

The Reflection of Iranian Educational Literature on the West-Eastern Divan of Goethe

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Abstract. Educational literature is one of the widest and commonest literary genres in the Persian literature. Writer's purpose within this literary genre is educating and teaching, i.e. teaching science, ethics, art and way of life. The extension of the literary genre in Iranian literature is obvious in a way that majority of poets and writers have included ethnic matters in their works. There are many ethnic exhortations and maxims in Ferdowsi, Sanai, Attar, Nizami, Sa'di, Movlavi and Hafez's works, which satisfy each insightful human's needs. Goethe, the great German poet, took the lead over others in using this rich source of the Persian literature. His being impressed by Hafez's poems in his "West-Eastern Divan" is evidence for the claim. In his "Book of Excommunication" and "Book of Wisdom". There are such themes as the oppression of the world, the transience of pleasure, easiness against time, grasping our opportunity, being hopeful, truthfulness in good deeds, the wise's not involving in dispute with the ignorant, reaping our good deeds' reward in all times and not becoming an oppressor. In comparison with some poems of Hafez, Sa'di and Ferdowsi we reach a conclusion that Goethe has been impressed by the Orient culture and literature therefore in some of his poems it can be felt brightly that these are pure translations of Hafez or Sa'di's poems.

Key words: Educational, literature, Goethe, Hafez, Sa'di.

Introduction

Educational literature is one of the widest and commonest literary genres in the Persian literature which in this literary genre, writer's purpose is educating and teaching science, ethics, art and way of life. A literary educational work is so called "it is a work which describes knowledge (both practical and theoretical) for the reader, or represents moral, religious and philosophical matters literarily" (Shamisa, 1995: 247). This genre is seen more or less in the works of many poets and writers of the world, but the wideness of its application is more obvious in Iranian literature in a way that most of poets and writers have included ethnic matters in their works. There are many ethnic exhortations and maxims In Ferdowsi, Sanai, Atar, Nizami, Sa'di, Movlavi and Hafez's works, which satisfy each insightful human's needs as Sa'di says:

If there is one in the happiness world

It's enough to say Sa'di's words

Iranian culture and literature like other dynamic and fluid cultures and literatures has crossed borders and has been effective and affected in the scene of cultural and literary exchanges. Among those who have been affected by Iranian outstanding poets' works more than others is Goethe, the famous German poet and scholar. In this research, we attempt to investigate the reflection of Iranian educational literature in Goethe's West-Eastern Divan in such a manner that first we express Goethe's educational and moral themes in his two poem collections of "Book of Reflection and Book of Maxims" and then mention comparative evidence and examples in Iranian poets' educational works.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) is the greatest German poet, writer and sage in the nineteenth century. He had a keen interest in the literature of the East, especially in Iran and has benefited considerably from it, but most of all, he was devoted to Hafez to the extent that the presence of Hafez in his most poems in West-Eastern

Divan can be felt. Shoja Ad-Din Shafa in this case writes: "Goethe was greatly devoted to Hafiz of Shiraz with all his enthusiasm and has said: "O Hafez, my wish is becoming a devotee of your devotees". It is also worth noting that in Goethe's life, no another case can be found that he has shown such humility and reverence to anyone else of his past and contemporary great men of art and literature and science (Shafa, 1964: 7).

What fascinated Goethe's soul has been Hafez's holistic attitude to his surrounding world and his true understanding of the universe. Dr. Mohammad Moein in this case writes: "What attracted Goethe to Hafez was oscillation between the intelligible and the sensible. Hafez considered all prospects of the world, such as beautiful faces and wine as the radiance and gleam of lovely beauty of truth and superior existence. This matter keeps away him from loving worldly affairs as well as from dry ironies and metaphors (Moein, 1990: 767).

Goethe not only received mystical and moral themes of Hafiz, but also has been affected by Iranian well-known poets such as Ferdowsi, Attar, Sa'di and Movlavi in a way that his impacts of these Persian notables are seen in the four poem collections of Book of Reflection, Book of Maxims, Book of Ill Humor and Book of Parables in the West-Eastern Divan that we discuss them below.

Book of Reflection

1. The oppression of the world

"O world how hypocritical and oppressor you are, you raise and also kill" (Shafa, 1964: 130).

