

The Spiritual Foundations of the Teacher-Student Traditions

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Abstract: This article explores the spiritual foundations of teacher-student traditions, which form an integral part of the moral values of the Turkestan peoples. It highlights the significance of education, ethics, and morality, as well as the respect and reverence accorded to teachers, mentors, instructors, and educators. The study examines exemplary cases from classical scholarly texts that emphasize the role of educators, drawing upon the teachings and writings of great scholars.

Keywords: spirituality, morality, ethics, education, upbringing, teacher, student, heritage, Farabi, Husayn Vaiz Kashifi.

The Spiritual Values of the Turkestan Peoples

The legacy of education, ethics, morality, and teacher-student relationships forms an integral part of the spiritual values of the Turkestan peoples. However, during the Soviet era, the educational system was designed to alienate our people not only from their own history, traditional culture, and spirituality but also from the universal sources of human values. The system was heavily focused on indoctrinating the younger generation with false communist ideologies.

It is well known that teachers play an unparalleled role in the development of humanity and the progress of the world. Our wise ancestors have long recognized this, as reflected in their proverbs:

- "A student who has had a teacher will succeed."
- "Blessings upon the teacher who has educated you."
- "A teacher is as great as a father."
- "When a master is present, restrain your hands; when a teacher is present, restrain your tongue."
- "If you become a master, never forget your teacher."
- "If you look at your teacher disrespectfully, you will fall; if you respect them, you will rise step by step."

In the Uzbek explanatory dictionary, the word "*ustoz*" (teacher) is defined as a guide, mentor, educator, leader, instructor, or trainer. This term carries profound meaning, and those who earn this title bear immense responsibility.

The Status of Teachers in Eastern Tradition

In ancient Eastern societies, teachers, mentors, instructors, and educators were always held in high esteem. From the earliest periods of self-awareness, humans have relied on teachers for spiritual strength. If a talented teacher fails to establish a school of thought and does not leave behind knowledgeable, gifted students, their life and efforts become fruitless. No matter how great a teacher is or how much success they achieve in education, if they do not pass on their knowledge and experience to worthy students, their achievements will disappear like a stone sinking in water.

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The great poet Alisher Navoi expressed this sentiment in his verse:

"If I do not preserve my craft, what will I do in the end? Shall I take it to the grave with me?"

Navoi met Abdurrahman Jami when he was around 18-19 years old, and Jami cherished him both as a son and a student. Their relationship strengthened over time and evolved into a creative collaboration. Navoi's work *"Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin"* was dedicated to Jami as a token of respect, serving as a brilliant example of teacher-student traditions. In his works, Navoi also acknowledges mentors such as Sayyid Hasan Ardashir, Lutfi, and Abu Lais Samarqandi.

Navoi also wrote:

"In the path of truth, if one teaches you a single letter with hardship, repaying that debt is not easy, even with a thousand treasures."

These words emphasize the immeasurable value of a teacher's contribution.

The Revival of Traditional Educational Values

Fortunately, with independence, the deceptive educational system that alienated people from their national interests and relied on empty rhetoric has been dismantled. During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has established a system aimed at studying and researching the spiritual and educational foundations of society, national and universal values, great historical heritage, and pedagogical traditions.

Of particular importance is the renewed interest in the intellectual and cultural heritage of the early Renaissance (9th-12th centuries) and the Timurid era (14th-16th centuries). Scholars of medieval Central Asia deeply believed in the power of education and spirituality and recognized its decisive role in human development and social relationships. Many of these scholars were not only researchers but also esteemed teachers.

The works of medieval scholars from Central Asia contain extensive discussions on education and teacher-student relationships. For example:

- Al-Farabi's *"Treatise on Complete Education"*
- Ibn Sina's *"Tadbīr al-Manzil"* (Household Management), *"Kitab al-Qanun fi al-Tibb"* (The Canon of Medicine), and *"Kitab al-Shifa"* (The Book of Healing)
- Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's *"Kitab al-Jamahir"* and *"Asar al-Baqiya"*
- Kaykavus' *"Qabusnama"*
- Saadi's *"Bustan"* and *"Gulistan"*
- Jami's *"Bahoristan"*
- Navoi's *"Hayrat ul-Abror"*
- Kashifi's *"Futuvvatnama-i Sultani"*
- Avloni's *"Turkiy Gulistan yoki Akhlaq"*

These works contain invaluable wisdom and teachings on education, which continue to serve as a foundation for Eastern and national pedagogy.

The Importance of Studying Educational Heritage

The goal is to deeply study and research the educational and teacher-student traditions recorded in the works of past scholars and apply their most advanced methods in modern pedagogical processes.

In the medieval Muslim East, teacher-student relationships played a crucial role in acquiring knowledge, mastering a profession, and adhering to universal ethical standards. One example is the spiritual mentorship provided to Amir Timur by Shamsiddin Kulol, Sayyid Baraka, and Zayniddin Tayabadi. Similarly, Abdurrahman Jami was a spiritual mentor to Alisher Navoi. There was also a concept of *"invisible mentorship"*, where students did not necessarily meet their teachers in person. For



instance, Bahauddin Naqshband considered Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani his unseen mentor, just as Khoja Ahrar Vali viewed Naqshband as his spiritual guide.

