

*The Position of*  
***‘Aql***  
*in the Prose and Poetry of*  
***Nāṣir Khusraw***



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*by*

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**Knowledge for a united humanity**

## The Position of ‘Aql in the Prose and Poetry of Nāṣir Khusraw<sup>1</sup>

In both his prose and poetry, Nāṣir Khusraw extols the position of the intellect, ‘*aql* (in Arabic) or *khirad* (in Persian). In so doing, his method follows neither that of the philosophers nor of the theologians. Although some include him among the philosophers and others among the theologians,<sup>2</sup> he does not regard himself as belonging to either group. He prefers to describe himself as a follower of the *ahl al-bayt*, the *rāsikhūn fi’l-‘ilm* (those well-grounded in knowledge, Qur’an 3:7) and *muṭahharūn* (the ones purified by God, Qur’an 30:30; 56:79). He includes himself among the people of *ta’wil* (esoteric interpretation) and *ta’yīd* (divine help through the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>). Alluding to this position, he concludes his *Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* thus:

“Every wise person who reads this book, in which we have mentioned the sayings of the sages of philosophy quoting them to answer every question and then rectifying and strengthening them with the *ta’wilī* explanation and demonstration from the discoveries (*mustanbatāt*) and deductions (*mustakhrajāt*) of the *rāsikhūn fi’l-‘ilm*, let him look at them with the inner eye and may he duly reflect upon every point. If he finds a word or a point in a religious allusion or in a *ta’wilī* expression that is not well-known among the renowned people of excellence from among the literati, poets and writers, let him not reject it, because the pearls of knowledge of true religion

are strung on the threads of allegories (*amthāl*) and concealed in the caskets of symbols (*rumūz*) that nobody can touch except the *muṭahharūn*, namely those who have seen the concealed secrets of the knowledge of [God's] mighty book and comprehended the writings of the splendid *sharīʿat*.”<sup>4</sup>

Here, Nāṣir indicates that certain aspects of the teachings of the *ahl al-bayt* are known neither to philosophers nor to theologians. They are known only to the family of the Prophet and those who follow this illustrious lineage. In order to assess how Nāṣir arrives at his concept of intellect, his background will be described briefly, his classification of people with respect to the innate intellect vis-à-vis the *tanzīl* will be examined, and finally the consequences he attributes to a human being's acceptance or rejection of edification by the perfect intellect are studied.

Nāṣir Khusraw was a member of the Ismaili *daʿwa*, or ecclesia. The Fatimid Caliph and Imam, al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh I (d. 487/1094), appointed him as the *ḥujjat-i Khurāsān*, the 'proof of Khurasan, or the *ṣāhib-i jazīra-yi Mashriq*, 'the lord of the eastern island'. In the *daʿwa* terminology, a *ḥujjat* or *ṣāhib-i jazīra* is one of twelve dignitaries who oversee the world's twelve *jazā'ir* (islands, sing. *jazīra*). Even today, centuries after his death, his memory is revered in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, China, Chitral, and the Northern Areas of Pakistan, including Gilgit, Puniyal, Ghizr, Yasin, Ishkoman and Hunza. In these areas he is known as Ḥaẓrat-i Pīr or Sayyid Shāh Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

His full name was Abū Mu‘īn Ḥamid al-Dīn Nāṣir b. Khusraw b. Ḥārith-i Qubādiyānī, Marwazī, Māzandarī, Yumgī or Yumgānī. He was born into a family of landowners and officials in 394/1004 in Qubadiyan on the right bank of the Oxus River. There is no dearth of literature about the various aspects of his multi-faceted life. A number of scholars have elucidated the main episodes of his career, such as his education, government service, the visionary experience that led him to change his life and resign from his post, the ensuing seven-year journey from 437/1045 to 444/1052 that was immortalized in his celebrated *Safar-nāma*, his arrival in Cairo and discussions with the senior Ismaili luminary, al-Mu‘ayyad fī'l-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), his audience with the Imam al-Mustansir bi'llāh I, his appointment as *ḥujjat* of Khurasan and return to his native land of Balkh in 444/1052, the beginnings of his *da‘wa* activities and initial successes, the opposition of his adversaries, his taking refuge in Yumgan and spreading the Ismaili *da‘wa* there and in the surrounding areas, his works and his death.<sup>5</sup>

Nāṣir Khusraw's writings show that he received a sound education in his youth, which afforded him entry into government service. Despite his success in this coveted position, he felt a certain hollowness. His ethical, spiritual and intellectual dissatisfaction with his earlier life rings clear in his *Dīwān*, in which he writes:

*Ān kardī az fasād ki gar yādat āyad ān*  
*Rūyat siyāh gardad-u tira shawad zamīr<sup>6</sup>*

You once wrought such mischief that were you to  
call it to mind  
Your face would be blackened by dishonour  
Your heart darkened by disgrace

Similarly, at the beginning of his *Safar-nāma*, his *Travelogue*, citing the Prophetic tradition “Speak the truth, though it be against yourself”,<sup>7</sup> he ruefully admits to his former addiction to drink.

His internal turmoil precipitated a crisis. One night, at the age of 43, he had a dream that was to transform his life forever. He writes:

One night I was approached in a dream by someone who chided me, “How long will you drink this brew that destroys human intellect? ’Tis better to be sober!” I responded, “The sages have failed to find a better elixir to drive away the sorrows of the world.” He said, “Never has drunkenness brought peace of mind. Can one who leads people to stupor be called a sage? Seek that which increases intellect and wisdom!” I asked, “Where can I find such a thing?” He replied, “Those who seek shall find.” And then, pointing in the direction of the *qibla*, he fell silent.<sup>8</sup>

Nāṣir rose, the vision still vivid in his mind. He lamented to himself: “I have woken up from last night’s dream. But now I must awaken from a dream that has lasted forty years”!<sup>9</sup> He resolved to forswear his evil ways, knowing that he would never

attain true happiness until he did so. Resigning from government service, on Saturday, 6 Jumādā II 437/19 December 1045<sup>10</sup> he set out on his famous journey, returning only seven years later, on Tuesday 26 Jumādā II 444/23 October 1052.<sup>11</sup>

The oracle had pointed him in the direction of the *qibla*, which was also the direction of Cairo, the capital of the Fatimid Caliphate and centre of the Ismaili *da'wa*. After his arrival there on Sunday 1 Ṣafar 439/28 July 1047 he met many Ismaili *dā'īs*, including al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī, the *ḥujjat* of Fars, who was the head of the *da'wa* at the time. Nāṣir was duly impressed with al-Mu'ayyad, whom he regarded as *riḍwān*, the warden of paradise.

