

## Review

# Sa'di's educational philosophy

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**Sa'di is one of the greatest Muslim Iranian poets and writers. In addition to this, he can be considered a very great and wise educator. The goal of this article is to extract and explain Sa'di's views on philosophy of education as portrayed in his poetry and prose texts. To reach this goal, his two most important books, Gulistan and Boostan, which are prose and poetry respectively and have many educational, moral and philosophical themes, were investigated and Sa'di's viewpoints regarding educational philosophy were extracted, explained and classified. This article shows that Sa'di has very important ideas and theories which can be used as a model in educational philosophy activities.**

**Key words:** Sa'di, education, philosophy, religion, knowledge, value, world.

## INTRODUCTION

Sa'di was born in Shiraz, a city in Iran, in 1184 and died there in 1291 (Pazargadi, 2000). Sa'di's were religious scholars and his father died when Sa'di was a youth (Moin, 1992). Abu Muhammad Moslehoddin Sa'di Shirazi, the great Muslim Iranian poet and writer, first learned literary and religious sciences from his father and scholars and scientists of Shiraz. Then he went to Baghdad to continue his education. After learning many of the sciences of his time and becoming a great poet and writer, he started to travel in the important countries and lived with different classes, becoming familiar with the morality and customs of different nations and acquiring very valuable experiences regarding anthropology. After these travels and acquisition of knowledge, courteousness and ethics and thinking in peoples' morality and behaviors, he returned to Shiraz and was much respected by people. Sa'di has mentioned the noblest educational, moral and social points in his bittersweet memories of his trips (Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari, 2001). At that time, Atabak Abubakr ibn Sa'd in Zangi governed in Fars (the province to which the city of Shiraz (Moin, 1992).

The most glorious Shaikh Sa'di Shirazi is one of the highest regarded writers of Persian literature who was able to express wide-ranging human feelings and experiences in the most simple but eloquent wording and in an adorned, sweet, attractive and dignified shape, so his poetry and prose, which have the highest form and beauty, constitute the main element and structure of

Iranian Muslims' culture and thought. The echo of his pleasant speech has won the hearts of the people of the world of any race and age, and he has quenched the thirsty souls of enthusiasts and people desiring knowledge and wisdom (Haj Sayyed Javadi, 2000).

It is said that Boostan took Sa'di thirty years to complete. It comprises 4133 couplets (each couplet consisting of two half-lines) in the form of 208 anecdotes with ethical or philosophical conclusions or counsels, or in the case of the first two chapters, pieces of advice addressed to his patron Abu-Bakr Sa'd. Sa'di's profession was preaching, and he shows this not only in Gulestan, which is a great Machiavellian work in Persian and a guide to all types of people from kings to dervishes, but especially in Boostan, the first two chapters of which are counsels to kings and rulers in statesmanship, good administration and fine qualities necessary for dealing with people. The remaining chapters are guidance and advice to the general public in individual behavior and social conduct. His pious sentiments, too, are more practical than visionary; they are half worldly, half-pious and full of worldly wisdom (Pazargadi, 2006). Sa'di's Boostan includes a complete and conclusive applied wisdom on issues such as etiquette, and it is consistent with man's natural principles and intellectual, moral, religious, political and economical standards which, if well applied, can cause happiness in human beings in this world and in the hereafter (Kasemi; cited from Naseh and Khtib Rahbar, 1996).

Undoubtedly, *Gulistan* is one of the greatest moral and educational books in which the noblest points have been stated in the most beautiful and effective statements (Alavi, 2002). This valuable moral and educational work is the result of Sa'di's travels, and is indicative of the era in which he lived and an expression of the social situations and customs of his time. This book has not only attracted and influenced Iranians, but also people all over the world, and it has been used for education and investigation (Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari, 2001.). Sa'di expresses many important and accurate moral and social principles in light of his high thought, deep insight and a right talent and aptitude (Yousofi, 2005). *Gulistan* brings wisdom to all inhabitants of the world. In addition, real love and mysticism are represented in this book (Khazaeli, 2000).

It can be said that Sa'di was a deist sage and a great religious educator. *Gulistan* and *Boostan* were the epitome of the expression of his religious, moral, educational and philosophical viewpoints. Thus, this research has been done to extract and analyze his religious educational – philosophical theories from his two great prose and poetry books, *Gulistan* and *Boostan*. In other words, this investigation's focus is on explaining Sa'di's religious philosophy of education in order that a religious educational model and pattern might be designed that could aid educators in formal and informal teaching. Little research has been done in this regard, even though the world today needs a real spiritual and religious educational philosophy. Educational philosophy is a combination of philosophy and education that can be investigated in the branches of ontology, ontology and education, epistemology, epistemology and education, axiology, axiology and education. Anthropology is a sub-set of ontology. In the light of this research, Sa'di's views will be clarified concerning these seven branches.

In other hand, Islamic philosophy is based on the systematic teachings of the Qur'an which can be classified into six general branches: ontology (and its subdivision anthropology), epistemology, axiology and the effects of each branch on education. According to this kind of philosophy, God exists and all the world and humans are created by Him. Human beings can reach to cognition about their own souls, nature, history, etc. through their senses, intellect and hearts.

There are some absolute and constant values which are quite consistent with humans' natures. Educational goal are in harmony with the goals for which human being has been created. Educational methods and contents should nurture humans' cognition tools (senses, intellect and heart). Teachers should improve their students' knowledge and attitudes towards educational values so that these values might manifest in the student behaviors. Sa'di is a Muslim poet, writer and scholar, and paying attention to his poets, writings and theories show that his philosophy is mainly consistent with the Islamic philosophy of education.

## SA'DI'S BELIEF IN GOD

There have been many different views regarding belief in God in different educational-philosophical schools. Idealists and rational realists believe in God. Most naturalists believe in God, as do most pragmatists, except for William James who did not reject God. Some existentialists do not believe in God. Natural realists do not believe in God, or say that, if there is a God, His existence cannot be proven by human beings (Alavi, 2007; Ozman and Craver, 2000; Gutek, 2001).

