

The Role of Classical Poetry in the Development of Critical Thinking: Clarity, Accuracy, and Reflection in Rumi's Masnavi

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Abstract

This paper investigates how classical poetry, particularly Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnavi*, contributes to the development of critical thinking skills. It specifically analyzes the story of Moses and the shepherd to demonstrate how poetic narrative can serve as a medium for cultivating essential cognitive abilities such as clarity, accuracy, logical consistency, evidence-based reasoning, creativity, open-mindedness, and reflection. Using qualitative content analysis, the study identifies and categorizes these critical thinking principles within the text and explores their pedagogical implications. The analysis shows that *Masnavi* encourages readers to move beyond rigid dogmatism, promoting intellectual openness and reflective engagement through allegorical storytelling. The findings affirm that classical poetry is not only a vehicle for spiritual insight but also a valuable tool for fostering critical thinking in educational and ethical contexts.

Keywords: Classical Poetry, Critical Thinking, Jalaluddin Rumi, Masnavi, Content Analysis, Reflection, Allegory

Introduction

In contemporary educational and professional contexts, critical thinking is recognized as an essential cognitive skill that underpins effective problem-solving, decision-making, and active engagement in social discourse. The complexity of today's global challenges -such as ideological polarization, intercultural misunderstandings, and socio-political conflicts- amplifies the necessity for individuals to possess strong critical thinking abilities. Recent research highlights that collaborative problem-solving approaches have been shown to significantly enhance students' critical thinking competencies, preparing them to navigate multifaceted issues with greater efficacy.¹ Furthermore, educational strategies that incorporate metacognitive approaches can foster not only critical thinking but also improve learners' problem-solving skills, thereby encouraging a deeper engagement in their learning processes.² Such methodologies resonate with the notion that critical thinking is not merely an isolated skill but rather a multidimensional competency that includes reflective openness and moral reasoning.³

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¹ Enwei Xu et al., "The Effectiveness of Collaborative Problem Solving in Promoting Students' Critical Thinking: A Meta-Analysis Based on Empirical Literature," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 16, no. 23 (2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01508-1>.

² Abdul Manan et al., "Developing the Geometry Teaching Module by Using a Metacognitive Approach in Kurikulum Merdeka to Improve the Students' Critical Thinking Skills," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review* 7, no. 5 (2024): 2548-58; Kah Choon Low et al., "Improving University Students' Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: How Problem-Based Learning Works during COVID-19 Pandemic?" *Journal of Advanced Research in Applied Sciences and Engineering Technology* 37, no. 2 (2024): 165-76.

³ Xu et al., "The Effectiveness of Collaborative Problem Solving in Promoting Students' Critical Thinking: A Meta-Analysis Based on Empirical Literature," 5.

The value of critical thinking has long been emphasized not only in modern educational theories but also in classical intellectual traditions. Classical Islamic scholars like Ibn Rushd emphasized that critical thinking was not only compatible with religious belief but also mandated by divine revelation, considering it essential for philosophical inquiry and scientific exploration.⁴ This historical perspective illustrates that the pursuit of critical thinking, far from being a modern invention, has deep roots in philosophical and theological discourse. Moreover, in addition to philosophical traditions, classical literary traditions -particularly Sufi poetry- also emphasize the cultivation of reflective and critical thought. As highlighted in recent analyses, Jalaluddin Rumi's poetic works encourage profound reflection on existential themes such as love, patience, and destiny, fostering a deeper understanding of human agency and moral responsibility.⁵ Rumi's emphasis on self-reflection and interpretive openness aligns closely with the foundational aims of critical thinking, nurturing not only analytical skills but also ethical and spiritual discernment.

Moreover, analyses reveal that critical thinking skills are essential for participants to engage meaningfully in social discourses. Studies indicate a correlation between critical thinking and self-directed learning abilities, which are vital for problem-solving in educational environments, particularly in nursing and medical education.⁶ The integration of reflective practices within pedagogies helps students develop both intellectual independence and a moral compass, increasingly required to address contemporary societal challenges.⁷ This nuanced understanding of critical thinking's role underscores its importance in nurturing not just cognitive skills but also the ethical and reflective dimensions that are crucial for effective participation in a complex world.⁸

Therefore, fostering critical thinking through various instructional methods -such as problem-based learning (PBL), collaborative tasks, and metacognitive strategies- is imperative. These methods not only enhance critical and creative thinking but also encourage students to engage constructively in discourse and problem-solving scenarios.⁹ Ultimately, cultivating critical thinking capabilities in educational settings directly contributes to the development of individuals who are better equipped to engage in the ongoing discourse surrounding global issues and social dynamics, reflecting a pressing educational objective in the 21st century.¹⁰

⁴ Achmad Khudori Soleh and Erik Sabti Rahmawati, "The Strength of Ibn Rushd's Integration of Religion and Philosophy: An Islamic Historical Discourse," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 18, no. 2 (2023): 180.

