# An Examination and Analysis of Behavioral Models of Teachers and Students in Saʿdī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān*

**Abstract:**

Didactic literature is a cornerstone of Persian literary tradition, transmitting ethical, political, and spiritual wisdom across generations. This article examines Saʿdī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, masterpieces that articulate a nuanced educational vision rooted in *adab* (moral refinement), social duty, and spiritual discipline. Using a descriptive-analytical approach with close textual reading, the study explores Saʿdī's models of the ideal teacher and learner, asking how these vary by social class and spiritual orientation. Findings show Saʿdī delineates three interrelated categories: (1) rulers, for whom education emphasizes justice, statecraft, and responsibility; (2) mystics, focused on *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification) and submission to the *pīr* (spiritual guide); and (3) the general public, guided by moral character, humility, eloquence, and social harmony. Critically, Saʿdī insists pedagogy must align with the learner's innate disposition (*ṭabʿ*) and social position. Education, for him, is not mere knowledge transfer but a transformative, relational practice of mutual ethical formation. This study enriches scholarship on Islamic pedagogy, Persian literary ethics, and historical educational thought, offering enduring insights into the moral dimensions of teaching and learning.

***Keywords:*** *Saʿdī, Gulistān, Būstān, Islamic pedagogy, adab*

## ۱ INTRODUCTION

Education has been defined as "caring for the development and growth of a human being during their maturation, that is, on their natural path toward perfection" (Shokouhi, 2002, p. 30). In the oldest recorded definition of the technical meaning of education, attributed to Plato, education is considered the most beautiful thing manifested in the best of human beings (Basiri & Amjadi, 2012, p. 68). In the intellectual system of Islamic society, a special place has been reserved for education and training, and definitions of education, the teacher, and the learner have been presented both in the Qur'an and traditions and in the works of Islamic thinkers. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī asserts that: "Education is the gradual and continuous transformation of each thing until it reaches the completion it deserves" (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1984, p. 184). Al-Bayḍāwī defined education as "gradually bringing each thing to perfection and making it worthy" (Al-Bayḍāwī, 1987, Vol. 1/51). Al-Ghazālī deemed education, after prophethood, the noblest of human tasks; Kant considered it the greatest and most difficult of human endeavors; and Plato believed there is nothing more sublime than technical education (Malakuti-Far, 2009, p. 16).

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the teacher holds an exalted status. Al-Ghazālī invokes the Prophetic saying, "I was sent as a teacher" (baʿathtu muʿalliman), to elevate teaching to a prophetic function. He further writes in Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn:"Humanity is the noblest of earthly creations, and the heart is the noblest part of the human being; thus, the teacher's vocation is to enter this heart, to polish, complete, and purify it, drawing it nearer to God" (Ghazālī, 1970, p. 13). This ethical-spiritual role demands not only knowledge but wisdom and moral integrity. Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), in his treatise on pedagogy, stresses the importance of balanced authority in teaching: "The teacher must adopt a middle path, neither so stern that the student fears to ask questions, nor so lenient that the student grows disrespectful and inattentive to the lesson" (cited in Aghazadeh & Armand, 2013, p. 72).

This principle of wasatiyya (moderation) reflects a broader Islamic educational ethos that values psychological attunement alongside intellectual rigor (Al-Attas, 1979, p. 156).

A tālib ʿilm (seeker of knowledge) or tilmīdh (student) is one who actively acquires knowledge through instruction, reflection, and practice (Anendraaj, 2001, p. 45). In Islamic tradition, the pursuit of knowledge is sacralized. A well-known hadith states:

"Whoever leaves his home in search of knowledge is engaged in jihād in the path of God until he returns" (cited in Hojjati, 1995, p. 59).

Al-Fārābī (d. 950 CE), revered as the "Second Teacher" (after Aristotle), emphasized the reverential posture required of the learner. He advised that the student should regard the teacher as the qiblah (spiritual orientation) of the classroom, listening attentively without interruption, accepting guidance humbly, and refraining from dissent until fully comprehending the teacher's intent (cited in Kamalian, 1985, p. 40). This does not imply blind obedience, but rather disciplined receptivity grounded in the recognition that the teacher embodies both knowledge and ethical exemplarity.

Consequently, the learner must exercise discernment in choosing a teacher, for, as Kamalian (1985, p. 41) observes, "the teacher serves as a living model of conduct, shaping not only the student's intellect but also their moral character and social behavior." This relational model positions education as a moral apprenticeship, wherein knowledge and virtue are cultivated in tandem (e.g., Arjomand, 2020; Lewis, 2008).

Didactic literature stands among the oldest and most enduring literary genres, with the explicit aim of educating and morally guiding its audience. As Shamisa (2004, p. 269) observes, "An educational literary work is one that conveys knowledge, scientific or theoretical, to the reader and frames moral, religious, and philosophical concerns through literary form." Such literature serves as a vital conduit for self-understanding, cultivating awareness of humanity's place in the cosmos, and fostering critical consciousness of social and political realities (Razi, 2012).

In Iran, this tradition stretches back to pre-Islamic antiquity, where advisory texts, often composed as royal testaments or mirrors for princes, articulated norms of governance, ethics, and civic responsibility within a stratified social order. Notable examples include the counsel of Bozorgmehr, the wisdom of Anushirvan the Just, and the maxims attributed to Ardashir I (Fouchekour, 1998). With the advent of Islam, Persian didactic literature absorbed and reconfigured Islamic ethical, ascetic, and mystical discourses, extending its influence even into lyrical and epic genres (Musharraf, 2010). Consequently, many canonical works of Persian literature, such as *Qābūs-nāma*, Sanāʾī's *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa*, Niẓāmī's *Makhzan al-asrār*, ʿAṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, Saʿdī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, and Rūmī's *Masnavī*, embody profound educational visions, synthesizing spiritual refinement (*tazkiya*), social ethics (*adab*), and philosophical insight into what may be termed "literary pedagogy" (Lewis, 2008; Arjomand, 2020).

Among these literary-educational voices, Saʿdī Shīrāzī (d. 1291) distinguishes himself through his exceptional attentiveness to the conduct, speech, and ethical comportment of both teachers and learners. His twin masterworks, *Būstān* (The Orchard) and *Gulistān* (The Rose Garden), are replete with anecdotes that crystallize distinct models of pedagogical relationships, calibrated to different social stations and spiritual dispositions. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Saʿdī systematically differentiates educational ideals for rulers, mystics, and the general public, offering nuanced prescriptions for each (Yarshater, 2010; Lewis, 2008). By closely analyzing these texts, one can reconstruct a comprehensive taxonomy of the virtues, responsibilities, and relational dynamics that Saʿdī associates with exemplary teaching and learning.

