

# The Traditions of Baby Nursing on the Example of Uzbek People

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*Abstract---This article deals with Uzbek people's tradition connected with baby caring, innovative processes in modern conditions. The data given in the article were collected by the author during her expedition in 3 regions of Uzbekistan: Tashkent city mahallas, villages in Surkhandarya and Namangan regions.*

*Keywords: uzbek people, family, children, beshik, baby, traditions, mothers, upbringing.*

## I. ATTITUDE TO THE CHILDREN

The specific feature of Uzbek people is that they consider family as sacred and family is understood in connection with baby. More precisely, the aim of the marriage is to have babies. And living without getting married is considered as uncommon. Uzbek people are child lovers as other nations in Central Asia, moreover there were some motivations to have more children in a family as using children's labor in agricultural production, people's strong faith in Islam religion, women's role in society as housewife, looking after and bringing up the children. The very significant is that families of many children were appreciated, and family with few children disregarded, and families with no any child were treated coldly.

## II ACCEPTABLE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN A FAMILY

Traditionally uzbek people loved children and tried to have more children. But despite of the fact that there were born lots of babies, before Soviet government came to power there was not many families with many children. The reason was the poor condition of living style, almost not existing medical service and other factors which made women's health worth and often new born children died. According to the information in 1914 from 1000 new born child 300 were died, some years from 1000 new born children 600-700 were died[1,87]. In particular, according to the demographic research in 1976 in Surkhandarya region resulted that women born during 1894-1909 gave birth on average 9-10 children, but 5-6 or in some cases 2-3 of them survived [2, 103]. The women whose children died or become infertile cause of some diseases were destined to live without any child. The situation didn't change suddenly even after Soviet government began ruling. Mainly after the World War II, exactly in 1950's people's life become more better, medical service was developed moreover, Soviet period the government's and the party's social demography policy focused on intensify the population number growth.

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For example, in 1944 the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued special decree about aid to pregnant women, mothers of many children and single mothers and to give mother of many children order and medals as "Mother-Heroine", "Honor of Maternity", and "Medal of Maternity"[2, 28]. As the result of such policy, the birth rate in Uzbek families was increased and the 70's of last century was on its high point. Especially in villages the number of families with 10 and more children increased and families of 7-8 children were considered as "average" family[3]. According to the information in the 80's of last century more than 2 million mothers in Uzbekistan were given the title "Mother-Heroine", order "Honor of Maternity" and "Medal of Maternity"[4, 57]. Beginning from 1980's, there was observed the decrease of birth rate because of such factor as involving the women into social labor and they become more educated, the appeared problem of dwelling space in cities, using contraceptive methods and other factors like these. The period after achieving Independence the birth rate suddenly decreased. Transition to Market economy and economic problems, the government policy to plan the family, that is propagation works concerning upbringing the healthy generation. As a result, people's responsibility for children's number in a family is increased. Medical service, particularly obstetrics and gynecology quality increased, the possibility of widely using the contraceptive methods and other factors resulted decreasing birth rate. As it is known that the quality of upbringing the children connected with the number of children in a family. Depending on the number of children the form, the meaning and the character of upbringing changes. According to sociologic researches at present time most parents prefer having 2 or 3 children, particularly 49,5% of respondents said "two children enough". 46,5% of parents said "Everyone should take into consideration the family's condition". 2,5% prefer 3 children, 1,5% prefer more than 3 children in a family. According to the age of respondents below 30 years old there was no one who wanted to have more than 2 children in a family[5].

## III THE ROLE OF CRADLE (BESHIK) IN CARING THE BABIES

Beshik plays significant role in Uzbek peoples baby caring traditions. The researches showed that till the 70-80's of last century it was the main means to care the baby. Beshik has its ancient history and was widely spread not only in Central Asia but also in Mongolia, Kashgar, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan. Historian R.S. Gershenovich who studied the traditions of Central Asia people concerning caring

babies, gives such a hypothesis that beshik was used among Tajik people before coming nomadic Uzbek tribes in the 11<sup>th</sup> century [6,18-19]. The ancient history of a beshik also firmed by facts in Makhmud Koshgariy's work "Devoni Lugotit turk" written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The book narrates about beshik and "sumak" [7, 201-466].