Sa'di, as a Muslim scholar, believed in God. The spirit of believing in God is quite clear in his works. In those parts of his poems where he spoke of love and fascination, he never meant a worldly beloved. He observed and experienced the effects of belief in God. It is not for nothing that he gave his heart to God. He did not seek God egotistically only for himself; rather, he wanted all human beings to be obedient to such a great and kind God, because such an obedience is to their advantage. It was not only humans who are and should be obedient to God's commandments; it is the entire universe and each of its particles that should submit to God. The hidden and manifest bounties of God in humans' lives are so great and abundant that it is not right that they disobey God. Apart from this, He is the creator of human beings and knows the things and interests that are best for them. God possesses the highest properties and, thus, His worshippers can become relatively similar to Him because of their nearness to Him and His guidance.

Sa'di really believes in God. He starts his *Divan Boostan* (the orchard) with these words: "In the name of God who gave life, the Sage who placed words on the tongue..." (2000, p. 1). Then he tries to define and describe this God and name some of His attributes and characteristics. In Sa'di's view, God is generous and helpful, darling, knowledgeable, tender, bountiful and the helpful one. He is powerful, an everlasting God whose realm is the oldest and His Essence the richest (*Boostan*, pp. 1 - 6). But Sa'di says that "neither can intelligence discover the depth of His essence, nor can thought find out his real qualities" (p. 7).

Sa'di is of the opinion that "if a man would but fix his mind as much on God, as he does on worldly goods, he would surpass the angels" (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, tale VII). Sa'di considers the greatest proof of having arrived at maturity is the fact that one becomes more intent on the means of pleasing the Almighty than in how to gratify the passions (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, tale XI). Sa'di prays, "May there never be at the head of a kingdom a ruler who is not an obedient servant of God" (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale XIX). Sa'di believes that God has created man and he has bestowed on him a soul, with reason, temper, intellect, beauty, speech, judgment, reflection and sensation (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, tale VII).

God is the real guide of his bondmen: "Whosoever thou guidest cannot stray, and whosoever thou causest to

wander hath no guide" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XCI). Therefore, Sa'di himself tries never to forget God (Gulistan, chapter II, tale III), and orders other people not to forget God (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale XVI), because Sa'di believes that "happy is the state of him who keepeth thee, O God, in continual remembrance, although he were in the belly of the whale, like Jonas" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXXVIII). For such good bondmen, Sa'di believes in "hidden mercies" of God: "O brother, who art in distress, be not disheartened, for God hath many hidden mercies" (Gulistan Chapter I, tale XVI).

### **SA'DI'S VIEW ON THE WORLD AND HEREAFTER**

Idealists maintain in general that what is real is in some way confined to, or at least related to, the contents of our own minds (Hamlyn, 2005). Therefore, it can be said that idealism is the philosophical doctrine that reality is somehow mind- correlative or mind- coordinated (Rescher, 2001). Realism is a theory that entities of a certain category exist independently of what we believe or feel about them (Mautner, 2005). Pragmatists believe that there is an independent world apart from man's mind; to the extent this world can be experienced. There are no things that are beyond man's experience. Existentialism reacts against the view that the universe is a closed, coherent, intelligible system (Blackburn, 2005). Naturalists believe that everything is composed of natural entities (Post, 2001).

From their viewpoint, there is a real and independent natural world. As a follower of the Islamic educational philosophy, Sa'di believed that the world has a real and independent existence. He was of the opinion that the world is not only material, but it also has an immaterial aspect. On the basis of this, Sa'di believed in God as an absolute and abstract concept, beyond time and place and who was and who knew about all times and places and all human beings. The world has been purposefully created and all of its events and phenomena are set and formulated carefully and prudently. Although Sa'di mentioned different properties and characteristics regarding the world, it appears that he placed much emphasis on the mortality of the world and the necessity of not becoming overly attached to it. He believed that the Hereafter deserves to be loved and the world in which we live can be considered an introduction to it. Sa'di introduces the world as real but not eternal; therefore one should not expect loyalty from it (Boostan, p. 94). He believes that the world is really fleeting, writing, "Life here is no more than an hour" (p. 113).

Considering different parts of Gulistan and Boostan, it can be concluded that from Sa'di's viewpoint the world is inconstant and man's life is really short and limited. A human's pleasure in this world is mixed with grief and sorrow. Thus, Sa'di believes that such a world does not deserve trust and attachment; rather it is up to all people

to be content and be pious and try to praise the infinite bounties of God and give their hearts to God who is eternal and permanent. It is necessary in this world that all people overlook carnal desires and resist divine trials and hardships. There is no other way for man to achieve happiness than to reject materialism because continence in its highest rank is "not wanting" rather than "not having." But Sa'di accepts that those who can identify such facts that has a good cognition and has possessed sufficient insight and knowledge.

Sa'di believes in the Hereafter and Resurrection Day. He says, "Hear with certainty that on the Day of Certainty no good man will see any wickedness in others" (Boostan, p. 398). Sa'di considered originality and authenticity for the Hereafter. He believed that, since the human beings possess the power of intellect and authority, they are duty- bound and responsible. Sa'di did not consider an infinite power of authority for humans. Sa'di was of the opinion that there should be places, that is, paradise and hell, in which those who have done good deeds should be rewarded and distinguished from those who have not done such good deeds. Since Sa'di considered the immaterial aspect of the world, he believed that humans have spirits, in addition to their bodies. Therefore, Sa'di believed in the world after death, the survival of man's spirit after death and the resurrection day at which time body and spirit are combined and all humans are again made alive and rewarded or punished, according to their worldly actions. Thus, from the viewpoint of Sa'di, death can be considered to be a transformation and not an ending for human beings. In spite of this, he believes in "reward or punishment for one's deeds". He says in this regard, "Do not glance wickedly at others' children, so that your good child will not be ruined" (Boostan, p. 387).