⁵ Taufiqurrahman Taufiqurrahman et al., "Exploring Jalaluddin Rumi's Hermeneutic of Love, Patience and Destiny in Relation to the Meaning of Life," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 2 (2024): 211-24, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no2.14>.

⁶ Lingling Huang et al., "The Mediating Effects of Self-Directed Learning Ability and Critical Thinking Ability on the Relationship between Learning Engagement and Problem-Solving Ability among Nursing Students in Southern China: A Cross-Sectional Study," *BMC Nursing* 22, no. 1 (2023): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01280-2>.

⁷ Shahnaila Syed et al., "Comparing the Influence of Critical Thinking on the Academic Performance of Two Secondary Education Boards in Pakistan," *International Journal of Social Science & Entrepreneurship* 3, no. 1 (2023): 205-31, <https://doi.org/10.58661/ijssse.v3i1.95>.

⁸ Huang et al., "The Mediating Effects of Self-Directed Learning Ability and Critical Thinking Ability on the Relationship between Learning Engagement and Problem-Solving Ability among Nursing Students in Southern China," 1-9.

⁹ Low et al., "Improving University Students' Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: How Problem-Based Learning Works during COVID-19 Pandemic?," 165-176.

¹⁰ Valentin Grecu, "Investigating Critical Thinking Among Engineering Students in Romania," *Acta Universitatis Cibiniensis. Technical Series* 75, no. 1 (2023): 21-29, <https://doi.org/10.2478/aucts-2023-0003>.

Despite its recognized significance, research on the development of critical thinking has largely focused on modern pedagogical tools such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and digital technologies.¹¹ However, relatively less attention has been given to the role of classical literary works in this context. The potential of classical literary texts, especially poetry rooted in moral and philosophical traditions, remains underexplored. In this context, classical poetry deserves renewed attention—not merely as cultural heritage, but as a pedagogical tool capable of enhancing clarity, accuracy, logical reasoning, creativity, reflection, and open-mindedness.¹² These intellectual virtues are critical in fostering empathy and critical awareness, particularly in pluralistic societies.

Ahmet İnam, emphasizes that critical thinking is not merely a cognitive tool, but an existential act—an evaluative journey through which individuals interrogate societal norms and self-perceptions.¹³ This aligns with John Dewey's perspective that critical thinking is a “habit of mind,” rooted in inquiry and experience.¹⁴ Likewise, Ennis defines it as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do,” highlighting its ethical dimension and emphasis on evaluative choice.¹⁵ Norris and Phillips further point out the role of reasoning and evaluation in developing effective communication and argumentation skills.¹⁶ These perspectives underscore that critical thinking is both a skill and a disposition.¹⁷

Beyond formal education, the lack of critical thinking has been shown to exacerbate societal divisions. Studies on prejudice, rigid thinking, and emotional polarization highlight how cognitive inflexibility can deepen sectarian and ideological conflicts.¹⁸ These findings underline the

¹¹ LLuthfi Anisatin, Afifah Akmalia, et al., “Design of Arabic Textbooks Based Flipping Book on Al-Masal (Proverbs) Material Class X MA,” *ATHLA: Journal of Arabic Teaching, Linguistic and Literature* 3, no. 1 (2022): 53–74, <https://doi.org/10.22515/athla.v3i1.5142>; Budi Jatmiko et al., “The Comparison of Oripa Teaching Model and Problem Based Learning Model Effectiveness to Improve Critical Thinking Skills of Pre-Service Physics Teachers,” *Journal of Baltic Science Education* 17 (April 2018): 300–319, <https://doi.org/10.33225/jbse/18.17.300>; Muhammad Awaly et al., “The Effectiveness of Multiple Representation Electronic Book Design in Improving Critical Thinking Skills and Creative Thinking Skills of High School Students,” *European Modern Studies Journal* 7 (July 2023): 169–82, [https://doi.org/10.59573/emsj.7\(3\).2023.17](https://doi.org/10.59573/emsj.7(3).2023.17); Agnita Siska Pramasdyahsari et al., “Fostering Students' Mathematical Critical Thinking Skills on Number Patterns through Digital Book STEM PjBL,” *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 19, no. 7 (2023): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/13342>.

¹² Raisa Gladushyna, “Challenging Critical And Creative Thinking In Foreign Language Teaching And Learning,” *Slavonic Pedagogical Studies Journal* 8, no. 1 (2026): 97–110, <https://doi.org/10.18355/PG.2019.8.1.7>.

