The Strategies Of Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi (Mowlavi) In Teaching Cognitive Concepts As An Effective Strategy In Modern Educational Systems (The story of the Prince and the Handmaid in Mathnawi)

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Abstract

Nowadays, education is the key to the development and growth of human communities. As an authoritative master of education, Mowlavi in his exquisite work, Mathnawi, uses various methods in the teaching of deep concepts such as: Love, wisdom, self, courtesy, non-courtesy, phantom, etc. His teaching methods are: narration, symbolism, allegory, commentary, reasoning, figures, embellishments, and verbosity. The present paper tries to remind all instructors and educators that the task of teaching especially in humanities is more than just defining some concepts. Using some effective and innovative methods along with defining not only attracts more audience but it also motivates the learners and leads to better educational achievements and desired goals.

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1. Introduction

Modern man lives in the era of significant developments. During the past century, we have faced with various human needs resulting from innovations, inventions, discoveries and vast developments in the world of sciences. This has led to the emergence of new interdisciplinary studies in academic centers throughout the world. Interdisciplinary studies or Interdisciplinary involves researchers, students, and teachers in the goals of connecting and integrating several academic schools of thought, professions, or technologies - along with their specific perspectives - in the pursuit of a common task. Interdisciplinary studies is a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single academic major or profession. Since most significant issues have multiple causes, interdisciplinary studies integrates a range of perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges.

Persian literature with its exquisite literary works of its outstanding literary men has the potentialities of major interdisciplinary sciences. Among the great poets of Persian literature, Mowlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi is distinguished for his vast knowledge, nobility of mind and thought and his familiarity with the needs of his contemporary communities. He could make an interrelationship between the Persian literature and educational...
psychoology. He applied modern educational methods in order to illustrate deep cognitive concepts in the form of sweet and eloquent stories of Mathnavi. While Mowlana’s educational methods are considered as traditional based on the modern psychology, but his effective methods can be applied today by academic and educational instructors and faculty members in colleges and universities. The immortality secret of Mathnavi and the increasing popularity of Mowlana in international community’s lie in his sublime thoughts and ideas and his innovative educational methods and techniques.

During the present paper, seven general educational techniques which Mowlana used in order to communicate theosophical concepts are introduced based on the story of the Prince and the Handmaid.

It is worth mention that Mowlana was a deep ocean in the Persian literature from whom one can only take a sip based on his/her capacities and knowledge. Mathnavi was also like a sea full of precious pearls of knowledge for human being.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{اب در یا را اگر تنوان کشید} & \\
\text{هم یقدر تنشگی باید چشید}
\end{align*}
\]

1.1 The story of the Prince and the Handmaid

A prince, while engaged on a hunting excursion, espied a fair maiden, and by promises of gold induced her to accompany him. After a time she fell sick, and the prince had her tended by divers physicians. As, however, they all omitted to say, "God willing, we will cure her," their treatment was of no avail. So the prince offered prayer, and in answer thereto a physician was sent from heaven. He at once condemned his predecessors' view of the case, and by a very skilful diagnosis, discovered that the real cause of the maiden’s illness was her love for a certain goldsmith of Samarkand. In accordance with the physician's advice, the prince sent to Samarkand and fetched the goldsmith, and married him to the lovesick maiden, and for six months the pair lived together in the utmost harmony and happiness. At the end of that period the physician, by divine command, gave the goldsmith a poisonous draught, which caused his strength and beauty to decay, and he then lost favor with the maiden, and she was reunited to the prince (Zamani, 2006).

This Divine command was precisely similar to God’s command to Abraham to slay his son Ismail, and to the act of the angel in slaying the servant of Moses, and is therefore beyond human criticism. According to Mowlana, Love is the astrolabe: means that only love can "measure" and understand the depths of Divine mysteries -- not the intellect. The astrolabe is an ancient astronomical device, "an instrument for measuring the altitude of the stars and solving the problems of spherical astronomy." (Nicholson, Commentary). The poet explains that what was said of love in the preceding verse bears a general application. Love, whether its immediate object is Divine or human, real or phenomenal, leads ultimately to knowledge of God and union with Him. All earthly beauty is but the reflex ion of Heavenly Beauty, and as the reflex ion fades away we turn our eyes towards the Light whence it came.