This text is the exact translation of this Ferdowsi's couplet that says:

*O world how unkind and ignoble you are
You not only raise but also slay*
(Dabir Siaghi, 1991: 63)

Kamala Din Ismail Isfahani also expresses this theme as follows:

*Don't be attached to this spinning dome that
This windlass is a mill that sheds loved ones' blood*
(Pur Haji Lan Garodi, 1990: 70)

2. Ephemeral nature of joys and difficulties

"The world is the birthplace of suffering. If they stay there, it escapes like a dream and if you travel, sorrow will be accompanied with you. If you will be attached to heat and cold, cold and warm times flies and until you look at a flower that has come out from the soil, it fades and falls on the soil" (Shafa, 1964: 130).

The poet, in this piece, refers to ephemeral nature of goodness, badness, joys and difficulties and Movlavi has said this matter as follows:

*Whatever delighted you from the world
Think of it when you are far from it
Most people become happy from what delighted you
Finally they forsook it and it become like the wind*
(Nicolson, 2000: 485)

Sa'di also eloquently says "whatever is not of a long duration is not to be cherished" (Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 30).

The Book of Maxims

1. Easy going and indulgence in facing time

"If life is hard on you, make your works easygoing yourself" (Shafa, 1964: 134)

The poet recommends us to compromise and tolerate with time. Hafez also expresses this theme as follows:

*Welfare in this and in the next world depends
on the interpretation of these two phrases
Fairness towards friends and tolerance of foes*
(Khatib Rahbar, 1991: 18)

Sa'di also expresses this theme as follows:

*If you cannot vanquish the firmament
It is necessary to meet halfway with its spinning*
(Khaza Eli, 1974: 280)

2. Making the most of opportunities and life

"It is still day, try to do something because when the silent night comes, nobody can do anything" (Shafa, 1964: 134)

The poet refers to making use of opportunity and life and emphasizes that day here means life and youth and night means senility and maybe death and resurrection. Sa'di also expresses this fact as follows:

*O the able one does what you can do
Before you cannot do anything*
(Foroughi, 1984: 724)

3. Not giving up

"If fortune knocked on the door and you didn't open the door, don't worry about it, the luck angel has a kind heart and will knock again on your door" (Shafa, 1964: 134)

Here the poet stresses on hope and improvement.

Sa'di in this regard says:

*If God, in his wisdom, closes a door
In his mercy, opens another door*
(Khaza Eli, 1974: 179)

4. Honesty in goodness

"Do goodness only for goodness, if this will not be a reward for your children, certainly your it will benefit your grandchildren" (Shafa, 1964: 135).

The poet emphasizes on the pure goodness and it definitely will not remain unpaid as Hafez says:

*O' the able one, play up to your dervish heart
Cause gold and dram treasure won't remain
It's written on the chrysolite with gold
Nothing will remain but generous ones' goodness*
(Khatib Rahbar, 1991: 241)

And again he says the same meaning:

*I'm the slave of the likeable one's ambition
That done a good deed without hypocrisy*
(Ibid: 1991: 130)

5. Isolation of artists and domination of non-artists

"Non-artists call out and humble ones are on the throne" (Shafa, 1964: 137).

The poet cries from the world's unfairness, artists' isolation and domination of humble and incompetent people. The first thing which can be imagined in the mind by reading this piece is that the poet has been clearly familiar with the famous ghazal of Hafez:

*What is this fervency around the moon
The entire world is filled with evil and riot*

Or again Hafez says:

*Sky breaks the ship of art lords
It's better to depend on that instead of this floating sea
(Khatib Rahbar, 1991: 515)*

Ferdowsi expresses this theme during the dictatorship and the ruling period of Zohak as follows:

*It becomes hidden the institution of sages
But spread madmen's names
Art abased, magician elevated
Honesty hidden, injury revealed
(Dabir Siaghi, 1991: 39)*

6. *Wise's not arguing with fool*

"If you are wise, do not argue with fools because you will be captured their ignorance and cannot make them wise" (Shafa, 1964: 137)

The poet emphasizes the futility of advising the ignorant people that will bring disrespectfulness for the good person and is useless.

Sa'di in this case says:

*Two wise men do not contend and fight
Nor does a scholar fight with contemptible fellow
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 371)*

He also says that "if a sage quarrels with an ignorant, he does not expect honor and if an ignorant is dominant over a sage, it is no surprise because it is a stone that breaks gem" (Ibid., 1994: 554)

7. *Finding bonus of goodness in any cases*

"Don't ask yourself who will benefit from your goodness? Put your bread into water, finally someone will eat anyway" (Shafa, 1964: 137).