### **SA'DI'S VIEWPOINTS ON HUMAN BEING**

Sa'di believes that man consists of body and soul (spirit). He likens the relationship between these two to the relationship between a bird and a cage, saying that man will be set free from that prison of body someday and will migrate to his eternal abode. Sa'di considers man's soul as a driver that guides him like a roadster all around. Therefore, man's genuineness and identity depends on his soul for those characteristics. He states that the main characteristics that make man superior to other creatures are good character, intellect and courtesy (Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari, 2001).

### **MAN'S CHARACTERISTICS**

According to Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari (2001), the following items can be considered as man's characteristics, from Sa'di's viewpoint:

### **Education-accepting natures**

Sa'di believes that different people have different natures, some of them accepting of education and some not. He states that it is impossible to guide some people, but he wrote *Gulistan* and *Boostan* to guide and educate human beings.

### **Evil tendency**

It can be concluded from Sa'di's writings and works that man's soul is inclined to evils, degradation and corruption and it does not simply surrender to Divine commands.

### **Intellect and thinking**

Sa'di considers intellect and thinking as distinguishing factors that cause man's superiority to other creatures and it is in the light of these two that humans can know truth, solve their problems and expropriate the world for themselves. Sa'di prefers intellect to love. He considers intellect as the light of the way and love as the destination of the way. He believes that it is possible for human being to reach these two things.

### **Love**

In spite of the fact that Sa'di prefers intellect to love, from his viewpoint love is higher than intellect. Therefore, if man's heart is empty of God's love, he is neither man nor animal, but he can be considered among inanimate objects. All disasters, afflictions and difficulties are meaningless against love. It is the light of love that makes man so attracted to God that his spirit surrenders to Him.

### **Seeking God**

Sa'di believes that a substance or an essence is located within man that brings him to God, provided that he moves darkness and egotism away from his heart so that God's light might shine into that heart. Thus, Sa'di emphasizes that it is up to humans to move all sorts of moral corruptions and carnal desires away from their hearts, spirits and souls in order that they be illuminated with God's reality.

### **Being sociable**

Sa'di considers the human society a frame and says that all human beings are a single body so that dejection and sadness for one another is a part of their nature and a sign of their humanity. He says that colour, race, blood-

lines or family ties and nationality can never affect this bond, and he who lacks that virtue of intimacy and sympathy cannot be considered a human. Sa'di considers those who have not yet been able to overcome their egoism and think about more than their own profits as the ignominious dead and he says that demons and beasts are better than they are.

Sa'di believes that there are reasons some people are superior to others. First, they do not try to injure the other people: "The Homai is honored above all other birds because it feeds on bones and injures not any living creature" (*Gulistan* chapter I, tale XV). The second reason is that "obedience insures greatness, whilst disobedience leads to a repulse: whosoever possesseth the qualities of righteousness, placeth his head on the threshold of obedience" (*Gulistan*, chapter I, tale XXV). The third reason is speaking well of the great and not speaking ill of them: "They asked Alexander the Great by what means have you conquests from east to west, since former monarchs, who exceeded you in wealth, in territory, in years and in the number of troops, never gained such victories? He replied, "When, with the assistance of God, I subdued a kingdom, I never oppressed the subjects and always spoke well of their monarchs. The wise consider not him illustrious who speaketh ill of the great, all the following objects are nothing when passed, wealth and dominion, command and prohibition, war and conquest: injure not the name of those who have died with good reputation, in order that, in return, your own good name may be immortal" (*Gulistan*, chapter I, tale XLI). Fourth, he mentions avoiding arrogance: "Who-soever through folly exalts his neck precipitates himself into distress" (*Gulistan*, chapter II, tale XLII). Finally, the fifth trait of a superior being is knowledge: "He replied, "O brother it behooveth me to be the more thankful to the divine creator, since I have found the inheritance of the prophets, that is wisdom and you have got the portion of Pharaoh and Hâman, or the kingdom of Egypt" (*Gulistan*, chapter III, tale II).

Sa'di places much emphasis on the role of destiny or predestination in human lives. There are many sentences in his book *Gulistan* that confirm this fact. For example, he says, "Wealth and power depend not upon skill and cannot be obtained without the assistance of Heaven" (chapter 1, tale XXXLX). In another instance, he admonishes, "A fisherman without luck catcheth not fish in the Tigris; neither wills the fish without doom expire on the dry ground" (chapter, III, tale XXIV). Here is another example: "Holy God, although this had a thousand feet, yet when fate overtook him, he could not escape from one destitute of hands and feet" (chapter III, tale XXV). A final lesson states, "The pigeon that is not to see his nest again, fate conducts to the grain and snare" (chapter III, tale XXVIII). In spite of this, Sa'di believes that one should employ all of his efforts to reach a desired goal: "Although our daily bread doubtlessly may come to us, yet reason requires that we should seek it out of doors"

(chapter III, tale XXVIII). He illustrates this again when he says, "Although we cannot enjoy more than providence has assigned us and we ought not to be negligent in acquiring it" (chapter III, tale XXVIII).

It should be noted that Sa'di believes that "two things are morally impossible; to enjoy more than providence has allotted, or to die before the appointed time. Destiny will not be altered by our uttering a thousand lamentations and sighs, or by our praises or complaints (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXV). He also says, "That which is not allotted, the hand cannot reach; and what is allotted will find you" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXVII). In this way, Sa'di tries to make human beings believe that they should not merely rely on their own abilities. He teaches that "wealth and power depend not upon skill and cannot be obtained without the assistance of Heaven" (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XXXIX). In another passage, he tells us, "If every hair of your head possessed two hundred accomplishments, they would be of no use when fortune is unpropitious (Gulistan, chapter III, tale XXVIII). There are similar statements in Chapter I, Tale XXXIX and Chapter II, Tale XVIII, etc.).