Nāṣir describes Cairo in glowing terms in his *Safar-nāma*, not only as a splendid metropolis, but even more so as the spiritual city *par excellence*, the city of knowledge and wisdom of the Imam. He writes:

One day I reached a city to which the heavenly bodies and spheres themselves were subservient. Its plains were embroidered like brocade, its walls made of emerald and its water pure and sweet like the spring of *kawthar* in paradise. In this city there is no wealth save excellence, no fir trees in its gardens save intellect. It is a city in which the sages wear brocade that is neither spun by women nor woven by men. Upon my arrival my intellect intimated to me, "Go no further! Seek here what you need." I went to the warden of the city and

told him my tale. He said, “Fear not, for your mine has now transformed into gems.” His discourse, so sweet and pregnant with meaning, convinced me that he was none other than *riḍwān*, the warden of paradise. According to the *ta’wīl*, paradise is naught but the *da‘wa* of the Prophet’s progeny. I told him of my soul’s grief and frailty, urging him not to look at the strength of my body, or the redness of my cheeks. Never would I touch a medicine without proof and demonstration, said I. He reassured me that he was a physician of that city and encouraged me to describe my illness to him.<sup>12</sup>

I then posed all the questions that ailed me, causing my intellectual sickness. He said he would give me medicine with proof and demonstration, but first would place a mighty seal on my lips. I consented to this and so he sealed my lips. He presented two witnesses: the external and the internal worlds (*āfāq* and *anfus*) for my nourishment.<sup>13</sup> Thus my treatment began gradually. Lo! My illness vanished. He removed the seal from my lips and allowed me to speak. Finally, he took me to the Imam of the time, al-Mustanṣir bi’llāh, to perform the oath of allegiance (*bay‘a*).<sup>14</sup>

In the *Dīwān*, evoking imagery of the oath sworn by the Prophet’s companions centuries earlier, Nāṣir describes his own experience:



*Dastam ba kaf-i dast-i nabī dād ba bay‘at  
Zīr-i shajar-i ‘ālī-yi pur-sāya-yi muthmar<sup>15</sup>*  
He placed my hand in that of the Prophet  
A pledge made under the lofty tree, shady and  
fruitful

Nāṣir expresses his overwhelming experience in the Imam’s presence in the following verses:

*Bar jān-i man chū nūr-i imām-i zamān bi-tāft  
Laylu’s-sarār būdam-ū shamsu’ḍ-ḍuhā shudam  
Nām-i buzurg imām-i zamānast zīn qibal  
Man az zamīn chū zuhra badū bar samā shudam<sup>16</sup>*  
When the light of the Imam of the time  
shone upon my soul,  
Even though I was dark as night,  
I became the glorious sun.  
The Supreme Name is the Imam of the time;  
By which I ascended, Venus-like, from the earth to  
heaven

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Further he says:

*Shifā-yi jān nadīdam zi īch dānish  
Magar az da‘wat-i āl-i payām-bar<sup>17</sup>*  
I did not witness spiritual healing from any  
knowledge  
Except from the *da‘wa* of the Prophet’s progeny

Here, it suffices to say that the course of his life changed forever. Henceforth he devoted himself to the service of the

Imam of his time. He expresses his gratitude for the favours of the Imam in the following words:

*Har jā ki buwam tā bi-ziyam man gah-ū biḡāh  
Bar shukr-i tū rānam qalam-ū miḥbar-ū daftar<sup>18</sup>*

Wherever I may be, so long as I live,  
time and again

My pen, parchment and inkpot will  
bespeak my gratitude to you

Nāṣir rapidly ascended the ladder of the *ḥudūd-i dīn* until he was appointed the *ḥujjat* of Khurasan. He left Cairo on Tuesday, 14 Dhu'l-ḥijja 441/9 May 1050,<sup>19</sup> arriving back in Balkh in 444/1052. Here and in the surrounding regions he began to preach the Ismaili *da'wa*. Both his *Dīwān* and Abu'l-Ma'ālī's *Bayān al-adyān*<sup>20</sup> reveal his initial successes. However, this soon drew the attention of adversaries who instigated the mobs against him. They persecuted him and burned his house down. Fleeing Balkh he took refuge in Yumgan, which was then ruled by an Ismaili prince, 'Alī b. al-Asad.<sup>21</sup> From his newfound home he actively and peacefully spread the Ismaili *da'wa*. As he says:

*Har sāl yakī kitāb-i da'wat  
Ba-aṭrāf-i jahān hamī firistam<sup>22</sup>*

Every year a book of *da'wa* I have been  
Sending to the corners of the world

He lavishes praise on Yumgan for giving him refuge and for being the centre of the *da'wa*

*Garchi zindān-i Sulaymān-i nabī būda ast*  
*Nīst zindān bal bāghīst marā Yumgān*<sup>23</sup>  
 Though Yumgan was Solomon's prison  
 'Tis not so for me – it is a garden  
*Kān-i ʿilm-u khirad-u hikmat Yumgān ast*  
*Tā man-i mard-i khiradmand ba Yumgānam*<sup>24</sup>  
 So long as a sage like me is here  
 Yumgan is the mine of knowledge, intellect  
 and wisdom  
*In jāst ba Yumgān turā dabistān*  
*Dar Balkh majūsh na dar Bukhārā*<sup>25</sup>  
 Right here in Yumgan is the school [of wisdom]  
 for you  
 Seek it not in Balkh or Bukhara

Nāṣir wrote most of his works in Yumgan and passed away there after 469/1076.

### **Salient Characteristics of the Ismaili *daʿwa*:**

Nāṣir, as mentioned earlier, was a member of the Ismaili *daʿwa*. Ismāʿiliyya (anglicized as Ismailism), is a branch of Shiʿī Islam,<sup>26</sup> which in turn, is one of the two main branches of Islam, the other being Sunni Islam. Shiʿī Islam, particularly the Ismaili branch, gives paramount importance to the intellect in religion. The entire *tanzīl*, or revealed form of the Qurʿan, is based on intellect. This is true of both the univocal verses (*āyātun muḥkamāt*) and the equivocal verses (*āyātun mutashābihāt*), the former directly and the latter indirectly. Intellect, however, may be of two types. At one pole is the *ʿaql-i muʿayyad*, the intellect that is aided by the *rūḥ al-quḍus* or the Holy Spirit, which is the intellect of the Prophets, legatees and

the Imams, whom God has appointed to teach humankind. Those who possess the *‘aql-i mu’ayyad* see everything in the divine light without any distinction between the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*. In their view, everything in the *tanzīl* is based on the intellect. At the other pole is the *‘aql-i gharīzī*<sup>27</sup> or innate intellect, which is the intellect of ordinary people and is in the position of learning. Unlike the divinely aided or perfect intellect, the *‘aql-i gharīzī* does not possess perfect knowledge. Though it only has rudimentary knowledge, it is capable of receiving knowledge from the former and attaining perfection. The perfect intellect brings down the higher realities for the sake of the innate intellects, expressing these in physical terms to facilitate the understanding of ordinary human beings. This process is called both *tanzīl* and *takthīf*, i.e. to bring down higher realities to the level of ordinary language and to clothe these realities in physical allegories or parables. However, it would have been a great injustice on the part of God if the innate intellects were deprived of knowing the higher realities and restricted only to parables and allegories. Far be it from God to be ungenerous! He has provided the means of *ta’wīl*, which literally means to cause something to return to its origin (*radd al-shay’ ilā awwalihi*). When ordinary people respond to the divine message, the allegorical layers are removed gradually from the realities and the respondents progress step by step in the religious hierarchy (*ḥudūd-i dīn*), climbing the ladder of divine cognition from the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*) to the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) and finally to the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), ultimately arriving at the level of knowledge of Prophets and Imams and thus attaining perfection. Once they achieve this perfection, they too do not

find any difference between the *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*, because everything in *tanzīl* appears based on the intellect.

