

Moral Teaching in Sufi Education

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Abstract

In Sufi thought, a servant embraces all creatures with a moral sensitivity in respect to the harmony and integrity in the names and attributes of his Creator. Sufi Education, which forms the essence of spiritual education, is very effective in helping people acquire moral principles, for Sufi Education brings spiritual happiness, divine morality and the essence of values education to people.

Sufi Education also shows the nuances of establishing universal bonds at the moral level, first with God and then with all creatures, due to the meanings it attributes to moral concepts. The main purpose of Sufi Education is to help people to discipline their souls and purify their hearts by removing them from bad moral qualities. Hence, Sufi Education integrates man first with his Lord and then with himself.

Sufi Education makes people realize the meaning and value of their existence. It is possible for a person who realizes his own value to embrace his Lord and all beings with moral respect. Sufi Education undertakes an important task in transferring spiritual and moral values from generation to generation.

As a result, Sufi Education undertakes an important task in transferring spiritual and moral values from generation to generation. For these reasons, in the article we will reveal how Sufi Education effectively teaches piety, humility, patience, gratitude and prayer.

Keywords: Sufism, Sufi Education, Piety, Humility, Patience, Gratitude, Prayer.

Tasavvuf Eğitiminde Ahlak Öğretimi

Öz

Tasavvuf düşüncesinde kul, Yaratıcısının ilâhî isim ve sıfatlarındaki uyum ve bütünlük gözetilerek, bütün yaratılmışları ahlakî bir hassasiyetle kucaklar. Manevî eğitimin özünü oluşturan tasavvuf eğitimi, insanlara ahlakî ilkelerin kazandırılmasında oldukça etkilidir. Çünkü tasavvuf eğitimi, insanları manevî mutluluğa, ilahî ahlaka ve değerler eğitiminin özüne yönlendirir.

Tasavvuf eğitimi, ahlakî kavramlara yüklediği anlamlardan dolayı, önce Allah'la, sonra da tüm yaratılmışlarla ahlakî düzeyde evrensel bağlar kurmanın yollarını da gösterir. Tasavvuf eğitiminin temel amacı, insanları kötü ahlaktan uzaklaştırarak, nefislerini terbiye etmelerine ve kalplerini arındırmalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Dolayısıyla Tasavvuf eğitimi, insanı önce Rabbiyle, sonra kendisiyle bütünlüştürür.

Tasavvuf eğitimi, insanın varlığının anlamını ve değerini fark etmesini sağlar. Kendi değerinin farkına varan insanın, Rabbinin ve tüm varlıklarını ahlakî bir saygıyla kucaklaması mümkündür. Sonuç olarak Tasavvuf eğitimi, manevî ve ahlakî değerlerin nesilden nesle aktarılmasında önemli bir görev üstlenmektedir. Bu nedenlerden dolayı makalemizde tasavvuf eğitiminin takvâyı, tevâzu, sabrı, şükürü ve duâyı etkili bir şekilde nasıl öğrettiğini ortaya koyacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tasavvuf, Tasavvuf Eğitimi, Takvâ, Tevâzu, Sabır, Şükür, Dua.

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Introduction

Sufi Education, which tries to build the spiritual integrity of people, enriches people's values system and perspective on life with different methods. At this point, the concepts and values system created by Sufi Education also determine how he will think or how he will not think.

Sufism is a science that forms the basis of spiritual education by showing the most important methods for educating a person's ego, cleaning his heart, and purifying his soul. Therefore, the main purpose of Sufi Education is to reveal the most mature person believed to exist in a person.

Sufi Education is also expressed as a spiritual education of the heart. Sufi Education, which uses different training methods such as contemplation, prayer, self-inspection, struggle with the ego, opposition to the ego, and minimizing the desires of the ego, provides people with the desired characteristics in the personal, social and spiritual fields.

"In Sufism, ego is the source of bad habits and ugly actions, while the soul is the source of good habits and beautiful deeds. There is a contradiction between the desires of the ego and the desires of the soul and a constant struggle between the two."¹ The real purpose of Sufi Education is to make the characteristics of the soul dominant in humans and thus to reach God. The way to do this is to oppose the desires of the ego and abandon the things that the ego likes in order to have a spiritual control.

