

VI International Forum on Teacher Education

## Moral and Spiritual Values in Works of Nasreddin Tusi

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### Abstract

This article studies some moral and spiritual views in the works of the prominent Azerbaijani astronomer, mathematician, philosopher, teacher and enlightener Nasreddin Tusi -“Ehlaghi Nasiri” and “Rules of Etiquette of Teachers and those Who Get Education”. The article determines the role of Nasreddin Tusi in modern history of pedagogical conceptions as well as in the sphere of upbringing theory and their influence on personality development. Nasreddin Tusi’s judgments and conclusions concerning philosophical basis and purity of moral, family management and upbringing of children, political government of country and peaceableness are known.

In the course of judgments based on thorough scientific researches the authors lead a reader to the conclusion that N.Tusi indeterminig the object – basic foundation of each science paid special attention to the presence of these factors in upbringing theory.

The authors consider various aspects of influence of N. Tusi’s speech peculiarities on the formation of moral and spiritual values from the point of view of modern pedagogics and also analyze and determine their role in the development of the rising generation which is especially important for society nowadays.

*Keywords:* education, heritage, upbringing, ethics, pedagogics, morals, spirituality.

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Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2020 (VI International Forum on Teacher Education)

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## **Introduction**

Education liberates mind from dependence. The future of modern society depends on education.

In the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries the Near and the Middle East, there were the centres of advanced scientific ideas. Philosophy, mathematics and astronomy owe a lot to outstanding scientists of this part of the globe: an algebraist, founder of algebraic science – Muhammedibn Musa Khorezmi (the 9th century), known in the West under the latinized name Algorithmus; a philosopher, astronomer and geometrist A bu Reikhan Biruni (973-1048); a physician, philosopher and astronomer Abu Ali ibnSina (980-1037) known in the West under the name of Avicenna; a philosopher, algebraist, geometrist and poet Omar Hayam (1040-1128); a geometrist Tabrizi (the 10<sup>th</sup> century) known in the West under the name of Anaritius (Dinorshoev, 1987; Mardanov & Aslanov, 2016; Aslanov & Gasanova, 2017).

The history of science knows only few names which could be compared to the name of Nasireddin Tusi in its uniqueness. There was, however, a “golden thread” connecting all his works and it was his astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, pedagogics and many others. In the history of mathematics within the history of exact knowledge and philosophy, Nasireddin Tusi will always belong to the number of the greatest founders side by side with Muhammed ibn Musa Khorezmi, Biruni, Abu Ali ibnSina, O. Hayam.

Ibn Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn Gasan Tusi (1201-1274) known under the name of Nasreddin Tusi is a universal scientist. His works were dedicated to the most diverse fields of knowledge. The first Muhammed is his name, the second Muhammed is his father’s name, ibn Gasan is his grandfather’s name. His pseudonym Tusi points to his relation to the town of Tus. As for the word Nasreddin, it can be said that the word Nasir means “helping” and the word Nasreddin means “helping to religion”. It should be noted that he had assumed the name of Nasir by himself. The great Azerbaijani writer M.F. Akhundov and poet M.V. Vidadi as well as others called him Nasir Tusi. A number of historians note that Nasireddin Tusi either was born in the town of Tus or got education there and because of that he chose this pseudonym. He had three sons and a daughter. Before the thirteenth century his children lived in Maraga and then moved to the north of Azerbaijan. His family lived in Ordubad and Vanandad (Mamedbeyli, 1957). In 1274, N. Tusi fell ill on the way to Baghdad and died on June 25 of the same year. The scientist is buried in the Jalil Mesjid mosque near the grave of the seventh imam Museyi Kyazym. The following words are carved on his tombstone: “Shakh of the world of science, Sultan of scientist. Defender of religion, justice, people. Mothers did not give birth to such sons as yet”.

