

## Manifestations of Didactic Literature in 'Aaina-Sikandari' (The Alexandrian Mirror')

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### ABSTRACT

Morality is a set of virtues and vices. Each of the spiritual positive attributes which has been interpreted as virtue, is the source of human evolution in the path of life. No wonder why morality is of high importance in the lives of humans; as humans reach the summit of perfection when moral values have been crystallized in their existence. What constitute the main axis of morality are the musts and must-nots and moral values. Any moral virtue creates a bond between humans and God and helps them approach the sacred essence of God step by step. One of the most important literary subjects is related to the didactic manifestations of literature. Indeed, didactic literature includes motifs such as asceticism, advice and sermon, and morality and this ethical literature is the most prominent and important division in Persian literature. Attention to desirable behavior in the sphere of literature has mostly appeared in the form of advice and sermon, and occasionally in the form of parable and story. The remarkable poet, Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, has given expression to moral concepts in his poems and this is why he could be best seen as a moral poet. In this paper, I intend to analyze the moral issues in Amir Khosrow Dehlavi's 'Aaina-Sikandari'.

**KEYWORDS:** Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, Aaina-Sikandari', morality

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### INTRODUCTION

Amir Khosrow Dehlavi was born in AH 651 in Delhi. Amir Khosrow started to learn science and arts early in his youth, and started writing poetry from then on, and reached a high standing in poetry. The 'Khamasa' which he wrote in imitation of Nezami's, contains admirable poems. This 'Khamasa' includes: Matlaul-Anwar, Sheerin-Khosrow, Majnun-Laila, Aaina-Sikandari, and Hasht-Bahisht. Besides the art of poetry, he was also counted as a great and adept teacher in the art of music. As a matter of fact, he could be regarded as one of the true teachers of amalgamation of Indian and Iranian music. He was highly adept at literary science. Furthermore, he was a follower of Shaikh Nizamuddin Muhammad Badayuni famous as Nizamuddin Auliya in mysticism. After his poetic maturation, he would write eulogies to the kings of Delhi until his death in AH 725. (Safa, 1990: 90)

Amir Khosrow had entered the court since his teenage years and this affiliation with the court continued until the last months of his life but this could be the symbol and epitome of the people who, despite all their dependence on the courts, have managed not to adopt conceited and corrupt manners and on the contrary, retain their unadorned and affectionate conducts all their lives and express themselves as iconic figures for the others.

### Courtesy

The most precious treasure of humans is courtesy. When speaking of courtesy, a kind of sublime behavior springs to mind that is related to the manner of speaking, manner of walking, sociability, and so forth. Courtesy, in any person and at any place, creates affection and popularity all around the person, and renders a well-mannered person as cherished and adorable. Without a doubt, friendship and affiliation with such people embellish our behaviors with the jewelry of courtesy. Prophet Muhammad who is the epitome of faith, morality and courtesy, claims to have been embellished with courtesy by God and says: "My God adorned me with good manners and he adorned me well." (Rey Shahri, 2005: 78)

From our poet's view, the most significant courtesy of a creature of God is the courtesy of understanding, which is the admission of a creature's weakness to know God.

Behave yourself, for nobody knows/ What God is but he (Amir Khosrow, 1983: 213)

Among other instances that Amir Khosrow Dehlavi expresses regarding courtesy, is the one related to courtesy in speech. He maintains that we should be polite while we speak:

Past and present, while you are conscious of yourself/ Be polite while you speak.

(ibid, 1983: 502)

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### **Forgiveness and mercy**

Forgiveness and mercy regarding other people's mistakes cause God to show mercy to us. Indubitably, according to Bayhaqi these mercy and forgiveness have the most significance at the time of capacity and strength: "man is that who can show mercy at the time of power." ( Bayhaqi, 2010: 118)

In order to derive benefit from divine gifts, the heart must be erased of darkness so that it could become a vehicle of purity for the desirable behavior. So, mercy and forgiveness are the best ways to brighten the heart and strip it of fury and spite. As our poet has many a time acknowledged, despite his power and capacity, God shows mercy to the sinners, this being divine mercy:

If You forgive all sinners, that/ Should not degrade You from Your Godhood.

(Amir Khosro, 1983: 407)

In all states, he is hopefully expects divine mercy and emphasizes this:

I am famed to be strong, although/ More than ever I am in need of Your Mercy.

(*ibid*, 408)

### **Asceticism**

The great gifts of faith in God are righteousness and piety. A righteous and virtuous person can overcome the desires of the flesh. Indeed, virtue and righteousness have many spiritual and moral effects. If a person is well accustomed to virtue and asceticism, they will always triumph in their spiritual and material lives. Thus, if all the members of a society have these divine and moral traits, many of their trials and tribulations will be resolved and an ideal and utopian society will be created. From the standpoint of Amir Khosrow, the virtue and righteousness of humans are the true treasures of life:

He breathes out of virtue when he does/ For indeed this is what virtue is.