This article seeks to delineate these models by drawing on the anecdotes and maxims in *Gulistān* and *Būstān*. Crucially, the analysis incorporates explicit verse citations from *Būstān*, ensuring balanced textual representation. We begin by defining key concepts, education, teacher, and learner, within the framework of classical Islamic-Persian thought, then proceed to analyze Saʿdī's tripartite classification of pedagogical contexts. The significance of this research lies not only in its contribution to the intellectual history of Persian education but also in its potential to inform contemporary pedagogical practice. By retrieving and reinterpreting Saʿdī's relational ethics of teaching and learning, we may identify enduring principles that address current challenges in moral education, teacher formation, and learner agency, bridging past wisdom with present needs. In particular, the present study deals with these three questions: What is Saʿdī's classification of teachers and learners?; What behavioral models does Saʿdī propose for the education of each social class?; How can Saʿdī's educational models be utilized in Iran's contemporary education system?

## ۲ RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In recent decades, scholarly interest in Persian educational literature has grown considerably, yielding a rich body of research on its historical development, thematic concerns, and pedagogical frameworks. Musharraf (2010), in her foundational work *Essays on Iranian Educational Literature*, offers a systematic analysis of the genre through three ethical paradigms: Ancient Iranian, philosophical, and Islamic ethics, thereby tracing the genealogy of moral instruction from pre-Islamic wisdom traditions to post-classical Islamic thought. Similarly, Taher al-Dini (2006) explores the complementary educational philosophies of Saʿdī Shīrāzī and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī in his monograph *Educational Literature: Training and Education from the Perspective of Saʿdī and Ghazālī*, highlighting their shared emphasis on moral character, social responsibility, and the cultivation of *adab* (ethical comportment) as central to human development.

A significant subset of this scholarship focuses specifically on Saʿdī's educational vision. Nozhat, Nazariani, and Hosseini (2017) extract and systematize the core components of "optimal education" in the *Gulistān*, emphasizing Saʿdī's integration of virtue ethics, rhetorical skill, and situational wisdom. Mohammadzadeh (2016) and Modarressi (2013) examine how Saʿdī navigates the complex interplay between heredity (*ṭabʿ*) and environment in shaping moral character, a theme that resonates with classical Islamic debates on human agency and disposition. Yousefi and Amiri (2016) shift focus to the domestic sphere, demonstrating how Saʿdī positions the family as the primary site of moral formation, where parental guidance lays the groundwork for public virtue.

While these studies have significantly advanced our understanding of Saʿdī's ethical and pedagogical thought, none have undertaken a dedicated, systematic analysis of the behavioral models of teachers and learners as delineated across the *Gulistān* and *Būstān*. Though scholars occasionally reference anecdotes involving mentors or pupils, the tripartite typology Saʿdī develops, differentiating pedagogical ideals for rulers, mystics, and the general public, has not been treated as a coherent framework in its own right. As Arjomand (2020) notes, Saʿdī's "context-sensitive pedagogy" remains underexplored, particularly regarding how ethical expectations shift according to social station and spiritual orientation.

More recent scholarship has begun to foreground this contextual and ethical dimension. Shojaei Kawan's (2019) *Adab and Authority* provides a robust modern analysis of the relational ethics in the *Gulistān*, while Arjomand (2020) explicitly frames Saʿdī's work within a comparative ethical-economic framework. These studies form a strong modern foundation for the present analysis, which aims to build upon them by systematically extracting and comparing the pedagogical models across Saʿdī's two major works.

This gap underscores the necessity of the present study. Saʿdī does not offer a monolithic ideal of the teacher or learner; rather, he constructs distinct yet interrelated models calibrated to the roles, responsibilities, and existential conditions of different societal groups. By isolating and analyzing these models, rooted in close textual reading and supported by precise citations from

both *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, this article contributes a nuanced perspective to ongoing conversations about relational ethics, differentiated instruction, and moral formation in classical Islamic thought.

Mo'addeni and Mirza Mohammadi (2019), in their article concluded that the opinions of Ibn Khaldun and Saʿdī in the field of education can be examined in three sections: biological, sociological, and psychological. The views of Ibn Khaldun and Saʿdī share commonalities in terms of a unified perspective on humanity, belief in the influence of environment, acceptance of humans' social nature, acceptance of the influence of rulers, emphasizing the impact of the teacher, views on the factor of imitation and individual differences, the influence of political and social conditions, and possessing a socio-religious outlook.

Mohsen Eisa (2022), in his book *Education from the Perspective of Saʿdī*, after examining Saʿdī's works, concluded that Saʿdī possessed expertise and skill in religious sciences, ethics, practical philosophy, mysticism, politics, and understanding different strata of society.

However, to date, the topic of behavioral models of teachers and learners in *Būstān* and *Gulistān* has not been examined as an independent research study. The necessity of the present article lies in examining the distinction Saʿdī presents regarding the types of education and training, as well as teachers and learners, a significant aspect not addressed in previous research. To this end, the method of this research is theoretical, conducted through a descriptive-analytical approach and based on library sources. Using content analysis, the researchers took notes from authentic and authoritative Islamic texts concerning education and training. Then, by studying and taking notes from Saʿdī's *Gulistān* and *Būstān* relevant to the research topic, they extracted, classified, and drew conclusions regarding their findings concerning the teacher and learner from Saʿdī's perspective.

## ۳ RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Given education's pivotal role in the moral and social flourishing of human communities, the positions of teacher and learner assume heightened significance in Saʿdī's ethical vision. Teachers, as formative agents, guide students through incremental stages of intellectual and moral development, while learners must cultivate both scientific aptitude and ethical virtue to receive and embody that instruction. Saʿdī, himself a lifelong moral preceptor who styled his works as sermons in prose and poetry, was acutely aware of the relational and contextual dimensions of pedagogy. Operating within the sociopolitical frameworks of 13th-century Iran and drawing upon longstanding Persian, Islamic, and Hellenistic traditions of statecraft and ethics, he differentiates educational ideals according to social class and spiritual orientation. In *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, he delineates three primary pedagogical spheres: (1) the ruling elite, (2) ascetics and mystics, and (3) the general public. Each domain entails distinct expectations for teachers and learners, reflecting

Saʿdī's belief that effective education must be calibrated to the learner's station (*maqām*), disposition (*ṭabʿ*), and social responsibility (Arjomand, 2020; Shojaei Kawan, 2019).

## ۳،۱ Class of Rulers

This section focuses on the first class: rulers, whose education carries extraordinary ethical weight due to the far-reaching consequences of their decisions. As Saʿdī notes, "the welfare of the realm rests upon the wisdom of its sovereign" (*Būstān*, chapter1, p. 42). Reflecting the *adab al-mulūk* (mirror-for-princes) genre, Saʿdī dedicates the opening chapters of both *Būstān* ("On Justice, Prudence, and Counsel") and *Gulistān* ("On the Conduct of Kings") to royal pedagogy, a structural choice underscoring its foundational importance (Heath, 2013, p. 115).

"The comfort of the world's people depends on the King's wisdom." (Wickens, 1984, p. 45).