Nasireddin Tusi is a unique phenomenon as a personality and a learned teacher in the field of mathematical education. N. Tusi was known among scholars in natural science and mathematicians due to his works on

astronomy, geometry, algebra and trigonometry but he became famous for the people by his work “Ehlaghi Nasiri” written in 1235 during his stay in Gakhistan and dedicated to Nasir, ruler of Gahistan. The book “Ehlaghi Nasiri” (Nasir’s Ethics) won fame all over the East. After a short time the book spreads in the Caucasus, Iran, Middle Asia, India and other countries. In subsequent years one copy of the book reaches Meng and Khulag khans. Having read the book they expressed Tusi their respect and gratitude.

The main place in the work “Ehlaghi Nasiri” is occupied by N. Tusi’s ideas about spiritual values. The role of upbringing and education is a matter of common knowledge in modern world. A person is distinguished from others by his upbringing and his essence is developed only through upbringing. The value of a person can also be revealed by the degree of his education and upbringing.

The work “Ehlaghi-Nasiri” (Nasir Ethics) is “practical wisdom” and consist of 3 main sections: “Purification of Ethics”, “Prudence of Domestic Science” and “Governing the Country”. The book chiefly comprises 3 articles:

- 1) The first article “Purification of Ethics” consists of 2 parts: the first part – “Fundamentals” – contains 7 chapters, the second part – “Objectives” – contains 10 chapters;
- 2) The second article – “Prudence of House” – contains 5 chapters;
- 3) The third article – “Rules of Governing the Country” – contains 8 chapters.

The principal feature of the work is organic unity of ancient Greek philosophy, upbringing theory of ancient Persia, traditions of classical Arabic poetry, spiritual values of Islamic religion as well as theory and experience of spiritual life of Azerbaijan systematized into a single whole.

First of all are elucidated the basics of upbringing of that period. The study of national, ethical and spiritual values in Tusi’s upbringing theory is very important at all stages of history as it is our spiritual wealth. In this sense the study of Tusi’s views relating to spiritual values acquires serious importance not only in terms of comprehending cultural heritage but also regarding their use in the process of today’s upbringing. As was noted above, it was Tusi who had glorified in this work such categories as moral duty, patriotism, friendship of peoples, lofty humanism, diligence, dignity, truthfulness, hospitality, modesty, amicability, devotion, faithfulness etc.

In this work, N. Tusi displayed himself as a skilled teacher and talented instructor. Speaking about person’s innate abilities, about the influence of surroundings on his formation and development the author underlines an important part of education and upbringing in this matter. Good, conscience, mercy justice,

moral duty, happiness, honor, dignity, modesty, sincerity etc. are such valuable traits which people for centuries had attributed to spiritual wealth having special importance in the process of human interrelations and generally in life. In different periods of history of human society people's ideas concerning a person's attitude towards another person, to labour, nation, groups of other individuals, society and mankind as a whole changed. Therefore, rules of behavior, ethical principles were not the same either. However, in spite of this each nation had its own spiritual values which passed through filter of history and constitute spiritual wealth up to the present. As regards the upbringing there also was a single criterion which was guided by in determining a personality's level in ethical aspect. In a certain period, when giving a moral evaluation of a personality society took into account the person's attitude towards good, evil, justice, conscience, mercy, happiness, honour, dignity etc. Such ethical categories had become deeply rooted in moral condition and consciousness of every individual, formed the basis of life style, rules of behavior of each specific personality.

N. Tusi proposed original theoretical ideas that reflected moral values and experience of a number of human race generations. These ideas have reached us mainly in the form of theoretical generalizations based on practice of instructions, suggestions, citations and advice. Of course, it is impossible to purify a person's moral spirit significantly only by directions and lectures. However, directions and advice are not quite useless under favorable conditions of life. If somebody remains indifferent and will not listen to wise advice, clever instructions, directions of outstanding personalities, this person deprives himself of a lot of things. While staying listless in the process of preserving moral and spiritual values, a person puts to doubt and even essentially loses his national self - consciousness, his national belonging.