(*ibid*, 504)

A person who is righteous and virtuous, is not bound by the chains of the desires and temptations of the flesh, and he harnesses his desires; as Amir Khosrow says regarding this, that he has fought out of asceticism and virtue, that is, he has heightened the emblem of virtue and thus brought his fleshly desires under yoke and famously, obliterated all desires and temptations of the flesh:

Out of virtue I shall fight, and/ The mischievous head I shall but behead.

(*ibid*, 567)

### **Wisdom**

The best gift of God to his creatures is wisdom, since this divine blessing helps humans to progress and develop. Not benefiting from reason and wisdom leads to harm in work. In fact, "thinking is the source of using the signs of God...and reason is the source of life and cause of perfection." (FathaliKhani, 2000: 50)

Amir Khosrow believes that God has bestowed reason upon humans and it is through the same reason that humans have been esteemed as the owners of the faculty of distinction and recognition:

The same God who should create in the wise/ The mere thought of what is right and wrong.

(Amir Khosrow, 1983: 539)

In Khosrow's view, wisdom is the best and greatest and most precious of all treasures:

One who find the treasure of Intellect/ Should be a fool looking for pure gold.

(*ibid*, 518)

The person who has accompanied himself with wisdom, takes steps with reason and discretion in all his deeds; such a person rarely encounters mistakes and doubts in life:

Intellect should choose as his friend/ Only one who knows when to do and when to refrain.

(*ibid*, 534)

### **Self-scrutiny**

The remarkable men of the enlightening religion of Islam have many a time noted that self-scrutiny (studying oneself) is the introduction to theology (studying God). For this reason, through consecutive centuries, many of real and true believers have set steps in this path and have covered this path despite all its trials and tribulations.

Acknowledging to this, Amir Khosrow also states that when a person starts to discover wisdom and reason in him, he can also know God to some extent:

When he understands the wisdom in his self/ He is very close to understanding God.

(*ibid*, 512)

### **Prayer and praise**

Prayer and praise are the keys to all success and salvation. Indeed, the most virtuous of all worship and the core and truth of all worship is prayer. When God causes the realization of his creature's prayer, he opens his gates of mercy onto him and illuminates his heart.

Amir Khosrow believes that we should think of God in all states and implore to the divine golden threshold of God but this is true about those who always think of God, as Amir Khosrow admits:

The ones who knew God/ Started praying day and night.  
(ibid, 546)

### **Gratitude**

Gratitude is the duty of any person. In other words, people must be thankful for the gifts of their lives and other blessings from God. Regarding the importance and effects of gratitude and thankfulness, it suffices that God has asked humans to be grateful for the gifts of their lives and his other blessings. Although God is not in need of worship and praise, but he has asked humans to be grateful to him as duty and task. In fact, "gratitude is the best of deeds and is regulated with the three elements of science and state and action, science is the very origin and root of gratitude which creates the present, and the present brings about action." (Shebr, 2010: 375)

The Holy Quran says in this regard: "God has mercy on people but most people are not grateful." (Yunes, 60) So the gratitude and praise of God's gifts is obligatory for each creature of God. However, humans are incapable of praising God Almighty, as Amir Khosrow reminds of this and says that if his tongue be in his mouth as the length of a hair, it still can't praise God the way it must and it should":

If I tire my tongue out/ I would not be able to thank You perfectly.  
(Amir Khosro, 1983: 407)

### **Patience and forbearance**

Patience means tolerance and forbearance in dealing with events, difficulties and the sufferings and gives such power, might, and endurance to humans that they are never overpowered by these. One of the issues that our poet has pointed out is patience and forbearance in moments of anger and infuriation:

When angry, seek patience more/Who needs water when there is no fire?  
(ibid, 427)

The purpose is that humans be able to seek patience and tolerance in moments of anger, thus never to have to regret anything in future.

### **Hospitability**

Hospitability is one of the highly admired moral traits. Since time immemorial, Iranians have been renowned for hospitability. Symposiums and affiliations create a sense of affinity and sympathy. In Islam respect to guests has been recommended many times, and as has always been said, the guests bring blessings with themselves, and take out the host's misfortune after leaving. With these preliminaries, we come to realize that hospitability is deeply rooted in the religious culture and theological beliefs of Muslims and is a teaching that Muslims have learned from the Holy Quran and the enlightening religion of Islam. Many statements are quoted regarding this, of many remarkable men of Islam such as Prophet Muhammad and holy Imams. The Prophet said: "be respectful and hospitable to your guests." (Motaqi, 245: 1993)

Our poet also has referred to this godly and ancient custom of Iranians:  
He held his hand, holding him a dear guest,/   
And asked him humbly to sit down and did himself.  
(Amir Khosrow, 1983: 516)

### **Moderation**

Moderation and restraint in all deeds have been greatly esteemed, in a way that the Prophet has said the best of deeds to be those of the golden mean. In some instances, we see that going from one extreme to another in our deeds paves the way for sin and disobedience to God. Therefore, humans must take heed of this. Being a moral poet, Amir Khosrow believes in moderation and restraint and one of the moderations he repeatedly calls attention to, is abstinence (from eating and drinking):

When the stomach is not busy with eating and drinking/ Why bother with other desires?  
Two persons should eat rightly:/One an infant, the second the elderly.  
(ibid, 518)

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