The class of rulers encompasses the king, royal heirs, ministers, military commanders, and court officials, those entrusted with governance. In pre-Islamic Iranian political theology, the king bore *farr* (divine glory); in Islamic thought, he was regarded as "the Shadow of God on Earth" (*ẓill Allāh fī al-arḍ*), a concept that fused Zoroastrian kingship ideology with Qur'anic notions of divinely sanctioned authority (Yarshater, 2010; Lambton, 1981). Though not omniscient, the just ruler was expected to emulate divine attributes, especially justice (*ʿadl*), and his obedience was considered a civic and spiritual duty. Saʿdī inherits and refines this tradition, insisting that royal education is not merely instructional but constitutive of political legitimacy.

### ۳،۱،۱ *Behavioral Model of Teachers in the Rulers' Class*

*Peer-based mentorship:* Saʿdī posits that the most effective teachers for rulers are those of equal or comparable status, ideally former or elder statesmen. He opens *Būstān* with Anūshīrvān's deathbed counsel to his son Hormoz: "Do not seek comfort for yourself alone; consider the welfare of your subjects":

I heard that Anūshīrvān said to Hormoz at the moment of his soul's departure:

"Think not on thine own comfort alone, / But seek the ease of all who dwell beneath thy throne." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 42)

Similarly, Khosrow Parviz advises Shirūyah to "always place the good of the people before your own desire":

I heard that Khosrow said to Shīrūyah, at the moment when his eyes closed from seeing:

"Always place the good of the people before your own desire."

These exempla illustrate that royal pedagogy in Saʿdī is historical and dialogic, rooted in the wisdom of past kings, not abstract theory (Heath, 2013). The prince learns statecraft by internalizing the conduct of exemplary predecessors.

"Think not on thine own comfort alone, / But seek the ease of all who dwell beneath thy throne." (Arberry, 1974, p. 32).

*Heightened disciplinary rigor:* Royal education demands greater exactitude, for a ruler's words and deeds carry disproportionate societal impact. In a telling anecdote from *Gulistān*, a tutor chastises the king's son more severely than other pupils. When questioned, he replies:

"Common folk may err without consequence, but from kings is expected deliberation before speech and virtue in action; thus, their words become rumor, their deeds precedent":

«The reason is that all people, in general, must speak considered words and perform praiseworthy actions, but kings, in particular, [must do so] even more, because whatever proceeds from their hands and tongues will inevitably be spoken of by others, whereas the words and deeds of the common folk carry little weight.» (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 155)

This reflects the classical Islamic principle that greater authority entails greater accountability, a theme central to Ghazālī's *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* and other mirrors for princes (Griffel, 2009, p. 178).

### ۳،۱،۲ *Behavioral Model of the Student in the Rulers' Class*

Saʿdī enumerates a comprehensive ethical code for rulers, synthesizing Persian *andarz* (wisdom) literature with Islamic political ethics:

*Selfless governance:* The king must prioritize public welfare over personal ease. As Anūshīrvān declares, "The throne endures only when the subjects prosper":

"Seek not comfort for yourself alone, / For none shall find ease in your land. / Care for the needy dervish, / For the king is crowned by his subjects." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 42)

*Justice over tyranny:* Justice (*ʿadl*) is the cornerstone of legitimate rule; tyranny (*ẓulm*) invites divine and popular retribution:

"Always place the good of the people before your own desire. / Subjects flee from tyranny; / His evil name becomes a tale told throughout the world. / He who builds on a bad foundation, / His

foundation will not long endure. / None is more fortunate in the climes / Than he who lived justly among rulers." (Ibid: p, 43)

*Diplomatic hospitality:* Merchants and travelers serve as emissaries of the realm's reputation. Kings must treat them with honor yet maintain prudent distance to avoid manipulation:

"You must seek a good name and good acceptance; / Honor merchants and envoys. / Esteem foreign great ones with your life, / For they carry your good name across the world. / Befriend the stranger and love the traveler, / For the eloquent traveler brings a good name. / Honor the guest and cherish the traveler, / Yet also be wary of their harm. / It is good to be cautious of strangers, / For an enemy may come in the guise of a friend." (Ibid)

*Loyalty to veteran servants:* Long-serving retainers, having proven their fidelity, deserve elevation, not suspicion:

"Honor your aged servants, lest they turn treacherous; / Forgetting their due invites betrayal"

"Increase the worth of your long-serving retainers, / For treachery never comes from the nurtured. / When a servant grows old in your service, / Do not forget the rights of his years." (Ibid: p. 44)

*Prudent handling of sedition:* Foreign agitators should be expelled peacefully, avoiding unnecessary bloodshed:

"Oppress not a stranger whose head is full of sedition, but expel him from your land. / If you do not vent your anger upon him, it is fitting, / For his own ill nature is his pursuer. / Even if his birthplace be Persia, / Send him not to Saghnaq, Suqlab, or Rum. / Grant him no quarter there until morning, / Lest calamity be visited upon another. / Let them say: 'May that land be overturned / From which such people issue forth!'" (Ibid)

*Strategic delegation:* Officials must be chosen for integrity, not kinship or factional loyalty. Saʿdī warns against appointing like-minded cliques, as homogeneity breeds conspiracy (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 45).

*Moral adornment:* The ideal king embodies generosity, forbearance, humility, and magnanimity, virtues that "engrave his name in the annals of grace":

"Entrust work to a man of substance who knows the Sultan, / For the destitute has no fear of the king. / If the overseer's two hands betray the trust, / A supervisor must be appointed over him. / Two old companions of the same ilk should not be sent to one place; / How do you know they will not become accomplices and friends? / One may be a thief, the other his accomplice."(Ibid)

*Fiscal responsibility:* State revenues must fund defense, not royal vanity:

"Treasuries are filled for the army, not for crowns" (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 52).

"Treasuries are filled for the army, / Not for adornment and ornament." (Ibid)

*Vigilance and preparedness:* The king must discern friend from foe:

"Neither prudent planning nor good counsel avails / If the king cannot distinguish foe from friend. / The condition of sovereignty is to live / So that you know every inferior for who he is." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 53)

Heed intelligence from plaintiffs to curb oppression:

"How can you hear the cry of the plaintiff / When your crown reaches Saturn, your bed the heavens? / Sleep in such a way that lament reaches your ear / If a claimant raises a cry. / So that he may lament the oppressor in your era, / For every tyranny he commits is your tyranny." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 53):

Never underestimate minor threats:

"Underestimate not a small enemy; / I have seen a great mountain [brought low] by a small stone. / Do you not see that when ants gather, / They stir up strife against warlike lions?" (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 57).

And remain perpetually ready for conflict:

"I do not speak of fearing the evil-intentioned's war, / But rather fear him more in the clamor of peace. / Many a one, by day, summons to peace, / Who, when night falls, leads an army upon the sleeping. / War must be prepared in secret, / So the enemy may not launch a sudden attack. / Caution is the work of experienced men; / An advance guard is the brass wall of the battlefield." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 76).

