

Iran : the contribution of persian heritage to the pedagogy of philosophy for children

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Introduction

Philosophy for children can be used as a means of education with its own methods; each culture enjoys its own stories, patterns and models which can be used in this regard, so that philosophy for children may be compatible with the social context of each country. Philosophy for children has a multidisciplinary approach which should integrate diverse disciplines for its improvement. Each civilization has its own heritage and methods of contributing to this cause. Oriental civilization also made its own contribution in this regard in a different way, by presenting criteria for thought and behaviour. Although this subject is a recent one, we can find its roots in the past from the ideas of the Persian philosophers and writers. This article aims in its first section to express its perception of and the objectives of philosophy for children, as well as the regular methods for its implementation in the educational system, and in the second section to provide some examples from Iranian literary and scholarly works which can be used advantageously for teaching philosophy to children.

I. The Pedagogy of Philosophy for Children: Objectives and Methods

1) Philosophy for children and its objectives

It has been argued that the primary purpose of education is the cultivation of thoughtful people¹. While philosophy has been defined as the collected thought of philosophers, an alternative approach sees it as an activity capable of being carried out by anyone who engages in philosophical thought². The main aim of philosophy for children is not to teach them the lessons of philosophers such as Aristotle or Avicenna, but rather to familiarise them with the act of philosophising by raising their capability to think and question, develop their intellectual capacities, arouse their curiosity, and improve their reason and thinking skills. In Islamic and Iranian culture, the human being is considered as the summit of creation and as someone who accepts responsibility, and thus, in Islamic thought, philosophy for children considers the responsibility to think, reflect, reason and to acquire knowledge. Based on Qur'anic principles, the best servants are those who choose the best of different words. Thus, Islam not only encourages thought and reflection but also says that if somebody does not believe in whatever he says, he is considered as a hypocrite. Therefore philosophy is here a way of thinking, concentrating, paying attention, distinguishing and searching for truth through reasoning in the Socratic manner. Philosophy for children teaches children the skills of thinking, reasoning, querying and judgment, and aims to replace the culture of blind imitation and acceptance with the culture of research.

Philosophy for children aims to reinforce four types of thinking, namely: critical thinking, creative thinking, caring or responsible thinking, and collaborative thinking. Thus, philosophy is a way to search for and explore the truth rather than memorising philosophical thoughts and systems in parrot fashion. If we pay attention to this kind of philosophy, it can enable the educational system to evolve and can be considered as a new movement in education in which logical thinking prevails. Questioning becomes the element of integrating philosophy with education, permitting children to think, judge and decide; it teaches logic, the best ways of expressing their questions, and how to begin dialogue. It is also multidimensional education which incorporates sympathy, imagination, and excitement with seriousness, openness, collaboration, reasonableness and tenacity. Questioning their main questions and concerns becomes the principal motor of research, and this kind of questioning and finding answers will give meaning and richness to the lives of children.

Self-understanding and intellectual independence, improvement in thinking and communication, ethical reasoning, inquiry skills and creativity, and processing ability are the main results of this way of thinking, which provides motivation and insight. Children learn how to present a question, how to analyse it and how to resolve it, rather than memorising and learning only the answers. They learn how to have appropriate dialogue and how they can distinguish correct from false reasoning. The main skill of dialogue is listening carefully; after that comes thinking, and after that, questioning. This manner of education organises the minds of children with new educational techniques and methods; how they can express their interest to others, how they can critique and accept the critiques of others.

The best method in this regard is the community of inquiry, in which the children sit in a circle to think collaboratively and correctly, to reason logically and to utilize the appropriate criteria for their judgment.

The main concepts which would be paid attention during the pedagogy and philosophy for children and which contribute to the conceptualisation and enriching the meaning of these concepts are: equity, justice, friendship, beauty, episteme, logic, ethics, environment, spiritual values, social norms, self-awareness, desires, intellect, the mind, cause, truth, belief, right, wrong, love, commitment, amiability, empathy, sympathy, sensibility, parent, self, body, good, and time.