## ROLE OF HERITAGE AND EDUCATION

Sa'di places much emphasis on the determinative role of inheritance and heritage in mankind, to the extent that he says, "An evil root will not thrive in a goodly shade. To educate the worthless is like throwing a walnut upon a dome. Though the clouds should pour down the water of life, you would never gather fruit from the branch of the willow. Waste not your time on low people, for we can never obtain sugar from the reed. The wolf's whelp will at length become a wolf, although it is brought up along with men. How can anyone form a good sword out of bad iron? O ye philosophers, it is impossible to convert a worthless wretch into a good man. The rain, in whose nature there is no partiality, produces tulips in the garden, but only weeds in a barren soil. A sterile soil will not yield spikenard, waste not then seed upon it" (Gulistan, chapter I, tale IV).

In another tale, he says, "When nature has given capacity, instruction will make impression; but if iron is not of a proper temper, no polishing will make it good" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale I). Sa'di believes that "a capacity without education is deplorable" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LVI). He gives some examples of this, saying that "the education is the same, but the capacities are different; although silver and gold are produced from a stone, yet these metals are not to be found in every stone. The star Canopus shines all over the world, but the scented leather comes only from Yemen" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale VI).

Therefore, Sa'di concludes that "an education without capacity is thrown away" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LVI). "A student without inclination is a lover without money; a

traveler without observation, is a bird without wings; a learned man without works, is a tree without fruit; and a devotee without knowledge, is a house without a door" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXI). In spite of this, Sa'di emphasizes the role of education in childhood and believes, "He who is not taught good manners in his childhood will have no good qualities when he arrives at manhood" (Gulistan, chapter XII, tale III). Sa'di likens a child to a piece of green wood that can be bent as much as we please, but when it dries, it cannot be made straight without fire (Gulistan, chapter XII, tale III).

Sa'di believes that good children are so important for their parents and society that "it is better in the opinion of the wise that a woman in labour should bring forth a serpent than wicked children" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale X). Therefore, it is up to educators to teach wisdom to their sons. He counsels, "If you desire your name to be remembered, teach your son wisdom and judgment" (Boostan, pp. 382 - 383). Sa'di places so much emphasis on intellect that he believes if such a son: "lacks both these assets, you will die and have no descendants" (p. 383). Sa'di admonishes that it is up to the parents and educators to take care of their sons and bring them comport, "so that their eyes are not fixed at others' hands, because he who shows no care of his offspring will see him cared for by others and roaming about (Boostan, p. 384).

## Individual differences

Sa'di believes that in spite of some of similarities between different people, there are some differences in their aptitudes as compared with each other, that is, there are differences between their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral aptitudes.

Sa'di says that people should consider the extent of their abilities. He is of the opinion that "whosoever contendeth with the great sheds his own blood. He who thinks himself great has been compared to one who squints and sees double. You will get a broken front by sporting your head against a ram" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XLV). In another example of this, he says, "It is not the part of a wise man to box with a lion, or to strike his fist against a sword.

Neither fight nor contend with one more powerful than yourself; put your hand under your arm-pit" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XLVI). He also warns, "A weak man, who contents with one that is strong, befriends his adversary, by his own death" (Gulistan, chapter XIII tale XLVII). Sa'di emphasizes that the teachers should speak to students in conformity with the temper of the hearer (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XXIX).

## Goals of education

According to Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari (2001), although Sa'di has not explicitly stated the educational

goals in his works, the following goals can be deduced from his sayings and poems:

### ***Detachment***

Sa'di speaks in detail of self-cognition, faith, servitude toward God and praising God in his writings and considers such traits necessary if one desires reaching the position of attachment to God, therefore reach a place that includes all values. Sa'di recognizes serving God as a way to gain esteem, power and greatness and he regrets that the people come and go and do not taste the most pleasurable and enjoyable pleasures of sincere devotion and absolute sincerity, which will cause wisdom springs to flow from his heart to his tongue.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of education, from Sa'di's viewpoint, is cognition of the exalted God and devotion to him. He says the way to reach this state is through the soul and being detached so that one acquires inner purity or good morality and is able to surrender to God.

### ***Cultivation of spirit***

Sa'di considers the cultivation of spirit as the basis of education and man's personality, and believes that it is impossible to cultivate spirit without purification of soul and banishing carnal desires, arrogance, rancor, oppression. He says it is also impossible without acquiring moral virtues such as humility, modesty, benevolence, justice, magnanimousness and magnanimity.

### ***Health of body***

Sa'di considers man as consisting of physical body and spiritual soul. He states that spirit's cultivation is by itself desirable and the major goal. However, he considers procurement of health and the power of body and satisfying its needs as desirable intermediate goals for the purpose of worship of God and rendering service to people. He warns humans against indolence. Sa'di mentions four points regarding health of body: (1) avoiding gluttony, (2) moderation, (3) preservation of greatness and magnanimity and (4) refraining from idleness.

### ***Social adjustment***

From the viewpoint of Sa'di, social adjustment leading to peaceful coexistence is desirable as we aspire to the perfection of the ideal society. He imagines a Utopia in which these two things are the firm foundation of each individual in such society. That's the reason that Sa'di, in all parts of Gulistan and Boostan, speaks of characteristics of the individuals in a desired society and mentions such properties as justice, humility, peace, benevolence, sympathy and contentment as the

characteristics of the desirable society. Sa'di mentions the following items as the factors which create social adjustment: (1) justice, (2) humility, (3) self-esteem and uprightness and (4) benevolence and goodness.

### ***Kinds of education***

Sa'di has a comprehensive view of education. He considers all kinds of education and considers them as complementary of each other. According to Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari (2001), kinds of education from the viewpoint of Sa'di can be classified as follows:

#### ***Intellectual education***

Sa'di considers intellect as the great gift of God. He believes that if intellect governs man's existence and being, then the carnal soul will have no power to fight with intellect and man will be able to reach perfection. It is in this way that man speaks thoughtfully, avoids pretentiousness, takes lessons from every happening, swallows his anger, quells his lust and is not avaricious. Sa'di believes that the soul's purification and deliverance from the captivity of gluttony and lust is the first step of intellectual education. He considers talkativeness, pretentiously not speaking when it is necessary to speak and speaking when an event does not deserve speech as the characteristics of ignorant people.