Collectively, these precepts reveal Saʿdī's realist yet ethical vision of kingship: governance is a moral art that demands constant self-discipline, situational wisdom, and accountability to both God and the people. His model aligns with what Lambton (1981, p. 89) identifies as the "Islamic theory of government", where power is legitimized not by birth alone, but by *adab*, justice, and service.

Based on what Saʿdī has stated regarding the behavioral models of teachers and learners in the rulers' class, it can be concluded that, firstly, from Saʿdī's perspective, the highest-ranking civil authority also requires a guide and teacher. Secondly, statesmen must study history and follow the governance methods of just and pious rulers. Thirdly, adornment with moral virtues, foresight and prudence, selection of competent officials, and lack of negligence regarding enemy conspiracies are among the behavioral models of successful politicians and rulers.

## ۳،۲ The Class of Clerics and Mystics

Among the social groups for whom Saʿdī deems education indispensable is that of ascetics and mystics (*zāhids* and *ṣūfīs*). By the 7th/13th century, the era of Saʿdī's maturity, Islamic mysticism had evolved from its early ascetic roots into a sophisticated spiritual and ethical system. However, as scholars have noted, this period also witnessed the proliferation of self-proclaimed "Sufis" whose performative piety often masked moral laxity or social parasitism (Ernst, 1997, p. 67; Karamustafa, 2007, p. 112). Saʿdī expresses deep concern about this deviation, dedicating significant portions of *Gulistān* and *Būstān* to distinguishing authentic spirituality from its counterfeit. In this context, the teacher is typically depicted as "The Old One" (*pīr* or *pir-e pārsā*), characterized by enlightenment (*maʿrifa*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), and humility; the learner is the disciple (*murīd*), portrayed as a seeker on the path of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*).

### ۳،۲،۱ *Behavioral Model of Teachers in the Clerical/Mystic Class*

In the Sufi hierarchy, the elder (*pīr*) occupies a position of moral and spiritual authority, guiding the disciple through disciplined companionship (*suhbat*) and ethical example. Saʿdī presents this figure not as a miracle-worker but as a moral exemplar whose conduct embodies divine proximity. Key traits include:

*Patience and perseverance:* In *Būstān* (p. 106), Saʿdī recounts an elder who, through unwavering supplication and steadfastness, attains spiritual realization, illustrating the Sufi ideal that divine grace responds to persistent effort (*mujāhada*).

I heard that an elder kept a vigil through the night; / At dawn, he raised his hands in supplication to the Truth. / A celestial voice whispered in the elder's ear: / "O hopeless one, go, attend to your own affair!" / The next night, he did not sleep from remembrance and worship; / A disciple learned of his state and spoke. / He said: "When you saw the door closed from that side, / Why persist so much in hopeless endeavor?" / On the preface [of his prayer], he shed tears of ruby hue; / He said sorrowfully: "O servant, / Were it not for despair, I would have turned from this path / Had I seen another way. / I heard that there is no path for me in this alley, / Yet truly, there is no other way to go." / While his head was thus bowed in prostration on the earth, / A call was announced to his inmost soul: / "It is accepted, though he possess no skill, / For he has no other refuge but Us." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 106)

*Forbearance toward others:* In a telling anecdote involving the revered saint Sāri al-Saqaṭī (referred to by Saʿdī as "the famous Karkhi"), the elder endures coarse language from a suffering patient without resentment. In contrast, those who urge him to retaliate represent spiritually immature teachers who lack compassion and contextual awareness (*Būstān*, p. 125). This reflects the classical Sufi maxim: "The mature soul bears offense as a mountain bears rain."

He smiled and said: "O beloved, gentle companion, / Be not distressed by this distressed one's words. / If he cried out against me in displeasure, / His displeasure was pleasing to my ear. / One

should not hear injury from such a person, / For he cannot sleep from restlessness." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 125)

*Openness to criticism:* Saʿdī praises Ḥātim al-Aṣamm, who "deafened himself" metaphorically, refusing praise so his disciples could speak freely of his faults, enabling self-correction:

"Be like Ḥātim al-Aṣamm, and hear your faults, / Do not become ensnared by the rope of praise." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 125)

This practice aligns with the Sufi emphasis on *muḥāsaba* (self-accounting) and the rejection of ego-driven validation (Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, Book 35, p. 234).

*Humility:* In a story featuring Junayd al-Baghdādī, the mystic shares his food with a starving dog and reflects: "No one knows what fate awaits him tomorrow; thus, the true man never looks down from a height":

"In appearance, I am better today than that; / Who knows what fate will drive upon my head? / And if the silence of gnosis remains within me, / [I know that] I am much lesser than this." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 132)

Such humility, rooted in existential precariousness, is central to Sufi ethics (Chittick, 2000, p. 78).

"Since none knows what shall be his lot the morrow through, / The man of God looks down on no one from his view." (Wickens, 1984, p. 121).

*Intellectual and moral openness:* Even Imam ʿAlī (AS), revered as the fountainhead of Sufi wisdom, is shown accepting a better judgment from another (*Būstān*, p. 133), underscoring that spiritual authority does not preclude fallibility.

He spoke what he knew and what was necessary to speak; / One should not hide knowledge like a spring sealed with clay. / The King of Men (Imam Ali) approved of him and said: / "I was in error, he was correct. / He spoke better than I, and the knower is one, / For there is no knowledge higher than his knowledge." (*Būstān*, p. 133)

*Inner freedom:* Authentic mystics, Saʿdī writes, are "free", unconcerned with human approval or censure:

A man of enlightened heart received / From the Amir of Khotan a cap of silk. / He did not put it on, but kissed the Amir's hand and said, smiling joyfully like a petal: / "The robe of honor from the Amir of Khotan is fair, / But fairer still is the cloak of my own self-sufficiency." / If you are freeborn, sleep on the earth and be content; / Do not kiss the ground before anyone for the sake of a carpet. (*Būstān*, p. 148)

This resonates with Rūmī's notion of *āzādī* (freedom) as liberation from ego and societal expectation (Lewis, 2008, p. 189).

*Gratitude in adversity:* A pious man by the sea, wounded by a leopard, thanks God for being "in trouble, not in sin":

"I saw an ascetic on the seashore who had a leopard's wound, and it would not heal with any remedy. For a long time he suffered from it, yet constantly gave thanks to God, Almighty and Eternal. He was asked: 'What thanks do you offer?' He replied: 'Thanks that I am afflicted with a calamity, not with disobedience [to God].'" (*Gulistān*, 2005: 91)

This exemplifies *shukr* (gratitude) as a spiritual discipline, even amid suffering, a theme central to Ghazālī's ethics (Griffel, 2009, p. 156).

