



ḤABIBIYA SCHOOL

ḤABIBIYA SCHOOL, an elite high school for boys established in 1321/1903 in Kabul and named after its founder, Amir Ḥabib-Allāh (q.v.; r. 1901-19). Originally established as a *madrasa* (q.v. [EDUCATION](#)), after World War II it became known as “the Ḥabibiya Lycée” (*Lisa-ye Ḥabibiya*). Its curriculum was modeled on that of Aligarh College (Dupree, p. 447), and thus it followed the Anglo-Indian system. Sardār Naṣr-Allāh Khan, the amir’s brother, served for ten years as its director and was succeeded by the amir’s eldest son Sardār ‘Enāyat-Allāh. A budget of 100,000 Kabuli rupees provided for the salaries of five teachers and the needs of the pupils, whose numbers increased rapidly: by 1931, it had an enrollment of about 600 students. Education was free, and students received a small stipend. Writing boards (*taḵta-ye seleyt*, *taḵta-ye mašq*) for the primary level and books, translated from English, as well as most supplies, were imported from India. The school was originally located in the garden of the Mehmān-kāna (the royal guesthouse), but it was frequently relocated until it moved to its present location in Karte Seh. Conditions were spartan: the teacher sat on a chair and the pupils on mats on the floor. In winter, open charcoal braziers provided warmth, and, except for a few days of severely inclement weather, classes were held throughout the year.

Three levels of teaching programs—primary (*ebte-dā’iya*), secondary (*rošdiya*) and higher (*e’dādiya*)—were offered (Ġobār, p. 702), and diplomas at each level qualified the holder for a governmental job commensurate with it. At the secondary level, Persian literature, Arabic, English and one of either Ottoman Turkish, Pashtu or Urdu were compulsory. At the higher level, the fields of



study included English as well as all the requirements for the baccalaureate. In 1918, the first class graduated with the baccalaureate, and in 1920 some Ḥabibiya graduates were sent abroad to study for the first time.

The traditional elements in Afghan society disliked the establishment of modern schools as it deprived the ulama of its monopoly in education, and even Amir Ḥabib-Allāh was wary of them. After becoming principal of Ḥabibiya School, Dr. ‘Abd-al-Ġani, an Indian Muslim from Lahore, attracted a circle of “Young Afghans” who formed a secret organization (*serr-e melli*) which was suspected of planning the overthrow of the amir and the establishment of a republican form of government.

American influence began in 1947-48 when Paul Bushnell, a professor of education from Ohio, became director of the school. He soon hired fourteen American teachers, including four women, and in 1964 a new school building was completed, equipped with all the necessities for a modern twelve-grade preparatory school. Like the three other elite schools in Afghanistan (Esteqlāl, Ġāzi and Nejāt), Ḥabibiya graduates accounted for a significant proportion of the holders of the highest governmental positions: it trained a number of cabinet ministers and prime ministers, including Moḥammad-Hāšem Maiwandwal (1965-67) and ‘Abd-al-Zāher (1971-72). The previous generation of graduates included foreign ministers Fayz-Moḥammad Zakariyā’ (1929-38) and ‘Ali Moḥammad (1938-52). The last president of the Marxist regime, Najib-Allāh (1986-92), was also a Ḥabibiya graduate.

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