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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Philosophical Foundations of Human Moral Perfection in Me'yor Ul-Axloq

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Abstract

The study examines the philosophical foundations of human moral perfection in Abdurahmon Sayyoh Toshkandiy's Me'yor ul-axloq, one of the significant ethical works of early twentieth-century Turkestan. The research aims to reveal the conceptual relationship between the human soul, moral character, rationality, self-discipline, virtue, education, and social responsibility in Toshkandiy's ethical thought. Historical-philosophical, hermeneutic, comparative, and conceptual methods are employed to reconstruct the author's model of moral development. The analysis shows that Toshkandiy interprets moral perfection as the attainment of balance between the intellectual, irascible, and appetitive powers of the human personality. Moral maturity is therefore not an innate and unchangeable condition but a developmental achievement based on education, self-control, rational judgment, habituation, and conscious correction of undesirable traits. Particular attention is given to the categories of ruh, nafs, measure, virtue, vice, wisdom, courage, temperance, and moral education. The findings demonstrate that Me'yor ul-axloq combines traditional Islamic ethical principles with an educational and reformist orientation characteristic of the intellectual environment of Turkestan in the early twentieth century.

KEYWORDS

Abdurahmon Sayyoh Toshkandiy, Me'yor ul-axloq, moral perfection, ethics, moral philosophy, ruh, nafs, virtue, moral education, measure, enlightenment.

INTRODUCTION

The question of human moral perfection is one of the fundamental problems of philosophical ethics. It concerns not merely the distinction between good and evil but the deeper issue of how a person becomes morally mature, how inner inclinations are transformed into stable virtues, and how rational consciousness can regulate desires, emotions, habits, and actions. In Eastern philosophical thought, these questions developed through the interaction of philosophical anthropology, religious ethics, spiritual self-discipline, educational theory, and ideas concerning the relationship between individual perfection and the well-being of society. In Turkestan at the turn of the twentieth century, this classical ethical heritage was reconsidered in response to new educational and social needs.

Abdurahmon Sayyoh Toshkandiy occupies an important place within this intellectual environment. He was known not only as an author but also as an enlightener, publisher, traveler, and participant in the periodical culture of Turkestan. Sources identify Me'yor ul-axloq among his principal ethical works and indicate that it was lithographically published in Tashkent by the G'ulom Hasan Orifjonov printing house in 1912. Later descriptions of the work report that it consists of two major

sections, each divided into seven chapters. The first section addresses the nature, meaning, virtue, corruption, and improvement of moral character, demonstrating the author's intention to treat ethics systematically rather than as a collection of isolated moral instructions [1; 2].

Toshkandiy's ethical thought was formed within a broader Islamic intellectual tradition. Research into his works notes his references to the Qur'an, hadith, Imam al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and other representatives of Muslim scholarship. At the same time, his interpretation of inherited moral ideas reflects the educational and social concerns of his own historical environment. He attempts to make ethical knowledge relevant to practical upbringing, personal behavior, family relations, and social development.

The philosophical importance of Me'yor ul-axloq lies particularly in the concept expressed by its title. The idea of me'yor, or measure, implies that moral perfection depends on balance, proportion, and the correct regulation of human powers. A virtue is not simply an isolated positive quality; it emerges when the various dimensions of personality operate within an appropriate moral order. Excess and deficiency disturb this order and generate vice. In this sense, Toshkandiy develops an ethical anthropology in which the individual is capable of change and in which education and self-discipline become instruments of moral transformation.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the philosophical foundations of human moral perfection in Me'yor ul-axloq and to determine how Toshkandiy conceptualizes the relationship between the inner structure of the human being, moral measure, virtues, the possibility of changing character, and education. The study argues that his concept of moral perfection can be reconstructed as a movement from internal regulation to stable virtue and from stable virtue to socially meaningful moral conduct.