The Prophet's *da'wa* (mission) was twofold. The first part of it was the *tanzīlī da'wa*, which he completed in his own lifetime. The *tanzīl* he brought is unchangeable. However, he appointed his *waṣī* (legatee) or *asās* (foundation) and his descendants to continue the *ta'wīl* till the day of resurrection. Referring to this twofold *da'wa*, the Prophet says: "The best among you is the one who will fight you for the sake of the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an as I fought you for the sake of its *tanzīl*."<sup>28</sup> Further, he says: "I am the custodian of the *tanzīl* (*ṣāhib al-tanzīl*) and 'Alī is the custodian of the *ta'wīl* (*ṣāhib al-ta'wīl*)."<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the *tanzīl*, which is fixed and unchangeable, the *ta'wīl* is fluid and progresses to ever-deeper levels as the adept ascends the ranks of the spiritual hierarchy. This is because there are numerous esoteric meanings or *bāṭins* in every exoteric statement or *zāhir* of the text of the Qur'an. These meanings, known as *bāṭins* or *ta'wīls*, are imparted by the Imam of the time to the seekers according to their degree of obedience and receptivity until the time of the *qā'im*, when all the meanings or *ta'wīls* of the Qur'an will be disclosed.

In this brief discussion of the Ismaili *da'wa*, the central point is that, in their entirety, the Qur'an and the *sharī'a* promulgated by the Prophet are based on the intellect. The Qur'an and the *sharī'a* therefore address those possessed of intellect. Those who have not reached the age of majority or who are otherwise not possessed of their senses are exempt from their injunctions. Secondly those who are addressed have an innate intellect, which has rudimentary knowledge of the existence of a

Creator, the necessity of an intermediary between Him and the creatures, the supremacy of humankind among the created beings and the need for a code of conduct.<sup>30</sup> Therefore it is called the first messenger (*rasūl awwal*).<sup>31</sup> However, to attain complete knowledge and the second perfection, which is the actualization of the innate intellect from its *potentia*, it needs a teacher whose intellect is actual and perfect. This teacher is called the last messenger (*rasūl ākhir*)<sup>32</sup> and is the counterpart or *mazhar* of the Universal Intellect in this world. His knowledge is therefore not acquired, but rather God given and therefore perfect. As long as the innate intellects exist, by the very nature of their need to be edified through knowledge, the presence of such a teacher in each and every time is incumbent.

These are the fundamental and central teachings found in the works of all eminent *dā'īs*, including Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Nasafī (d. 921), Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq Sijistānī (d. after 970), Abū Ḥātim Rāzī (d. after 933-4), Qādī Nu'mān (d. 973), Ja'far bin Maṣṣūr al-Yaman (d. 975 or 990), Ḥamid al-Dīn Aḥmad Kirmānī (d. after 1021) and al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1078). These *dā'īs* had different approaches and modes of expression according to their contexts. However, there is a consistent central theme that a divinely supported guide with perfect intellect and divinely bestowed knowledge free from any defect must exist for the nourishment and actualization of the innate intellects. Nāṣir was impressed by their exposition of the intellect, accepted it and devoted the rest of his life to propagate it.

### Exposition of Intellect by Nāṣir Khusraw:

From the preceding observations, it is obvious that the bi-polar position of the intellect necessitates a dual definition, which Nāṣir provides. He defines the innate or potential intellect as “a simple substance (*jawhar-i basīṭ*) whereby people comprehend things.”<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the active or Universal Intellect is defined as “the first originated [thing] which God brought into existence through origination (*ibdāʿ*). It is a simple and luminous substance, which contains the forms of all things.”<sup>34</sup>

In his exposition of the intellect, Nāṣir first of all establishes it as the First Existent (*ḥast-i nukhust*) on various grounds. In his *Khwān al-ikhwān* he argues on the basis of the Qur’anic verse (Qur’an 40:67): “It is He who created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from a blood clot, then He brings you forth as a child, then lets you reach your age of full strength, then lets you become old – though some of you die before – and then lets you reach the appointed term; and that haply you may find the intellect (*laʿallakum taʿqilūn*)”. Nāṣir concentrates on the implications of the last phrase and says: “God, after mentioning all these states, says that you may find/reach the intellect (*ki ʿaql rā biyābīd/ba-ʿaql birasīd*).”<sup>35</sup> He continues that this is because of the fact that since creation originates with the intellect, inevitably it should return to its origin. He says in his *Dīwān*:

*Khīrad āghāz-i jahān būd-ū tū anjām-i jahān*  
*Bāz gard, ay sara-anjām, badān nīk-āghāz*<sup>36</sup>  
Intellect was the beginning of the world  
and you its end  
O happy end! Return to that good beginning

Thus, when God says that “you may find the intellect”, it signifies that the first originated existent was the intellect. Therefore, man, who is the last of the existents, should reach his origin, just as the perfection of a date palm, which originates from a date stone, lies in producing a date stone so that its end may return to its origin. Nāṣir concludes, “He who benefits from the intellect through the mediation of the *ḥudūd-i dīn*, the religious hierarchy, returns to it eventually.”<sup>37</sup>

Nāṣir further elaborates this Qur’anic verse with a Prophetic tradition in which he says: “The first thing God created was the intellect (*‘aql*). God said to it: Come forward! It came forward. Then He said to it: Go back. It went back. Then God said: By My might and glory! I have not created anything more revered by Me than you! Through you I shall reward and through you I shall punish!”<sup>38</sup> He writes that it is because of this divine decree that in the true religion (*dīn-i ḥaqq*), whoever uses the intellect and worships God in the light of the intellect (*baṣīrat*), reaches eternal happiness. Meanwhile, whoever ruins the intellect and acts without knowledge arrives at eternal remorse.