2) Methods of education in philosophy for children

Attention should be paid to all aspects of philosophy for children, such as the book (for example, those containing fables, parables and stories); the class, which is in the form of the community of enquiry, like a circle; and the teacher, who is only the facilitator, who favours the process of the questioning of the children, rather than someone who imposes their ideas on children. The teacher should arouse the curiosity of the children so that they focus on "how" and "why", and should expand children's thinking skills and their capacity to critique. Through discussion of a subject by both the children and their teacher, reciprocal relations are established.

Firstly, to focus more closely on the book as a teaching instrument, to enable the capacity for children's thought and concentration of flourish, one should concentrate on pictures and images for learning, and also use stories of animals to make it more tangible. An example is the story of Stephen Bear, *Your House or My House*,³ which concerns the friendship between a bear and a fish. Each of them wished to invite the other to its own home; however, if the bear wanted to bring the fish to his house, he should take it in his mouth to bring it to his cave, and in this case the fish, taken out of the water, would lose its life. Equally, if the fish wanted to invite the bear, he should descend to the depths of the sea, in which case he would drown. They conclude that they should see each other on the river banks to continue their friendship. This story shows that the views, home and world of the bear are different to those of the fish, and can arouse children's curiosity in wondering why the bear became friends with the fish, and how the fish was able to talk to him - raising its head out of the water - without losing its life. Thus, there are some ambiguities and questions which the children can ask each other, the answers to which can be reached through collaborative activity; the children will also learn such concepts as friendship. Story books include the element of imagination so that children wish to associate themselves with the protagonist, in the process improving their thinking skills and taking some models and patterns from these stories. Here the teacher is, like the students, a member of the class in which they come to do research with the children, rather than imposing some information on them. The children should attain the answers by dialogue and through an exchange of views, and in this regard the teacher is a facilitator to improve the logical and expressive skills of the children. Stories contribute to exploring norms and values, through which children can be socialised, and children are themselves the criteria for distinguishing the authenticity or falsity of the stories; that is, when a story is attractive, children will wish to continue reading or listening to it. Children's self-identification with the hero of a story results in them taking up the pattern; the question of the hero becomes their own question. Aspects of the stories which should be taken into consideration include their ethical and sympathetic approach, their appropriateness to the age of children, and their compatibility with the culture of children so that they can facilitate their thinking. Therefore, one may understand that the story can be considered from an inter-disciplinary approach.

Turning in more detail to the class, this becomes a community of questioning and collective answers or replies, in which pupils exchange their views freely and with respect for each other. They learn how to raise appropriate questions and how to pay attention rather than remaining indifferent, and thus learn the method of thinking rather than memorization. They learn how to conclude, how to listen, how to behave logically, how to reply and how to judge. In this community of inquiry, open rather than limited questions would be raised, and this method of education avoids being teacher-centric. The best method is the dialectic Socratic way, which is indirect education. The best way of learning philosophy is learning how to solve a problem, rather than learning its answer. The teacher does not have the role of determining what is right or wrong, but should rather facilitate dialogue and the bilateral nature of questions and answers. In the education in philosophy for children, we should pay attention to some elements such as the interests of the children, their sentiments and excitement, their critical thinking, values, and the collaborative nature of the class, so that they can dialogue in a

circle. In such circles they will learn not only how to dialogue, but also how to collaborate, respect others, understand the pleasure of understanding, learn the skills of thinking and reading for understanding and questioning, have intellectual integrity and observe what is appropriate.

Thus, this educational system would be based on a new paradigm founded on reflection rather than the transfer of information. The teacher in this programme is not the only person who transfers information; pupils can question the teacher, and the teacher can also learn from their pupils. The children shall be directed towards good thinking and to approach the truth through learning the following: to understand the text very well, to listen to the speech and views of their friends, to formulate their questions and views, to critique the views of the teacher, to understand that they may be wrong, to not be irritated when their views are critiqued, to formulate their critiques so they do not hurt their friends, to express their views easily without any fear, to use their own words to critique others, to use logical rules for this, to explore the falsity of their friends' viewpoints, and to analyse whatever is under discussion.

II. Iranian Heritage as a Resource for the Pedagogy of Philosophy for Children

Iranian heritage forms a rich resource for teaching philosophy to children, and includes both intellectual heritage, in the form of literary and scholarly texts, and folkloric or intangible cultural heritage, in the form of rituals, which can educate children in how to think or how to behave.