The investigations have demonstrated that according to N. Tusi's upbringing theory, all personal characteristic traits, both positive and negative without exception, are sure to form under the impact of surroundings and upbringing as well and this thought runs through his theory. A person is not born bad, harmful or with wonderful ethical features. Good and evil are not inherent in a person primarily, from his birth. They are a product of surroundings, outer world, and upbringing. A person acquires positive and negative traits only through his upbringing.

It is not accidentally that in this sense in N. Tusi had unveiled in his peculiar manner the gist of the above said and the title of the first article of his book "Ehlaghi Nasiri" – "Ehlaghin Saflashdyrylmasy" (Purification of Morals) (Schmidt, 1913). In N.Tusi's opinion, each science must have its basis which should be studied first of all; otherwise it is impossible to master any science. In explaining the bases of other sciences (medicine, mathematics) he states the main objective and theme of his "science of upbringing": so, the subject of this science is "human passion", a desire with which are connected all

human actions: good and laudatory, bad and blameworthy directly depending on the will of a personality itself (Ehlaghi, 1989; Isayev, 2007). From this it becomes clear that according to N.Tusi, all spiritual values: good, conscience, mercy, dignity, courage, justice (impartiality, fairness), happiness, honour, love, friendship, comradeship, patriotism etc. are in the broad sense displayed in passion, desire and are constituents of the essence of this notion. N.Tusi in unveiling the content of “passion” first of all tries to elucidate this notion “it means that primarily it is necessary to find out from what a person consists of, a person’s passions, their borders and the degree of a person’s perfection, amount of his strength, to reveal the cause of his failures, sins, mistakes in the right application of these forces or, on the contrary, to learn, what prevents him from obtaining happiness”. As is seen, N.Tusi, considering that “passion” is a special factor for obtaining happiness had perceived this notion in the broad sense. He endeavors to prove that such categories as “spirit”, “psychics”, “spiritual state”, “intelligence”, “consciousness”, “perception” are characteristic of all beings including inanimate ones, he has shown that the essence of plants is formed precisely by these above named categories – so, they possess spiritual essence, but he noted that these categories are in no way identified with matter. “Passion”, especially its human or speech aspect is called “simple essence”, “substance” by N.Tusi”. It is always taken to be over everything (as a superstructure category). It should be known that a body subjected to the process of decomposition retains “speech passion” even after decay. There is not any connection between death and “speech passion”, on the contrary, it is never destructible, breakable, i.e. passion is not subject to death (Ishagi, 1979; Ehlaghi, 1989).

To explain a “desire passion” category N.Tusi produces six conditions and endeavors to clarify all them separately in different items and to prove their existence. For the take of visibility he brings examples of “passion”, “desire” taken from nature or from everyday life proving thus the existence of “passion”, “desire”, its essence, simplicity, elementariness as well as non-materiality and declaring that this is something inexplicable, implicated, non-evident which can be understood solely and only through itself and cannot be taken by any sensory organs.

At an early stage of society development a person did not differ much from an animal in his way of existence, acts, activity. “At this stage, distinctions and superiorities are natural; afterwards, at later stages, his successes are due only to his will, ability to observe and, of course, capabilities” (Ehlaghi, 1989, p. 56). In Tusi’s opinion, a person using these advantages masters worthy traits of personality. “It is characteristic of those people who discover useful trades and find in themselves capabilities of making necessary complicated working instruments, mental efforts, purposeful thinking, who are inclined to talent and resourcefulness. N. Tusi raises to the highest point of development those who strive for trades, profession and science putting a lot of zeal, thoughts and mental power into this. Following moral requirements these personalities assume such tasks as putting in order affairs on the Earth, helping people to reach happiness,

straightening out all domestic, troubles observing ethical norms”. This is the highest point of human achievements in the process of his development (Isayev, 2007). Such people reach the highest mark on the way of their rising up to the “excellent” degree, for them the satisfaction of spiritual needs is more than that of material ones.