"There are differences between Normal Education and Sufi Education in terms of personal and social field education. In this sense, it is clear that the contribution of Sufi Education will be great in the religious and social dimension if it is used upon integration into normal education programs."²

Sufi understanding is a highly significant way to understand what existential and permanent values are and to discover ourselves. A person who discovers himself gets to know his 'Self' and his 'Lord' thanks to Sufi Education. Sufi Education makes vital contributions to ensure the abstract feeling the beauty of moral and spiritual values.

The process of self-knowledge from a psychological perspective and the process of self-knowledge from a Sufi Education perspective sometimes complement each other despite the deviation in their perspectives. "In this sense,

¹ Muhammed Ebû Hamid Gazâlî, *Ihyâ-ı Ulûmi'd-dîn* (Cairo: Muessesetu'r-Riclibî, 1974), 87.

² Vahit Goktas, "Tasavvufî Terbiyenin Günümüz Din Egitim-Ogretimine Sunabilecegi Imkânlar", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 52/2 (2011), 141.

psychological self-awareness is a person's sense of consciousness about himself."³

In short, while psychological self-awareness means being aware of one's personal self, in terms of Sufi Education, self-awareness means realizing the power of the Lord and thus perceiving the whole existence. In this context, Sufi Education offers important methods and approaches to people in the process of knowing themselves.

The main purpose of Sufi Education is to protect all dear and good habits; Since the aim is to get rid of the influence of ugly and bad habits, Sufi Education helps the person to have dominance over his heart, emotions, mind and ideas. "The awareness of 'Self-Knowing-Knowing the Lord', which arises from the understanding of man's self-control, reveals the soul-treating and therapeutic aspect of Sufi Education."⁴

Sufi Education puts tawakkul, the feeling of trust in God, at the center of spiritual and moral teaching. In this context, trust means that a person is satisfied with God's will and that his heart is not lost in sadness."⁵ In fact, as in the understanding of trust in Sufi Education, moral teaching is about surrendering completely to God, being very happy about the things that happen in life, and losing one's self with arrogance. It over comes stres and depression in a person, by preventing him from getting up set about things that do not even exist.

1. Moral Principles and Values in Sufi Education

From the a servant's perspective, God loves, protects, tolerates and forgives. In this context, taking into account the person's spiritual and cognitive development, his spiritual education should be carried out in parallel with his religious education.

The Sufi Education that must be given to person is carried out in five stages. These stages include telling stories about faith to the person, ensuring that prayers are performed in different environments, praying together, talking about religious questions and ensuring that they are active in prayers."⁶ The Sufi

³ William Mcgaughey, *Rhythm and Self-Consciousness* (Minneapolis: Thistlerose Press, 2001), 78.

⁴ Esma Sayın, *Tasavvuf Terapisi* (Istanbul: Hayykitap, 2020), 8.

⁵ Ebû Nasr Serrâc et-Tûsî, *el-Lumâ fi Tarihi't-Tasavvufi'l-Islamiyyi* (Beirut: Dâru'l-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyyeti, 2001), 78.

⁶ Bernard Miller, "Whither the People? People in Religious Education", *The Journal of Religion* 86/4 (2006), 637.

Education obtained in these five stages also directly supports spiritual education.

In order to attract the attention of persons, there must be an eye-catching religious material.⁷ A religious education with these characteristics develops morally based on Sufi Education and values education in the spiritual world of the person.

The content of the education given to persons in terms of morality and values is shaped by parables and stories and the appropriate environment.⁸ Effective use of materials is very important in teaching moral values and Sufi Education.

In addition to the feeling of love, compassion, care and kindness form the basis of religious feelings in a person. Another emotion that is associated with religious emotions is admiration. The feeling of admiration is the combination of fear and love and is the best emotion that expresses the person's belief in God.

2. Moral Teaching in Sufi Education

2.1. Piety Teaching in Sufi Education

The sense of righteousness is a very important moral characteristic. In other words, honesty is the moral characteristic that most affects a person's thought system and behaviour. On the other hand, lying is mostly a product of fear.⁹ Righteousness, which has the most impact on the person's moral and spiritual world, can be taught through piety (taqwa) in Sufi Education.

Piety means that a person stays away from anything that takes him away from Allah. Piety has two dimensions. One of these is formal, the other is spiritual. The formal aspect of piety (taqwa) is to preserve the commandments of religion. The spiritual aspect is ikhlas, defined as good will and sincerity.¹⁰

With these aspects, piety ensures that awareness of responsibility and worship is established. In Sufi Education respect, piety is a moral and spiritual value in which correct behaviour and awareness of responsibility.