The principal source of the research is Abdurahmon Sayyoh Toshkandiy's Me'yor ul-axloq, published in Tashkent in 1912. The analysis also draws on studies devoted specifically to Toshkandiy's ethical heritage, including investigations of the structure and philosophical essence of Me'yor ul-axloq, its socio-ethical content, its place in the intellectual environment surrounding Al-Isloh, and comparisons between Toshkandiy and other representatives of Turkestan enlightenment. Recent scholarship confirms growing academic interest in the work: studies published between 2021 and 2025 have examined its ethical terminology, structure, educational implications, and relationship to the reformist thought of its period.

The methodological framework combines historical-philosophical analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, comparative analysis, and conceptual reconstruction. Historical-philosophical analysis is employed to interpret Toshkandiy's ideas in the context of early twentieth-century Turkestan rather than separating them from the intellectual problems of his era. Hermeneutic analysis is used to clarify the meaning of categories such as ruh, nafs, aql, xulq, fazilat, and me'yor. Comparative interpretation helps identify the interaction between inherited Islamic ethical concepts and Toshkandiy's enlightenment-oriented treatment of moral education. Conceptual reconstruction makes it possible to view his discussions of the soul, human powers, virtues, character, and upbringing as interconnected elements of a coherent philosophy of moral perfection.

The analysis demonstrates that Toshkandiy begins his philosophy of moral perfection from a distinction between the outward and inward dimensions of the human being. The body constitutes the visible aspect of human existence, whereas habits, actions, dispositions, and character express the internal moral form of the personality. In his interpretation, bodily beauty depends on proportion among physical elements; analogously, inner beauty requires proportion among dispositions and actions. When behavior and character lose their appropriate measure, inner perfection becomes impossible. This analogy provides an important key to understanding the philosophical meaning of Me'yor ul-axloq: morality is fundamentally connected with internal order and proportion.

Such an approach makes moral perfection a question of harmony rather than the mechanical accumulation of separate positive traits. A morally developed person possesses an organized inner world in which thought, emotion, desire, intention, and action do not constantly contradict one another. The notion of measure therefore functions simultaneously as an anthropological and ethical criterion. Anthropologically, it establishes the requirement of proportionality among human faculties. Ethically, it enables the distinction between virtue and the excessive or deficient manifestations that lead to vice.

The categories of ruh and nafs have particular importance in this construction. Toshkandiy considers the human being as possessing both a corporeal and an inward dimension, while conduct and habitual qualities serve as manifestations of the latter. The invisible moral nature of the human being becomes

recognizable through actions. Consequently, moral character cannot be separated from practical behavior: the quality of the inner self is revealed in the manner in which a person speaks, chooses, reacts, and acts.

This relationship also explains why moral perfection requires self-regulation. The presence of inner impulses does not itself make a person morally deficient. The decisive question is whether these impulses are regulated by reason and ethical consciousness. Toshkandiy identifies three fundamental powers in the human moral constitution: the intellectual or reflective power, the irascible power, and the appetitive power. Contemporary analyses of the primary text confirm that each of these powers may produce both virtues and vices depending on the manner and degree in which it is manifested [1, pp. 87–94].

The intellectual power is connected with understanding, judgment, memory, discernment, truthfulness, and wisdom. When it operates according to measure, it enables a person to recognize reality adequately and make morally meaningful judgments. When distorted, however, intellectual capacity may turn into deception, cunning, ignorance, falsehood, or irresponsible reasoning. Toshkandiy therefore does not identify intelligence automatically with goodness. Intellectual ability becomes a virtue only when directed toward truth and morally justified purposes. This point gives his theory an important philosophical depth: moral perfection requires not simply knowledge but ethically regulated knowledge.

The irascible power concerns the human capacity for energetic response, resistance, courage, anger, and defense. In its balanced form it produces such qualities as forgiveness, gentleness, compassion, determination, humility, endurance, generosity of spirit, and courage. When it exceeds its appropriate measure, it may generate arrogance, cruelty, hostility, resentment, excessive anger, or aggression; when deficient, it can result in cowardice and weakness of resolve. The source therefore treats courage not as unlimited boldness but as the morally proportionate use of an affective power.