#### ***Religious education***

Sa'di frequently speaks in Gulistan and Boostan of God, His greatness, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, creation manifestations and of the hereafter and resurrection day. He invites people to religion and religious education. He has considers religion and faith as the basis of a man's life and he even considers knowledge as the means of cultivating religion's. He emphasizes knowledge and good deeds in religious education and recognizes the religious knowledge as the means of bringing man to his spiritual purpose. He says good deeds are the result of that religious knowledge. Sa'di places emphasis on three points in religious education: (1) God's remembrance, (2) lamentation and supplication for morality and (3) thinking of the hereafter.

#### ***Mystical education***

Sa'di is aware of mystical thoughts and he frequently speaks in his works of mystical education, deep emotion, exaltation, love, self-sacrifice and detaching God and welcoming hardships for the sake of God and annihilation in divine essence.

He has allocated the third part of Gulistan to love, deep

emotion and exaltation and says that it is up to the mystic seeker to start the journey to the infinite region of cognition and mysticism by self-refinement and overcoming the carnal soul, until he gradually reaches a place where there is no trace of his own name and remembrance.

### **Moral education**

Sa'di frequently speaks of moral virtues and high human values such as forgiveness, chivalrousness, sympathy, compassion, justice, magnanimity, goodness, righteousness and contentment in *Gulistan* and *Boostan* and has allocated many chapters of these two books to moral education. He considers himself to be an educator of morality and as an admonisher. Sa'di's art is in his ability to express skillfully and artistically the moral virtues and admonishments using beautiful, eloquent, fluent and rhythmical statements in order that the reader might accept them and might not become tired of them. Sa'di has particularly emphasized moral education and has introduced moral education and acquisition of good morality as the purpose of the mission of the prophet of Islam and the aim of the Qur'an's revelation. He considers bad-temperedness and moral degeneration as factors that will cause man to fall into a burning hell and eternal punishment. Sa'di believes that moral education is very difficult and requires much time. He emphasizes two fundamental points in moral education. Sa'di is of the opinion that moral education should begin in childhood because if a bad habit is positioned in a man's nature or soul, it cannot be easily omitted. Secondly, Sa'di believes that the success of moral education is dependent upon a good educator who has virtue and knowledge, does good deeds, has a right speech and has educated his own soul before educating others.

### **SA'DI'S VIEWS ON KNOWLEDGE**

Sa'di placed great importance on knowledge and wisdom. He believed that man's senses, intellect and hearth are the means of obtaining knowledge. One can acquire knowledge from resources such as, according to Sa'di: human beings, nature, history and literature. Having such a deep and comprehensive knowledge is one of the preference factors of humans which, in turn, can result in true religiosity, another of the people's preference factors.

Sa'di puts such an emphasis on knowledge and wisdom that he introduces the idea that a religious man without knowledge is an enemy to religion (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale XIX). He also calls power without design ignorance and madness. Thus, he concludes that "the first requisites are judgment, prudence, and wisdom and then a kingdom; because putting power and wealth into the hand of the ignorant is furnishing weapons against

themselves" (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale LIX). Sa'di also introduces the idea that knowledge can be used as a weapon for combating Satan (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale LXII). Sa'di considers understanding and good manners as the precondition of humanity (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, tale XI). Sa'di says that a learned man, who is known to be so because of his sweet speeches, powerful eloquence and store of knowledge is universally sought after and respected (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, tale XXVIII). In addition, he says, "These are only the wise that the affairs should be entrusted to them" (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale VI).

Sa'di believes that "science is to be used for the preservation of religion and not for the acquisition of wealth. Whosoever prostituted his abstinence, reputation and learning for gain, formed a granary and then consumed it entirely" (*Gulistan*, chapter VIII, tale IV). Sa'di takes lessons from the growth of plants, the beauty of a garden, freshness of trees, coloration of fruits, different states of nature, shedding leaves in autumn, death of people and reaches the highest ranks of truth. He also takes lesson from the lives people who lived before him and from the propitious ones and from the miserable ones (Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari, 2001).

Meanwhile, Sa'di emphasizes that it is up to people to take lessons from life experiences: He instructs, "Another time if you are not able to endure the sting, put not your finger into the scorpion's hole" (*Gulistan*, chapter I, tale XVI). And he advises, "On an affair of importance, employ a man of experience, who will bring the devouring lion into his trammels. A young man though he has strength of arm and is powerful as an elephant, will feel his joints quaking with fear, in the day of battle. A man of experience is as well qualified to act in war, as the learned man is to expound a case of law" (*Gulistan*, chapter VII, Tale XVII). Paying attention to life and its events will cause us to understand that "the death of my enemy is no cause of joy to me, since neither is my own life eternal" (*Gulistan*, Chapter I, tale XXXVII). In another example, he says, "In such a position, man reaches this place where he understands the plaintive notes and doleful lamentations of the nightingales in the trees, the partridges in the mountains, the frogs in the water and the brutes in the desert. Therefore, he himself reflects that it does not become a human being, through neglect of his duty, to be asleep, whilst all other creatures are celebrating the praises of God and it is not consistent with the laws of human nature, that whilst a bird is reciting the praises of God, he should be silent" (*Gulistan*, chapter II, tale XXVI).

### **Hidden and informal education**

Since Sa'di believed the sources of knowledge are unlimited, he did not confine himself to formal and classic textbooks. He placed particular emphasis on informal

learning, by which the students try to take lessons from the great school of nature and the individual events of their lives and the lives of other people, in all places and times. Thus, people should not confine themselves to the appearance of matters; rather, they should make great effort to get to the essence of matters and subjects and try to comprehend their truth. The educational method of storytelling utilized by Sa'di in both poetry and prose can be considered as an epitome of the teaching methods. Therefore, students should be committed to this approach in that they not only study history books, for example, but also must pay great attention to all of history, nature and all human beings, if they wish to reach the highest educational goals. This is also a task of all scholars and authorities in the educational system. Sa'di believes in hidden learning and learning from all things: For example, he relates, "They asked Lokman from whom he had learnt urbanity. He replied, 'From those of rude manners; for whatsoever I saw in them that was disagreeable, I avoided doing the same.' Not a word can be said, even in the midst of sport, from which a wise man will not derive instruction" (Gulistan. Chapter II, tale XXI).