¹³ Ahmet İnam, “Bin Yıllık Hüzün: İnsanın Düşünme Serüveni Üstüne Bir Yorum,” in *Doğu'dan Batı'ya Düşüncenin Serüveni: Akli Düşünce ve Felsefenin Doğu'dan Doğuşu: Babil-Keldani-Çin-Hint-İran-İbrani Gelenekleri*, 1st ed., vol. 1, ed. Bayram Ali Çetinkaya, *Düşünce Dizisi* 47 (İnsan Yayınları, 2015), 85–102.

¹⁴ Moeketsi Letseka and Davison Zireva, “Thinking: Lessons from John Dewey's How We Think,” *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2 (July 2013): 51–60, <https://doi.org/10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n2p51>.

¹⁵ Jukka Utriainen et al., “University Applicants' Critical Thinking Skills: The Case of the Finnish Educational Sciences,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 61 (2016): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1173092>; Laura J. Fero et al., “Critical Thinking Skills in Nursing Students: Comparison of Simulation-Based Performance with Metrics,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 66, no. 10 (2010): 2182–93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2010.05385.x>.

¹⁶ Brian Hand et al., “Improving Critical Thinking Growth for Disadvantaged Groups within Elementary School Science: A Randomized Controlled Trial Using the Science Writing Heuristic Approach,” *Science Education* 102, no. 4 (2018): 693–710, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.21341>.

¹⁷ Rabab Hassan et al., “Critical Thinking Disposition And Self-Esteem Among Technical Nurse Students In Port-Said City,” *Port Said Scientific Journal of Nursing* 7 (December 2020): 122–37, <https://doi.org/10.21608/pssjn.2020.124002>.

¹⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict Representations of Arabs in Israeli Jewish Society* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), xvii–xviii, 97–124; Michael E. Brown et al., “Ethical Conflict: Conceptualization, Measurement, and an Examination of Consequences,” *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 107, no. 7 (2022): 1130–49, <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000854>; Gudrun Østby, “Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and

importance of cultivating multidimensional critical thinking skills in both formal and informal educational contexts.

Building on this conceptual foundation, the present study seeks to investigate how classical poetry—particularly *Masnawi* by Mevlâna Jalaluddin Rumi—can serve as a rich resource for developing critical thinking. Composed in the 13th century, Rumi’s *Masnawi* is a monumental work of Sufi literature that blends allegorical narrative, theological reflection, and philosophical inquiry. Among its many parables, the story of Moses and the shepherd presents a vivid confrontation between rigid religious formalism and intuitive spiritual expression. The narrative not only problematizes external correctness in worship but also affirms the value of sincerity, love, and interpretive generosity.

This paper focuses on this story to examine how classical poetic discourse can facilitate key dimensions of critical thinking. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, it explores how the story embodies principles such as clarity, logical consistency, evidence-based reasoning, creativity, open-mindedness, and reflection. In doing so, the study contributes to the emerging literature on the educational potential of literary traditions in cultivating analytical and ethical capacities in modern learners. Thus, this study explores the pedagogical potential of Rumi’s *Masnawi* to nurture essential critical thinking skills, particularly by illustrating how classical poetic narratives can foster analytical reasoning, ethical reflection, and intellectual openness within contemporary educational contexts.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the intersection of critical thinking and classical poetry, focusing specifically on the story of Moses and the shepherd from Mevlâna Jalaluddin Rumi’s *Masnawi*. A qualitative content analysis approach is adopted, following the principles articulated by Elo and Kyngäs.¹⁹

The story of Moses and the shepherd was selected because of its rich allegorical structure, which offers profound insights into faith, understanding, and devotion. It presents a compelling context for analyzing how poetic storytelling can cultivate cognitive and ethical reflection. Rumi’s use of metaphor and allegory invites readers to engage deeply with key principles of critical thinking, including clarity, accuracy, logical consistency, evidence-based reasoning, creativity, open-mindedness, and reflection.

The research design involves a close textual reading of the narrative. The text was divided into meaningful units—such as dialogues, metaphors, and narrative events—and systematically coded according to pre-determined critical thinking criteria. Each principle was analyzed as it appears in the story: clarity in the expression of ideas, accuracy in understanding diverse perspectives, logical consistency in evaluating interactions between Moses and the shepherd, evidence-based reasoning in assessing the sincerity of spiritual devotion, creativity in the shepherd’s unique worship practices, open-mindedness in the acceptance of diverse expressions of faith, and reflection on the deeper meanings behind actions. Thus, the analysis seeks to demonstrate how Rumi’s poetic

Violent Civil Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 2 (2008): 143–62; Hadi Wahab, “Syria’s Sect-Coded Conflict: From Hezbollah’s Top-down Instrumentalization of Sectarian Identity to Its Candid Geopolitical Confrontation,” *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 8, no. 2 (2021): 149–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347798921999191>.