1.2 Five stages of education from the view points of educational psychologist

General patterns by which the master applies the educational methods are:

- Pre-educational stage: the selection and formulation of instructional goals
- Pre-educational stage: the selection procedures of the learners and preliminary assessment
- Pre-educational stage: refernce to learning psychology and motivation to improve the process of learning and teaching
- Teaching process: the selection and application of appropriate methods and techniques
- The preparation and practice stage of appropriate testing methods and techniques (Saif, 2001)

1.3 The educational methods of Mowlana in expressing the theosophical concepts

As we read the Mathnavi we see that Mowlana was a great philosopher since he mastered all the sciences of his time including: theosophy, philosophy, religion and history. He is quite familiar with his community, popular cultures, the moods of the people, different classes of society, and various methods and techniques in promoting motivation among the learners. In the fourth stage of education, he applies the following methods based on the requirements of his time in order to implement the general educational goals and to change them into behavioral objectives:

1.3.1 Story Telling
Affected by the Indian literature, Mowlana uses story within-a-story technique in order to teach the theosophical concepts. In this technique, the reader reads a fascinating story instead of reading scientific materials to get the poet’s main idea. Narrating relatively long stories using story within-a-story technique, Mowlana little by little draws the attention of his readers to his deep ideas. An important point is that all these stories are not told by Mowlana himself. They have been written in the old books in simple prose and without any attractions. Mowlana used simple ideas to form poetical stories for the sake of his readers in an attractive manner.

1.3.2 Symbolism

Theosophists, philosophers, and psychologists sometimes use signs, clues, symbols, and words with different meanings than they appear. These words are called symbols. Symbolism is when the author uses an object or reference to add deeper meaning to a story. A symbol is something such as an object, picture, written word, sound, or particular mark that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention (Poor-Namdarian, 1989). Since Mowlana deals with two groups of people (elite and common) and understanding the inner and deep meanings of his stories was difficult for the common people. Therefore, he used some symbols so that they may be easily understood by them. The symbols of this story are:

- The prince as the symbol of the soul
- The maiden as the symbol of the ego and a tyro follower
- The court physicians as the symbols of the earthly wisdom and superficial theosophists
- Goldsmith as the symbol of the world
- The spiritual physician as the symbol of the omniscient person and the true master

Using these symbols, Mowlana reminds his readers that

- A Clever person (here the Prince and the changed handmaid at the end of the story) is the one who leaves superficial love to find the true and eternal love.
- If earthly (virtual) love is pure it may lead to real love.

1.3.3 Allegory

Allegory as according to the Europeans is in the field of fiction, epic, and drama. It includes all the events in all these forms whether concrete or abstract (Shafie Kadkani, 1988). Allegory is based on simile. In other words, there is a simile hidden in the allegory. In Persian poetry including Mowlana’s works, the poet applies allegory in his poems in order to express a moral, educational and logical idea or impress the readers in a concrete and comprehensible form. In this story, Mowlana enjoys allegory to give his readers a moral and educational message. At the beginning of the story when the Prince gets the handmaid to the court to enjoy her, suddenly the maiden acts sickly. Using allegory, Mowlana teaches the readers that man in this world in no moment can fully achieve his/her goals unless s/he losses something favorable:

An yeki khar dasht palanash nabood
yaft palan gorg khar ra dar rebood
koozeh bodash ab minamad be dast
ab ra chon yafkh khod koozeh shekast

1.3.4 Explanation, Commentary, Description

Another method for teaching and realizing concepts in humanities is explaining, commenting, and describing. Mowlana defines the words and expressions and comments on deep concepts and ideas so that the readers achieve the desired educational goals. The couplets 48-50 in the story of the prince and the handmaid deals with the definition and commentary on the expression: God willing (Inshallah). Mowlana believed that the selfish court physicians omitted to say God Willing!. Therefore God showed them their weaknesses and what they prescribed
was useless and in vain. As the story continues, Mowlana introduces the characteristics of the physicians using the elements of characterization and description as follows:

\[
\text{did shakhși fazeli por mayei}
\]

\[
\text{dafîb dar miane sayet}
\]

\[
\text{miresîd az door manande helal}
\]

\[
\text{nîst boodo hast bar shekle khial}
\]

\[
1 \text{.} 3 \text{.} 5 \text{ Reasoning}
\]

Reasoning in the science of logic means: the process of drawing inferences and conclusions from available information or data. In debate, it is the process of inferring relationships between evidence and assertions (Sajjadi, 1995). Mowlana as the master of Islamic sciences gives religious and theosophical knowledge to the readers as his general and behavioral goals. In order to inform the audience who have gone far in evil deeds, Mowlana argues:

\[
\text{harche bar tu ayad az zolmato gham}
\]

\[
\text{an zebî bakio gostakhist ham}
\]