Sa'di believes in "informal learning" and says, "Listen to the discourse of the learned man with the utmost attention" (Gullistan. Chapter II, tale XXXVIII). Sa'di wants all people to pay attention to the admonitions of the advisers and take lessons from them. He says, "Know you not, that you will see your feet in fetters, when you listen not to the admonition of mankind" (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XVI). Sa'di believes that "admonish" comes before "confinement," saying, "Great men first admonish and then confine; when they give advice and you listen not, they put you in fetters" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XC). Sa'di says that it is up to humans to admonish even though the other does not listen: "Admonish and exhort as your duty requires; if they mind not, it does not concern you. Although thou knowest that they will not listen, nevertheless speak whatever you know that is advisable. It will soon come to pass that you will see the silly fellow with his feet in the stocks, there smiting his hands and exclaiming, 'Alas! that I did not listen to the wise man's advice'" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale V). Sa'di also believes, "The fortunate take warning from the histories and precepts of the ancients, in order that they not become an example to posterity" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XC). Therefore, Sa'di orders all people, "Take warning by the misfortunes of others, that others may not take example from you" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XC).

### Teaching methods

Teaching and instruction methods should bring the students to the educational goals. Therefore, to reach the goals envisioned by Sa'di, there is emphasis on such activities as question and answer and improved lecture

methods. He also suggested some points in teaching, instruction and learning that can improve students' education. He not only emphasized paying attention to the techniques of speaking or talking, but also placed much emphasis on the distinct role of silence as one of the greatest techniques or methods of increasing and improving educational policies.

The importance of questioning and asking from Sa'di's viewpoint is revealed when he says, "They asked Imam Mursheed Mohammad Ben Mohammad Ghazaly, (on who is the mercy of God!) by what means he had attained such a degree of knowledge. He replied, 'In this manner, whatever I did not know, I was not ashamed to enquire about...'" He tells people to inquire about every thing you do not know; "since for the small trouble of asking, you will be guided in the respectable road of knowledge (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXVII). However, he also notes "that whenever you are certain that any thing will be known to you in time, be not hasty in inquiring after it" (Gulistan, chapter VIII,, tale LXXVIII). One should think and then answer. He says that "who-soever doth not reflect before he giveth an answer, will generally speak improperly" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XXXVI).

Sa'di refers to three points in applying the question-and-answer method. First, we should question for knowledge: He believes that one should not ask a question for pedantry, ostentation and dawdling and for getting information about the other's private and personal affairs. Therefore, if the questioner receives his answer without asking and with patience and silence, it is not necessary that he asks a question. Second, ask questions of the wise ones: Sa'di is of the opinion that one should ask educated, knowledgeable and well-intentioned scholars. Third, he believes in the necessity of a well-thought-out answer. When a wise person wants to give the answer to a question, he will do this in a thought-provoking way, technically and with good intentions because the unexamined speech can mislead instead of increasing knowledge (Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari, 2001).

When speaking and questioning or answering, Sa'di emphasizes not interrupting the others. "No one confesses his own ignorance, excepting he who begins speaking whilst another is talking; and before the discourse is ended" (Gulistan, chapter IV, tale VII). The reason Sa'di says this is that "a discourse hath a commencement and a conclusion" (Gulistan, chapter IV, tale VII). In another instance, he says, "Whosoever interrupts the conversation of others, to make a display of his own wisdom, certainly betrays his ignorance" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXXII). And he adds, "A wise man speaketh not until they ask him a question" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXXII). Sa'di orders all people, "Till you perceive a convenient time for conversing, lose not your own consequence by talking to no purpose" (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XIII). Sa'di says that when a business can



be managed without his interference, it is not proper for him to speak on the subject; but if he sees a blind man in the way of a well, if he keeps silence, it is a crime (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XXXVIII). Therefore, Sa'di concludes, "Until you are persuaded that the discourse is strictly proper, speak not; and whatever you know will not obtain a favourable answer, ask not" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale XIII). "He who listens not to advice, studies to hear reprehension. When advice gains not admission into the ear, if they reprehend you, be silent" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XLVIII).

### Encouragement and punishment

Teaching methods and instructional content alone are not sufficient to bring students to the educational goals. It is also necessary to utilize particular techniques to improve and accelerate the gradual progress of students toward those goals. Encouragement and punishment of students are necessary techniques. The reasons for using these two are the same: leading students to educational goals. It is necessary for educators and teachers to be the epitome of both authority and affection, so students will both respect and love them.

A teacher should be the epitome of affection and authority. He explains, "Anger, when excessive, createth terror; and kindness out of season destroys authority" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XVIII). Therefore, Sa'di believes that teachers should be not so severe as to cause disgust, nor so lenient as to encourage audacity. Severity and lenity should be tempered together; a wise man carries not severity to excess, nor suffers such relaxation as will lessen his own dignity. Thus, one should be complacent, but not to that degree that they may insult him with the sharp teeth of the wolf (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XVIII). Sa'di believes that one should use both encouragement and punishment in a timely manner, adequately and thoughtfully, because undue, unnecessary and unexamined anger and punishment makes the student truant and the undue encouragement makes him or her arrogant, egoistic and exigent to the extent that the he does not obey the teacher or the educator. From the viewpoint of Sa'di, encouragement and motivating others is of particular importance and can influence them for better performance to accomplish the desired goals (Gulistan, chapter I, tale III).