In order to eliminate people's tendency towards pessimism, it is necessary to increase their sense of attachment to the family. If a person has developed the

⁷ Michael Grimmitt, "The Use of Religious Phenomena in Schools: Some Theoretical and Practical Considerations", *British Journal of Religious Education* 13/2, (1991), 83.

⁸ William Berryman, *Teaching Godly Play: How to Mentor the Spiritual Development of People* (Denver: Morehouse Education Publishing, 2009), 142.

⁹ Bernard Russell, *Eğitim Uzerine* (Istanbul: Say Yayınları, 1996), 14.

¹⁰ Abdülkerîm Quşeyrî, *Risâletu'l-Quseyrî* (Beirut: Dâru'l-Hayr, 2003), 87.

ability to love and a sense of devotion, that person is expected to love all people.¹¹

In Sufi Education context, the intense love expressed by the concept of piety is a fear of losing God's love. This expressed fear of loss is actually called 'love of God'. Therefore, in Sufi Education, the love and affection of God can be internalized in the person's spiritual world with the feeling of piety.

The fear expressed by the concept of piety is nothing like the fear of seeing a wild animal or a cruel ruler.¹² A sense of responsibility and a sense of love in Sufi Education increase devotion to God Almighty and the feeling of 'obedience based on love' instead of 'obedience based on fear'.

During Sufi Education, the person's lifestyle forms the core of the person's personality. In Sufi Education respect, conscience is imparted to the person through the understanding of piety. Piety is the care that a person takes to ensure that his heart does not separate from God Almighty even for a moment.¹³

The greatest measure of superiority in the sight of God is piety. Piety forms the essence of both love of God and awareness of responsibility and conscience in Sufi Education. Therefore, it is very important to internalize the understanding of piety while giving moral and spiritual education to the person. In this context, the understanding of piety forms the basis of the love of God and humanity that the family can give to the person.

If a person has doubts about the rightness or wrongness of a subject, he consults his 'conscience', the value system of the emotions in his heart.¹⁴ Paying attention to the limits regarding God's orders and prohibitions is called 'piety'.¹⁵ If these feelings are imparted to the person through piety, the person's love of God, awareness of responsibility and ability to conscience can be developed.

2.2. Humility Teaching in Sufi Education

Every person is born with a tendency to believe. Another characteristic that develops together with the tendency to believe is humility. In Sufi Education, humility means surrendering to God Almighty and giving up objecting to God's commands.

¹¹ Eric Fromm, *Psikanaliz ve Din* (Istanbul: Fatih Yayınevi, 1982), 47.

¹² Hayati Hokelekli, *Din Psikolojisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1998), 108.

¹³ Ebû Hafs Suhreverdî, *Avârifü'l-Maârif* (Cairo: Dâru'l-Maârif, 1966), 2/89.

¹⁴ İsmail Ankaravî, *Minhâcu'l-Fukârâ*. Prep. by. Saadettin Ekici (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1996), 244.

¹⁵ Şah Velîyullah Dihlevî, *Huccetullâhi'l-Bâliga* (Cairo: Dârü't-Turâs, 1985), 265.

Humility means embracing humbleness and carrying people's burdens.¹⁶ Because teaching the value of humility in Sufi Education is of vital importance in helping the person acquire the feelings of obedience to God and compassion for people. Every human being has a spiritual quest that searches for God and desires Him. In this respect, when the love of God and the awareness of obeying Him are not completed, some problems arise.¹⁷

In Sufi Education, people try to make sense of life. Helping them in this process contributes to the individual's future quality of life. The person has an innate love of God and the awareness of obedience to Him, and in this context, the virtue of humility, which is the essence of this, must be taught to him in Sufi Education.

Arrogance, which is the opposite of humility, leads to hardness and harshness of heart. At the same time, it prevents one from softness of heart and closeness. It cools people's hearts. These are more than enough to reveal the evil of arrogance. If those afflicted with this disease knew the damage caused by arrogance and self-conceit, they would lower the wings of their arrogance, collect what they had scattered, and try to restore what they had destroyed.

The person who realizes this and gives up his arrogance will gain spiritual miracles. Humility is the basis of honour, dignity and reputation. A humble person increases his friends. At this point, when the virtue of humility is taught to the person in Sufi Education, the person can realize the meaning of closeness to God, people and himself in his soul.