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This intellect, so revered and noble in the eyes of God, permeates the entirety of existence: the higher world, the lower world and the world of religion. With regard to the world of religion, which is like a ladder ascending from the lower to the higher world, Nāṣir says that the intellect basically appears at two levels: as the *mazhar* of the Universal Intellect,<sup>39</sup> which is actual, and as the *mazhar* of the particular or innate intellect (*‘aql-i gharīzī*),<sup>40</sup> which is potential. The latter, in its nature, has knowledge of a Creator, worshipping and expressing gratitude to Him for His bounties and the choice of good and avoidance



of evil, but it does not know how to practise them. That is, the innate intellect needs someone to teach it how to practise. Therefore, in the very first discourse of his *Wajh-i dīn*, “On the Establishment of *Hujjat* (Proof) of God, the Imam of the Time”, Nāṣir argues that God *has to send* someone to fulfil the need of the innate intellect for knowledge, just as He provides animals the means of their sustenance by appointing the elements, stars and spheres. Otherwise God would be considered parsimonious, an attribute far from Him. In this sense, the innate intellect acts as the first messenger potentially, but it needs an actual Intellect in order to be actualized. Nāṣir says:

*Khīrad sū-yi har kas rasūlī nihufṭa*

*Ki dar dil nishasta ba-farmān-i Yazdān*<sup>41</sup>

Intellect is a hidden messenger for everyone

Sitting hidden in the heart by God’s command

In order to fulfil the need to actualize the potential intellect, God chooses one of His servants to be the *mazhar* of the Universal Intellect in the material world, and endows him with all the virtues of the Universal Intellect. He gives His special knowledge and *ta’yīd* to him. He breathes His Spirit into him and illumines him with His light (Qur’an, 33:46). This chosen one is called the Messenger (*payghām-bar*) in his cycle, the legatee (*waṣī*) in his age and the Imam of the time (*imām-i rūzgār*) in every time.<sup>42</sup> As long as the world lasts, the human species cannot be without an individual of this rank. Thus, the world is never devoid of this *mazhar* of the Universal Intellect. Nāṣir says that were the world devoid of such an actual intellect, the innate intellects would perish. This would be

tantamount to God playing a frivolous game, which is something far from Him.<sup>43</sup> This actual intellect in the cycle in which Nāṣir lived was the Prophet Muḥammad with ʿAlī as his *asās* and al-Mustaṣhir bi'llāh as the Imam of the time.

### **Classification of the possessors of the innate intellect and how they use it to understand the *tanzil*:**

According to Nāṣir the possessors of the innate intellect are divided into four categories:

(1) The first group consists of the literalists who blindly accept the *tanzil* at face value, even when it comes to the Qur'an's anthropomorphic descriptions of God. While other Muslims sought to understand these passages by way of *ta'wīl*, or esoteric interpretation, the literalists refused such explanations. The famous Qur'anic verse on *ta'wīl* (3:7), used by others to justify the practice, was understood by the literalists to condemn it, by a simple difference of opinion on where one of the sentences ends. In the literalist reading, the verse may be rendered as follows:

He it is Who has sent down to you the Book, of which are unequivocal verses, they are the mother of the Book, and others are equivocal. As for those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow that [part of] it which is equivocal, seeking discord and seeking its *ta'wīl*. But no one knows its *ta'wīl* except Allah. And those who are well grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord."

The literalists would end the pivotal sentence after the word Allah, confining the *ta'wīl* to Him alone, to the exclusion of even the Prophet himself. However, the verse was read by many others as, “But no one knows its *ta'wīl* except Allah and those who are well grounded in knowledge. They say: ‘We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord.’”<sup>44</sup>

An example of the literalist approach is the famous statement of Mālik b. Anas concerning *al-Raḥmānu ‘ala’l-‘arshi istawā*, “The Beneficent One sat on the throne” (20:5): *Al-istiwā’u ma‘lūmun wa-al-kayfiyyatu majhūlatun wa-al-īmānu bihi wājibun wa-al-su’ālu ‘anhu bid‘atun* “That He sits is known, but how (He) sits is unknown. It is incumbent to believe in this but to ask questions about it is [damnable] innovation”.<sup>45</sup>

Nāṣir explicitly censures this kind of blind adherence in his *Dīwān*:

*Guftand ki mawḍū‘-i sharī‘at na ba-‘aql ast  
Zīrāki ba-shamshīr shud Islam muqarrar  
Guftam ki namāz az chi bar atfāl-ū majānīn  
Wājib nashawad tā nashawad ‘aql mukhayyar*<sup>46</sup>

They said, “The *sharī‘a* does not depend on the intellect

Because Islam was established by the sword”

I replied, “Why then is prayer not enjoined upon children and the insane

Until their intellect becomes capable of choosing?”

(2) The second group is composed of the philosophers (*falāsifa*) who reject the *tanzīl* because of its allegorical and seemingly contradictory language. These philosophers claim to have attained intellectual sciences by the efforts of their own, unaided intellects. They therefore maintain that in recognizing the signposts of salvation, they can dispense with the Prophets. In their view, the Prophets are needed only to govern worldly matters in order to protect life and property and to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak.<sup>47</sup>

(3) The third group is composed of *mutakallims* (theologians) who accept the *tanzīl*, but unlike the literalists seek the *ta'wīl* of the allegorical verses. In the famous verse (3:7) on *ta'wīl*, they do not stop after Allah, but continue the sentence and include the *rāsikhūn fi'l-ʿilm*, “those who are well grounded in knowledge,” with God in the knowing of the allegorical verses. However, they arrogate to themselves the distinction of being the *rāsikhūn fi'l-ʿilm* and do not confine this distinction to the Prophets and the Imams from the *ahl-i bayt*. Unlike the philosophers, they accept the *tanzīl* as the source of ultimate knowledge, but in doing the *ta'wīl* of the *mutashābihāt*, use their own intellect to derive conclusions.<sup>48</sup>

(4) The fourth group consists of the people of *ta'wīl* and *ta'yīd* who accept the *tanzīl*, but maintain that *tanzīl* on its own does not provide complete guidance. Rather, complete guidance resides in the *ta'wīl*<sup>49</sup> of the perfect and actual intellect of the Prophets and the Imams. It can be sought from them, because they alone are the *rāsikhūn fi'l-ʿilm* mentioned in the Qur'an. Those who uphold this view are the Shī'ā of the Prophet's Family, particularly the Ismailis. Thus, in the Ismaili *da'wa*, there is no fundamental difference between the intellect and the *sharī'a*. In fact, the *sharī'a* itself is the *ta'yīd* of the Universal

Intellect. As Nāṣir writes: “The Intellect [i.e. the Universal Intellect] is the *mu’ayyid* (giver of *ta’yīd*) of all the Messengers (*Wa mu’ayyid-i hama rasūlān ‘aql ast*).”<sup>50</sup> Thus, contrary to the literalist point of view, Nāṣir Khusraw considers intellect to be the very foundation of the *sharī‘a*. It is because of this that his predecessor, Abū Ya‘qūb Sijistānī, writes: “The *sharī‘a* is embodied intellect (*al-sharī‘atu ‘aqlun mujassam*)”.<sup>51</sup> This concept was elaborated by numerous Ismaili *dā‘īs*.

Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, for example, devoted the seventh chapter of his *A‘lām al-nubuwwa* to establish that the Prophets were the real fountainheads of all knowledge. They then bequeathed this knowledge to the sages. According to Rāzī, knowledge and science spring from the first sage (*al-ḥakīm al-awwal*), Adam, to whom God taught the names directly. All worldly and spiritual knowledge was contained in these names. Through the ages God taught His Prophets everything that people needed to know, both in a worldly and a spiritual sense. He shared His knowledge of the external and internal worlds exclusively with the Prophets. As the Qur’an declares: “He is the knower of the unseen (*ghayb*), and He does not reveal His unseen to anyone, except to a Messenger whom He chooses” (Qur’an 72:26-27). Rāzī tries to demonstrate that some of those who are considered sages were in fact Prophets. To this end, he gives the example of the Prophet Idrīs, stating that he is known to the philosophers as Hermes and in the Old Testament as Akhnūkh (Enoch).<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, al-Mu‘ayyad fi’l-Dīn Shīrāzī ridicules those who say that the *sharī‘a* is not in accordance with the intellect. He writes:

Had they examined the matter closely, purifying their thoughts of fanaticism and passion, they would realize that they would fume with rage if someone were to upbraid them, saying, “You said or did such and such, which was not in accord with the intellect”. In fact, they would not have hesitated to confront that person, calling him a liar and making him culpable. So if they detest such accusations about themselves, how can they allow them with regard to their Prophets, who are the chiefs of their religion and the intermediaries between them and their Lord, may He be purified? Don’t they consider the fact that the entire Book of Allah is addressed to the people of intellect (*ulu’l-albāb*)?<sup>53</sup>

Al-Mu’ayyad further argues:

There are only two possibilities with regard to these legal practices (*al-awḍāʿ al-sharʿiyya*): either the Prophet had no intellectual explanation for what he himself brought, which would be a monstrosity, or he had such an explanation, but did not inform people about it. In the former case, were someone to ask him why there were five *ṣalāts* and not six, he would have to reply that he did not know, which would suffice to discredit him for bringing something of which he himself was ignorant. If he did have an intellectual explanation for these practices, which adorns words and deeds, but did not reveal it, then he did

not duly execute the duty of conveying the message. However, this can be disproved about the Prophet because he did convey the message and said in the congregation: O Allah! Bear witness that I have conveyed the message.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, to these Ismaili authors, there is nothing in the *sharī'as* that does not accord with the intellect. The innate intellect is considered God's first messenger (*rasūl-i awwal*) to humankind, while the human Prophet is His second Messenger who nourishes the first messenger with knowledge.

In their emphasis on the intellect, the Ismailis are partially akin to the philosophers. However, without the upbringing of a divinely appointed teacher (*mu'allim*) or guide, they consider the innate or partial intellect to be imperfect and incomplete. As Nāṣir writes: "Intellect is the [first] *ḥujjat* (proof) of God over the people in their creation whereas His second *ḥujjat* to them is His Messenger, who comes and nurtures the innate intellect. The innate intellect in their creation is *in potentia*. The Messenger brings it into actuality".<sup>55</sup> Nāṣir also says in his *Dīwān*:

*Miyān-i ʿālam-i ʿulwiyy-ū suflī*  
*Bi-istādan na kārī hast āsān*  
*Ba-fi'l āwurdan az quwwat khirad rā*  
*Ba-Aḥmad dād farmān Fard-i Raḥmān*  
*Ba-yārī khwāst bar ḥaml-i nubuwwat*  
*ʿAlī rā sayyid-i sādāt-i dūjhān*<sup>56</sup>

To stand between the higher and lower worlds is not a trifling matter!

The Unique, Compassionate God commanded  
Aḥmad

To bring the intellect forth from potentiality to  
actuality.

To bear the burden of Prophethood

The Chief of both the worlds sought the help of  
‘Alī

In this respect, the Ismaili *dā‘īs* differ profoundly from the philosophers. According to the latter, human beings can, on their own, acquire the knowledge of the realities of things as they are, whereas according to the Ismaili *dā‘īs*, it is impossible to do so without *ta‘līm* or authorized teaching. Thus, Nāṣir devotes the very first discourse of *Wajh-i dīn* to explain the necessity for such a teacher to actualize the potential intellect of human beings by his actual intellect. He argues that just as human beings require physical upbringing and sustenance, without which they cannot survive, similarly they cannot grow and survive intellectually without intellectual upbringing and sustenance. Thus, the need for a divine teacher continues as long as human beings exist. Such teachers, who are the Prophets and Imams, are the main source of knowledge and, in fact, philosophers and others have borrowed from them. Al-Mu‘ayyad writes:

As far as the belief of the people of truth (*al-muḥiqqīn*) is concerned, all sciences, including the intellectual ones (*al-‘aqliyyāt*), which they (the philosophers) claim, are gathered together in the sciences of the Prophets, from which they have branched out and ramified.<sup>57</sup>



The preceding account shows that the Ismaili *dā'īs* can neither be included in the category of *mutakallims*, who use their own partial intellects to interpret the Qur'an and the *sharī'a* without recourse to the *rāsikhūn fi'l-ilm*, nor in the category of those philosophers who claim to dispense with the Prophets. Ismaili works show that almost every Ismaili *dā'ī* has criticized both the *mutakallims* and the philosophers for their stances. For instance, prior to Nāṣir, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. after 411/1021) criticized the views of Mu'tazilī and Ash'arī *mutakallims* and philosophers in his *Tanbīh al-hādī wa'l-mustahdī*.<sup>58</sup>

Nāṣir criticises the views of Mu'tazilī and Karramī *mutakallims* in his *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*.<sup>59</sup> As for the philosophers, he accords them a higher status and says that there is an iota of wisdom (*shammātī az ḥikmat*) in the works of the ancients.<sup>60</sup> By this he implies, as did Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, that originally they had attained wisdom from the Prophets, which they attributed to themselves and mingled with their own ideas and concepts. Therefore, except for the traces of the Prophetic wisdom that remain in their writings, their other views are incorrect. In *Zād al-musāfirīn*, Nāṣir explains that in the absence of Prophetic guidance, the faulty knowledge of one's own mind is like a spider's web in which the seeker becomes entangled.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in his *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, although he explains the problem from the point of view of the philosophers, he disagrees with them in most cases and finally gives the view of the people of *ta'wīl* and *ta'yīd*. This, he explains, is the knowledge received from the *rāsikhūn fi'l-ilm*, that is, the Prophet as the *nāṭiq*, 'Alī as the *asās* and their children as the Imams. He further writes: "The

treasure of wisdom is the heart of the inheritors of the Seal of the Prophets”.<sup>62</sup> This he also repeats in his *Dīwān*:

*Hikmat az ḥaḍrat-i farzand-i nabī bāyad just*  
*Pāk-ū pākīza zi tashbīh-ū zi ta<sup>c</sup>ṭīl chū sīm<sup>63</sup>*

You must seek wisdom from the presence of the  
Prophet’s son

Pure and unsullied as silver, free from *tashbīh* and  
*ta<sup>c</sup>ṭīl*.