Generalizing his thoughts about human spiritual needs N. Tusi is of the opinion that the way to their satisfying and controlling goes through mind, thinking, consciousness and will. The clues for a person on the way to happiness and misfortune, wisdom and vice are his consciousness and will-power.

By his work “Ehlaghi Nasiri” (Nasir’s Ethics) N. Tusi went down in history of oriental peoples as a scientific enlightener, teacher and theorist of morals.

Moral views of the prominent Azerbaijani representative of oriental national pedagogics – Nasireddin Tusi – can serve as the clue for solving many problems and difficulties in the sphere of education and ethics. Nasireddin Tusi was not only the great scientist in the sphere of upbringing but also the great teacher.

Based on the fact that Nasireddin Tusi’s thoughts about upbringing are extremely useful analysis of his thoughts relating to upbringing is highly topical. A historical study of Nasireddin Tusi’s moral views in the sphere of moral upbringing displays high level of development of Islamic thought and human awareness at the stages of evolution and progress of culture and knowledge of the world.

The notion “upbringing” is one of the primary and chief requirements of human life and presents not only an integral part of life as “life itself from cradle to grave is its reflection”. Only through proper upbringing a person can be called a thinking being and achieve his goals, realize his wishes in order to reach the heights of his happiness. The upbringing on the basis of ideas and views of progressive thinkers of the past is of tremendous importance.

Comparative analysis of moral views in the works of the outstanding personality of Nasireddin Tusi is insufficiently made in pedagogical science up till now. Apart from some insignificant historical notes and short articles special investigations dealing with problem are absent.

The scientific heritage of Nasireddin Tusi presents great scientific and practical interest for historical pedagogics. The idea of transforming structure, system of teaching and upbringing of Nasireddin Tusi played its historical role in the life of peoples, it is acknowledged as one of considerable components of global human culture having pedagogical value at modern stage as well.

Nasireddin Tusi believes the process of upbringing to be the birth of “an angel” in a human being by way of inculcating certain habits. In his book he writes: “The upbringing is a feature which must follow nature so that a person could demonstrate refinement of phenomena in perfection. Nature is a teacher of its kind and a pupil is a product of it”.

Nasireddin Tusi is convinced that each person adhering to a certain discipline must direct his effort precisely to a branch chosen by himself in order to take delight in the taste of knowledge. In fact, Nasireddin Tusi concretizing the role of teaching and upbringing sees their essence in the right choice of profession, otherwise all the performed work in teaching and upbringing is vain and useless. Nasireddin Tusi notes that a person possesses a sense of passion, wrath and reason, these senses are formed by stages (Hasanova, 2009). The first sense is a sense of passion, then – a sense of wrath, the last sense is a sense of reason. When making plans of teaching and upbringing it is necessary to consider stage – by-stage formation and reflection of senses. He also stresses that the nature of a human being is inclined to getting knowledge and practice. If the plans of teaching and upbringing are systematized on the ground of education and wisdom then mankind will develop in a worthy way. All-round abilities and scientific outlook will be formed.

In Nasireddin Tusi’s opinion, the first essential task of parents is giving a good name to a child. He believes that a worthy name is an engine contributing to his further development and a name not suitable for a child will cause him discomfort all his life. An unworthy, inappropriate name will create inferiority complex in a child and his feeling of his own ego will be distorted in his mind. If a child is given a ridiculous and inappropriate name, then Nasireddin Tusi is convinced that this is sure to leave an ill trace in the child’s life.

Receptivity to upbringing is different in humans. Some of them have certain training in this field and can be brought up easily. Such people are endowed with nobleness subtlety of soul diffidence and shyness, however, some others do not have preliminary training and, on the contrary, object to upbringing and directions. Like a black stone that does not reflect light at all Nasireddin Tusi points to the presence of human distinctions and considers that the upbringing should be done with due regard for specific traits of each person which is significant and quite important. He notes that children are more susceptible to upbringing than adults and thinks that childhood is the most convenient period in a child’s upbringing.