Al-Farabi's Vision of a Teacher

According to Al-Farabi, a teacher's role is to instill moral values in young people while also developing their practical skills and competencies in a specific field. The aim of teaching is to prepare students for the pursuit of happiness and knowledge. From this perspective, Al-Farabi had no respect for dishonest and irresponsible educators. He believed that a teacher's duties were as crucial as those of a state leader.

Al-Farabi outlined the following qualities that a teacher must possess:

- A sharp and far-sighted intellect
- The ability to effectively convey knowledge to students
- Perseverance and dedication to the demanding nature of teaching
- A love for truth and those who seek it
- A deep dislike for falsehood and those who promote it
- A dignified and confident personality
- A sense of justice in treating students
- Determination in achieving educational goals

Ethical Perspectives on Teachers in Eastern Thought

The philosophical views of Eastern thinkers on the character of a teacher are equally significant. For example, in Nasir al-Din Tusi's *"Advice for Students"*, he states:

"A mentor or teacher must be sincere, patient, and articulate. They should adjust their tone and volume according to the situation. Teachers should never be harsh or cruel in their speech."

Najmuddin Kubra offers perhaps the most comprehensive definition of a teacher:

"A teacher is someone who has comprehended truth and justice, understands the challenges of this path, and is dedicated to guiding students with beneficial knowledge. They must cultivate wisdom, distinguish between what is beneficial and harmful, and devote themselves to the intellectual and moral development of their students."

In conclusion, the rich heritage of teacher-student traditions in Turkestan offers timeless lessons that continue to be relevant today. By studying and implementing these principles, we can strengthen the foundations of modern education while preserving the wisdom of our ancestors.

The Naqshbandi Order and Its Spiritual Teacher-Student Traditions

The globally renowned **Naqshbandi Sufi Order**, which emerged and developed in the sacred land of **Turon (Turkestan)**, is a unique reflection of the **teacher-student relationship**. The ideas put forward by its revered masters—**Abdulkhaliq Gijduvani, Arif Revvani, Mahmud Anjir Fagnavi, Khoja Ali Romitani, Muhammad Boboyi Samosi, Sayyid Mir Kulol, and Bahauddin Naqshband**—represent a profound educational and spiritual legacy. The Naqshbandi sheikhs were, in today's terms, **dedicated educators**, who, through their educational methods, have nurtured and guided multiple generations for centuries.

But what was the nature of the **teacher-student relationship** in the teachings of these Naqshbandi masters? Sources indicate that they were among the most **outstanding scholars** of their time. The reason behind this is that in the Naqshbandi tradition, **the responsibility of being a teacher was regarded as an immensely serious duty**. This is extensively discussed in **Husayn Vaiz Kashifi's** remarkable ethical treatise, *"Futuvvatnama-i Sultani, or The Path of Chivalry"*, which elaborates on **the etiquette, qualities, and responsibilities** of a teacher-student relationship.



The Four Conditions of a Teacher According to Husayn Vaiz Kashifi

In his work, Kashifi emphasizes that **only those who have attained full personal and spiritual perfection** and are **capable of raising students to the same level** should take on the responsibility of teaching (or, in Sufi terms, becoming a sheikh). He outlines **four essential conditions** for a teacher (pir):

1. **Liberating the student (murid) from all sorrow, grief, and darkness.**
2. **Practicing what they preach**—the teacher must follow all the principles they instruct their students to follow and abstain from what they prohibit.
3. **Acting as a shepherd**—viewing students as their flock and never abandoning them under any circumstances.
4. **Not exploiting the student's wealth**—a teacher should never use their student's belongings for personal gain.

The Ideal Qualities of a Spiritual Teacher

Kashifi further elaborates on **the essential traits of a true teacher** in another section of his work:

- **Profound knowledge and wisdom**
- **Organizational and leadership abilities**
- **Intelligence, intuition, and psychological insight**
- **Spiritual and moral strength**—the ability to guide and support students under any circumstances
- **Independence**—not being financially or emotionally dependent on anyone
- **Detachment from fame, greed, and material wealth**
- **Truthfulness, sincerity, and selflessness**—being a loyal and honest friend
- **Selflessness and forgiveness**—valuing the greater good over personal interests

The Everlasting Influence of a Teacher's Kindness

The efforts and kindness of a teacher toward their student are never wasted. This is also affirmed in the **Holy Quran**:

"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is aware of what you do." (Surah **Al-Mujadila**, Ayah 11)

The Responsibilities of a Student

Just as a teacher has duties, a student also bears great responsibility toward their teacher. Some key aspects of student etiquette include:

- **Speaking only when necessary** in the teacher's presence.
- **Greeting the teacher with respect** when entering their presence.
- **Avoiding unnecessary topics** and not diverting discussions away from the lesson.
- **Not asking questions without the teacher's permission.**
- **Refraining from contradicting the teacher** or challenging their authority.
- **Respecting the teacher's silence and serious moments.**
- **Not interrupting the teacher's speech** by trying to finish their sentences.

The Relevance of the Teacher-Student Tradition Today

The above principles highlight the significance of teacher-student relationships, which continue to be debated in contemporary educational discussions. In modern times, both in **secondary and higher education**, questions arise:



➤ **What should an ideal teacher be like?**

➤ **How should teacher-student interactions be structured?**

To answer these questions, revisiting the **classical educational traditions** and the **spiritual foundations of the teacher-student relationship** can be immensely beneficial. The experiences and wisdom of our ancestors, along with the **rich scholarly heritage they left behind**, offer valuable insights that can help resolve many challenges in today's education system.

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