

PAPER

# HAMZA HAKIMZODA NIYOZIY'S CREATIVE WORK ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS, FREEDOMS, AND GENDER EQUALITY

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## Abstract

This article discusses the rights, freedoms, and the role of women in society, as well as issues of gender equality, social inequality, old beliefs, and religious superstitions in the works of Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi, a reformist intellectual. It highlights his analytical views on these topics, with a focus on the rights of women, the importance of education, and the fight against ignorance and outdated customs.

**Key words:** Women's rights; feminism; gender equality; education; enlightenment; tradition; religion.

## Introduction

The rights, freedoms, and problems of women have been one of the most relevant issues both historically and in the present day. After World War II, particular attention was given to the role of women in the family and society, their formation as individuals, and issues of equality. In our country, significant steps have been taken in this area, including the adoption of the "Gender Equality Strategy until 2030," and the implementation of 25 legislative documents related to gender equality. The number of women in the parliament of Uzbekistan has reached 32%, in line with the UN recommendations, ranking Uzbekistan 37th among 190 parliaments worldwide.

Women hold 27% of positions in government, 44% in political parties, 40% in higher education, and 35% in entrepreneurship. To support women economically and socially, the "Women's Register" system was introduced, and 300 billion Uzbek soums are allocated annually from the state budget for this purpose. These reforms are still ongoing, and it is encouraging to see the growing importance and role of women in society.

Looking back at the Jadid movement, intellectuals of that time fought for the education and empowerment of women, especially to lift Uzbek women from ignorance to enlightenment. One such reformist was Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi, who openly discussed women's rights, social inequality, and fought against religious big-

otry. Throughout his works, the ideas of enlightenment are dominant. Hamza advocated for women's education, participation in social and political processes, and their active role in society, while also highlighting the harmful effects of outdated customs and religious superstitions.

Hamza's works, especially his poems and prose, introduced new perspectives in Uzbek literature. He portrayed both men and women as equals, responsible and free individuals. In his poem "To Uzbek Women," Hamza emphasizes the importance of education and criticizes the religious leaders and superstitions that hinder progress:

\*"When the time comes to reveal your true self,

Break the chains and scatter the burdens.

Go to school, open your mind,

Let the sword of knowledge shed the blood of anger."\*

These lines reflect Hamza's strong belief in the importance of educating women, encouraging them to overcome obstacles, especially the oppressive religious authorities and superstitions of his time. Despite facing serious opposition from religious figures, who criticized his views, Hamza remained steadfast in his commitment to enlightening the people. He argued that knowledge should be equally accessible to both men and women, as it is a fundamental right according to Islam.

In his dialogue "Husbands and Daughters," Hamza again

touches on the issue of women's education and their societal role. His passionate call for women's education is clear:

Husbands:

"We are ignorant, our wives are without knowledge,  
Unaware of their own situation, they are ignorant,  
Their hands bound, trapped in the cage of ignorance,  
Their hearts do not feel, their eyes are blind."

Daughters:

"Why do you say, 'We are ignorant,  
Unaware of our own situation, we are ignorant?'  
We are prisoners, our hands bound, our eyes blinded,  
By the treacherous religion that traps us in its grave."

Hamza's revolutionary spirit, filled with internationalism, criticized the feudal-patriarchal system of his time.

He portrayed the damage caused by ignorance and highlighted the deep longing of women for knowledge and freedom, as expressed in his portrayal of the tragic figure, Tursunoy. In his "Tursunoy Elegy," he mourns the fate of women who were victims of both ignorance and oppression.

Today, even in an era of digital advancements, one might ask: Are there still "Tursunoy's" in our society? Around the world, laws and declarations are being adopted to combat all forms of violence and discrimination against women, while gender equality and gender psychology have spread across every corner of society.

Hamza's contributions to literature and social reform still hold immense relevance. Despite the fact that he was criticized by some for his revolutionary views, it is essential to note that Hamza was neither an enemy of Islam nor an atheist. Rather, he was a progressive thinker who fought against outdated religious beliefs and superstitions.

Hamza's works, along with the reforms of the Jadid movement, aimed to introduce progressive changes to Uzbek society, taking inspiration from global reforms. His awareness of the importance of education led him to express the idea that education was the key to progress and prosperity. As he wrote in his work *\*New Happiness\**:

"God Almighty has told us that happiness lies in knowledge, and ignorance brings misery. Every action follows its own course, and the educated will find happiness, while the ignorant will only find misery."\*

Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi, like other Jadid intellectuals, wished to see women as active, free, and independent individuals in society, not merely in the family role. His works reflect the call for gender equality and feminist ideas, urging social and political changes that continue to resonate today.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the creative legacy of Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi continues to have significant social relevance. In the modern context of a "New Uzbekistan," reforms in education, science, and culture continue to emphasize the importance of knowledge and enlightenment, much like the values Hamza championed. As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has stated, "Whether anyone likes it or not, our people must continue down the path shown by the Jadid intellectuals. Their ideas and programs are in harmony with the strategy for building a new Uzbekistan." It is now our responsibility to study and promote Hamza's creative contributions, keeping his vision alive for future generations.

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