Sa'di puts emphasis on praise the student and says in this regard, "If you wish to preserve peace with your enemy, whenever he slanders you in your absence, in return praise him to his face; at any rate as the words will issue from the lips of the pernicious man, if you wish that his speech should not be bitter, make his mouth sweet" (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XXIV). Sa'di does not think it advisable to overindulge in blame, when the blame is necessary (Gulistan, chapter I, tale XVI). It appears that Sa'di affirms punishment when necessary. Sa'di says, "A

king sent his son to school and placed a silver tablet under his arm. On the face of the tablet was written in gold, "The severity of the master is better than the indulgence of the father" (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale IV). However, punishment should be the last method in education and not the first one. He professes, "When the hand has failed in every trick, it is lawful to draw the sword" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XV). "Forgiveness is commendable, but applies not ointment to the wound of an oppressor. Knoweth he not that whosoever spareth the life of a serpent, committeth injury towards the sons of Adam (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XVI). The reason Sa'di confirms punishment in some cases is that "An enemy does not become a friend, through indulgence; nay, it increases his avarice. Be humble unto him who shows you kindness" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXXI). In another tale, he adds, "When you speak to a low fellow with kindness and benignity, it increases his arrogance and perverseness" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXI). He believes the base men do not deserve affections because "when you connect yourself with base men and show them favour, they commit crimes with your power, whereby you participate in their guilt" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale VIII). Ans in another instance, he says, "When you support and favour the vicious, you commit wickedness with your power, by participation (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LIII).

### SA'DI'S VIEWPOINTS ON VALUE

Sa'di believed in absolute and constant or unchangeable values which, because of their harmony with human nature, do not change and are valuable for all human beings in all times and places. Sa'di paid particular attention to artistic representation of moral and religious values, adornment of speech and drawing attention of all humans to the beauty that surrounds them. These principles may all be due to the fact that he believed in humans' attraction to beauty. Sa'di considered good behaviour, virtue and beneficence as the factors leading people to humanity. Therefore, he wanted all people to be committed to these values. The importance of morality from Sa'di's viewpoint is so great that he says, "The Koran was revealed that men might learn good morals" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXII). Sa'di considers "understanding, good manners, liberality, benevolence and virtue" to be the requisites of humanity: "If a person forty years of age hath not understanding and good manners, of a truth he ought not to be called a man. Manhood is composed of liberality and benevolence; do not imagine that it consists merely in the material form: virtue also is requisite.... When a man hath not virtue and benevolence, what is the difference between him and the figure on the wall? It is not wisdom to acquire worldly wealth, but to gain one single heart" (chapter VII, tale XI). Sa'di singles out the passion of lust because the more

you indulge, the more it increases its enmity (Gulistan, chapter VII, tale XIX).

Sa'di places much emphasis on self-sacrifice and states, "Blessed is he for whom the welfare of mankind is far superior to his own comfort" (Boostan, p. 63). That's why he believes: "no patrons of art and protectors of people preferred their own joys to the sorrows of others (p. 63). Sa'di also believes that: "worship and piety are nothing but serving people" (p. 65). And he says: "How can a rich man enjoy his bite, when he sees a poor man afflicted with hunger?" (p. 76). Or "Only such a person was victorious in the field whose thought centered on public welfare (p. 95). In another story, he says, "He can rest peacefully under the earth from whom the people rest in tranquility.... If you do not wish to be distressed in life, do not forget who are in distress" (p. 135). Another of his maxims says, "Bring comfort to distressed hearts, so that life offers you peace and composure" (p. 160). This is another on the subject: "God does readily grant to that servant of His who brings comfort to the life of people... one who is benevolent to God's creatures will receive favours in both worlds" (pp. 164-165). Finally, he says, "Men have won superiority through self-sacrifice" (p. 166).

Sa'di emphasizes good character and wants people to avoid bad companions (Gulistan, chapter, tale XXXII). He says, "If you eat colocynth from the hand of a kind man, it is preferable to a sweet-meat given by one who has a crabbed countenance" (Gulistan, chapter III, tale XI). Sa'di considers the power of the good tempered so great that he says, "By using sweet words and gentleness, you may lead an elephant with a hair" (Gulistan, chapter III, tale XXVIII). Sa'di also speaks of fair thought or favourable opinion toward others and emphasizes, "Whomsoever thou seest in a religious habit, consider as a pious and a good man, if you know not what is hidden in his mind: what business hath the Mohtesib with the inside of the house" (Gulistan, chapter II, tale I). That's the reason Sa'di also speaks of beauty in different parts of Gulistan and considers it as a very important matter which can influence others and can overshadow many other bad properties (example, chapter III, tale XXVIII; chapter V, tale XVI and XVII and XVIII and XIV and XX; chapter XVI, tale II). He deals with this subject in at least eight tales. Sa'di believes that it is possible for man to comprehend the pains through experiencing them, telling this parable to illustrate. "Joseph the just, when there was a famine in Egypt, ate not his fill, in order that he might not forget those who were hungry.... He who lives in ease and wealth, how can he know what it is to be hungry? He knows the condition of the distressed, whose own circumstances are needy" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale LXIII). In tale XIX, he says, "The pain of a wound affects not those who are in health. I will not disclose my grief but to those who have tasted the same affliction. It was fruitless to talk of a hornet to them, who never felt the sting. Whilst thy mind is not affected like mine, the

relation of my sorrow seems only an idle tale. Compare not my anguish to the cares of another man; he only holds the salt in his hand, but it is I who bear the wound in my body" (Gulistan, chapter 5, tale XIX). Sa'di emphasizes "moderation" in all deeds. For example, he says, "There is no harm in visiting men, but let it not be so often that they may say, 'It is enough. 'If you correct yourself, you will not need reprehension from another" (Gulistan, chapter II, tale XXX).

## SA'DI'S VIEWS ON EDUCATIONAL VALUES

Sa'di is of the opinion that man's personality and character is gradually made and speech and behaviour progressively affect it. Doing only one or a few good deeds cannot cause a good personality to be made; rather it is continuance and repetition of behaviours that gradually cause man's personality to be formed (Beheshti, Faqih and Abuja'fari, 2001, p. AA). Sa'di believes humans can educate themselves and one of the most important lessons is learned by fighting with one's carnal or sensual desires. Sa'di says in this regard, "The subject is foresight, disposition and being good and not the horse, field, polo and the ball. You are co-habitant with hostile self; why do you care about combat with strangers? No one need worry about an enemy like you when you cannot deal with your own self.... Lust, avidity, haughtiness and envy are like blood in the veins and a spirit in the body. If these enemies find the chance to get strong, then they never obey your judgment and command. But carnal desires are never able to fight when they see the sharp claws of intelligence" (Boostan, pp. 348 - 349).