The first philosophical stories were written by Ibn Sina, Avicenna (980-1037); this tradition he established was transferred to Shahabeddin Sohrevardi (1155-1191). Avicenna's stories are mystical, as can be seen in his works *Resal-e Esharat* (Recital on Theorems); *Tanbihat* (Remarks); *Resal-e Salaman* (Recital of Salaman)⁴; and *Resalat ol-Teyr* (Recital of Birds), and he likened the human spirit to a bird, which in this world is caged by its body, but will come back to the celestial realm to return to God. Avicenna was the founder of methodological education for children and made various recommendations to mothers concerning the education of their children, during pregnancy, during infancy - for example, a mother can convey some meaning to her baby in the movement of its cradle, during childhood and during adolescence, as can be seen in his books *Shefa*, *Qanun* and *Resalat-e Siasat* (Recital of Politics)⁵. Avicenna also wrote a chapter entitled "The Role of the Teacher in the Training and Upbringing of Children", as a guide to teachers working at *maktab* schools, in which he noted the benefits of children being taught collectively in a class rather than individually, emphasizing the value of group discussions and debates. Philosophers such as himself and Shahabuddin Sohrevardi - who translated Avicenna's work *Resalat ol-Teyr* - also paid attention to writing stories, not merely for children but rather for everyone who is in some way at the level of a child regarding philosophy. They did not use philosophical terminology, but rather wished to present their thought in mystic and idolatry terms in order to transmit very celestial ideals to their audience, while also using ideals to acquaint people with metaphysical concepts. They thus maintained some distance from academic and pure logical expressions in order to present philosophy in a manner that would popularize it.

There are many miscellaneous Persian proverbs and stories, either true or fables, which can be used to teach philosophy to children. For example, the stories of Ferdowsi's (935-1020) Shahnameh ("The Book of Kings"), the millennium of whose composition is being celebrated by UNESCO in 2010, teaches children about sacrifice and devotion, and that a hero is not only heroic in physical capability but also in intellect and mind; rather than merely being someone who can kill or vanquish others, a hero is also someone who can help others. Characters such as Rostam, Esfandiyar or Siavash, who sacrifices his life, form models for children. The mystical bird called the Simorgh, who is later to be seen in the poetry of Farid ud-Din Attar Neishabouri, is also referred to in the Shahnameh as the symbol of assistance and devoted help⁶. Regarding the Shahnameh, an expression of intangible cultural heritage exists which is called naghali, the art of narrating stories in either verse or prose, using the corresponding gestures, expressions and dialogue to convey the story to the audience; the naghali (narrator) tells the story with dramatic tone and expressions accompanied by a musical instrument. The narrators have different styles of performed narration, including pardeh-khani or shamayel-gardani, in which the narrator explains the paintings on a portable curtain to a group of listeners. Such recitation of the Shahnameh is made in historical costume to remind the audience of the atmosphere, and is beneficial for children, who learn a great deal from it⁷.

Abu Reyhan Al-Biruni (973-1048 A.D.) was a versatile scholar and scientist who had equal facility in physics, metaphysics, mathematics, geography and history; as one of the very greatest scientists of Islam he has inspired the teaching of geometry to children, notably through the substitution of critical thinking for rote learning, in order that children might understand and think for themselves. His book entitled "Al-tafhim le-avaa'ele Sanaat el-tanjim" (Understanding the Elementary Issues of Astronomy), is written to teach in a simple manner mathematics and astronomy to an adolescent girl named Reyhane. He held the belief that the transfer of knowledge to children was insufficient, and instead a sense of judgment and creative talent should be encouraged to flourish and develop in children. As Biruni wished to address the youth, he used a method appropriate to their age by writing his mathematical and astronomical work in the form of a dialogue comprising questions and answers, in which the child first posed a question to be answered by Biruni himself in very simple language. In teaching geometry, rather than beginning in the traditional manner of Euclid with a point and a straight line, as these definitions of Euclid are abstracts which are difficult for children to grasp, Biruni instead began with three-dimensional space, which is tangible for children, and continued from there. Children thus taught to grasp tangible things then became more capable of understanding abstract problems⁸.