*Discernment of human nature:* The elder advises a troubled disciple: "Give freely to dervishes, but ask the rich for your needs, so they won't linger":

"A disciple said to his master: "What should I do, for I am troubled by people, so many come to visit me and my time is disturbed by their comings and goings?' He said: 'Lend something to those who are dervishes, and ask for something from those who are wealthy, and they will no longer gather around you." (*Gulistān*, 2005: 103)

This reflects the Sufi art of *firāsa* (spiritual insight), enabling tailored guidance (Ernst, 1997, p. 92).

*Trust in God (tawakkul):* Elders teach disciples to rely on divine providence: "If you truly depend on the Provider, you would surpass even the angels in rank":

"God did not forget you in that state / When you were a hidden, unconscious drop of fluid. / He gave you spirit, intellect, nature, perception, / Beauty, speech, opinion, thought, and awareness. / Now, O insignificant ambition, do you think / That He will one day forget you?" *Gulistān*, p. 159).

Yet, as Saʿdī elsewhere clarifies, *tawakkul* does not negate effort, a balance central to his ethical realism (Arjomand, 2020, p. 124).

### ۳,۲,۲ *Behavioral Model of Students in the Clerical/Mystic Class:*

Saʿdī equally emphasizes the disciple's ethical responsibilities, framing spiritual education as a co-constitutive process requiring active moral cultivation:

*Self-reliance, not passive dependence:* A dervish who abandons work after seeing a fox scavenge from a lion is rebuked by a divine voice: "Strive for your livelihood; do not feign weakness":

"Go, be a manly lion, O deceitful one; do not throw yourself down like a lame fox... / Eat by your own strength as much as you can, / So that your effort may be on your own scale. / Bear the burden and bring comfort like men; / The effeminate one consumes the earnings of others. / O youth, take

the hand of the needy elder; / Do not throw yourself down, saying 'Take my hand'." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 89).

Saʿdī rejects ascetic idleness, insisting that true mystics "bear their own burdens so others may rest" (Shojaei Kawan, 2019, p. 145).

*Non-interference and open-mindedness:* A disciple who smashes a harp out of religious prejudice is beaten by the crowd. The elder uses this to teach: do not impose your judgments on others' practices (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 156), a call for tolerance within Islamic ethical pluralism.

He had not slept that night from the pain of the whip and the blows; / The next day, his elder said to him, teaching: / "If you do not wish to have a face scarred like the drum, / O brother, bow your head like the harp." (Ibid)

*Concealing others' faults:* When a disciple gossips about a Sufi drinking wine, the elder commands him to carry the drunkard home, resulting in public slander. The lesson: "If you would not have God expose your faults, do not expose those of others":

He had not slept that night from anxiety and ill-fortune; / The next day, his elder said to him, instructing: / "Do not cause your brother's disgrace in the quarter, / Lest Time wash away your honor in the city." (*Būstān*, p. 158).

This reflects the Qur'anic and Prophetic injunction against backbiting (*ghība*).

*God-consciousness (murāqaba):* True piety arises not from fear of public shame but from awareness of God's omnipresence: "Be ashamed before God, not before people":

“One was persisting in a reprehensible deed; / A virtuous, pious man passed by him. / He sat down, his face sweating with embarrassment, / [Thinking] 'I am ashamed before the sheikh of the quarter!' / The elder of enlightened soul heard this speech, / Became angry with him and said: 'O youth! / Are you not ashamed before your own self, / While God is present, and you are ashamed of me? / You have no regard for anyone's side; / Go, regard the side of God, and that is enough. / Be so ashamed before your Lord / As you are ashamed before strangers and kin.” (*Būstān*, p. 192).

*Obedience and receptivity to guidance:* Saʿdī recounts his own youthful defiance of his sheikh's advice to avoid musical gatherings, until a painful experience leads to repentance:

"[Because] my venerable sheikh had repeatedly advised me to abandon listening to music and had given eloquent sermons, but his words did not enter my ear until tonight, when auspicious fortune [and blessed luck] guided me to this place, and by this hand I repented that for the remainder of my life I would not go near music or gatherings." (*Gulistān*, p. 95).

This illustrates that spiritual progress requires surrender to the elder's wisdom, even when unintuitive.

*Active forgiveness:* When slandered, the disciple is instructed: "Shame your accuser by doing him good":

"I complained to [one of] the elders that so-and-so has testified to my corruption. He said: 'Put him to shame through your righteousness." (*Gulistān*, p. 96)

A practice echoing Christ's ethic of enemy-love, also affirmed in Islamic tradition (Qur'an, 41, v. 34).

*Necessity of a guide:* Just as a child needs a father, the seeker needs a *pīr*: "Without an elder, one cannot attain divine knowledge":

"You too are a child on the path, striving, O dervish; / Go, seize the hem of those who know the way. / Do not sit with base people; / When you have, wash your hands in awe. / Disciples in strength are like children against ropes; / The elders are like sturdy walls. / Learn conduct from that small child / Who seeks support from the wall. / You have been freed from the chain of the impious / Because you sat in the circle of the pious." (*Būstān*, p. 192)

This affirms the classical Sufi principle that the path (*ṭarīqa*) requires a living guide to navigate spiritual pitfalls (Karamustafa, 2007, p. 134).

Collectively, Saʿdī's portrayal of the mystic class reveals a disciplined, ethically rigorous Sufism, one that privileges inner transformation over outward spectacle. His anecdotes serve not only as moral instruction but as correctives to spiritual pretension, aligning with Ghazālī's project of "reviving the religious sciences" through ethical authenticity.

## ۳،۳ Public Class

Saʿdī affirms that education is a universal human necessity, transcending social rank or spiritual orientation. While rulers and mystics require specialized instruction, the vast majority of society, the "public class", forms the primary audience for ethical formation. For this group, Saʿdī articulates a comprehensive model of the ideal teacher and learner, grounded in moral integrity, intellectual competence, and relational wisdom. This section examines these ideals as they appear across *Gulistān* and *Būstān*.

### ۳،۳،۱ *Behavioral Model of Teachers in the Common People Class*

Saʿdī insists that effective teaching demands both knowledge (*ʿilm*) and virtuous character (*khalq*). A true educator, he writes, is not merely a dispenser of information but a moral exemplar whose life embodies the teachings he conveys (Shojaei Kawan, 2019, p. 167).

*Scientific Virtue of the Teacher*

The teacher's intellectual authority is central to his role as a formative influence on students' speech, conduct, and destiny. Saʿdī consistently describes exemplary teachers with terms such as *ḥakīm* (sage), *ʿālim* (scholar), *fāḍil* (virtuous), and *adīb* (cultivated). In one anecdote, a king "appoints a literate master to train [a boy] so that he might learn eloquent speech and reject foolish answers" (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 62).

"In short, they raised the boy in comfort and luxury and appointed [a cultivated master] for his education to teach him eloquent speech and proper response." (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 62)

Elsewhere, a sage is asked whether generosity or courage is superior; he replies, "He who is generous has no need of courage" (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 108), demonstrating that wisdom, not mere knowledge, defines true scholarship.