Abu Ali ibn Sino wrote that "To temper the baby's body 2 things is required: 1<sup>st</sup> oscillatory movements and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lullaby sung by mother". [8, 183]. The beshik was made of fruit tree wood and consists of such parts as wooden "sumak" [9], clay pot "tuvak" [10]. and cradle pieces as blankets, quilts and "yopqich"-covers [11]. The basic blanket covers the bottom of beshik which is filled with oat's or wheat's hay and named "qovus". And it is covered with two layers of cotton filled blankets. The top covers of cradle were changed depending on seasons, in summer time cotton fabric and in winter time velvet fabric covers were used. Old Uzbek women say that carry the child in arms continuously make him irritable, and that's why at that time carrying the child in the arms for long time was prohibited [12, 35].

#### IV. BABY CARING TRADITIONS

According to Uzbek people's baby caring traditions newborn baby caring is very responsible activity. That's why young mothers were taught by their mothers or mother's-in-law how to take care of baby when they give birth their first child. In most places after giving birth to the first child mother spent 40 days at her parent's home. And this tradition is still kept. To put down into the cradle, to wash, to swaddle the baby for the first time is the responsibility of experienced old women. In some places there were employed experienced women to teach how to care baby. Old women were busy with baby caring and controlling the others. They never let stay new born babies and children without control. As one of experienced mothers say there are some rules of putting the baby into the beshik and taking the baby from it. In the case of not following that rules it may result negative effects. For example, the baby's head or legs might be deformed, that's why people say "cradle mould". Experienced old women make massage of child's body before putting into beshik. And after taking out from beshik they make some kind exercise for baby's body [13]. Before the baby could speak old people talked with babies using baby language.

#### V. THE RESULTS OF INVOLVING THE WOMEN INTO SOCIAL LABOR

According to the information during the Soviet period working women could take maternity leave for 2 months that's why they had to stay their child with another person or in a crèche. In villages, if there was no one adult to look after a child, the duty of caring the baby shifted to eldest daughters. As researches show, even 6-7 years old girls were given task to help their mother to care and carry in the arms the babies. Mothers working in kolkhoz [14] were made to take their babies to their place of work that is to the field, because there was no person at home to look after. Though in that place named "shiypon" [15] there were organized season kindergarten and day nursery, there was not enough conditions for caring babies. The hygienic and sanitary

condition of such kindergartens didn't meet any requirements. Moreover in shiypon only one person looked after more than 10 children. But unfortunately that nurse had no education in this area [16].

In the 70-80's of last century most families with many children used two beshiks, and children were putting into it till they are 2-3 years old. When another child was born the eldest child gave youngest baby the beshik. Mother of 11 children says "I worked in kolkhoz and at the same time brought up all my children. Beshik was calm and quiet for us" [17]. The tradition to put the child into beshik till 2-3 years old was also common for cities. According to ethnographic data families with many children, especially if mother was working, used to stay child in a beshik tied, for long time 10-11 hours a day. The order of putting and taking the baby from beshik was the following for most working mothers: 8-9 in the evening tied in a beshik and 7-8 in the morning untied, 11-12 day time tied in a beshik and 4-5 in the afternoon untied. Certainly, in connection with growing age of child the time of lying in a beshik was shortened. Some mothers of many children say "The child who lay in a beshik much time will be quiet, gentle and meek" [18].

#### VI. BABY CARING IN MODERN CONDITIONS

At present time most of Uzbek families use beshik while caring baby, but the time of usage and the length of putting into the beshik shortened. According to the obtained ethno sociologic information, 80.5% of respondents tie their children into beshik. But most of them that is 60.7 % use it for a month, 10,5 % for 5-6 months. So there is no case when mothers tied the children in beshik as in the 60-80's of last century. The reason of it: 1<sup>st</sup> young mothers have free time to take care of their children. Because, nowadays the mother who works can have maternity leave for 3 years. 2<sup>nd</sup> reason is widely spread nappies which decreased the demand for beshik. The beshik was appreciated because it supported "accurate" lying of the baby. The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason is that today's young mothers don't have many children as their mothers had and children are born with interval for 3-4 years between them. And this condition helps mother to be busy only with one baby. The other reason is that recent years medical personnel propagate "free swaddle" program. This also holds young mothers away from beshik .

