

FATEMI DAWAT
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'Ilm

paper 3

The Classification of Knowledge-I
Primary & Religious Sciences

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ILM-PAPER 3

THE CLASSIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE-I PRIMARY & RELIGIOUS SCIENCES

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Introduction

Ikhwan us Safa's classification of knowledge includes all fields of knowledge, from the mathematical and logical sciences to the natural and corporal to the psychological and finally the theological (*deen*). They have a holistic approach to knowledge and philosophy, and a very realistic view towards the material needs of man, including in their curriculum those sciences today seen as 'secular'. However, the ultimate goal of the *Ikhwan* is the knowledge of *deen*. The fundamental aim of all knowledge, they say, is to gain recognition of the spirituality of one's own soul and its Divine Creator.

The *Ikhwan* say that there are three broad categories of knowledge: **1. Primary Sciences, 2. Religious Sciences, 3. Philosophical Sciences.** The first two categories are outlined in this article. The third category will be presented in the next article *inshaallah*.

Primary Sciences (Riyadiyaat)

1. Primary & School Education:

These are the fundamental secular subjects which form the basis for any further learning, worldly or religious. They comprise what we today call basic schooling, consisting of language, mathematics and the arts and the social sciences:

a. Language:

Learning a language reading, writing, grammar – is a basic requirement for all further learning. As far as worldly vocations are concerned, it would be any language or languages, that is best suited to your field. Concerning the knowledge of *Dawat* specifically, knowledge of the Arabic language is of primary importance. The Ikhwaan us Safa categorize Arabic as being amongst the great sciences, which no student pursuing the *ilm* of *dawat* and *deen* should be ignorant of. This is because it is the language of the Quran, and as such has almost a sacred status. Then most of the *dawat kitabs* are also in Arabic, and for a long period of time the medium of teaching remained just Arabic. That was a time when the centre of the *Dawat* was in Arabic speaking lands. Now that the *Dawat* is based in India, the language of communication is *Lisaan ud Dawat* (a form of Gujarati, with a substantial portion of Urdu and Arabic words), it is incumbent upon all

mumineen to learn it; it is this which will enable them to understand what is taught in the *madrasas*, and more importantly, to understand the *waaq*, *bayan* and *wasila* where the *ilm* of Aale Mohammed SA is imparted.

b. Mathematics:

It is one of the essential sciences, since a basic mathematical ability, how to add and subtract for instance, is an indispensable requirement of practically everyone's daily life. Moreover, mathematics forms the foundation for all other sciences, and examples from it are used for illustration in all other subjects.

c. Literature:

Literature consists of prose and poetry in different forms. The Ikhwan us Safa encourage the study of literature inasmuch as it is a chronicle/ record of human thought spanning ages and cultures, an insight into which helps to cultivate depth of understanding and thinking in the reader.

d. Music:

There is an entire *risala*, consisting of several chapters, devoted to music in the Rasail Ikhwan us Safa. Music has historically been and continues to be an intrinsic part of human life. The Ikhwaan us Safa address in considerable detail the effects of music on human beings, their minds and moods. They discuss at some length the uses of music in various contexts, such as war, worship, celebration etc.; indeed they consider the benefits of music so great that they even explain with precision how to make a musical instrument called *oud*. Today, science has proved that certain music has a beneficial effect on the logical and mathematical ability of the brain. Music was also used in religious worship in *shariats* prior to Islam. However, due to misuse of music in *haram* activities, Islam has limited its usage to particular contexts. When the centre of *dawat* shifted to India, Dais severely restricted the use of music, as the context in which music was used here was mostly in activities related to *haram* things like *hindu bhajans* for idol worship, and *mujras* (dancing girls). Then at the turn of the twentieth century, music started to become closely related to pop culture, including discos, drugs and illicit sex. To summarize, music has many benefits but it is important to differentiate between the type and context of music.

e. History:

History is a study of the past. But the study of history always remains relevant because, firstly, it gives you an insight into human nature and how history is shaped by it. Hence things that happened in the past are bound to recur as human nature remains intrinsically

same all through the ages; and secondly, it provides examples and lessons for the present day.

f. Geography:

Geography is the science of the earth and everything in and upon it. The study of geography enables one to comprehend the cycle of nature, to realise how each and everything in this world is connected with the other, and to understand where one is himself placed in the scheme of things. This knowledge also compels the student to wonder at the complex beauty of creation, and leads him to deliberate about the “signs in the universe and the human beings”, which guide him to the belief and knowledge of the Creator, and encourage him to prepare for his journey back to Him.

