

‘Ilm

paper 1

THE PURPOSE OF THE HUMAN SOUL

*Takmeel (Purification and Completion) and Reunification
with its Divine Origin*

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Introduction: Knowledge and the Completion of the Soul

Allah Subhanahu created man on this Earth with the sole purpose of going to Jannat and reuniting with his Divine origin. This can be achieved only by purification and completion of his *nafs juz'iyya*, his individual human soul. The reuniting of the individual human soul with its Divine origin, the process of purification, and the completion and unification with the whole, begins by the *ma'rifat* (recognition and knowledge) and *walayat* (love and allegiance) of the Imam uz Zamaan, the Representative of Allah in this world, (and in the Imam's *satr* his representative the Dai al Mutlaq), manifested in the act of giving *misaaq* (oath of allegiance) to him.

For the *Ikhwan us Safa* the soul of the human is his identity; his body is just the vehicle which has been attached temporarily to the soul for the use of the soul in attaining its perfection. Only by coming to this world inside this human form with its human mind can the soul attain the virtues, *fada'il*, required for its completion/perfection, just as it is not possible for a human being to be born into this world except by remaining for a period of time in the womb of its mother.

The *Ikhwan us Safa* say that from the day a human being is conceived in his mother's womb, his return journey towards Allah has begun. The first stage of the journey is progression towards physical completion and birth, which happens without his voluntary will; after his birth and the adjoining of the human rational soul he can take charge of his soul's journey back.

The human embryo has the potential to become a fully developed human being, but in the embryonic form it is in its undeveloped deficient state; only with the proper conditions in the womb and proper nutrition will it grow and realise its potential to become a human baby, and eventually after birth it will over the years become a full-grown mature human being. As for the individual human soul, it is born with the potential to become an angel. Upon birth it is in its initial 'embryonic' state, its undeveloped or deficient state: the soul at this time knows nothing, it is raw, but it has the potential to learn and grow to angelic perfection. As the Quran says,

God pushes you out from the wombs of your mothers in a state where you know nothing. (Surat al-Nahl:78)	اللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا
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After its birth in the human body, the soul has the opportunity to strive towards completion and purification, to initially acquire knowledge in preparation for giving the *misqa*, and after *misqa*, to be transferred from one stage to another, lower to higher and better and better until he purifies and completes/perfects his soul. With proper health of body and mind, and with proper nutrition of the soul – which consists of the correct true *aqeeda* (belief) and *ilm* (knowledge) – the soul will manifest its potential in suitable actions, thereby completing its *fada'il*, virtues, and fulfilling its potential.

If upon death the soul is purified and completed then it will reach and unite with its Beloved, Allah, who will reward it with eternal life. If the soul does not achieve completion, it will suffer in the *aakherat*, the hereafter: just like the baby who is born not fully developed or with an abnormality will therefore be handicapped in this worldly life, the incomplete soul will not get the full benefit of life in the hereafter. However, even if *takmeel* has not been achieved, with the *shafa'at*, intercession of the Imam it will be made an angel, and will enter into *jannat*, but it is the stage of completion/ purification of the soul which will determine its *daraja*, rank.

After the initial step of *walayat*, there are three things required for the soul to reach perfection: *ilm* (true knowledge), *amal* (right action) and *akhlaq* (good character). All of these three essentials are encompassed in the Ikhwaan us Safa's philosophy:

التَّشَبُّهُ بِالْإِلَهِيَّةِ حَسَبَ طَاقَةِ الْإِنْسَانِيَّةِ

which means, trying to follow and imitate the 'perfect' human being, the Imam and his Dai, in all of these things, to the best of one's ability.

آثار حكمة الله

God-Given 'In-Built' Characteristics which Facilitate the Realisation of the 'Potential' into the 'Actual'**1. Motivation & Drive Towards Longevity**

Allah, in His wisdom has made man in such a way and aided him with such amazing and astounding faculties in his body and mind as to facilitate the ready realisation of his potential into actuality. The body itself is a gift given by God to the individual human soul. Its *tarkeeb*, the way it is made, with each organ, limb, sense etc. in its particular place, is in the best order to facilitate the manifestation of the will of the soul in actions.

It is in the nature of existing things, including the human being, to want to remain forever in a state of completion and bliss. The human soul includes the *nafs nateqa*, (the rational soul), and the lesser souls, the *naamiyah* (the growth soul) and the *hissiya* (the lustful soul). The *nateqa* as well as the lesser souls are given inbuilt characteristics, wants and desires which are necessary for their survival. The *naamiya-hissiya* soul's desire and need for food, for instance, is what drives it to seek nutrition for the sustenance and well-being of the body, and its *baqa*, longevity of natural life. As long as the body remains alive, the *nafs nateqa* has the opportunity and the time to become complete in its knowledge, and perfect in its virtues, and to manifest its virtues in action.