Saadi (1184-1283/1291), the great Persian poet, also wrote in his works written in high literary style in prose (Golestan) and poetry (Bustan), many stories and proverbs to teach children how to think and act in society. The following proverbs have been quoted from him: to place a bad action in the river Dejleh so that God will give it back to you in the desert, which means that a good action is never lost; those who give to the poor, lend to God. "One blind man leads another"; in society we are blinded by our imitation of each other. "Death is like a camel which sleeps behind each house"; death will knock at every door. "A blacksmith committed a sin in Balkh, but they have cut the throat of a coppersmith

in Shushtar"; innocent people can be killed while the principal committers of an act escape punishment. His stories also constitute a source of reflection for children on how they could or should behave in society. Another person who has written Persian stories which are important in this regard is the great mystical poet Farid ud-Din Attar Neishabouri (1145/6-1221), whose rich works were to inspire Mawlana Jalauddin Balkhi Rumi; of particular significance is his work *Mantegh ol Teyr*, the *Conference of the Birds*⁹.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Balkhi Rumi (1207-1273), the 800th anniversary of whose birth was celebrated by UNESCO in 2007, believed that one should talk to children in their own language. He also wrote many stories which provide very high-level concepts of philosophy to people but which are at the same time tangible and comprehensible for children: for example the story of the grocer and the parrot¹⁰, in which the moral is not to simply compare things which appear similar; and the story of the merchant and the parrot¹¹, which teaches that one should abandon everything and sacrifice one's life in order to gain release, and in which he used the parrot as the speaking symbol of one's spirit. Similarly, the story of the elephant in the dark house¹² demonstrates that one requires all one's senses to understand the whole truth. Mawlana's stories take his audience into consideration; this is combined with technique and art to produce personalities. His stories have a symbolic effect, as he wanted to provide a way to reach the meaning and show how to pass through different stages to reach the truth. He conveyed this information firstly to teach, and then developed the story with some comedic and tragic aspects; through creativity and artistry he tried to draw the reader into the atmosphere that he wished to convey, which is the high concept of wisdom. For example, his story about the lion and the rabbit¹³ is the struggle between determinism and free will, in which he built the image of the extraordinary dialectic in which the lion is the symbol of free will and the rabbit and other animals that of determinism. A discussion arises between them, and Mawlana develops their personalities and finally traces the image of the victory of the rabbit over the lion. One of the functions of this dialogue is that Mawlana shows us indirectly the improvement of the intellectual level of the rabbit; if the rabbit decides to fight against the lion, it is because he has the intellectual power or capacity to overcome it, and thus Mawlana wanted to demonstrate the victory of intellectual over physical capacity. The importance Mawlana accorded to education is demonstrated in his story of Cain and the crow: after Cain had killed Abel, he did not know how to dispose of his body. Suddenly he saw a crow burying a dead crow and he learned from this how to bury Abel. Thus, he believed that human beings require education, even at such a low level as that of a gravedigger; there is no profession, industry or skill which can be learned without the instruction of a teacher.

Sheikh Bahae (1531-1609), the 400th anniversary of whose death is being commemorated by UNESCO this year, is a personality who is well-known in the Arab and Iranian worlds, as well as throughout Islamic civilization; his scientific works have been used as international reference works. He wrote a story about a cat and a mouse which includes very interesting proverbs which are significant for children and which are tangible for them. For example, "the cat is like a lion in catching the mouse, but is himself like a mouse when combating the leopard". "Do not consider a peppercorn, which is small, as nothing"; a small seed can grow into a mighty tree and is very powerful and

effective. "From this column to that column is relief"; that is, tergiversation - as the mouse would tell the cat that he could eat him tomorrow, always delaying it until the next day. "Kindness to the leopard, which has sharp teeth, is the oppression of sheep" - it is a bad shepherd who likes the wolf; tolerance cannot be shown to those who want to kill us. "The door does not turn on the same stone"; all the days are not the same, and we cannot always benefit from them as they may be with us or against us. "First equality, then fraternity"; "They did not take tomorrow from us"; we should think about tomorrow, tomorrow - we should be contented with each day at its time. "Do not enter into friendship with those who have elephants or construct buildings for elephants"; we should suffer the consequences of our actions. "The atonement of the wolf is his death", meaning that if a wolf has killed sheep and wants to atone for this, we should not listen to what it says; even if it makes such a change, it is equal to its death, as the wolf may change its skin but not its nature. "Prudence is the condition of wisdom." These proverbs are written in prose, whereas Obeid Zakani (d.1370)¹⁴ has also written a book of the same name, *Mouse and Cat*, but in poetic form, which also teaches children to understand the hypocrisy of the cat and the mouse's means of survival through its intelligence, with a critical view to the social situation.