2. Secondary or Vocational Education

After getting the basic grounding in the primary subjects, it is necessary to pursue a field of study that equips and aids one to make a living in this world and to improve life here. This comprises what we would today call college or university education or higher education. The subjects mentioned by the Ikhwan us Safa in this category include:

- a. *Crop farming.*
- b. *Cattle farming.*
- c. *Business and business management.*
- d. *All the various types of professions.*
- e. *All the various types of trades and crafts.*

Religious Sciences (al Shari’ah al Wad’iyah)

This is basically the knowledge of the Quran and the *Shariat*. The Quran, the Holy Book revealed by Allah to Mohammad Rasulullah SA, is known as *Kalaam Allah*, ‘the Word of God’. Just as the Quran was revealed by spiritual communication called ‘*wahye*’, so too was the *Shariat* revealed by *wahye*. The Quran says,

<p>Mohammad does not speak of his own accord, indeed it [the Quran and the <i>Shariat</i>] is nothing but <i>wahye</i> transmitted by Allah.</p>	<p>وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ، إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ</p>
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This knowledge of *deen*, the religious sciences, teach one the correct and the best way to live in this world, so as to live a good and fulfilling life in this world as well as prepare for

the *aakherat*, which is the purpose of this life. The religious sciences include the following subjects:

1. The *Zahir* (outer literal meaning) of the Quran:

This consists first of learning how to recite the Quran in ‘*tarteel*’, way of recitation with *abkaam* (rules), *talaffuz* (proper pronunciation and clarity), and *waqf* (stopping at the proper places in long *aayats* so as to convey the intended meaning). The Quran says,

Recite the Quran with <i>tarteel</i> .	وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلاً
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This subject also includes a basic understanding and appreciation of the ‘*zahir*’ or literal content of the text, expanded by a knowledge of the the reason for the revelation of the different *aayats* (*‘asbaab un nuzool’*). Memorisation of certain *Surahs* of the Quran is necessary for the obligatory prayer, but memorisation of as much of, and indeed the entire, Quran is also very much encouraged and is considered an *amal* of great *sawaab* and honour.

2. The *Taweel* (concealed inner esoteric meaning) of the Quran and *Shariat*:

Rasulullah SA is the ‘*Sahib al Tanzeel*’, the person through whom Allah revealed the Quran and the *Shariat* through *wahye*. Maulana Ali SA is the ‘*Sahib al-Taweel*’, the person who is responsible for dispensing the *taweel* of the revelation; this *taweel* can only be obtained from Maulana Ali SA and the Imams after him, and the *Duat* during the Imam’s seclusion, just as the Quran and the *Shariat* can only be obtained from Rasulullah. *Sayyedna al-Muayyad al-Shirazi* says that the true miraculous nature of the Quran is in its *taweel*. It is *taweel* which is the bridge between revelation and reason; *taweel* explains religion logically. Understanding the *taweel* of the *Quranic aayats*, of the *qisas al anbiya* (stories of the prophets) in the Quran is what makes the Quran relevant to this day and always. Understanding the *taweel* of the *amal* of the *shariat* makes one aware of the foundational structure and principles of *deen* and *dawat*. It is *taweel* of the Quran and the *shariat* that makes the appeal of Islam universal to all intelligent beings. *Taweel* is on a higher level than ‘*zahir*’.

3. *Dawat* history:

This comprises the history of *Anbiya*, *Aimmat*, *Duat*, *Hudood* and *Mumineen*. Understanding the history of the *dawat* reinforces and strengthens our roots and our sense of identity as *mumineen*. The history of the *Awliya ul lab* keeps their achievements and sacrifices alive for

succeeding generations. The Ikhwaan us Safa say more than once, that one should take lessons from past history and apply them to the current time, to today's events. It is said, "*al-akbbaar al-anwaar*", history is illumination.

4. Fiqh:

This is the *ilm* of the practical rules (*ahkaam*), the compulsory (*farizat*), voluntary (*sunnat*, *naafelat* / *tatannu'*) *amal* of the *shariat*. It comprises firstly of the *ilm* of the seven *da'aaim* pillars of Islam – *walayyat* (*maarefat* and *mohabbat* of *Nabi*, *Wasi*, *Imam* and *Dai*), *tabarat* (purification), *salaat* (*namaaz*), *zakaat*, *sawm* (fasting), *hajj*, and *jibaad* (holy war). It also includes the religious guidance regarding other behaviour and social interactions of human beings' daily lives – business, *nikah*, *talaaq*, inheritance, food and drink, clothes etc. In general, it is the knowledge of what is allowed (*halaal*) and forbidden (*haram*) in *deen*. The Ikhwan us Safa say that this *ilm* is most important since it is this knowledge that will enable a person to live a life which in all aspects is in accordance with the *shariat* – '*hayaat tayyebah*'.

5. Zuhd:

It is encouraged to learn the true meaning of *zuhd* – to adhere to *halaal* in the pursuing of pleasures, to refrain from chasing material things and worldly pleasures at the cost of compromising *deen*. At a higher level, it means having less interest in this world and turning one's attention to the hereafter, and preparation for the highest possible *darajaat* in *jannat*. It should be noted that the *zuhd* advocated and practised by the Christians is not the same as the understanding of *zuhd* in Islam. There, it is encouraged to forsake the world and society to devote oneself to God; in Islam, it is expected that one worships and serves God while living a normal life in society.

6. *Faal*, *Taweel al-Manaam* (interpretation of dreams):

This *ilm* consists of the science of divination, of reading auguries and omens and making prognostications about the future. It includes the 'science' of interpretation of dreams – of those dreams which contain messages and signs and are not just "*adhghaatho ablaam*" (confused nonsensical dreams). This is a specialised field which the Ikhwan us Safa say only a few can master; in fact, other people should not dwell on it for fear of wrong interpretations.

We will continue with the third category of knowledge, the Philosophical Sciences, in the coming paper, *insbaallah*.