The *nafs nateqa* too has been given inbuilt characteristics, which drive it towards realising its potential and ensuring its life. The rational soul loves knowledge because it is what completes it and makes it reach its full potential. It thirsts for the honor and elevation that knowledge brings, and is dedicated to obtaining it; learning is its highest pleasure, and it is even willing to undergo pain and humility in order to acquire it. Having reached this state of knowing the ultimate reality of things, it finds happiness only in the uninterrupted continuation of this state of bliss.

2. The Five Senses: al-Quwwah al-Hassasa

The first of the bounties given by God to the human being for acquiring knowledge is the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste. Through these five senses he takes in what is material and tangible in front of him, immediately comprehended by him as occurring in a specific space and time. The five senses and the information about material things they provide are indispensable for the body's survival. Moreover, they are the starting point of the path of knowledge. Without the five senses, or at the least just one of them, the pursuit of knowledge is not possible and cannot begin.

3. The Intellect: al-Quwwah al-Aaqila

الْعَقْلُ فِي الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْلَى الْجَوْهَرِ * مُتَلَا لِي فِي نَفْسِهِ كَالْأَزْهَرِ

*The intellect is the highest most precious jewel in the human being
It shines in his soul like the moon*

Syedna Taher Saifuddin RA

The *aql*, intellect, is the power of the mind to know, think and reason, and thus have rational speech. The intellect is what makes a human a human and distinguishes him from, and places him above, all existing things on the face of this earth. The human being is the only possessor of the rational soul. There is a direct connection between the rational soul and the intellect. The Ikhwaan us Safa say that the soul in the human baby is a *jawhara rubaniyya*, spiritual and alive in its essence; it is potentially *nateqa* - potentially knowledgeable, and potentially capable of rational action. As the human baby grows up, it starts learning first by using its senses to take in the image of tangible things. This information is transmitted to the brain, which processes it, to understand and give meaning to these 'sensory' experiences. Thus, gradually the power of *nutq*, of reason, develops; his intellect becomes knowledgeable in actuality. This intellect is what adds the '*nateqa*' dimension to the human soul. The Ikhwan us Safa say that the intellect is like the light of the sun, and the soul is like the glow of the moon; when the moon absorbs and reflects the sun's light, it too emits a glow. This then is the *nafs nateqa*, the rational soul of the human being. The Ikhwan us Safa say that the *aql* or intellect is to the soul what light is to the eyes. Just as the eyes cannot see without light, the *nafs* cannot perceive its true self, cannot see anything from the simplest to the

highest absolute realities, the *haqa'iq*, except through the intellect. Every human being possesses the *nafs nateqa*, the rational soul. However, the true *nafs nateqa* is that which has perceived and accepted the *haqa'iq*, thereby accepting the true *deen*, and has thus become worthy of eternal life.

The Two Kinds of Intellect: Instinctive and Acquired

The Rasa'il Ikhwan us Safa contain in-depth analysis of the intellect and its functions. They say that the intellect can be divided into two types or levels. The first level is called *al-'aql al-gharizi*, instinct or common sense: as the five senses naturally and even without conscious effort perceive the material world and its natural laws. This basic information is processed and stored in the brain, leading to the effortless development of this natural sense or intellect.

The second type or level of intellect is *al-'aql al-muktasab*, the acquired sense. This is developed through the analyses of observation and experiences and through learning. This contributes to evolving the rational ability of the mind to acquire the capacity of logical deduction (*qiyas* and *istidlal*) and the capability of dealing with abstract things and concepts. The more conscious effort, *ijtihad*, one applies, the sharper this intellect becomes.

It is this intellect that scholars take pride in and because of it that they acquire merit and distinction. It is to this acquired intellect that all the precise and meticulous actions and constructions / handiworks, of man are attributed. All his views and opinions, the intellectual and practical theories he subscribes to are a product of this mind. All that man is today and has achieved in terms of progress is due to this intellect.

The Five Powers of the Intellect

The Ikhwan us Safa say that the intellect has five powers or faculties. These faculties of the mind and their 'product' is the most honorable and noble, of any action of any other faculty of the body.