¹⁹ Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, “The Qualitative Content Analysis Process,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62, no. 1 (2008): 107–15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>.

Classical Poetry in the Development of Critical Thinking: Clarity, Accuracy, and Reflection in Rumi's Masnavi discourse can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool for cultivating critical thinking skills in modern educational contexts.

The Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the *Masnavi* in the Context of Critical Thinking

Before analyzing the story of Moses and the shepherd, a brief summary of the narrative will be presented, followed by a content-based examination in light of critical thinking principles. The story is taken from the English translation of R. A. Nicholson,²⁰ and due to space limitations, only a summary is provided.

This analysis focuses on how Rumi's narrative engages with key dimensions of critical thinking and challenges readers to reconsider dogmatic perspectives. The story is rich in allegorical and ethical elements, making it an ideal subject for examining the intersection between poetic imagination and intellectual reflection. In this context, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the principles of critical thinking -such as clarity, accuracy, logical consistency, evidence-based reasoning, open-mindedness, creativity, and reflection-represented in the story of Moses and the shepherd?
2. How does Rumi use allegorical storytelling to promote critical engagement with theological and moral issues?
3. In what ways can classical poetic texts like the *Masnavi* be utilized as pedagogical tools for cultivating critical thinking in educational contexts?

The Summary of the story of Moses and the Shepherd

In this text, a shepherd's prayer leads to a profound interaction between Moses and God, highlighting the difference between outward religious practices and inner spiritual understanding. The shepherd is seen praying in a naive and unfamiliar way, expressing a desire to serve God by performing menial tasks, such as sewing God's shoes and cleaning His room. Moses, upon hearing this, rebukes the shepherd harshly, accusing him of blasphemy and ridiculing his simplistic approach to worship. Moses questions how the shepherd can attribute such physical needs to God, who is above all worldly concerns.

However, Moses' stern criticism leads to a divine response. God reveals to Moses that his actions have severed the shepherd from the divine presence, rather than bringing him closer. God emphasizes that He has given everyone a unique way of expressing devotion, and that what might seem foolish or incorrect to one person may be deeply meaningful to another. God further teaches Moses that He does not need praise or rituals for His own benefit, but that worship exists as a kindness to the worshippers themselves. The outward form of worship, whether it is in the idioms of different cultures or the actions of the individual, is secondary to the heart's devotion.

God explains that the true measure of worship is not found in the external acts, but in the sincerity of the inner spirit. This burning passion for God, or the "burning of love," is the essence of true devotion. For those who are deeply immersed in divine love, even flawed expressions of worship are acceptable, as long as they come from a pure and passionate heart. God's mercy is abundant, and the religion of love transcends traditional religious rules. It is not bound by formalities or rituals but is a deeply personal and transformative experience that connects the devotee to the divine. In response to this revelation, Moses seeks out the shepherd and follows his erratic,

²⁰ Reynold A. Nicholson, *Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, vol. 2 (The Cambridge University Press, 1926), <http://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.20683>.

wandering path until he finds him. Upon meeting, the shepherd, now in a state of deep spiritual transformation, reveals that he has surpassed the need for external religious structures. He speaks of being bathed in his heart's blood, indicating that his soul has transcended the limitations of earthly expressions of worship. The shepherd's words reflect a state of spiritual ecstasy and closeness to God, far beyond the conventional practices that Moses had once thought necessary for true devotion.

Ultimately, the text emphasizes the idea that spiritual truth cannot always be captured by conventional religious norms. True devotion comes from the heart, and sometimes, unconventional expressions of faith can carry deeper meaning than traditional practices. This story underscores the importance of love, humility, and sincerity in worship, suggesting that God's mercy and grace transcend human limitations and the rigid structures of religious observance.²¹

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Clarity Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Mevlâna Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnawi* highlights the tension between external expressions of devotion and the inner sincerity of worship. Evaluating this tale through the clarity principle of critical thinking reveals significant insights into the importance of understanding and communication in spiritual and interpersonal contexts.

The shepherd's words, while unconventional and seemingly blasphemous, reflect a deep and genuine love for God. His metaphorical language-offering to sew shoes, comb hair, and kiss God's hands-demonstrates an attempt to express devotion using familiar concepts from his everyday life. From the clarity perspective, this reveals how personal experiences shape communication, emphasizing the need to understand the shepherd's intent rather than judging his literal words.

Moses's harsh reprimand of the shepherd underscores the pitfalls of misjudging others based on one's own framework of understanding. By focusing on the perceived impropriety of the shepherd's words, Moses fails to recognize the underlying sincerity and love. This illustrates how a lack of clarity-both in interpreting others' expressions and in understanding diverse spiritual languages-can lead to miscommunication and unnecessary conflict.