Humility not only constitutes the essence and basic raw material of religious belief, but it also strengthens the sense of obedience to God and prevents the impulses of the soul, the naughty man inside a person. At this point, humility means lowering the wings of pride and carving the sharp edges of the soul.¹⁸

Arrogance also creates a hard heart. Arrogance prevents a person from establishing spiritual unity and closeness with people. It alienates people's hearts from the arrogant person. This is enough to define arrogance as evil. Hence, in Sufi Education, the person must be taught the value of humility in order to both internalize religious belief in the person and integrate him into society.

¹⁶ Ebû Bekir Muhammed Qelâbâzî, *Taarruf li Mezhebi Ehli't-Tasavvuf* (Cairo: Mektebetu'l-Kulliyâti'l-Ezheriyye, 1980), 147.

¹⁷ David Wolpe, *Teaching Your People About God* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1995), 215.

¹⁸ Ethem Cebecioglu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sozlugu* (Istanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2004),656.

2.3. Patience Teaching in Sufi Education

The purpose of Sufi Education is to raise people who are mature in terms of morality and character. Sufi Education also contributes to the development of people's belief in God. The way to teach worship, prayer and spiritual values in a permanent way is possible by placing the understanding of patience in the spiritual world of the person.

Patience means 'to detain'. Patience is holding one's breaths in times of pain and screaming.¹⁹ When the concept of patience is taken into the centre of life, it is possible to control the self and mature the personality in Sufi Education and to permanently mature spiritual values in the person's heart. Patience allows the person to control himself by imprisoning the self in times of pain and screaming, as it is self-restraint.

Patience leads one to dynamism. In this sense, patience is very effective in internalizing a person's faith and gaining spiritual dynamism in Sufi Education. At the same time, the concept of patience and patience training contribute to the person finding answers to hundreds of questions that satisfy the meaning of his existence. Such approaches strengthen the person's connection with God.

A person who manages to get satisfactory answers to the meaning and purpose of his existence will be stronger in character against the difficulties of life and will be able to stop complaining when faced with difficulties. This can make him a solution-oriented person. In this context, patience means abandoning complaints. While talking about patience, the people of Sufism stated that they were ashamed of God Almighty for not being patient.²⁰

Despite the fact that the process of patience is difficult, the result of patience is always sweet. Thus, patience is the way to soften the person's innate negative temperament traits and develop more positive character traits.

While the person's image of God matures and turns into a more spiritual point, continuity and endurance in faith are strengthened with patience training. If a person is given moral and spiritual upbringing, both his emotions and intelligence will develop.²¹ The person acquires this expressed love without difficulty. He achieves this through the understanding and training of patience, which gives him the strength to endure existential questions and difficulties.

¹⁹ Ebu'l-Fadl Cemâluddîn Ibn Manzur, *Lisânü'l-Arab* (Beirut: Dâru's-Sadr, 1957), 4/438.

²⁰ İzzet Derveze, *Tefsîru'l-Hadîs*, translated by. Saban Karatas, Ahmet Celen, Mehmet Celen (Istanbul: Ekin Yayınları, 1998), 1/70.

²¹ Ali Etoz, *Need for Faith and Worship in People and Young People. Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Study Meeting-I*. Edited by. Seyma Arslan (Istanbul: Dem Yayınları, 2004), 365.

Patience is maintaining calmness of soul while sipping away the pain of difficulties. In another sense, patience ensures not to succumb to selfish impulses. In this respect, patience is a moral superiority that strengthens the richness of the person's heart and spiritual world. The demands of the ego are so many that only a moral power called patience can limit its wishes.

2.4. Gratitude Teaching in Sufi Education

The life stories of the prophets affect the spiritual world of people and develop their spiritual and religious consciousness. It also teaches how the prophets thanked Allah in every situation and condition, that is, the awareness of gratitude. Therefore, the gratitude of the prophets is reflected both in their tongues and hearts, and in all their attitudes and behaviours. Knowledge of worship also enables the development of gratitude awareness and education in the person.

Worship contributes to a sense of mutual trust and commitment.²² Generally, people are interested in the external aspects of prayer and external behaviours, such as tying hands in prayer. At the same time, prayers meet some of the spiritual needs of people.²³ Through worship, the person connects to the Almighty Creator and learns to thank Him. In Sufi Education context, gratitude means seeing that all people of open and hidden blessings come from the Creator.