"[A sage] was asked which is better, generosity or courage? He said: 'He who has generosity has no need of courage.'" (Ibid)

*Moral Virtue of the Teacher*

Saʿdī treats the teacher as the living embodiment of ethics. His moral credibility is non-negotiable, for as he warns:

"Sin is blameworthy in anyone, but worse in scholars, knowledge is the weapon against Satan; if the wielder of the weapon is taken captive, the shame is greater" (*Gulistān*, p. 181).

"Sin, from whomever it occurs, is reprehensible, and from scholars it is worse, for knowledge is the weapon against Satan, and when the bearer of the weapon is taken captive, his shame is greater." (*ibid*)

*Key moral virtues include:*

*Piety and integrity:* Knowledge divorced from action is hypocrisy. Echoing Imam al-Ṣādiq's dictum that "if the scholar does not act on his knowledge, his advice slips from the hearts" (*Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, p. 56), Saʿdī condemns scholars who preach but do not practice:

"They teach people to abandon the world, / Yet themselves hoard silver and grain. / A scholar who is all talk and nothing more / Will impress no one with what he says." (*Gulistān*, 2005: 93)

*Avoidance of futile dispute:* When challenged by an ignorant man, a scholar replies, "My knowledge rests on the Qur'an, hadith, and wisdom of elders, but you believe none of these; what good is arguing with unbelief?":

"My knowledge is the Qur'an, hadith, and the sayings of the elders, and he does not believe in these nor listens; what good does it do me to hear his disbelief?" (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 129).

This reflects the classical Islamic principle of *tark al-mujādala* (avoiding unproductive debate).

*Humility and patience:* True sages endure insult without retaliation. Saʿdī urges scholars to remain steadfast "even when persecuted by the vulgar:

"If a virtuous man suffers oppression from the vulgar, / Let him not distress his heart nor become vexed. / If a low-born stone breaks a golden bowl, / The stone's value does not increase, nor does the gold decrease." (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 179)

Aligning with Ghazālī's emphasis on *ḥilm* (forbearance) as a scholarly virtue (Griffel, 2009, p. 167).

*Rejection of performative piety:* Saʿdī criticizes sages who "show off" their knowledge or physique, noting that ostentation obstructs genuine guidance:

"A scholar who indulges in pleasure and pampers his body, / He has lost his own way; how can he guide others?"

*Silence over verbosity:* In a celebrated metaphor, he writes:

"Musk's worth lies in its scent, not the perfumer's boast. / The sage is like the small drum, silent, deep, and resonant; / The ignorant, like the judge's drum—loud, hollow, and empty" (*Gulistān*, p. 207; *Būstān*, p. 134).

"Musk is that which exudes its own fragrance, not what the perfumer proclaims. The wise man is like the perfumer's drum: silent yet displaying art; the ignorant man is like the herald's drum: loud-voiced and hollow within." (*Gulistān*, p. 207).

This same theme is expressed in the fourth chapter of *Būstān* as follows:

"O sage, do not scatter pearls from your sleeves / When your own being, sir, is filled with self. / No one appears worthy in the eyes of others / When he boasts much of himself. / Do not speak, so that they may thank you a thousand times; / When you speak for yourself, expect no praise from others." (*Būstān*, p. 134)

This valorization of silence echoes Rūmī's and Ghazālī's critiques of empty talk (Lewis, 2008, p. 211).

"The value of musk lies in its fragrance, not in the merchant’s cry. / The wise man is like a small drum, silent, deep, and full; / The fool is like the judge’s drum, loud, empty, and dull." (cf. Arberry, 1974, p. 89).

*Teacher's Instructional Skills*

Beyond personal virtue, Saʿdī outlines pedagogical principles essential for effective instruction:

*Recognition of innate disposition (ṭabʿ):* Education must account for natural aptitudes. In one story, a king raises a rebel's son with care and appoints a wise tutor, yet the boy reverts to violence, prompting Saʿdī to conclude: "Education may be the same, but natures differ" (*Gulistān*, p. 62).

[In a tale from *Gulistān*] A king, at the request of his ministers, spared the son of a rebellious tribe and raised him in comfort and luxury, appointing a cultivated master for his education. However, the education of the wise had no effect on him, and eventually, he conspired with a group of rebels, killed the minister and his sons, and fled with much gold and jewelry. The king was greatly astonished by this event and said:

"Can a good sword be made from bad iron, O sage? / A base person cannot be refined through education." (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 62)

Likewise, Luqmān refuses to preach to bandits, saying, "It is vain to speak wisdom to those who cannot hear it" (ibid, p. 94).

Also, in another tale, Saʿdī speaks through the tongue of Luqmān the Wise about the ineffectiveness of admonition and wisdom upon the unworthy. A caravan was attacked by bandits, and the merchants' goods were plundered. The merchants asked Luqmān the Wise, who was among them: "Speak some words of admonition and wisdom to them, perhaps they will release some of our property, for it is a pity that so much wealth should be lost." Luqmān replied: "It would be a pity to speak words of wisdom to them.

What use is preaching to the black-hearted? / An iron nail does not penetrate stone." (Ibid)

This affirms Saʿdī's belief in differentiated instruction, a concept resonant with modern educational psychology (Arjomand, 2020, p. 118).

*Logic over emotional favoritism:* A teacher who indulges a beautiful student out of affection is rebuked when the pupil asks, "Attend to my soul's etiquette, not just my face." The teacher admits: "My gaze sees only form, not essence" (*Gulistān*, p. 136).

Saʿdī explains this issue in a tale in *Gulistān*. A teacher, due to the beauty of a student's face and voice, developed great affection for him and did not administer the rebuke and punishment he applied to other children. The student asked him: "Just as you pay attention to the etiquette of my lesson, likewise consider the etiquette of my soul, so that I may strive to change it." The teacher replied: "O son, ask this of another, for the regard I have for you sees nothing but virtue." (*ibid*)

True pedagogy, Saʿdī implies, requires impartiality.

*Moderation in discipline:* Extreme leniency or harshness both fail. When gentle teachers replace strict ones, children "lose all awe" and abandon study (*Gulistān*, p. 156).

He addresses this issue by comparing the approach of a strict, grim-faced, ill-tempered, and tormenting teacher with a forbearing and gentle one. Saʿdī begins the tale by describing the strict teacher and the outcome of his behavior, which caused terror, fear, and lack of self-confidence in

the children. The tale continues that when the parents learned of the torment and punishment from the strict teacher, they replaced him with a forbearing and gentle-natured teacher. But within a short time, "the awe of the first teacher left the children's heads, and seeing the angelic character of the second teacher, the devil within each became as one; relying on his forbearance, they forgot their lessons; moreover, most of the time they gathered for play and broke their undeciphered tablets over each other's heads." After two weeks, the parents restored the first teacher to his position. When Saʿdī expressed astonishment that once again they had made Iblis (Satan) the teacher of angels, an experienced elder said to him:

"A king sent his son to school, / Placing his silver tablet upon his lap. / On his tablet was inscribed in gold: / 'The teacher's severity is better than the father's kindness." (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 156)

Hence Saʿdī's golden mean:

"Be not so harsh they fear you, nor so soft they defy you; / Be not so stern they hate you, nor so mild they master you" (*Gulistān*, p. 173).