God's rebuke of Moses serves as a pivotal moment, emphasizing that worship should be evaluated based on the heart's intention rather than the precise articulation of words. The principle of clarity here extends to recognizing the subjective nature of devotion and the value of diverse expressions of faith. God's response highlights that true clarity in critical thinking involves looking beyond superficial expressions to discern deeper truths.

The story urges readers to approach both their own beliefs and others' expressions with humility and openness. The shepherd's unpolished language becomes a symbol of pure and untainted devotion, while Moses's initial criticism exemplifies how rigid frameworks can obscure the essence of worship. Clarity in critical thinking, therefore, demands attentiveness to context, sensitivity to underlying intentions, and a willingness to reevaluate one's own assumptions.

Several critical insights emerge from this story regarding the clarity principle: First, the shepherd's words, though unconventional, communicate profound devotion, underscoring the importance of considering intent over literal form. Second, Moses's initial reaction highlights the dangers of applying one's own standards rigidly when interpreting others, violating the openness required for

²¹ Nicholson, *Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, 2:310-17.

true clarity. Third, the narrative teaches that genuine clarity involves seeking deeper understanding beyond outward expressions to uncover the sincerity and meaning beneath. Finally, by affirming the multiplicity of valid spiritual expressions, the story reminds us that clarity also requires embracing diversity in communication and thought. Thus, Rumi's narrative not only challenges superficial judgments but also exemplifies how critical thinking rooted in clarity can foster greater empathy, understanding, and respect for diverse forms of spiritual and interpersonal expression.

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Accuracy Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* is a profound exploration of the tension between formalized religious expression and the authenticity of heartfelt devotion. Analyzing the narrative through the principle of accuracy in critical thinking highlights the importance of ensuring truthfulness, appropriateness, and alignment with reality in communication and judgment.

The shepherd's heartfelt expressions of devotion, though inaccurate in theological terms, stem from his personal understanding of God. His language, describing God in human-like terms (e.g., offering to comb God's hair or wash His clothes), demonstrates a mismatch between his words and theological accuracy. However, his sincerity and intent to communicate devotion reflect an inner truth. Critical thinking here acknowledges that while his words are not doctrinally precise, they accurately represent his genuine emotional state and limited understanding.

Moses's initial response focuses solely on the theological inaccuracy of the shepherd's words, dismissing the sincerity of his devotion. By condemning the shepherd's expressions as blasphemous, Moses prioritizes doctrinal correctness over the shepherd's genuine intent. This highlights a critical thinking error: overlooking context and intent when assessing accuracy. Moses's approach demonstrates the dangers of rigidly adhering to external standards without considering deeper truths.

God's intervention reframes the notion of accuracy, emphasizing that true worship is judged by the heart's sincerity rather than the precision of one's words. God rebukes Moses for disrupting the shepherd's connection to Him, pointing out that the shepherd's devotion, though inaccurate in form, is true in spirit. This illustrates a critical thinking lesson: accuracy must encompass both factual correctness and the deeper alignment of intent and meaning.

The story underscores the importance of balancing doctrinal accuracy with an understanding of individual context. While theological precision is valuable, critical thinking requires recognizing that expressions of faith often vary based on cultural, educational, and personal factors. In this case, the shepherd's inaccurate words reflect his personal context, which Moses initially fails to consider.

Several key insights emerge from the analysis of accuracy in this narrative. First, accuracy must consider intent: although the shepherd's words lack theological precision, they accurately reflect his emotional devotion and understanding. Second, overemphasis on external correctness can obscure deeper truths: Moses's focus on verbal exactness neglects the spiritual authenticity of the shepherd's connection to God. Third, true accuracy integrates both depth and form: as God's response highlights, the essence of worship lies in the alignment of the heart with divine love, transcending superficial verbal correctness. Finally, understanding context is vital: expressions of devotion must be interpreted within the framework of individual experience and limitations, rather than judged by rigid external standards. Thus, Rumi's narrative teaches that critical thinking about

accuracy involves a holistic evaluation—one that integrates both the factual dimension of statements and the emotional and existential truths they seek to express.

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Open-Mindedness Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* serves as a compelling narrative that illustrates the tension between dogmatic adherence to religious norms and the need for open-mindedness in interpreting spiritual devotion. Evaluating the story through the principle of open-mindedness in critical thinking highlights its emphasis on tolerance, acceptance of diverse perspectives, and the importance of reevaluating rigid assumptions.

Moses's harsh reprimand of the shepherd reveals an initial lack of open-mindedness. His immediate reaction, focusing on the theological impropriety of the shepherd's words, demonstrates an inflexible approach that prioritizes strict doctrinal correctness over understanding the shepherd's intent. Moses's inability to consider the shepherd's personal context and spiritual sincerity exemplifies the dangers of a closed-minded perspective.