Such knowledge, according to Nāṣir and other Ismaili *dā‘īs*, is not the product of the imperfect human intellect, but rather the product of an intellect that is illumined by the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quḍus*). He writes in the *Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* that knowledge of the true religion is the result of the Holy Spirit (*natā’ij-i rūḥu’l-quḍus*).<sup>64</sup> This means that the intellect of the Prophets and their successors, the Imams, is supported and illumined by the Holy Spirit, which according to the Qur’an (42:52), is in the form of light. Nāṣir therefore refers to it as the “luminous intellect (*‘aql-i nūrānī*)”.<sup>65</sup> It is the intellect of one from whose spiritual eyes the veil of negligence has been removed and whose sight has become sharp, as the Qur’ān, addressing the Prophet, says: “You were unaware of this. Thus We have removed from you your veil, so your sight is sharp today.” (50:22).<sup>66</sup> Once the veil is removed, everything, both in this world and the next, becomes clear to him.<sup>67</sup> It is on the basis of this inner vision (*baṣīra*), not on hypothetical or conjectural knowledge, that the Prophet and his successor invite people to eternal life. As God says to His Prophet in verse 12:108: “Say: This is my way, I invite unto Allah on the basis of *baṣīra* (insight), and [also] those who follow me”.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the insight

and intellect of the Prophet and those who follow him (the Imams), whom God has chosen for the guidance of the people and made intermediaries between Himself and His creatures, are superior to that of other human beings.

According to Nāṣir and other Ismaili *dā'īs*, such knowledge is not confined to the Prophet and the Imam, but is granted to other people as well. However, this is conditional on *iṭā'a* (obedience and submission) or *istijāba* (responding) to the *da'wa*. He explains that when minerals submit to plants they attain the vegetative soul, when vegetative souls submit to animals they attain the animal soul and when the latter submit to human beings they attain a rational soul. Similarly, when human beings submit to the Prophet and his successors and accept their *da'wa*, they attain the Holy or Divine Spirit.<sup>69</sup> He quotes the Qur'anic verse (8:24) to substantiate this: "O you who believe! Respond (*istajībū*) to God and the Messenger when he invites you (*da'ākum*) unto that which will give you life (*yuḥyikum*)". It is this real and higher life that enables one to be born twice and to enter the kingdom of heaven (*malakūt al-samā'*). Nāṣir, alluding to his second birth and his witnessing the kingdom of heaven, writes:

*Gar man darīn sarāy nabīnam darān sarāy*

*Imrūz jā-yi khwīsh chi bāyad baṣar marā<sup>70</sup>*

· If in this world I cannot see

What my place in that world is

What use have I of eyes?

Further, he says:

*Khīrad rā ba-īmān-ū hikmat biparwar*  
*Ki farzand-i khwud rā chunīn guft Luqmān*  
*Chū jānat qawī shud ba-īmān-ū hikmat*  
*Biyāmūzi āngah zabānhā-yi murghān*  
*Bigūyand bā tū hamān mūr-ū murghān*  
*Ki guftand azīn pīshtar bā Sulaymān<sup>71</sup>*  
 Nurture the intellect with faith and wisdom  
 For as the Prophet Luqmān told his son  
 When your soul is fortified by faith and wisdom  
 You will learn the languages of the birds  
 The ants and birds will tell you  
 What they once told Solomon!

This obedience is in many degrees. Those who respond to this *da'wa* initially are called *mustajībs*. The *mustajībs* can ascend the ladder of the *da'wa* through the ranks of the religious hierarchy or *hudūd-i dīn*, up to the Imam or *asās* or *nātiq* in their respective time. After the time of the *nātiq*, the *asās* takes his place. Similarly, after the time of the *asās*, the Imam takes his place and therefore occupies the supreme position in the hierarchy. Further, at the rank of *hujjat* the believer experiences fully the Holy Spirit of the Prophet or the Imam in the form of light within himself. Thus, that light, which is in every human being *in potentia*, is brought into actuality by absolute submission to him. Nāsir, as the *hujjat* of Khurasan, describes his own experience in his *Dīwān* as mentioned earlier:

*Bar jān-i man chū nūr-i imām-i zamān bi-tāft*  
*Laylu's-sarār būdam-ū shamsu'd-ḍuhā shudam*  
*Nām-i buzurg imām-i zamānast zīn qibal*  
*Man az zamīn chū zuhra badū bar samā shudam*

When the light of the Imam of the time shone  
upon my soul,  
Even though I was dark as night, I became the  
glorious sun.  
The Supreme Name is the Imam of the time;  
By which I ascended, Venus-like, from the earth to  
heaven

Indeed, the Holy Spirit enhances the vision of the respondent, who is enabled to read the books of the *āfāq* and *anfus*, the physical and spiritual worlds. It elevates the respondent from the level of philosophy to that of observing angels. Nāṣir writes:

*Kār-kunān-i Khudāy rā chū bibīnī*  
*Dil nakunī zān sipas ba falsafa marhūn*<sup>72</sup>  
When you behold the artisans of God  
Never again will you pledge your heart to  
philosophy.

**Perpetual presence of the Perfect Intellect as God's Proof on the earth:** *Knowledge for a united humanity*

The necessity of the presence of God's Proof on the earth has been discussed earlier in the context of the upbringing of the innate intellects. Nāṣir states this very emphatically in his *Dīwān*. In fact his personal quest begins when he becomes aware of this need, therefore it is pertinent to quote it here. He says:

*Yak rūz bikhwāndam zi Qur'ān āyat-i bay'at*  
*Kīzid ba-Qur'ān guft ki bud dast-i man az bar*

One day I read in the Qur'an the verse of *bay'at* (Qur'an, 48:10)

In which God says: "My hand is above (their hands)".

*Ān qawm ki dar zīr-i shajar bay'at kardand*  
*Chūn Ja'far-ū Miqdād-ū chū Salmān-ū chū Bū Dharr*  
Those companions who had done *bay'at* under the tree,  
The likes of Ja'far, Miqdād, Salmān and Abū Dharr.

*Guftam ki kunūn ān shajar-ū dast chigūnast*  
*Ān dast kujā jūyam-ū ān bay'at-ū maḥḍar*  
I asked: 'Whereof that tree? That hand on which to  
pledge?  
Where should I seek that hand, that *bay'at* and that  
group?'

*Guftand dar ānjā nah shajar mānd-ū nah ān dast*  
*Kān dast parāganda shud ān jam' mubattar*  
They replied: 'The tree no longer exists, nor that hand,  
For that group has now dispersed and that hand  
disappeared,

*Ānhā hama yārān-i rasūland-ū bihishtī*  
*Makhsūṣ badān bay'at-ū az khalq mukhayyar*  
All of them are the companions of the Prophet in  
Paradise,  
Singled out by that *bay'at* and chosen from among the  
people'.

*Guftam ki ba-Qur'ān dar paydast ki Aḥmad*  
*Bashīr-ū nadhīrast-ū sirājast munawwar*

I said: 'It is clear in the Qur'an that Aḥmad is a Bearer of glad tidings, a warner and a luminous lamp' (Qur'an 33:45-46).

*Gar khwāhad kushtan ba-dahan kāfir ū rā*  
*Rawshan kunadash Īzid bar kāma-yi kāfar*<sup>73</sup>  
Even if unbelievers intend to extinguish it with their mouths,  
God will keep it shining despite their intention (Qur'an, 9:32).

