



Education and educational methods from Rumi's point of view in Mathnawi

Sayyed Hossain Vaezi* and Shayesteh Ghasemi

Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

Learning about the different aspects of human beings as the most complicated creature in the world, has always been an issue for scientists. Unlike other creatures man is the only creature who is able to think about his own existence and has the ability to grow mentally and spiritually; all these are possible through Education. Education is transferring knowledge and skills by an educator; there are too many opinions on the way of this very act of transfer. Rumi (Molavi), the famous Iranian poet of the 7th century presented very glorious points of views on education relying on Islamic and Iranian rich knowledge. This paper is an attempt to know his ideas and educational methods through analyzing sample verses of his poems in his world-known masterpiece, "Mathnawi". The implications for current educators will be discussed by considering his division of educational aims into general and specialized categories.

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Introduction

"Tarbiat", which is the Arabic word for education, means "addition". In the field of education, it means the addition of science and skill and the omission of bad things (Bagheri, 2011). Education is affected by human's complexities; it tries to guide a person towards perfection. Since there are various definitions for perfection in different schools of thought, there are different ways leading to perfection. Some schools believe that education is the adults' endeavor to adapt the kids to the environment, while others believe it is a way to activate people's potential capacities. Some people think it is developing the ability to judge but others believe education is guiding a person toward perfection and at the same time guiding him toward his divine origin (Mirhadi, 1994).

The Elements affecting education

It seems that education is an interaction between a teacher and a student while there are so many other factors dealing with it. The society, the ideology of the society, the environment, genetics and the family conditions all affect education.

The Role of the environment

Geographical conditions such as simplicity or complexity of the environment and its distance to the equator affect this educational methods; Ibn-e-Khaldoon is one of the pioneers of this idea. He believes that the variety of the customs and administrative methods of different nations is due to the various geographical situations and life styles.

The Role of the genetics

Great Iranian scientists like Aviceana, Ibn-e-Moskooye, Ghazali and Sa'di believed that if a man's nature doesn't have the capacity to be educated, educating will not influence him (Rafi'i, 2003). Molavi has a poem pinpointing this issue:

Teaching knowledge and skills to men of evil nature

Is like a sword that has fallen into the hand of a brigand

Education in Islam's point of view

The main goal of education in Islam is facilitation of closeness of human beings to God and striving for the perfection that has been destined for them (Shokoochi, 1996). The purpose of Islamic education is training people to have a good

discrimination power and a truth-seeking tendency (Ahmadi, 2006).

The purpose of education in Rumi's view

Rumi (in Iran known more as Molavi) believes that his responsibility is educating people and he wrote his masterpiece "Mathnawi" to get to this goal. He believes that human is the ultimate purpose of creation of the universe. He believes that human is a divided part of a whole and should approach the whole which is closeness to God and education is a collection of activities that an educator does to guide people to reach this goal, so it is necessary for man to learn and he should use what he has learned to solve his problems and to find out what his origin and his destination is.

The necessity of learning in Molavi's point of view

Molavi belonged to a scholar family and he himself mastered the science of that time too. He believes that the value of each person depends on his degree of knowledge and that science solves human's difficulties.

Knowledge is the seal of the kingdom of Solomon

The whole world is form, and knowledge is the spirit

He believes that acquisition of knowledge has pre-requisites and people should prepare themselves to learn.

Beware! Do not carry this burden of knowledge without any aim

So that you will see the knowledge inside you

From Sufism's point of view science has three categories: 1. "shari'a" which can be learnt, 2. "tarigha" which can be observed, and 3. "haghigah" or the truth which is a gift of God (Ghani, 2005).

Adam, created of earth, learned knowledge from God

So his knowledge shot beams up to the Seventh Heaven

Molavi isn't satisfied with imitated knowledge and believes that knowledge should be innovative and should bring about changes.

Between the true knower and the blind imitator there are great differences For the former is like David while the other is an echo

The necessity of education in Molavi's point of view

Education is an opportunity to approach the highest level of knowledge and since man has a complicated nature, education is more necessary for him. Molavi believes that education is the responsibility of knowing people and a gift for others. What is expected from knowledge is to educate. He believes that man's divine nature is prior to his materialistic nature. He says that human is the goal of the creation of the universe, and that just like a fruit that originates from a branch and the branch is for the fruit's sake, the universe is for the man. He believes that human has infinite capacities (Nasr Esfahani, 1999).