From the viewpoint of Sa'di, knowledge should be accompanied by piety because "a learned man, without temperance, is a blind man carrying a link; he showeth the road to others, but doth not guide himself" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale V). That's because Sa'di believes that "sin by whomsoever committed is detestable, but most so in a learned man.... An ignorant plebeian of dissolute manners is better than a learned man without temperance; for that through blindness, lost the road and this, who had two eyes, fell into the well" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXII). Sa'di introduces a person who had knowledge, but made no use of it, comparing him to a person who died and carried with him regret (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale CVI). In another tale with this theme, Sa'di says, "A lawyer said to his father, those fine speeches of the declaimers make no impression on me, because I do not see that their actions correspond with their precepts. They teach people to forsake the world, whilst they accumulate property. A wise man, who preaches without practicing, will not impress others. That person is wise who abstaineth from sin, not he who teacheth well to others, whilst he committeth evil. The wise man who indulges in sensual gratifications being he

bewildered how can he guide others?" (Gulistan, chapter II, tale XXXVIII). Sa'di believes that "knowledge" should be partnered with "action." "Two persons took trouble in vain and used fruitless endeavors; he who acquired wealth, without enjoying it; and he who taught wisdom, but did not practice it. How much so ever you may study science, when you do not act wisely, you are ignorant" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale III). Sa'di likens the learned man without work to a tree without fruit and a devotee without knowledge as a house without a door" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale LXXI). He also likens a learned man without work to a bee without honey (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale LXXII). Or he says, "Whosoever acquired knowledge and did not practice it, resembleth him who ploughed but did not sow" (Gulistan, chapter XIII, tale XL). Sa'di says the behavior of one person can strongly affect that of others, since one corrupted individual can lead astray and seduce all of the individuals. "When one of any tribe commits an act of folly, there is no distinction between high and low, the whole being dishonored" (Gulistan, chapter II, tale V). "By the means of one disorderly person in a company, the hearts of many wise men become afflicted" (Gulistan, chapter II, tale V).

It should also be noted that "whosoever associates with the wicked, although he may not imbibe their principles, will be accused of following their ways" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale LXXX). Sa'di considers the role of friends so important matter that he wants educators to keep their children from evil companions, "who will mislead and ruin him like themselves." Sa'di says: "a son who sits among wandering libertines may as well be wholly forsaken by his father; do not be sorry if he is annihilated or destroyed, for it is better that such an unworthy son be dead before his father" (Boostan, pp. 384 - 385). "Whosoever associates with the wicked, will not see good...; you cannot learn virtue from the wicked" (Gulistan, chapter VIII, tale XXXVIII). Sa'di believes that the influence of teachers and educators on students is undeniable. Therefore, he recounts some stories from governors and ministers' who entrusted children to teachers. Sa'di has considered his own success and the success of every child because of obedience to the teacher and tasting the teacher's punishment (Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari, 2001).

Educators and teachers by their good deeds and speeches should be a good model and example for their students (Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari, 2001). Sa'di places much emphasis on mutual affection between educator and student and believes it is necessary that such affection be stated. Such affection causes the behaviours of educator and student to be well directed, good deeds to be done and bad action to be avoided (Beheshti, Faqihi and Abuja'fari, 2001). It is quite possible for a person to be his or her own educator. On the other hand, Sa'di believed that fighting against one's own capriciousness is the way to be guided to some particular kinds of knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary that

science be accompanied by piety, especially considering the facts that it may well be that one individual's deeds will seriously affect other people.

Students' personalities form gradually. Each student sees the values according to his or her personality. One of the most basic reasons for the fact that some people do not love the spiritual values is that they have a dark personality. It is up to teachers to do what is necessary for their students to acquire a deep and comprehensive knowledge regarding values, so they can acquire good attitudes toward these values. Having such an attitude will then cause them to act in accordance with these values. One of the factors that increase the success of students in this educational process is that their own teachers serve as educational models for them. That is why Sa'di himself, as the educator and teacher of humanity, was the epitome of one whose speech, writings and deeds were mixed with knowledge and wisdom. It also explains why he made such great effort to inform all the world of the educational values of considering and observing the necessary techniques of spiritual propagation.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this paper that Sa'di was a religious educator and poet whose views regarding education and literature were affected by his Islamic philosophy, worldview and weltanschauung. His ideas about morality and education constitute a systematic framework and model which can be applied by educators in real-life situations. It can be concluded from Sa'di's theories and opinions in this regard that God is One and Unique, possesses the best attributes, is able to do all things and that no one can do anything without His power. God will lay some hidden mercies upon His good bondmen. The goal of education is leading the students to such a God, especially considering the fact that seeking God is one of the characteristics of human beings. That's the reason religious and mystical educations are two important kinds of education. The main reason for man's superiority is his obedience to God. The world is not eternal; rather it is fleeting, fickle and mixed with different sorrows and man's life in this world is too short; therefore, contentment and continence are necessary in this world. Man is a combination of body and spirit and his spirit will remain after his death, and hereafter and resurrection day are definite for human beings. Knowledge is of great importance and since intellect and thinking are human characteristics, if man obeys his intellect orders, there is no place for his anger and lust. Thus, it is necessary to teach children and students wisdom and intellectual education will be very important in order to achieve moral education. All the nature and life experiences can be considered as resources of knowledge and cognition; therefore, education is not limited to a particular time and

place; rather formal and informal education are necessary for cultivation of all many aspects of man's personality: physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral in all times and places. Those teachings and instructional methods which can help the individuals to reach this goal are acceptable. Morality, spirituality and religiosity are the prerequisites of humanity and lead the individual to tranquility and happiness. Man himself, along with his companions and his teachers, can be very effective in his religious education.

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