*Chūnast ki imrūz namāndast azān qawm*  
*Juz ḥaqq nabuwad qawl-i jahān-dāwar-i akbar*  
How is it that today no one is left from that group?  
Is the speech of God, the Supreme Ruler of the world,  
other than the truth?

*Mā dast-i ki gīrīm-ū kujā bay'at-i Yazdān*  
*Tā hamchū muqaddam bidihad dād-i mu'akhhkar*  
Whose hand should we take and where is God's bay'at?  
That He may treat the later ones as justly as the earlier?

*Mā jurm chi kardīm nazādīm badān waqt*  
*Maḥrūm chirā'im zi paygham-bar-ū muḍṭarr*  
What sin did we commit that we were not born at that time?  
Why are we deprived of the Prophet and distressed?<sup>74</sup>

Thus, Nāṣir emphasizes that since God has guaranteed the continuation, rather the perfection of His light in this world, it cannot be devoid of it as His word is perfect in truth and justice

(cf. Qur'an 6:115). It is with this conviction that he started his search and ultimately he reached his desired goal, the Imam from the family of the holy Prophet. He says:

*Faryād yāftam zi jafā-ū dahā-yi dīw*  
*Chūn dar ḥarīm-ū qaṣr-i Imāmu'l-warā shudam*<sup>75</sup>  
I found refuge from the oppression and cunning  
of the devil  
When I entered the sanctuary and palace of the  
Imam of humankind

Then he says:

*Dastam ba kaf-i dast-i nabī dād ba bay'at*  
*Zīr-i shajar-i 'ālī-yi pur-sāya-yi muthmar*<sup>76</sup>  
He placed my hand in that of the Prophet  
A pledge made under the lofty tree, shady and  
fruitful

Thus, Nāṣir's ardent yearning to give *bay'at* on a hand that represented God's hand was fulfilled. According to him, the purpose of creation cannot be achieved without the presence of that hand. Comparing the Imam of the time to the sun and the innate intellect to eyesight, he declares in his *Dīwān*:

*Chashm-i sar bī āftāb-i āsmān bī-kār gasht*  
*Chashm-i dil bī āftāb-i dīn chirā bī-kār nīst?*<sup>77</sup>  
If the head's eye becomes useless without heaven's  
sun;  
Why not the heart's eye without religion's sun?



### **Consequences of the innate intellect's responding to or rejecting the Perfect Intellect's upbringing:**

The paramount importance of using the intellect, which is a Divine gift to humankind, is clear from the Qur'an: "Verily the vilest of beasts with God are the deaf and the dumb who do not use their intellect." (Qur'an 8:22) Also: "And they said: 'Had we but listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the inmates of the Blaze'." (Qur'an 67:10) There are numerous such verses that show that those who do not use their innate intellect and its initial teaching as the first messenger or the first proof have to face grave consequences. On the other hand, those who follow its initial teaching and actualise it fully through nurturing true knowledge are praised highly as the "*ulu'l-albāb*" (the people of intellect) and are granted the abundant good (Qur'an 2:269).

Nāṣir alludes to this position of the innate intellect in his prose and poetry. In his *Jāmi'*, interpreting the hadith: "Every human being has two devils who lead him astray", and comparing the two devils to the appetitive and irascible souls, he says that every individual is endowed with the rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqā*) and the appetitive and irascible souls. The rational soul is a potential angel whereas the appetitive and irascible souls are potential devils.<sup>78</sup> If the rational soul is able to subjugate them the individual becomes an actual angel, but if the latter subjugate the former, he becomes an actual devil. This means that every individual who is endowed with the rational soul has the potential to be an actual angel. However negligence in executing the innate intellect's teaching causes the person to become "the vilest of beasts". Such are the consequences of accepting or rejecting the perfect intellect's teaching or

guidance in the form of true knowledge. These are also described in his poetry. For instance in the case of failure:

*Har chand raḥmat ast khirad bar tū az Khudāy  
Bar har ki bad kunad ba-khirad ham khirad  
balāst<sup>79</sup>*

Although intellect is God's mercy to you  
It also becomes a calamity to the one who abuses it

In the case of success, Nāṣir extols the intellect so profusely that it is extremely difficult to decide what to quote and what to leave! He says:

*Khirad kīmyā'-yi ṣalāḥast-ū ni'mat  
Khirad ma'dan-i khayr-ū 'adl ast-ū iḥsān<sup>80</sup>*  
Intellect is the alchemy of well-being and munificence  
Intellect is the mine of goodness, justice and favour

*Qadr-ū bahā-yi mard na az jism-ī farbihast  
Bal mardum az nikū sukhan-ū 'aql pur bahāst<sup>81</sup>*  
Man's glory and worth is not because of his corpulent body  
Rather, man's glory lies in his intellect and eloquence

*'Adl ast-ū rāstī hama āthār-i 'aql-i pāk  
'Aql ast āftāb-i dil-ū 'adl azū diyā ast<sup>82</sup>*  
Justice and rectitude are all traces of the pure intellect

Intellect is the sun of the heart and justice is its  
light

And finally:

*Gar khirad rā bar sar-i hushyār-i khwīsh afsar  
kunī*

*Sakht zūd az charkh-i gardān, ay pīsar, sar bar  
kunī*<sup>83</sup>

If you crown your prudent head with intellect  
O son, instantly you shall raise your head above  
the revolving sphere of the heavens

To conclude, Nāṣir Khusraw simply and logically expounds his distinct bi-polar concept of the intellect, the actual or perfect intellect and the potential or innate intellect and their respective active and passive roles. He bases the foundation of his argument on examples from the physical world and gradually and systematically proceeds to the spiritual or higher world. This makes it very easy to understand his thought. His works are very effective in conveying the importance of higher and eternal realities and speak to human beings across time and space. They are therefore as relevant today as they were in his time and will no doubt inspire and motivate thinking people in the future. Nāṣir does not consider himself either a *mutakallim* or a philosopher, if philosophy is understood in the Greek sense. If however, we take it in a broader sense and include other disciplines of thought, as Henry Corbin did in coining the term Prophetic philosophy for *ta'wīl*,<sup>84</sup> then Nāṣir is indeed one of the most outstanding Prophetic philosophers.

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance Sayyid Ja'far Shahīdī, "Afkār-ū 'aqa'id-i kalāmī-yi Nāṣir Khusraw", in Dānīshgāh-i Firdawsī, *Yād-nāma-yi Nāṣir-i Khusraw* (Mashhad, 1976), pp. 316-40, hereafter cited as *Yād-nāma*.

<sup>3</sup> The Muslim concept of the Holy Spirit must not be confused with the Christian idea of the third person of the Trinity. According to Islam it is the Spirit of the Prophets and Imams, which is in the form of light. See Qur'an 42:52.

<sup>4</sup> Nāṣir Khusraw, *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Mu'in (Tehran/Paris, 1953), pp. 315-16, hereafter cited as *Jāmi'*.