The stories of Mullah Nasrudin¹⁵ overcome cultural boundaries through their philosophical connotations, and are impregnated with philosophical concepts which are rather oriental; 1996-1997 was declared International Nasrudin Year by UNESCO. He is an ironic personality with a sense of humour, unafraid of authority, who at the same time holds philosophical views. His stories teach us very humorous and ironic thoughts, but also teach meaning and demonstrate the limitations of logic, which is in itself also the education of logic. What adds to his uniqueness is the manner in which he conveys his messages very effectively in an unconventional and very simple way. In all the stories of Mullah Nasrudin there is only one unique idea, that is, the idea of enquiry, searching and understanding meaning, and in this we can refer to his saying that a new shirt eats rice¹⁶.

In fact, proverbs and stories constitute the main pedagogical resource in the Iranian cultural and literary context. As far as the Persian proverbs are concerned, we can refer to the following examples: somebody who has a bigger roof has more snow (that is, if one has more authority, one has more commitment, leading to a sort of balance between rights and obligations). There are also many stories in Iranian folklore which are beneficial for teaching children, such as the story of the close friendship between a man and a bear: one day while the man was sleeping a fly landed on his nose, which his faithful friend the bear tried to kill with a great rock, which led to the man's death (thus, if there is no homogeneity between two friends, it can result in destructive acts). Similarly, there are the stories of the fox and the rooster,¹⁷ and also the fox and the crow¹⁸, which teach children that they should not open their mouths at inappropriate times. In educational books for children there is also the story of a devoted farmer; unable to inform the driver of a train of the danger caused by the collapse of the railway tunnel, he looked for something to burn to alert him, and burnt his jacket; in the process he was himself burnt to death while saving the lives of others. Such a story teaches the concept of self-sacrifice to children. Also to be mentioned are the stories of Kalileh and Dimneh, which create a world of wisdom - this is a great philosophical book due to its social, political and pure

philosophical content, but in the form of stories and dialogue among animals; and also very symbolic didactic stories from the imams which are gathered in Dastan-e Rastan, the stories of righteous and correct persons, by Seyyed Morteza Motahhari, which provides ethical patterns for children.

Conclusion

Through the examination of Persian heritage and its contribution to the pedagogy of philosophy for children, it becomes evident that the contributions of Persian philosophers and writers and Persian heritage in general were made in several forms: firstly, methodological, such as is found in the works of Avicenna and Abu Reyhan Biruni; secondly, behavioural, showing how children should behave in complex society, as found in Iranian proverbs and also the rituals that have been mentioned above, as well as whatever is written in the Golestan of Saadi and cat and mouse stories of both Sheikh-e Bahae and and thirdly, intellectually, demonstrating how children can or shall think, question and learn through critical thinking, as is found in the stories of Mullah Nasrudin and Mawlana. Thus, one becomes aware that the pedagogy of philosophy for children should take into account the diverse contexts in which philosophy should be taught, and should try to develop inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches based on cultural diversity to educate children. It should take into consideration the values and norms of children's societies, while at the same time trying to distance them from the clichés or stereotypes which can exist in each society by means of encouraging the development of their critical thinking.

(1) Ennis, Lipman and Paul (1989), cited in Shabani 2004.

(2) See Beheshti, S. (1999): Philosophy of Education, Ghods Publications, Mashad, Iran (cited by Seyed Mansour Marashi, "Teaching Philosophy to Children: a New Experience in Iran", Analytic teaching, Vol. 27, No. 1.

(3) This story is included in the series Thinking Stories edited by Philip Cam, Associate Professor in the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales, Australia.