The shepherd's heartfelt expressions of devotion, though unconventional and anthropomorphic, reflect his sincere love for God. Open-mindedness in this context requires acknowledging the diversity of spiritual languages and recognizing that different individuals express devotion in ways shaped by their cultural and personal experiences. The shepherd's words challenge the listener to move beyond rigid interpretations and appreciate the authenticity of his emotional connection to God.

God's intervention serves as a powerful endorsement of open-mindedness, as He rebukes Moses for separating the shepherd from Him. God's response highlights that true worship lies in the sincerity of the heart rather than the precision of words. By emphasizing the value of diverse expressions of faith, the story urges readers to adopt a broader perspective, embracing differences in how people connect with the divine.

Moses's transformation after God's rebuke underscores the importance of reevaluating one's assumptions and beliefs. Open-mindedness requires the willingness to question initial judgments and consider alternative interpretations. Moses's eventual acceptance of the shepherd's devotion exemplifies how critical thinkers must remain flexible and open to revising their views in light of new insights.

Several critical insights about open-mindedness emerge from this story. First, tolerating diverse expressions is essential: the shepherd's unconventional words reflect a genuine spiritual connection that deserves respect rather than condemnation. Second, rigid judgments must be avoided: Moses's initial response illustrates how dogmatic rigidity can lead to misunderstanding and alienation. Third, critical thinkers must be willing to reevaluate their assumptions, demonstrating the humility to adjust their perspectives when confronted with deeper understanding. Finally, valuing intent over form is crucial: as God's response reveals, the sincerity of the heart holds greater significance than the outward correctness of devotional expressions. Through this narrative, Rumi vividly illustrates that open-mindedness is a cornerstone of critical thinking, enabling individuals to engage more compassionately and thoughtfully with the diverse realities of human experience.

Classical Poetry in the Development of Critical Thinking: Clarity, Accuracy, and Reflection in Rumi's Masnavi
Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Reflection Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* offers a profound lesson on the importance of reflection in understanding and evaluating human actions and beliefs. By applying the reflection principle of critical thinking, we can explore how this narrative emphasizes self-awareness, deeper understanding, and thoughtful judgment.

At the start of the story, Moses reacts impulsively to the shepherd's unconventional expressions of devotion. His immediate condemnation of the shepherd's words demonstrates a failure to reflect on the shepherd's intent and spiritual sincerity. Moses's response is guided by his own rigid framework of theological correctness, without pausing to consider the shepherd's personal context or emotional state. This lack of reflection highlights how unexamined assumptions can lead to misunderstanding and harm.

God's rebuke serves as a turning point, compelling Moses to engage in self-reflection. By questioning his actions and assumptions, Moses recognizes the limitations of his initial judgment and the importance of valuing the shepherd's heartfelt connection to God. This process of reflection enables Moses to gain a deeper understanding of the diversity in human expressions of faith and the necessity of approaching others with compassion and humility.

The shepherd's expressions, though theologically inaccurate, reflect his inner truth and sincere love for God. The story underscores the need for reflective thinking in evaluating actions and beliefs, urging us to look beyond surface appearances to uncover deeper meanings. The shepherd's words remind us that authenticity and intent often carry greater significance than formal correctness. God's response invites reflection on the nature of worship and devotion. By emphasizing that He values the sincerity of the heart over the precision of words, God challenges rigid interpretations of spirituality. This divine perspective encourages reflective thinkers to prioritize intent and authenticity, cultivating a broader and more inclusive understanding of faith.

Several critical insights about the reflection principle emerge from this story. First, it highlights the necessity of pausing before judgment: Moses's impulsive reaction illustrates the dangers of immediate condemnation without reflective consideration. Second, it underscores the importance of acknowledging personal biases: genuine reflection requires recognizing and questioning one's own assumptions and preconceptions. Third, it emphasizes seeking deeper understanding: the narrative urges readers to move beyond superficial expressions and discern the sincerity and meaning underlying others' actions. Finally, it affirms the role of reflection in personal growth: Moses's transformation exemplifies how critical reflection fosters greater humility, empathy, and the capacity for meaningful understanding. Through this narrative, Rumi demonstrates that reflection is not merely a cognitive exercise but a transformative process that deepens human connection, enhances ethical awareness, and nurtures true critical thinking.

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Creativity Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* highlights the significance of creativity in expressions of faith, problem-solving, and human connection. By applying the creativity principle of critical thinking, the narrative illustrates how innovative and unconventional approaches can reveal deeper truths and foster spiritual growth.

The shepherd's anthropomorphic description of God, offering to comb His hair and wash His clothes, reflects his use of imagination and creativity to express devotion. While unconventional, his language demonstrates a sincere effort to relate to the divine through familiar, everyday experiences. This aligns with the creativity principle, which values originality and the ability to approach problems or concepts from unique perspectives.