The main goal of Sufi Education is to raise people as people of character. The fundamental value that develops people's morality and character in the manner prescribed by the educational goals is the value of gratitude. There is an important aspect of gratitude that should be taught to people. A truly grateful servant knows that all the blessings he has are from God. As a person who knows how to be grateful believes that blessings come from God, his character matures and his morals improve.

2.5. Prayer Teaching in Sufi Education

Prayer helps people know and understand themselves.²⁴ Through prayer, person experiences the freedom of expressing himself to his Lord in the most transparent, simplest and sincere way.²⁵ The best of prayers is the one that

²² R. Lamothe, "Faith as a Vital Concern in Human Development: Structuring Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity". *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 27(3), (1999), 238.

²³ Huseyin Peker, *Din Psikolojisi* (Samsun: Aksiseda Matbaası, 2000), 152.

²⁴ David Wolpe, *Teaching Your People About God* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1995), 145.

²⁵ Esma Sayın, *Dua Terapisi* (Istanbul: Hayykitap, 2020), 11.

stimulates doldrums, for a praying person thinks about the abundance of his sins.

In this sense, prayer is a ladder for sinful servants to climb to the level of God's forgiveness. In this context, the person learns to communicate with the Lord about his needs, wishes and mistakes through prayer. While praying, the person learns to be sincere, transparent and natural towards his Lord.

The responsibility for prayer education falls on the Sufi Education.²⁶ Prayer has a very important effect on the person's spiritual world and behaviour. Prayer directly strengthens a person's love for God and his closeness to Him.

Prayer is to appear before God Almighty with the language of modesty. A servant who comes into the presence of God with modesty will be ashamed of God. In this state, the person protects his mind, stomach and heart from selfish and sensual emotions, as the Prophet said. In this sense, the most important function of prayer is to create a fully integrated, determined and solid human personality. In Sufi Education, prayer leaves permanent traces in the person's spiritual world and enables the development of his character.

People make various requests in their prayers. Prayer, in the broadest sense, corresponds to mercy. God has described Himself with the name 'Merciful'. His servants also describe God with the name 'Merciful'.²⁷ A person who feels the power and love of God prays. For the person, this prayer is an invocation to God, a plea to God, and a presentation to the Lord of the state of simply asking from the Lord.

The prayer of ordinary people is in the tongue. Those who live their knowledge are in action. The lovers' language is in the language of behaviour. Thus, prayer is longing for the beloved.²⁸ Upon praying, a person gradually learns over time through prayer education to direct his prayer from his tongue to his heart, state and behaviour, according to the degree of closeness he feels with God in prayer.

CONCLUSION

Controlling emotions and behaviour begins to be learned with Sufi Education. Therefore, it is possible to give moral and spiritual education to the person during this period. Sufi Education can be transferred to the person through morally based mystical education and values education.

²⁶ H. Hartshorne, *People and Character: An Introduction to the Study of the Religious Life of People* (New York: Nabu Public Domain Reprints, 1919), 39.

²⁷ Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *Letâifu'l-Esrâr* (Beirut: Dârul-Kutubi'l-Ilmiyyeti, 1293), 1/386.

²⁸ Suleyman Uludag, *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sozlugu* (Istanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1999), 155.

The issue that most affects the person's moral and spiritual world in Sufi Education is honesty. Honesty can be taught with the understanding of piety in Sufi Education. In this respect, piety education includes teaching four different dimensions: compliance with God's orders and prohibitions, love-centred fear, a sensitive awareness of responsibility and behavioural change.

People have an innate tendency to believe. Another moral characteristic found in people is humility, which means their trust in God and submission to Him. The understanding of humility, which constitutes the essence of peace, tolerance and humility, strengthens the sense of obedience to God. It also prevents the self-indulgence of the self, which is the naughty person inside a person.

Teaching worship, prayer and spiritual values in a permanent way is possible by learning the concept of patience. In this sense, patience enables the soul to find peace and the person's character to mature. Prophet stories that affect people's spiritual worlds teach them how prophets thank God in every situation and condition. A person who learns to be grateful appreciates the goodness done to him and knows its value.

The person who reaches prayer awareness, learns to communicate with his Lord about his needs, wishes and mistakes. While praying, the person learns to be sincere, transparent and humble towards his Lord. At this point, prayer leaves permanent traces in the person's spiritual world, teaches him the awareness of servitude and contributes to the maturation of his character.

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