draws attention to issues of social justice.

The results show that "*The Indian Traveler*" is significant not only as a geographical description but also as a work containing Enlightenment ideas and humanism. This work continues to serve as an important source in educational processes both in its time and today. Through Fitrat's work, we gain a deeper understanding not only of Indian culture but also of universal human values.

Conclusion

In analyzing Fitrat's works, we focused on issues such as education, religion, and social life highlighted by the author. The origins of the Enlightenment ideas expressed by the writer and their connection to European Enlightenment were revealed. The issues raised in "*The Indian Traveler*" were examined statistically according to the level of coverage in the text.

The characters of the work and the problems of Turkestan, as described by the author, were analyzed with a modern perspective. The division of society into Ulama, Umara, and Fuqara and the descriptions given to each were studied both theoretically and practically.

The work is a strong testament to the reformist spirit, showing that only the revival of scientific enlightenment, the transition of governance to legal and just principles, and the growth of the people's legal consciousness could save Turkestan, which was "doomed to destruction." In essence, it is not merely a travelogue but a socio-political manifesto calling to awaken from the slumber of ignorance, fully aligned with the Jadid theoretical framework.

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