Moses's initial reaction to the shepherd's words reveals a rigid mindset that stifles creativity. By condemning the shepherd's imaginative expressions as blasphemous, Moses fails to appreciate the shepherd's personal and culturally shaped attempt to connect with God. This highlights a common challenge in critical thinking: balancing doctrinal or logical precision with the openness required to value diverse creative approaches.

God's rebuke of Moses underscores the value of creativity in spiritual practice. By affirming the shepherd's expressions of love and devotion, God highlights that genuine connection transcends formal correctness. The divine response reinforces the critical thinking principle that creativity is essential for addressing complex and abstract concepts, such as the human relationship with the divine. The story demonstrates how creative expressions can serve as a bridge between the earthly and the divine. The shepherd's imaginative language reflects his attempt to make the incomprehensible accessible, illustrating how creativity fosters understanding and emotional connection. For critical thinkers, this emphasizes the importance of using creativity to navigate and communicate abstract or challenging ideas.

Several critical insights about the creativity principle emerge from this narrative. First, unconventional approaches must be valued: the shepherd's imaginative expressions highlight the crucial role of creativity in conveying complex emotions and abstract ideas. Second, critical thinking requires balancing rigor with openness: Moses's initial reaction exemplifies the pitfalls of disregarding creative expressions in favor of strict precision. Third, the power of imagination must be recognized: the story shows how creativity enables individuals to make intangible concepts more relatable and meaningful. Finally, fostering diverse perspectives is essential: God's affirmation of the shepherd's devotion highlights the importance of embracing varied and innovative ways of expressing faith and understanding. Through this story, Rumi illustrates that creativity is not merely a stylistic embellishment but a fundamental aspect of critical thinking, enabling deeper insight, emotional resonance, and more inclusive communication across different dimensions of human experience.

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Evidence-Based Reasoning Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* highlights the tension between rigid theological correctness and heartfelt spiritual devotion. Evaluating this narrative through the lens of evidence-based reasoning in critical thinking offers insights into the role of proof, context, and interpretation in understanding human actions and expressions.

Moses's reprimand of the shepherd is based solely on the literal interpretation of the shepherd's words, without considering the broader context of his intent and emotional state. This reflects a failure to gather sufficient evidence before forming a judgment. Evidence-based reasoning requires understanding the full picture, including cultural, personal, and spiritual contexts, to make informed decisions. Moses's reliance on theological doctrine, without examining the shepherd's sincerity, exemplifies a one-dimensional approach to reasoning.

The shepherd's words, though theologically inaccurate, provide emotional evidence of his deep devotion and love for God. His expressions reflect a genuine spiritual connection, which evidence-based reasoning would recognize as a critical factor in assessing the validity of his worship. By dismissing this emotional evidence, Moses overlooks a key aspect of the shepherd's faith.

God's rebuke of Moses highlights the importance of considering both external and internal evidence. While the shepherd's words may seem inappropriate from a doctrinal perspective, God values the sincerity of his heart. This underscores that evidence-based reasoning must encompass more than external correctness—it must include intent, emotion, and the authenticity of one's actions. God's response encourages critical thinkers to adopt a holistic approach to evaluating evidence.

The story illustrates the transformative power of self-reflection and divine guidance. Moses's eventual change of heart, prompted by God's intervention, is evidence of the importance of reevaluating one's judgments considering new insights. Evidence-based reasoning requires the willingness to revise initial conclusions when presented with more comprehensive or accurate information.

Several critical insights about evidence-based reasoning emerge from this narrative. First, gathering contextual evidence is crucial: assessing the shepherd's words requires considering his intent, cultural background, and emotional sincerity. Second, weighing multiple types of evidence is necessary: the story demonstrates the value of integrating doctrinal knowledge with emotional and spiritual dimensions. Third, avoiding premature judgments is essential: Moses's initial reaction illustrates the dangers of forming conclusions without sufficient evidence. Finally, being open to reevaluation strengthens reasoning: evidence-based thinking demands flexibility and the readiness to adapt judgments when new information or perspectives emerge. Through this narrative, Rumi conveys that true critical thinking requires more than superficial evaluation; it calls for a comprehensive and empathetic engagement with the full range of human experiences and expressions.

Analysis of the Story of Moses and the Shepherd in the Context of the Logical Consistency Principle in Critical Thinking

The story of Moses and the shepherd in Rumi's *Masnavi* explores the tension between rigid dogmatism and heartfelt devotion. Analyzing the narrative through the lens of the logical consistency principle of critical thinking highlights the importance of maintaining coherence between beliefs, actions, and judgments.

Moses's reprimand of the shepherd reveals a lack of logical consistency. While Moses upholds the principle of theological correctness, he fails to apply the same rigor to understanding the shepherd's intent. His harsh judgment contrasts with his role as a prophet who is expected to guide individuals with compassion and understanding. This inconsistency demonstrates the need to align one's principles and actions coherently.