O brother, you are that same thought (of yours)

As for the rest (of you), you are (only) bone and fiber

If your thought is a rose, you are a rose-garden

And if it is a thorn, you are fuel for the bath-stove

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale

Complaining of separations

Every one who is far from his origin

Wishes to go back to the time he was close to his origin

The goals of education in Molavi's point of view

The end of education in his view is a human that has sought for and approached his origin; this is what is expected from man (Ghani, 2005). In the first part of his book he has talked about the phases of humans' maturation.

I died to the inorganic state and became endowed with growth

And (then) I died to (vegetable) growth and attained to the animal

I quit being an animal and became human

Why should I fear then, did I lose anything after quitting being an animal

After the next attack I shall die to man

So that I may soar high above the angels

He tries to teach social customs and general education in order to prepare human for a successful life. Friendship with knowledgeable people and avoiding fools are emphasized equally.

The flight of Jesus was not caused by fear

He is safe (from the mischief done by fools): it was for the purpose of teaching (others)

A single word ruins a whole world

And turns dead foxes into lions

A prominent part of his book is teaching leniency, tolerance, and humanism. These features were so important to him that he allocated the main part of his short will to it to teach people to be tolerant to others' rudeness (Foroozanfar, 2009). Once a drunkard entered Molavi's "Sama'a" Ceremony _Sufism's special dance _and hit Molavi while staggering. Molavi's students wanted to punish him, but he didn't let them do so. His students said that he is a Christian, and he answered "Why aren't you so?" And in another story a Jude asked him "Which religion is better, ours or yours?" Molavi answered "Yours." (Zarrinkoob, 2011). This is because he believed the best way to teach is leniency and taking things easy. There's a story in his book about this issue which is about an elephant in a dark room and another story is about four people struggling over the name of grape.

To take a tight hold and to attach one's self strongly (to the world) is (a sign of) being raw

As long as you are an embryo, your occupation is blood-drinking

The truth is that not all are true

Neither are all the herd astray

One who says all are true is a fool

And the one who says all are false is a tyrant

At the end, he teaches his students that different minds and difference in perceptions are not bad.

Know well that intelligences differ thus

In degree from the earth to the sky

An immature mind ruins the mind

Worldly joys ruin a man

Educational methods in Molavi's point of view

Since both the roles of the teacher and the students are important in the process of teaching Molavi has so many pieces of advice about these roles. These techniques can be categorized into two groups: a. teaching techniques, and b. learning techniques.

Teaching Techniques

Since the teacher has a basic role in teaching, it is thought that he is the only person responsible in teaching. Great men like Aviceana, Ibn-e-Moskooyeh, Ghazali, Khaje Nasir, Sa'adi and Molavi have talked about this. Molavi could combine the knowledge and methods of the people before him with his own ideas and innovations and include them in his lessons (Abdolhakim, 1978).

Teaching by imitating models

Molavi has many stories about this method. He has a story about a woman whose son has gone up to the roof of the house, and she asks Imam Ali to help her.

A woman came to Ali and said,

"My child has gone up on to the water-spout"

"If I call it, it will not come to my hands

And if I leave it, I am afraid it will fall to the ground"

He (Ali) said, "Take another child up to the roof

So that the boy may see his peer"

In another story he points out that advice shown in action is more effective than oral advice. Since children imitate their parents in their early life and imitate their teachers and instructors during their education, parents and instructors should be very careful about their behavior and appearance.

Teaching through kindness and affection

One of the requirements of humans is to love and to be loved. Modern psychology has proved that after their physical requirements, humans have spiritual needs and the most important need is being loved. This need affects the psychological health and the characteristic of people in their adulthood (Shari'atmadari, 2010). Khaje Nassir Toosi believes that love is the natural feature of humans believing that the word "ensan" which is the Arabic word for "human" is derived from the word "ons" which means sociability. It is a natural feature of humans and when something reveals its feature it develops, so humans should be loved. He believes that we cannot teach except by kindness and talking kindly. Students should feel secure to be ready to learn.

Who but Grace shall open the eyes?

Who but Love shall allay the wrath?

Till a child sees that the apple is there

It will not give up from its hand the stinking onion

The story which is about "Fazl" and cleverness of "Loghman" is his best verse about love.

By love bitter things become sweet

By love copper turns into gold

By love dregs become clear

By love pains become healing

By love the dead body revives

By love a king is turned into a slave

Teaching through consulting

Consulting and using others' ideas is also emphasized by Molavi.