In observance of courtesy in presence of God, he beautifully argues:

\[
\text{az adab por nor gashtast in falak}
\]

\[
\text{vaz adab masoomo pak amad malak}
\]

Mowlana who enjoys the intuition and discovery rejects the reasoning of the disguise scholars and says if one is looprince for a reason for the sun, the sun itself is the best reason:

\[
\text{aftab amad dalile aftab}
\]

\[
\text{gar dalilat bayad az vey roo matah}
\]

\[
\text{az vey ar saye neshani midahad}
\]

\[
\text{shams har dam noore jani midahad}
\]

He says: if shadow implies the existence of the sun, then without the sun there would be no shadow. Comparing reasoning, discovery, and intuition. Mowlana calls the reasoning shadow and discovery and intuition the sun. We have to go towards the truth (the sun) and refrain from the shadow, he continues (Zamani, 2006). He later rejects the earthly love and justifies this by saying that the love of the handmaid for the goldsmith soon faded because her love was superficial and not eternal:

\[
\text{eshgh haee kaz peye rangi bovad}
\]

\[
\text{eshgh nabvad aghebat nangi bovad}
\]

Generally speaking, Mowlana enjoys reasoning in his stories to clarify and teach deep concepts. His reasoning is sometimes accompanied by allegory and this makes his stories more fascinating and attractive to follow. Although this technique started with some poets such as Sanaee and Ghaznawi and developed in the hands of Attar but there seem to be some attractions in the language Mowlana which is unprecedented among other Persian poets.

\[
1 \text{.} 3 \text{.} 6 \text{ Literary devices, figures and embellishments}
\]

Persian poets including have always employed various literary devices in order to teach sublime ideas and thoughts as well as various sciences. The language of poetry is full of imagery, fantasy, simile, and metaphor. Literary devices are quite common in many forms in Persian literature but it is more effective and encouraging in the language of fiction. Mowlana used this technique to develop his stories (including the story of the prince and the handmaid) in Mathnawi. Creating setting, characterization, and teaching deep theosophical concepts was not
possible without using literary devices and embellishment, the direct results of which were: the fascinating tone of the story, the attraction for the audience, the stimulating music of the language, and the capabilities of the speech. Literary devices used from the beginning to the end of the story are summarized as follows (although Mowlana has also used many other literary devices and figures):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary device</th>
<th>The no. of the couplet in the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pun</td>
<td>35, 45, 67, 70, 82, 130, 158, 161, 172, 175, 177, 181, 233, 235, 241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td>60, 80, 81, 88, 89, 118, 125, 176, 224, 227, 228, 236, 240, 245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>39, 52, 57, 61, 68, 69, 75, 77, 110, 115, 119, 199, 207, 218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverb</td>
<td>76, 96, 107, 116, 131, 133, 136, 140, 175, 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>66, 114, 115, 123, 127, 152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.7 Verbosity

Verbosity which means the excess use of words, especially using more than are needed for clarity or precision is used for teaching complicated and difficult concepts. A skillful master should evaluate the level of his learners or pupils so that s/he may apply appropriate effective teaching methods. To teach deep theosophical concepts (real versus superficial love, the meanings and functions of wisdom, ego and its levels, the recognition of the world, etc.), Mowlana applied verbosity in the story of the prince and the handmaid effectively. If Mowlana had used brevity instead of verbosity, he could have never communicated with his common readers. For instance take the word *phantom* when Mowlana is describing the prince falling to asleep in the mosque and the divine physician who cures the handmaid.

Using verbosity, Mowlana applies the word *phantom* in the above couplets skillfully. His reference to the prince waiting for his sleep interpretation (the first couplet), introduction of the divine physician by characterization (second couplet), the explanation and interpretation of the word phantom (in the following couplets) is a good sign for the success of Mowlana in the world. It is also a clear sign of his full awareness and mastery on the Persian language.
2. Method

The present paper used library method to review teaching methods in educational psychology to analyze the story of the prince and the handmaid in book one of the Mathnawi by Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi (Mowlavi). We tried, hopefully, to depict Mowlana’s success in applying fiction as an educational tool to teach major theosophical concepts, themes, and messages.

3. Conclusion

The conclusion of the story of the prince and the handmaid comes as follows:

- Mowlana was a great master of the sciences of his time.
- Mowlana as a skillful master, used various effective educational methods to teach deep, complicated theosophical concepts to common people.
- The sublime ideas of Mowlana must be analyzed and investigated not only in the context of his time but also in the following years for the sake of his great capabilities and merits.

References