Therefore, [in the eighth chapter of *Gulistān*,] Saʿdī writes: "Excessive anger causes alienation, and untimely kindness diminishes awe; be not so harsh that they become weary of you, nor so lenient that they grow bold with you." (Ibid)

This reflects Avicennan and Ghazālian ideals of balanced pedagogy (Al-Attas, 1979, p. 145).

Openness to criticism: "Speech is not refined unless corrected," Saʿdī asserts (*Gulistān*, p. 175), a call for epistemic humility central to Islamic scholarly ethics.

Saʿdī considers receptiveness to criticism as a factor in refining one's speech and writes: "A speaker's words will not be perfected until someone points out their faults." (Ibid)

### ۳،۳،۲ *Behavioral Model of Learners in the Common Class*

Just as teachers must embody virtue, learners must cultivate moral and intellectual readiness.

*Moral Virtues*

*Respect for the teacher:* Even after mastery, the student must honor the teacher. In the tale of the wrestler, a boastful disciple claims parity with his master, prompting the king to order a match. The master defeats him with a withheld technique, saying, "I kept this for the day you turned foe" (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 79). The lesson: gratitude and humility are lifelong duties.

In this regard, Saʿdī addresses the student's disrespect and its consequences in *Gulistān* in the tale of the wrestler and his student. After learning three hundred and sixty advanced wrestling holds, the student wrestler said before the king: "My master's superiority over me is only due to his seniority and the right of training; otherwise, in strength I am not less than him, and in skill I am

his equal." (*Gulistān*, 2005, p. 79). The king deemed the student's disrespect unbecoming and ordered the master and student to wrestle. The master, seeing the student stronger than himself in arm strength, defeated him with the very hold he had not taught the student. The student said: "He said: 'O Lord, he did not defeat me through strength, but rather there was one subtle point of the wrestling art left which he had withheld from me. Today, by that subtle point, he gained mastery over me.' The master said: 'I kept it for such a day, for the wise have said: Do not give your friend such power that, if he becomes your enemy, he will overcome you.'"(Ibid)

*Fidelity in friendship:* True companions "place friends' needs before their own":

"I asked a great man about the conduct of sincere brethren. He said: 'The least of it is to prefer the comfort of friends over one's own interests. The wise have said: A brother who is concerned only with himself is neither a brother nor a kinsman."(*Gulistān*, p. 106).

Saʿdī warns that self-absorbed friends are "neither brother to others nor to themselves."

*Avoidance of gossip:* When young Saʿdī complains of classmates' envy, his master rebukes him:

"You disliked their jealousy, yet spoke ill of them? / If they go to hell one way, you take another" (*Būstān*, p. 159).

"You did not like jealousy from a friend; / What made you think backbiting is good? / If he takes the path to Hell out of meanness, / You arrive there by this other road." (*Būstān*, 2005, p. 159)

Backbiting (*ghība*) corrupts community and self, a theme emphasized in Qur'anic ethics (Qur'an 49:12).

*Behavioral/Action Model of the Learner in the Commoner Class*

*Discernment in companionship:* "Choose friends as you choose your soul," Saʿdī advises (*Gulistān*, p. 106).

"If a companion is hasty, he is no companion of yours; / Place no heart on one whose heart is not tied to yours." (*ibid*)

Hence, he says:

"A thousand relatives who are strangers to God / Are as nothing compared to one stranger who is a friend." (Ibid)

Companions shape character; thus, spiritual and ethical compatibility is essential.

*Situational awareness:* A Hindu studying advanced medicine is told, "This is no game for one whose house is made of reeds" (*Gulistān*, p. 159), a reminder that education must align with one's social reality and capacity.

Saʿdī mentions a Hindu who was learning naphtha-throwing, and a sage said to him: "For one whose house is made of reeds, this is no game for you." (Ibid)

*Eagerness to learn:* "A reluctant student is a lover without gold; / An ignorant wanderer is a chicken without feathers" (*Gulistān*, p. 183). Motivation, not mere instruction, drives learning.

Therefore, Saʿdī writes: "A student without desire is a lover without gold; a wanderer without knowledge is a bird without feathers." (*ibid*)

Inquisitive yet disciplined questioning: Citing al-Ghazālī, Saʿdī praises the scholar who "was never ashamed to ask what he did not know":

A spirit of inquiry is essential for a student and learner. Saʿdī, quoting Imam Muhammad Ghazālī, attributes his attainment of a high rank in the sciences to his inquisitive nature: "Imam, the guide Ghazālī, may God have mercy on him, was asked: 'How did you reach this station in the sciences?' He said: 'Because I was not ashamed to ask about anything I did not know."(*Gulistān*, p. 184)

Yet cautions against frivolous questions that "diminish dignity"

*Not being hasty in questioning:* As much as a learner must possess an inquiring spirit, he should not hasten to ask unnecessary questions, as it diminishes his dignity: "Do not hasten to ask anything which you know will eventually become known to you, for that diminishes the awe of sovereignty." (*Gulistān*, p. 185).

*Obedience and perseverance:* Saʿdī credits his own progress to "obeying the teacher and enduring the toil of learning":

"Do you not know how Saʿdī attained his goal? / He neither traversed plains nor crossed seas. / In childhood, he received blows from great ones for his sake; / In adulthood, God granted him purity of heart. / Whoever bows his neck to command / Will soon give commands himself." (*Būstān*, 2005, 165)

*Receptivity and preparedness:* In a parable, a preacher's words move a passerby but not his assembled audience, illustrating that learning requires inner readiness, not just external teaching (*Gulistān*, p. 90).

The most eloquent of speakers expressed this theme in the form of an instructive story: One day, in the mosque of Baalbek, he was preaching some words to a group of despondent and faint-hearted people, and he noticed that his words were not taking effect in their souls. While he was speaking about the meaning of the verse "We are closer to him than his jugular vein," a wayfarer passed by the edge of the assembly, and Saʿdī's words affected him; he cried out. Concerning this, the venerable sheikh said: "Glory be to God! The distant are aware and present, while the near are blind and absent." (*ibid*)

Similarly, the "sleeping student" awakens only when the "morning breeze brings a flower" (*Būstān*, p. 112), a metaphor for the soul's readiness to receive grace.

"What man of lust is fit for spiritual audition? / The sleeping rise at a pleasant voice, not the intoxicated. / The flower is scattered by the morning wind, / Not the firewood, which only an axe can split." (ibid)

*Eloquence and truthfulness:* Speech must be reasoned, truthful, and restrained. "Better to be jailed for truth than freed by lies" (*Gulistān*, p. 186).