Even if thou hast intellect, with another intellect
Associate and consult, O father
Take counsel with the righteous
Note the Divine command given to the Prophet, "Consult them."
It becomes necessary to take counsel concerning things to be done
So that there may not be repentance in the end

Teaching through encouragement and punishment

Encouragement in teaching in Molavi's point of view is love. He believes that if an offence is repeated after reminding, punishment should be used to prevent the offence. To be fair, encouraging is the response given after a good act and punishment is negative reinforcement for a bad act. He has established his education on the basis of love, encouragement, and leniency.

Teaching by good advice

He advocates talking nicely to someone who has neglected something believing that advising has two prerequisites: First of all advising should be done on time to be effective. Secondly, there should be a good preparation on the part of the listener to be accepted by the listener.

The parrot said, "She by her act counseled me
Abandon thy charm of voice and thy affection (for thy master)"

Giving moral lessons

Taking moral lessons means a transfer from bad features to good features (Javadi Amoli, 1994). Since human beings calculate every action and think about every event, taking moral lessons of the past events has a very good educational effects on them. Different stories in Mathnawi aim at making us learn from the characters of the stories.

Extinguish the wrath, open the (spiritual) eye, rejoice
Take a lesson from (true) friends, become a teacher (of the Truth)
Since thou hast taken warning from (the fate of) the vile wolf,
Thou art not a fox: thou art my own lion

Exemplifying

Giving examples is very common in educational systems because it is brief and comprehensive. Giving examples and telling proverbs reveal the lecturer's ability. Molavi as a knowing and Gnostic man has a good ability to show things by means of maxims and examples and a lot of the stories of Mathnawi are used as proverbs.

Know that evil thought is a poisonous nail
In (the case of) deep reflection it rends the face of the soul
The (troubled) heart is not comforted by lying
Water and oil kindle no light
How should the fly know whose garden this is?
For it was born in spring, and its death is in the (following) winter

Telling stories

Molavi has used Quran's method which is telling stories. He has taught a lot of Islamic knowledge by this method. He has a story in his book about a king who is in love of a female slave. In this story the king is the symbol of man.

*O my friends, hearken to this tale
In truth it is the very marrow of our inward state
The altercation of the man and wife has been related (as a story)
Know that it is a parable of your own flesh (nafs)
O brother, the story is like a measure
The real meaning in it resembles grain (in the measure).*

Learning Techniques

Learning is as important as teaching, and learners' contributions to the process of learning are vital to any educational situation.

Being interested in learning

Being prepared to learn means being interested in learning. Being motivated is an important factor in learning.
No lover, in sooth, is seeking union
Without his loved one seeking him
No sound of clapping comes forth
From one hand of thine without the other hand

Practicing what is learnt

According to modern psychology, when someone learns something by memorizing, he hasn't in fact learnt it. Because during learning, behavior, habits, skills and perceptions of a person should change (Shari'atmadari, 2002).

Beware! Do not carry this burden of knowledge for the sake of selfish desire

So that you may ride on the smooth-paced steed of knowledge

To love God

The first stage of purification is to love God and to believe in Him. He watches men all the time. Molavi believes that the basis of education is love and says one who falls in love is able to fly, i.e. develop to higher levels.

*He whose garment is rent by a (Mighty) love
Is purged of covetousness and all defect*

Thinking and caring about his deeds

Thinking about your deeds and calculating them are very important in Islamic education especially in Gnosticism. Molavi emphasizes controlling satanic temptations.

*Make thyself pure from the attributes of self
That thou mayst behold thine own pure untarnished essence*

Keeping God in mind and thinking

In addition to thinking and caring about his deeds, keeping God in mind is of a student's duty. Molavi thinks this will develop thought and enrich the mind.

*Recollection (of God) brings thought into movement
Make recollection to be the sun for this congealed (thought)
Praise of God is pure: when purity has come
Defilement packs and goes out*

Patience

Patience and tolerance to approach the goal is a duty of the student. Molavi believes that patience is the most important way to prevent satanic temptations.

*God created hundreds of thousands of elixirs
Man hath not seen an elixir like patience
In the end the seeker is a finder
For from patience joy is born*

Conclusion

Molavi has developed to the highest levels of wisdom by using Islamic lessons and virtues of the Iranian civilization. He believes that man should be educated to be able to follow the path of his nature towards perfection. Knowledge is a means towards education. He tries to motivate people to get educated and advises them to be persistent in their pursuit of knowledge. He also believes that in the education process both the teacher and the student have their shares and responsibilities. This view, interestingly, is quite compatible with recent humanistic movements in education and the role of interaction they advocate.

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