The appetitive power is associated with physical needs, desire, possession, pleasure, and material inclination. Toshkandiy does not present these needs as inherently immoral. Their ethical significance depends on regulation. Under moral discipline, the appetitive dimension can be associated with contentment, patience, modesty, generosity, dignity, self-restraint, order, and temperance. Without measure, it can generate greed, betrayal, uncontrolled desire, stinginess, and other destructive tendencies.

The relationship among these three powers makes the concept of balance central to Toshkandiy's anthropology. Human moral perfection is achieved neither through the destruction of natural capacities nor through unrestricted satisfaction of them. Instead, each power must fulfill its legitimate function without dominating the entire personality. The rational faculty determines appropriate boundaries, while education and repeated practice stabilize desirable forms of behavior. In philosophical terms, moral maturity emerges as an internal hierarchy in which reason and moral consciousness direct rather than eliminate the emotional and appetitive aspects of human existence.

One of the most significant results of the analysis concerns Toshkandiy's position on whether moral character can be changed. If character were absolutely fixed, the science of ethics and the practice of education would lose much of their meaning. Toshkandiy explicitly rejects such fatalism. In the concluding discussion of moral correction, he argues that even a person with deeply established undesirable traits can undergo at least some improvement through repeated instruction, discipline, and appropriate influence. Even where complete transformation is difficult, the intensity and further development of negative qualities can be reduced [1, p. 80].

This position provides the philosophical foundation for moral education in Me'yor ul-axloq. Human beings possess habits, but habits are not entirely immutable. Character is shaped through repetition and can consequently be reoriented through sustained ethical practice. Moral perfection becomes a process rather than a static status. It includes recognition of one's deficiencies, acceptance of moral guidance, correction of harmful habits, conscious reinforcement of virtues, and gradual transformation of conduct.

Toshkandiy's theory therefore contains a significant idea of moral agency. Individuals are influenced by upbringing and environment, yet they are not reduced to these influences. The ability to reflect on one's conduct makes self-correction possible. Moral consciousness intervenes between impulse and action. The stronger this reflective capacity becomes, the less an individual is governed by uncontrolled inclination. Perfection is consequently related to the development of an internal capacity for ethical self-government.

Education is the social mechanism that supports this development. Toshkandiy gives particular attention to the

upbringing of children and distinguishes interconnected dimensions of education concerned with physical formation, the inner or psychological self, proper development, and good upbringing. Research comparing Toshkandiy's position with that of Abdulla Avloniy shows that both thinkers regarded systematic education as indispensable for changing character and preparing a morally responsible generation, although their classifications differ [5].

The educational significance of Me'yor ul-axloq must also be considered in the context in which the work appeared. Studies of Toshkandiy's intellectual activity emphasize the demand in Turkestan for ethical materials accessible to students and adapted to contemporary educational needs. His later publishing activities and association with Al-Isloh similarly connected moral questions with enlightenment, religious knowledge, social reform, and public education.

The philosophical structure of the work thus connects personal perfection with social development. An individual who learns to control desire, cultivate reason, restrain destructive anger, practice honesty, and transform knowledge into good conduct becomes capable of responsible participation in collective life. Moral perfection is therefore not confined to the private inner world. Inner harmony has social consequences because virtues become visible in relationships with other human beings.

The results make it possible to interpret Me'yor ul-axloq as a systematic theory of moral formation rather than merely a manual of permissible and impermissible conduct. Its philosophical center is the idea that human perfection depends on the ordered relationship among the powers constituting personality. The word me'yor acquires conceptual significance because the boundary between virtue and vice often depends upon degree, direction, and purpose. Courage, for example, is distinguished from recklessness and cowardice through measure; control of desire is distinguished both from uncontrolled appetite and from an unnatural denial of legitimate needs.