This story is taken from the sixth chapter, about the increase of gem from the affluence of wisdom and art of Ghaboosnameh. It is the story of Fath who was adopted son of Mutawakkel that during learning swimming unwontedly enters a hole –and remains there a week. –A man named Mohammad ibn al-Hussein Eskaf put twenty pieces of bread into the Tigris River every day which his name was on them. Qaboos ibn Voshmgir says that "Fath said I in these seven days (I wasn't hungry that everyday) put twenty pieces on a large dish, came landing on the water and I tried to get two or three pieces of bread, and my life was due to those bread pieces and it written on each bread Mohammad ibn al-Hussein Eskaf" (Yusof, 1996: 31-32).

Sa'di also expresses this theme as follows:

*Do good deeds and forget about them
Because God will give you back in troubles*

8. *On not bullying and freeing the oppressed ones*

"One day I put my leg on a spider. I asked myself: why I killed him? God has created him to live and enjoy the pleasures of world" (Shafa, 1964: 137)

This theme was originally composed by Ferdowsi in the story of the Iraj who was killed cowardly by his brothers:

*Do not harm an ant that is hauling a grain
Because he has life and sweet life is dearer
Ruthless and pitiless is
The one who wants to harm an ant
(Dabir Siaghi, 1991: 88)*

Sa'di also expressed this theme as follows:

*I also remember the distich quoted
By the elephant-driver on the bank of the Nile
If you knew the state of the ant under your foot
It like your own condition under the foot of an elephant
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 111)*

9. Benefiting all from God's gifts table

"What a hubbub is in God's feast! Friends and foes are sitting at the table" (Shafa, 1964: 137)

The poet speaks regarding God's grace and gifts for all humans the exact case that Sa'di in the introduction of his Golestan has mentioned:

"The showers of his boundless mercy have extended to every place and the banquet of his unstinted liberality is spread out everywhere."

*O bountiful One, who from your invisible treasury
Supplied the Guebre and the Christian with food
How could you will disappoint your friends
While having regard for your enemies?
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 6)*

10. Silence brings health

"When someone is silent, no threat will be for him because his fate is tied to his tongue" (Shafa, 1964: 138)

The poet considers silence as a way to be uncovered and healthy as Sa'di says:

*Until a man speaks
His shortcomings and virtues are hidden
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 53)*

11. The instability of worldly possessions:

"Everyone who came into the world built a new house –and when died left it for someone else. Secondly, he/she changed the house according to his/her taste, but no one could complete it" (Shafa, 1964: 138)

The poet here emphasizes on the instability and the lack of happiness – as if he has translated Sa'di's couples exactly:

*Whoever had come had built a new edifice
He departed and left the place to another
And that other one concocted the same futile plans
And this edifice was not completed by anyone
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 19)*

"You have two dear friends, a stable position, fine wine and a collection of love poems. Thus what do you want more than these?" (Shafa, 1964: 139)

The poet considers having two beloved friends, security, wine and his love poems enough for himself and does not want more from this world. Hafez has said the same concept as follows:

*Two clever friends and from the old wine
Leisure, a book and a grass corner
(Khatib Rahbar, 1991: 650)*

13. Paying attention to good morals, not a good look:

The wise Legman who was considered as an ugly face, wisely said: "the sweetness of sugar cane is not in its cane, but the sugar which lies within the cane" (Shafa, 1964: 139).

Goethe has narrated the story from the nineteenth anecdotes of the fourth chapter of Sa'di's *Boostan* as follows:

*It is said the Legman was dark of features
And he was lean and by no means self-indulgent*
(Foroughi, 1984: 316)

Sa'di in another place says:

*The beautiful face is not anything
O' brother a beautiful character is important*
(Foroughi, 1984: 724)

Conclusion

By investigating the educational and moral themes of two books of Reflection and Maxims in West-Eastern Divan of Goethe (1749-1832), German poet and scholar, and comparing them with local and moral themes of Iranian outstanding poets especially Hafez and Sa'di, we can understand the effectiveness extent of Eastern culture and literature especially Iran on Goethe –as far as in some cases they are extremely close to each other as if Goethe has translated only the poems of Hafez or Sa'di. For example, this theme that Goethe has been affected by Sa'di's *Golestan* and says "What a hubbub is in God's feast! Friends and foes are sitting at the table" (Shafa, 1964: 137).

What Sa'di has said in the introduction of *Golestan* masterfully as "The showers of his boundless mercy have extended to every place and the banquet of his unstinted liberality is spread out everywhere."

*O bountiful One, who from your invisible treasury
Supplied the Guebre and the Christian with food
How could you will disappoint your friends
While having regard for your enemies?*
(Khatib Rahbar, 1994: 6)

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