Furthermore, students and learners must strive to be truthful. From the venerable sheikh's perspective, truthful speech and imprisonment are better than fabricating lies and gaining freedom:

"If you speak the truth and remain in chains, / That is better than lies granting you release from bondage." (*ibid*)

Verbosity, Saʿdī insists, "is the plague of eloquence" (*Gulistān*, p. 130), silence, its cure.

Additionally, verbosity is another affliction of eloquence that the student/learner must guard against. Saʿdī also deems verbosity blameworthy and praises silence:

"When you have said it once, do not say it again; / Sweetmeat, once eaten, is enough." (Ibid, p. 130)

*Table 1 Saʿdī's Tripartite Model of the Ideal Teacher and Learner*

| Class | Ideal Teacher Characteristics | Ideal Learner Characteristics | Key Examples from Text |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Rulers** | Peer mentor (former statesman); Disciplinarian; Embodies justice & statecraft. | Prioritizes public welfare; Exercises justice (*ʿadl*); Strategic & vigilant. | Anūshīrvān's counsel (*Būstān* 1:42); Tutor's strictness (*Gulistān* 1:155). |
| **Ascetics & Mystics** | Humble elder (*pīr*); Patient guide; Open to criticism; Practices *tawakkul*. | Obedient disciple (*murīd*); Self-reliant; Conceals others' faults; Seeks purification. | Ḥātim al-Aṣamm's humility (*Būstān* 3:125); Dervish rebuked for idleness (*Būstān* 2:89). |
| **General Public** | Sage (*ḥakīm*) with moral integrity; Moderate | Respectful & eager student; Avoids gossip; Discerning in | Teacher's golden mean (*Gulistān* 5:173); |

| Class | Ideal Teacher Characteristics | Ideal Learner Characteristics | Key Examples from Text |
|---|---|---|---|
| | disciplinarian; Attentive to student's *ṭabʿ*. | friendship; Truthful in speech. | Wrestler's lesson (*Gulistān* 2:79). |

## ٤ CONCLUSION

Saʿdī's *Būstān* and *Gulistān* stand as enduring monuments of Persian didactic literature, not only for their poetic elegance and moral insight but also for their sophisticated pedagogical vision. Beyond offering general ethical counsel, these works present distinct, socially situated models of the ideal teacher and learner, reflecting Saʿdī's deep engagement with the intellectual, spiritual, and political realities of his time. In response to the complex stratification of 13th-century Iranian society, Saʿdī articulates three interrelated educational paradigms: (1) the ruling class, (2) the ascetics and mystics, and (3) the general public. Each paradigm entails specific ethical expectations, relational dynamics, and pedagogical principles, as summarized in Table 1.

For rulers, education is a matter of public trust and divine accountability. Saʿdī dedicates the opening chapters of both *Būstān* ("On Justice, Prudence, and Counsel") and *Gulistān* ("On the Conduct of Kings") to this class, underscoring its foundational role in social order. He contends that the most effective mentors for kings are those of comparable stature, ideally former rulers or statesmen, whose lived experience embodies the virtues of justice (*ʿadl*), foresight, and self-restraint. The prince's education, therefore, is not abstract but practical, emphasizing governance that prioritizes the welfare of subjects, respects the rights of servants and merchants, and maintains vigilance against internal and external threats (Arjomand, 2020; Heath, 2013).

In the mystical domain, the teacher, often called "the Old One" (*pīr*), functions as a spiritual guide whose authority stems from humility, sincerity, and submission to the Divine. Far from seeking admiration, the true elder welcomes criticism, conceals others' faults, and trusts wholly in God. The disciple, in turn, is called to obedience, self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and active compassion, exemplified by the ethic of "doing good to one's slanderer." This Sufi pedagogy, as Shojaei Kawan (2019) observes, is deeply relational: knowledge is transmitted not through lecture alone but through embodied presence and ethical companionship (*suhbat*).

Yet the most extensive and socially inclusive dimension of Saʿdī's educational thought concerns the general public. Here, the teacher is portrayed as a *ḥakīm* (sage), *ʿālim* (scholar), and *adīb* (cultivated person), someone who blends intellectual competence with moral integrity. Such a teacher practices *tawāzun* (moderation): neither overly harsh nor excessively lenient,

always attentive to the student's innate disposition (*ṭabʿ*), and committed to silence over ostentation. Likewise, the ideal student combines eagerness to learn with humility, respects the teacher's dignity even after attaining mastery, avoids gossip, and cultivates eloquence grounded in truthfulness and prudence (Lewis, 2008; Griffel, 2009).

Saʿdī's context-sensitive models hold significant promise for addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic education and moral formation. His principle of aligning pedagogy with the learner's disposition (*ṭabʿ*) prefigures modern theories of differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences, suggesting pathways for more effective, personalized learning in diverse Islamic school settings. The tripartite model also offers a framework for ethical leadership development: the ruler's emphasis on justice and accountability, the mystic's on humility and introspection, and the public teacher's on integrity and moderation can inform holistic training programs for community leaders, educators, and civil servants in Muslim-majority and multicultural societies. Furthermore, Saʿdī's relational ethics—where teacher and learner are mutually formed through responsibility and respect—provides a robust alternative to transactional educational models, emphasizing character building alongside knowledge acquisition. In an era seeking authentic models for moral education, Saʿdī's literary pedagogy, rooted in *adab*, offers timeless yet adaptable insights.

Collectively, Saʿdī's tripartite model reveals a context-sensitive, ethically grounded vision of education that transcends mere knowledge transmission. For him, teaching and learning are co-constitutive moral practices, in which both parties are shaped through mutual responsibility, self-discipline, and social awareness. This vision remains strikingly relevant today, offering timeless insights into relational ethics, differentiated instruction, and the moral formation of citizens, leaders, and seekers alike.

From Saʿdī's perspective, due to individual differences and variations in aptitude, human beings possess significant disparities in matters of education and training. Educational and instructional material may be comprehensible to one person and obscure or even misleading to another. Therefore, based on the principle of individual differences, one must first discover dispositions, temperaments, abilities, and aptitudes, and only then proceed with the task of education and training. Whereas in Iran's current education system, less attention is paid to the principle of individual differences, and students' field of study is often determined based on their grade point average. From Saʿdī's viewpoint, teachers play a crucial role in the educational process, and students' scientific, cultural, social, ethical, and spiritual competencies are influenced by teachers. Therefore, it is necessary for policymakers to strive for the elevation and honoring of the teacher's status and to attend to their scientific, welfare, and material needs.

Saʿdī believes that in education and training, attention must be paid to spiritual matters and self-purification. Neglecting these issues leads to the spread of a materialistic spirit and the instrumental utilization of education. Saʿdī places great emphasis on the factor of advice, counsel, and admonition in the form of tales and stories. Imitation and role-modeling are important to Saʿdī in

education. Today, teachers also play an effective role in the education of students by creating role models and introducing worthy exemplars in various religious, sporting, artistic, and other fields.

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