(4) Ja'far Jami (1414-1492) also was inspired by Avicenna in his book Salaman and Absal.

(5) IRNA News Agency:

<http://www.irna.ir/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=787014>

<http://www.irna.ir/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=78702> , accessed 13/11/2009

(6) The Simorgh entered history after the birth of Zal; when Sam, the father of Zal, realized that the hair of his son was white, he decided to abandon him in the desert. However, the Simorgh took Zal to his nest to raise him. When Sam, after dreaming of his son, realised he was still alive, he went to the Alborz mountains to find him, and the Simorgh gave Zal one of its feathers which he could use in case of difficulty. Zal used the feather twice: once on the birth of Rustam, who was so big that it was very difficult to be born, and another time during the battle of Rustam and Esfandiyar, in which Rustam,

using the means taught him by the Simorgh, succeeds in vanquishing Esfandiyar; on this occasion the Simorgh also healed Rostam's injuries. Thus the Simorgh has a material existence in the Shahnameh, but also enjoys metaphysical qualities and characteristics.

(7) See, for example, "Naghali, Iranian style of storytelling", www.tehrantimes.com/PDF/10652/10652-7.pdf and "Traditional Storytelling", <http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/dir/traditions/asiamiddleeast.html>

(8) From an interview with Dr. Ja'far Aghayani-Chaboshi, Professor of Sharif Technology University in Tehran, entitled "Philosophy for children in Iranian-Muslim culture", conducted by Saeed Naji and translated from Persian to French by Justine Landau (Université Paris III, Sorbonne Nouvelle).

(9) Attar wrote about a group of birds which wanted to choose a king, and finally chose the Persian bird called the Simorgh (literally, "thirty birds"). The Simorgh lived on the mountain of Qaf, situated very far from the city in which the birds were living; as they wished to go to him and ask him to become their king, led by the hoopoe they began a very long trip, passing through seven steps called the seven valleys of love. At each step some of the birds finished their travel through either tiredness or loss of life. When they reached the mountain on which the Simorgh lived, they did not find him; however, when they looked at themselves they realised that they were thirty birds, and then they understood the unity of the one who seeks and the one who is sought (such as the lover and beloved); they themselves were in fact the Simorgh. In the words of the Simorgh:

"Pilgrim, pilgrimage and road Was but myself toward myself, and your Arrival but myself at my own Door... Come, you lost atoms, to your center draw And be the eternal mirror that you saw: Rays that have wandered into darkness wide Return, and back into your sun subside."

(10) The grocer had a beautiful green parrot in his shop who could talk like a human, joking with the customers and making them laugh. One day, when it flew from one side of the shop to the other, its wing hit a jar of oil which fell down and broke. When the grocer returned, he saw the spilt oil which had made the shop dirty. He took a stick and beat the parrot's head, which became injured so that its feathers fell out. The parrot did not talk any more from that time on and the grocer became sad and regretted his behaviour. One day a bald man passed the shop; the parrot saw him and suddenly asked, "Oh, bald man, have you also broken a jar of oil to become a member of our community of the bald? You should not spill oil." Thus, the parrot had concluded that every bald person had also spilt oil, which is a false comparison.

(11) Once upon a time, a merchant wanted to go to India and asked everybody what they would like as a gift. He also asked his caged parrot, who replied that if in India he saw a parrot, the merchant should tell them that it was eager to see it, but unfortunately was caged and would like some guidance from it. The merchant promised it to convey its message to the parrots of India. When he reached India he passed on this message to an Indian parrot he saw, in response to which it fell down dead from its tree. The merchant became sad and reproached himself for transmitting this message which had caused the death of a parrot. When he returned home, his own parrot asked him whether

he had conveyed the message, and he replied that he regretted that he had done so. When the parrot asked him why, he told it that when he passed on the message, the Indian parrot had trembled and then fell down from the tree and died. When his parrot heard the news, it also trembled and fell down dead. The merchant was very sad about this, and brought the parrot out of its cage to see what had happened to it. The parrot suddenly flew off, to the astonishment of the merchant, who asked it the meaning of this. The parrot told him that the Indian parrot had taught it how to gain release from the cage and added that, if one would like to be released, one should abandon everything and sacrifice one's life in order to gain release. The merchant thus learnt from the parrot that to save his life, he should abandon everything, and he thanked the parrot for teaching him this point.