#### VII. UPBRINGING THE CHILDREN OF SMALL AGE

Uzbek upbringing traditions consider a child as "king" till the age "4-5" and certainly treated with respect. Adults treat the children with love and bring sweets, dried milk product or dried fruits. Showing their love with giving something to children is specific to Uzbek mentality. As academician A.P.Petrovskiy writes: "... the middle point of psychological growth from birth of a man to mature age is considered 3 years old by psychologists" [19, 41]. That's why people's pedagogy gives main attention to upbringing from baby age. Uzbek people say "The child is known from

early ages”.It is known to teach children for discipline is closely connected with age. This field has difference from nation to nation, teaching discipline and the level of strict demands connected with age stages, and they are also different. The researcher differ the societies into four types according to these principles: weak demand of discipline during babyhood and childhood; strong demand for discipline during babyhood and childhood; strong discipline in babyhood and weak discipline in childhood; free attitude in babyhood and strong discipline in childhood[20, 516-519]. That is Uzbek people’s baby caring traditions concern the last 4<sup>th</sup> type. Many scholars who investigated the Central Asia give information that Uzbek people treat babies with respect.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

As above mentioned, we can conclude that 50-60’s of last century Uzbek people’s open heartedness, ability to control emotions were connected with upbringing in babyhood. In the 70-80’s of last century there were observed indifference, carelessness, and lacking initiative in some people’s character. The reason of it was weak and less attention during babyhood. Because lack of attention and caring can cause the drop behind in mental, spiritual and sometimes physical development. The reason of it also might be lying long time without any movement of the body. In the fact usually according to the traditions, Uzbek people entrusted baby caring only to experienced people. But as it was seen during Soviet Period involving women into social labor, the multiple number of children and mother’s lack of time for caring the babies and going back for their work made children upbringing by persons without any experience. Generally, lack of attention to babies, “stay them alone” is not a feature of Uzbek people that was formed during “socialism period. Keeping the baby in a beshik for a long time was the reason of necessity and conditions. For mothers of many children and working there was no way to choose. Most of old people complaining on young mothers who is irritable, hot tempered character and often hitting the children and bothering them. The reason of young mother’s irritable character because they learned that style of upbringing from their parents. That’s why today’s children are curious, quick-witted on one hand, stubborn, nervous and noise maker on other hand. At present time most parents bring up their children not as their own parents who followed the fourth style, but mostly they choose the 2<sup>nd</sup> style that is strict discipline both during babyhood and other age stages. Generally between the babies of 70’s and 2000 there is a big difference in every fields. These differences are caused not only by social-economic progress, but also by changes in the style of upbringing and attitude to the baby..

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9. Sumak is a part of a beshik which was constructed in the way to help baby to piss. Depending on the sex of baby there are special one for boys and another for girls.
10. Tuvak is a clay pot which is placed in a special hole in a beshik. Sumak is put into tuvak.
11. Yopqich-cover is made of fabric, and meant to protect the baby of cold and hot temperature, of some insects and covers the top of a beshik.
12. Japan people also had such opinion, that continuously carrying the baby in arms make him get into the habit and the baby will ask to carry him always. ( Masari Ibuka.Uchdan keyin kech bo’ladi.//Sog’lom Avlod.2002, № 2 . 35 )
13. Field reports, Namangan region, Yangiqo’rg’on district, 2006.
14. Kolhoz- made of combining of first syllables of words “kolhoznoye hozyaystvo”- which means collective farm. During the former Soviet Union period there were organized such cooperative organizations which united peasants with the aim to produce agricultural products. Each “kolhoz” was consisted of groups of people and as “brigada”- brigade.
15. Shiypon- each brigade’s central place in the field. Shiypon consisted of a house with several rooms and a yard planted with fruit trees. Some rooms of the house was made as kindergarten, crèche. Shiypon is a place where kolkhoz members gather, sometimes having lunch, and organizing events.
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