<sup>5</sup> See Sayyid Ḥasan Taqīzāda, "Introduction" to Nāṣir's *Dīwān*, ed. Sayyid Naṣr Allāh Taqawī (Tehran, 1304-1307/1925-1928), hereafter cited as (Taqawī edition); E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1977), II, 160, 162, 169, 200-201, 211, 218-246; *Yād-nāma*. Other sources for his life and works are given in I.K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, California, 1977), 111-25, 430-36; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their history and doctrines* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 215-20, 639-40, note 138; Alice C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan* (London, 2000); 'Alī Mīr Anṣārī, *Kitāb-shināsī-yi Ḥakīm Nāṣir-i Khusraw-i Qubādiyānī* (Tehran, 1993); A. Nanji, "Nāṣir-i Khusraw", EI2, VII, 1006-7.

<sup>6</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Dīwān*, ed. M. Mīnuwī and M. Muḥaqqiq (Tehran, 1974), p. 102; hereafter cited as (Mīnuwī edition)

<sup>7</sup> Nāṣir Khusraw, *Safar-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Dabir-i Siyāqī (Tehran, 1984), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>12</sup> *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), pp. 511-12.

<sup>13</sup> Literally food and water, which symbolize *tanzīl* and *ta'wīl*, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Wajh-i dīn*, ed. Gh. R. Aavani (Tehran, 1977), p. 250; hereafter cited as *Wajh*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 512-13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 513. Here the rhyme requires "muthmīr" to be "muthmar".

<sup>16</sup> *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 139.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 536.

<sup>18</sup> *Dīwān* (Taḡawī edition), p. 515.

<sup>19</sup> *Safar-nāma*, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> Abu'l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh, *Bayān al-adyān*, ed. 'A. I. Āshtiyānī and M. T. Dānesh-pajhūh (Tehran, 1997), pp. 55-56.

<sup>21</sup> *Jāmi'*, pp. 15-18, 100, 314-16.

<sup>22</sup> *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 221.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>26</sup> The appellation Ismā'īliyya came into existence after Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, when the Imāmi Shī'i split into many groups named after his children. Among them the two most important ones are those who followed Ismā'il al-Mubārak, his older son and came to be known as Ismailis (anglicized form of *Ismā'iliyya*) and those who followed Mūsā al-Kāẓim, another of his sons, who came to be known as Mūsawiyya. Later on, when the twelfth Imam of this latter group went into occultation, they became known as the Ithnā 'ashariyya or Twelvers, meaning those who believe in twelve Imams.

Ismailis are sometimes called Sab'iyya or Seveners, that is, those who believe in seven Imams, and are thereby juxtaposed to the Ithnā 'ashariyya or Twelvers, those who believe in twelve Imams. This is a grave misunderstanding. Ismailis do give importance to a set of seven Imams in the sense that they constitute a minor cycle (*dawr ṣaghīr*). However, they do not believe that there are only seven Imams. They do not confine the chain of Imams to a particular number. Their present Imam is the 49<sup>th</sup> in the line of Imam 'Alī in the cycle of Prophet Muḥammad.

<sup>27</sup> Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, *Ithbāt al-nubu'āt*, ed. 'A. Tāmīr (Beirut, 1986), p. 51, hereafter cited as *Ithbāt*. (there is no note 24)

<sup>28</sup> *Jāmi'*, p. 61; *Wajh*, p. 269.

<sup>29</sup> Ḥamid al-Dīn Kirmānī, *Majmū'at rasā'il al-Kirmānī*, ed. M. Ghālib (Beirut, 1983), p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> *Ithbāt*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Jāmi'*, p. 249.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

- <sup>35</sup> Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Khwān al-ikhwān*, ed. ‘A. Qawīm (Tehran, 1959), pp. 90-94, hereafter cited as *Khwān*.
- <sup>36</sup> *Dīwān*, (Taqawī edition), p. 202.
- <sup>37</sup> *Khwān*, p. 91.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- <sup>39</sup> *Wajh*, p. 61.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>41</sup> *Dīwān* (Minuwī edition), p. 84.
- <sup>42</sup> *Wajh*, pp. 11-13.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *Ta’wīl mushkil al-Qur’ān*, ed. A. Baqr (Cairo, 1973), pp. 98-99.
- <sup>45</sup> *Jāmi’*, pp. 32-33; ‘Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa’l-niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad b. Faṭḥ Allāh Badrān (Cairo, 1956), p. 85.
- <sup>46</sup> *Dīwān* (Minuwī edition), p. 510.
- <sup>47</sup> Al-Mu’ayyad fi’l-Dīn Shirāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu’ayyadiyya*, ed. Ḥātim Ḥamid al-Dīn (Bombay, 1975), I, 3; hereafter cited as *Majālis*; *Jāmi’*, p. 32.
- <sup>48</sup> *Jāmi’*, pp. 32-33.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116
- <sup>51</sup> *Ithbāt*, p. 125.
- <sup>52</sup> Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, *A’lām al-nubuwwa*, ed. Ş. al-Şāwiy and Gh. R. Aavani, (Tehran, 1977), pp. 273-318.
- <sup>53</sup> *Majālis*, I, 2-3.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 3.
- <sup>55</sup> *Khwān*, p. 29.
- <sup>56</sup> *Dīwān*, (Taqawī edition), p. 314. Here the rhyme requires “*dū jahān*” to be read “*dūjhān*”.
- <sup>57</sup> *Majālis*, I, 3-4.
- <sup>58</sup> Ḥamid al-Dīn Kirmānī, *Tanbih al-hādī wa’l-mustahdi (long i)*, Ms. 957, IIS, London, Chapters 15-17, fols. 48-109.
- <sup>59</sup> *Jāmi’*, pp. 45-67.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>61</sup> *Zād*, p. 151.
- <sup>62</sup> *Jāmi’*, p. 16. *Khātām-i waratha* in the text should be read *waratha-yi khātām*.
- <sup>63</sup> *Dīwān*, (Minuwī edition), p. 356.
- <sup>64</sup> *Jāmi’*, p. 16.

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- <sup>65</sup> *Dīwān*, (Mīnuwī edition), p. 535.
- <sup>66</sup> *Wajh*, p. 139.
- <sup>67</sup> *Zād*, pp. 214-216.
- <sup>68</sup> *Majālis*, I, 217-18.
- <sup>69</sup> *Zād*, pp. 472-75.
- <sup>70</sup> *Dīwān*, (Mīnuwī edition), p. 12.
- <sup>71</sup> *Dīwān*, (Taqawī edition), p. 321.
- <sup>72</sup> *Dīwān*, (Taqawī edition), p. 355.
- <sup>73</sup> Here the rhyme requires “*kāfir*” to be “*kāfar*”.
- <sup>74</sup> *Dīwān*, (Mīnuwī edition), p. 508-9.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139; (Taqawī edition), p. 273.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 513. Here the rhyme requires “*muthmīr*” to be “*muthmar*”.
- <sup>77</sup> *Dīwān*, (Taqawī edition), p. 78.
- <sup>78</sup> *Jāmiʿ*, pp. 143-44.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- <sup>82</sup> *Dīwān*, (Mīnuwī edition), p. 394.
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.
- <sup>84</sup> Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1993), pp. 23-104.