(12) The people had come to see the elephant in a dark house but could not distinguish the creature in the darkness; thus everyone wanted to touch it to understand what it was. Somebody touched the elephant's trunk and said it was like a rainwater-pipe; another person touched its ears and said that it was like a fan; another touched its leg and said it was like a pillar; and another put their hand on back of the elephant and said that it was like a bed. Thus, the story demonstrates that if we content ourselves only with one of our senses, we cannot understand the whole truth.

(13) The story goes that in a forest the lion was killing the animals to eat, until finally the animals came together to discuss how to obtain tranquillity and rid themselves of the fear that the lion would catch and eat them. Finally they decided to tell the lion that they would present him with one animal to eat every day by drawing lots. The lion accepted this, but was a little sceptical. The animals told him that they could try it and God's will would be done, and that they should lean on God to see whatever He has determined for their destiny and accept it. The lion agreed, but said that God showed us that our way and life is like a ladder we can mount step by step to reach whatever we want; first we should try, then lean on God, and then submit to His will. The lion also said that God gave us hands to work with, and a head to think with and legs to walk with, and we should thank Him for all His gifts; if they are not used properly, it will lead to the destruction of these blessings. The lion convinced them through his reasoning, and when the animals were released from this intellectual laziness, which was entangled in determinism, their reason and intellect also became free and they could take reasonable decisions. Then they decided to send one animal for the lion each day, but one day the lot drawn fell to the rabbit himself. The animals asked him to go quickly so that the lion would not be irritated, but the rabbit had another plan as his reasoning and knowledge surpassed that of the other animals. He dithered, and did not divulge the mystery of this delay to the other animals. The lion was hungry and said to himself, "I knew that these animals would not keep their promise. I am surprised that these animals, who believed in determinism, by telling me that they had no free will obliged me to accept silence and submission; but now, with ruse and reason, they have stopped my efforts in the way of life so that I have become stagnant in my place." All of a sudden, the lion saw that the rabbit was approaching very slowly and limping. The rabbit apologised and said, "I was coming with another rabbit to offer to you but on our way another lion suddenly pursued us, and even though I told him that we are your servants as you are our king, he did not pay any attention and took the other rabbit." The lion became irritated and asked where that lion was, so that he could

show him who was the king, and the rabbit asked him to follow him. They walked together until they reached a well. The lion asked the rabbit why he had stopped, and the rabbit replied that the lion was in the well; the lion asked him to show him the other lion. The rabbit replied, "If you hold me in your paws I can show you, as otherwise I do not dare to do so." The lion picked up the rabbit and looked into the well, where he saw his reflection; he thought that this was the other lion who had taken the rabbit reserved for him. He then released the rabbit, who said, "Your rival is there." The lion jumped into the well and drowned. The rabbit returned happily to the forest and told the other animals that the lion was dead, and they celebrated the news. However, the rabbit recommended them not to have the arrogance of victory, and that the fighting against oneself is more important than fighting an enemy.

(14) Masnavi Mush o Gorbeh (Tales of the Mouse and the Cat).

(15) See <http://www.nasruddin.org>

(16) Mullah Nasreddin was not permitted to enter a wedding celebration; when he put on a new shirt and was permitted enter, he offered some of the rice to his sleeve, saying that what was important was one's dress, rather than humanity itself. This shows the importance of humanity rather than social standing. On another occasion, he lied to all his neighbours that soup was being given out; when he saw crowds of people going to collect the free soup, he himself also believed in it. This demonstrates that that sometimes we may even believe our own lies.

(17) The fox requested the rooster to accompany him, but the rooster was a little hesitant. The fox then encouraged the rooster to crow, and when he did so the fox jumped and caught him. When he was trapped in the fox's mouth, the rooster said, "Down with mouths open at inappropriate times, down with eyes closed at inappropriate times!"

(18) A crow was holding a piece of cheese in its beak; a fox saw him and paid him many compliments, finally saying, "I also would love to hear your beautiful voice". When the crow, flattered, opened his beak, the cheese dropped down to be caught by the fox.