It is necessary to start upbringing from early childhood. A child should be called for fulfilling a certain significant instruction lovingly, it is obligatory to prevent him from communicating with immoral interlocutors. Nasireddin Tusi is convinced that a person is a being perceiving the upbringing by means of

which he will achieve happiness. As the people by his nature is able to percept these two factors there arose a need for teachers, instructors and educators who could help in giving up the way leading to misfortune and vice.

Such immortal work on ethics and aesthetics, philosophy and upbringing – “Ehlaghi Nasiri” – could be written only with the pen of a man endowed with outstanding intellect, a man with excellent upbringing. Not only his compatriots or like-minded persons but also the whole mankind must be proud of such a personality.

The most important work in the field of methods for teaching – upbringing in the Middle Ages was the book “Adabol-MaceelliminVelmchesselin” (“Muellimlerin ve Tehsil Alanlarin Edeb Gaydolari”) – “Rules of Etiquette of Teachers and Those Who Get Education” of the Azerbaijani scholar, founder of observatory in Maraga Nasireddin Tusi (Idibekov, 1987).

This book which was written in the thirteenth century was “supplemented or improved” by clergymen in the time of the Sefevids (1502-1736). The added religious words differ from scientific and methodical directions of the work, from personal views of Nasireddin Tusi and scientific considerations of his other works so much that they can be easily separated from the original text. For example, the subject of astronomy is presented as a harmful science in the first chapter of the book though Nasireddin Tusi was the most skilful astronomer and noted that he loved this science a lot and repeatedly enjoyed his astronomic discoveries. He also praised this subject in his work named “Medheli-nujum”. Later on the supplements in his work become obvious and for this reason the representation of astronomic science as harmful, undoubtedly, does not relate to the author (Isayev, 2007). The work consists of 12 parts.

The first section is about the importance and necessity of giving education to boys and girls (children). The author states that “the main task of science is in studying necessary problems of life”. The second section says that children must learn lessons “in order to eradicate ignorance and perceive religion”. The third section states that at first it is necessary to study religion and one of sciences which are necessary for life. The fourth section shows that “one must be active and diligent for getting education. A student must fix the time when he is to start his work in the morning and finish his lesson in the evening”. In order not to doze at a lesson a student must be healthy and give up large quantities of food and drinks”. At the beginning of the fifth section there is a superstitious saying that “a student must begin learning new themes and new books on Wednesday as Allah created the world precisely on this day” (beyond doubt, this idea was added into Tusi’s work later (Isayev, 2007). The sixth section says: “One must be consistent and persistent in studying a lesson. Each person gets a lot of pleasure from solving a complicated and incomprehensible

scientific problem”. The seven section states: “The time of getting education is not limited. A person can get education from his birth till the end of his life. But the most suitable time for education is youth. The suitable time for lessons is morning, afternoon and even evening”. The eighth section says: “ A teacher must be kind to a student and teach him everything. He must try in order to make his student one of great scientists in the future”. A teacher must be sincere and treat his student with respect if he asks a question. The ninth section contains the following: “When a student comes to a teacher he must have with him paper, a pen, ink and write what the teacher says. What is written with a pen is not lost, it remains. A student must not flatter his teacher but at the same time be polite to him”. In his work Nasireddin Tusi notes that “a teacher must be proud, reserved and dressed tidily”. He must not dress luxuriously. A teacher must explain a lesson to his students in simple language and in easy way. At the end of the lesson a teacher must give his students an opportunity to ask questions and clarify the moments in which they have difficulties”. The following is written about respect of a student for his teacher: “A student must respect his teacher and follow his example. He must not hesitate to put questions to his teacher. In the morning it is good to learn a lesson by heart, in the afternoon it is good to write and in the evening it is good to read. When reading a lesson student must mark important questions for them”. The tenth section says that “a student must not eat street food. He must eat little, do namaz and read Koran, communicate with good comrades and also he should decline the invitation of “bad friends”. We read in the eleventh section: “To strengthen his memory and power of intellect a student must eat honey or food with added sugar and he also must eat 21 big red currants every day as these dishes abate biliary excretion and sputum”. The twelfth section says about daily bread and prolongation of life. This section also was added into the book later (Isayev, 2007).