This understanding brings Toshkandiy's thought close to the broader tradition of virtue ethics while preserving the religious and cultural foundations of his worldview. His work does not isolate reason from spirituality or personal character from divine and moral responsibility. Sources examining the intellectual foundations of his ethical writings point to Qur'anic and hadith traditions and to the influence of major Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazali and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. What distinguishes Toshkandiy in his immediate historical context is his effort to convert this ethical inheritance into a practically oriented program of education and moral renewal.

A second philosophical foundation is the transformability of moral character. Toshkandiy's insistence that even deeply rooted negative traits can be moderated gives education a genuine philosophical justification. If people are capable of correction, ethical teaching is not simply descriptive; it is transformative. The teacher, family, community, and individual himself become participants in moral formation. This principle also rejects moral pessimism. A person should not be defined permanently by an existing vice, because repeated moral practice may create new habits and new forms of self-understanding.

A third foundation is the unity of inner character and outward conduct. The work treats actions and habits as expressions of the inner moral form of the person. Moral perfection cannot therefore be achieved merely through theoretical knowledge. A person may know definitions of wisdom, honesty, patience, or temperance without embodying them. Knowledge becomes ethically valuable when it informs judgment and produces stable forms of behavior. This explains why Toshkandiy combines philosophical reflection with educational recommendations.

The fourth foundation is the social character of perfection. The disciplined personality is not constructed for isolation from society. Balanced powers make just interaction, responsibility, cooperation, and moral reliability possible. This interpretation corresponds with later scholarship that regards Toshkandiy's ethical ideas as an important part of the socio-ethical and educational discourse of the Jadid-era intellectual environment. Studies published in recent years have particularly highlighted the relationship between his ethics, enlightenment, educational reform, and the cultivation of morally responsible individuals.

In this respect, Me'yor ul-axloq occupies a transitional intellectual position. It preserves categories inherited from classical Islamic morality while addressing the problems of a society confronting educational, cultural, and social transformation. Toshkandiy does not present moral renewal as possible through institutional modernization alone. Development requires a corresponding transformation of the person. Knowledge without ethical discipline, social change without responsibility, and intellectual ability without virtue cannot produce genuine human perfection.

The philosophical analysis of Me'yor ul-axloq demonstrates that Abdurahmon Sayyoh Toshkandiy understands human moral perfection as a dynamic process based on inner balance, rational regulation, moral education, and the transformation of knowledge into virtuous conduct. The central philosophical category of the work is me'yor—measure—which expresses the requirement that the intellectual, irascible, and appetitive powers of the human personality should operate within appropriate limits.

The intellectual power reaches perfection when knowledge, understanding, discernment, and reasoning are directed toward truth and wisdom. The irascible power becomes morally productive when it is transformed into courage, endurance, forgiveness, compassion, and firmness rather than aggression or cowardice. The appetitive power contributes to perfection when desire is regulated through contentment, patience, modesty, generosity, dignity, and self-restraint. Moral vice arises when these faculties lose balance through either excess or deficiency.

An especially significant aspect of Toshkandiy's philosophy is his recognition of the possibility of changing character. Moral deficiencies are not interpreted as an irreversible destiny. Education, repeated ethical instruction, self-examination, habituation, and conscious discipline can reduce negative tendencies and strengthen virtues. This principle turns ethics into a practical science of human transformation.

Accordingly, Me'yor ul-axloq presents moral perfection as the unity of a well-ordered inner world and socially responsible behavior. A morally mature person is not merely one who possesses knowledge of good and evil but one who has learned to govern personal inclinations, convert ethical knowledge into habit, preserve moderation, and express virtue through relations with other people. In this sense, Toshkandiy's work represents an important synthesis of traditional Islamic moral philosophy and the educational-enlightenment aspirations of early twentieth-century Turkestan, and it remains a valuable source for studying the philosophical foundations of moral personality and human perfection.

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