The shepherd's anthropomorphic descriptions of God, though doctrinally inaccurate, are logically consistent with his limited understanding and personal context. His expressions reflect his genuine devotion and attempt to relate to God through familiar concepts. Logical consistency in this case would recognize the alignment between the shepherd's intentions and his way of expressing them, even if they deviate from formal theology.

God's rebuke of Moses emphasizes the inconsistency in his judgment. While Moses prioritizes verbal and theological accuracy, God values the shepherd's heartfelt sincerity. This highlights a broader logical inconsistency in religious dogmatism: judging individuals by rigid standards while neglecting the underlying sincerity and intent. God's response underscores the importance of maintaining coherence between divine compassion and human judgment.

God's message to Moses introduces a consistent framework for evaluating devotion: the sincerity of the heart is paramount, and expressions of faith can vary based on individual circumstances. This consistent standard emphasizes the alignment of actions and beliefs with a deeper understanding of spiritual truths. It challenges rigid frameworks that prioritize outward correctness over inner alignment.

Several critical insights about logical consistency emerge from this story. First, judgments must be aligned with intent: Moses's initial condemnation lacked logical consistency because it prioritized external form over inner substance. Second, contextual coherence must be considered: although unconventional, the shepherd's words are logically consistent with his personal understanding and sincere devotion. Third, standards must be evaluated fairly: God's rebuke highlights the need for consistent criteria that value sincerity rather than superficial correctness. Finally, coherence between beliefs and actions must be promoted: true logical consistency requires that principles such as compassion, fairness, and understanding are reflected consistently in one's judgments and actions. Through this narrative, Rumi illustrates that critical thinking rooted in logical consistency fosters deeper empathy, fairer judgment, and a more authentic engagement with diverse human experiences.

Conclusion

This study sets out to explore how Jalaluddin Rumi's *Masnavi*, specifically the story of Moses and the shepherd, embodies and promotes the principles of critical thinking. Through qualitative content analysis, it examined how poetic narratives can contribute to intellectual and ethical growth, particularly within educational and intercultural settings.

The findings demonstrate that Rumi's allegorical storytelling presents a rich framework for engaging with the core dimensions of critical thinking. The story reveals how:

- Clarity is challenged by differences in expression and perception, as seen in the shepherd's heartfelt yet unconventional words.
- Accuracy is reframed through the divine perspective, valuing sincerity over literal correctness.
- Logical consistency is questioned in Moses's initial reaction and realigned through divine correction.
- Evidence-based reasoning is expanded to include emotional and spiritual insight, not just doctrinal logic.
- Creativity is emphasized in the shepherd's imaginative worship.
- Open-mindedness is modeled in Moses's transformation and the divine affirmation of diverse expressions of faith.
- Reflection is central to Moses's personal growth and the narrative's pedagogical function.

In addressing the research questions, the study concludes that the *Masnavi* not only exemplifies critical thinking principles but also offers a poetic model for their cultivation. Rumi's narrative challenges rigid theological norms and encourages reflective, empathetic, and inclusive modes of thought-skills that are essential in contemporary education. While this study focused on a single

Classical Poetry in the Development of Critical Thinking: Clarity, Accuracy, and Reflection in Rumi's Masnavi narrative for reasons of scope and depth, it is important to note that Rumi's *Masnavi* contains numerous other stories that could further enrich the exploration of critical thinking. For example, the story of the Elephant in the Dark illustrates the limitations of human perception and the necessity of open-mindedness, while the tale of the Grammarian and the Boatman highlight the balance between theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom. Future research could expand on these narratives to deepen our understanding of Rumi's contribution to the cultivation of critical thinking. Limitations of this study include its reliance on a single narrative and interpretive methodology. The analysis does not include empirical classroom data or comparative literary models, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the corpus of analyzed texts or examine student responses to the pedagogical use of classical poetry.

Recommendations include integrating classical poetic texts such as the *Masnavi* into critical thinking curricula, particularly in humanities education, and designing interdisciplinary frameworks that merge literary analysis with cognitive skill development. Ethical Statement: This study does not involve human or animal participants. Therefore, no formal ethical clearance was required. However, all interpretive and scholarly standards were observed in the use and citation of textual sources. Rumi's *Masnavi*, as demonstrated through this case study, should not be regarded merely as mystical literature. Instead, it should be recognized as a dynamic tool for fostering intellectual humility, ethical inquiry, and critical engagement. By presenting complex moral and cognitive challenges through allegorical storytelling, Rumi invites readers into an ongoing process of questioning, reflection, and transformative learning-offering timeless resources for educational innovation in a globalized and pluralistic world.

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