The works of Nasireddin Tusi “Ehlaghi Nasiri” and “Rules of Etiquette of Teachers and Those Who Get Education” had produced a considerable impact on the development of upbringing theory both in the East and Europe.

In his priceless book “Ehlaghi Nasiri” (“Nasir’s Ethics”) Nasireddin Tusi points to the fact that in upbringing it is necessary to pay attention to the nature of each person. He emphasizes that morals is God’s prescription dictating to be guided by nature and one must observe the order of existence of skills and senses, for this reason it is necessary to take into account the inclination of senses and passions, to keep discipline and keep within limits regarding the stages of development and perfection of nature.

The content and the truth of following nature is that to program the upbringing of a child and a teenager at first it is necessary to study natural peculiarities of his development and then, with consideration for all this, to lay the foundation of his upbringing. In the opinion of many psychologists and scientists, the impact of this factor is predominant in modern world.

As far as advantages of moral upbringing are concerned Nasireddin Tusi adheres to the opinion of Greek thinkers and against this background he treats virtue as moderateness and characterizes moderateness by four factors: piety, courage, wisdom and justice. He attributes harmfulness to three factors of passions: partiality, wrath and evil tongue. Though Nasireddin Tusi shares Aristotle's opinion, however, he states a new approach regarding immorality and ill behavior and this new approach has not ever been considered by anybody.

Nasreddin Tusi believes happiness to be the highest objective of moral upbringing. It is necessary to underline that comparative analysis of Nasireddin Tusi's moral views concerning the problem of education and upbringing has not been made in the form of monography so far. Nasireddin Tusi has left an indelible trace in a number of sciences at once: mathematics, astronomy, law, philosophy, medicine, logics, pedagogics, music, theology and poetics. And this is far from complete list of spheres to which he had devoted himself. The works and activity of Nasireddin Tusi had laid very strong basis on which developed subsequent generations of scientists and thinkers both in the Near East and all over the world.

In addition to the above said we want to enumerate the names of his various fields of science: "Zij Elhani", "Shaklul Ghita", "Tahrriri Oglidis" (Euclid's Accounts), "On Astrolabe", "30 Chapters", "On Calendar", "Meditations about Astronomy", "Intersection of Appolonium's Cone", "Menelay's Spherica", "Quadrature of Archimed's Circumference", "On Sphere and Cylinder", "Ptolemy's Almagest", "Rules of Geometry", "Commentaries to "Signs"", "Metres of Versification", "On Eternity and Infinity of Universe", "Tajrid", "On Finances", "Javahirmamya" (On Minerals) and others.

Nasireddin Tusi had written more than 100 scientific transactions. The name of Nasireddin Tusi, the talented Azerbaijani astronomer, mathematician, philosopher and teacher is widely known in many countries of the world, first of all, for his intelligent original books on the upbringing "Ehlaghi Nasiri" and "Rules of Etiquette of Teachers and Those Who Get Education" which have been translated into many languages of the world.

The history of science is above all the history of ideas. Their appearance, development and continuity –that is what is of interest and importance for a historian, at least in a popular-scientific article. The objective of the article is to arouse interest to studying mathematics itself and to pass to reading reputable historical works of N. Tusi where it is possible to find exhaustive answers to all questions relating to moral and spiritual upbringing. The priceless heritage of Nasireddin Tusi must be studied and explored still more and more.

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