- a. Power of Imagination (القوة المتخيلة)
- b. Power to Think (القوة المتفكرة)
- c. Power of Memorization (القوة الحافظة)

- d. Power of Speech (القوة الناطقة)
- e. Power of Action and Creation (القوة الصانعة)

Let us consider briefly each of these powers of the mind and what it can do.

a. Power of Imagination (القوة المتخيلة):

The intellect's imaginative power is its ability to retain an image of the physical material things it perceives with the five senses. The information taken in by the five senses is transmitted to the intellect's first faculty, its imaginative power, where the physical material thing perceived remains as a '*ruhani surat*', a non-physical image, imprinted in the *jawhar*, the essential substance of the mind, like a seal-print imprinted on hot wax. Because of this fascinating ability to perceive inside the mind the image of a thing even when the thing is no longer there, no longer within the purview of the senses, a human being is able to go around the world, east to west, roam the lands, go into the sea or far up into the skies without moving from his seat. It is by this faculty of imagination that the intellect is able to give form to purely spiritual concepts like *jannat*. The *anbiya* have explained such concepts using examples from the physical world, so that the listener can relate to them; then with further knowledge, he transfers these sensual descriptions (*mabsus*) to the spiritual plane (*ma'qul*).

b. Power to Think (القوة المتفكرة):

The thinking power of the mind is its ability to reason and apply logic to the information received by the senses. It is thus like a judge between the imaginative power and the five senses, deciding and concluding which information or piece of imagination is factually correct and which is untrue, *wahm*. Logic is the universal standard for all intelligent people. The Ikhwan us Safa say that this faculty is like the king and all other faculties of the mind and body are like its servants, helpers, ministers, armies and subjects who carry out his orders.

This faculty has many functions which encompass the functions of all the other faculties of the mind and body; these abilities include:

- i. *al-Tafakkur*, Reflection – the ability to understand things deeply;
- ii. *al-Rawiyya*, Deliberation – the ability to weigh advantages and disadvantages to arrive at decisions and formulate policies;

- iii. *al-Tasawwur*, Picturisation – the ability to picture/know things in there reality;
- iv. *al-I'tibar*, Consideration – the ability to analyse past situations and apply that knowledge to the present;
- v. *al-Tarkeeb*, Composition and Building;
- vi. *al-Tableel*, Analysis of the Essence of things;
- vii. *al-Jam'*, Understanding of Categories, Species and Genuses;
- viii. *al-Firasa*, Perceptive Insight – the ability to look inside people and recognize their nature;
- ix. *al-Zajr*, Knowledge of Impending Events – arriving at logical conclusions by interpreting natural signs;
- x. *al-Takabbuh*, Astrological Reading of Events;
- xi. *al-Manamaat*, Interpretation of Dreams;
- xii. *al-Qiyas*, Logical Inference and Deduction: The information gathered through the five senses is processed by the imaginative and thinking faculties of the mind to produce what is called the *awa'il al-'uqul*, first impressions or basic preliminary knowledge. When a child sees and starts understanding the things around him which comprise his small world, based on that perception he infers at first that that same reality is true everywhere. This application of perceived data to other contexts is called deduction, and it is as natural and instinctive as using the senses to gather information. The Ikhwan us Safa say that most of human knowledge is based on logical deduction, but such '*qiyas*' can differ widely from person to person based on their knowledge, experience, opinions, inclinations etc. An intelligent person who has more experience and knowledge will have a broader base for making deductions about things not perceptible at the time.

To avoid this subjectivity, scholars devised a formula of logical proofs by which one can make deductions; this formula they named '*burhaan*'. True premises, based on knowledge and experience, are the building blocks of the *burhaan*. Each level of the 'proof' has to be established before one can proceed to the next step; the intellect can then by logic 'see' the deduction, since this logical formula compels it.

Burhaan is the scale for the *aql* and its intellectual deductions, as measures and balances are the standard of judgment for material and tangible things. Logical argument and proof is the standard for intelligent beings to decipher truth and discover falsehood, to establish good and evil in words and actions. It is through logical argument and proof that truth is universally established.

If someone does not value logic, does not accept its importance, how can one have a logical argument with them or give logical proofs? The conversation is over. As the Quran says,

<p>When the foolish and ignorant address them, they say “Peace.” (Surat al-Furqan: 63)</p>	<p>وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا</p>
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The Ikhwan us Safa metaphorically explain the *burbaan* thus: ‘The information gathered through the senses is like letters, *huruf*; these are put together by the initial faculties of the mind to form words with meaning, *asma*’, which are the *awa’ilul uqul*, first impressions. ‘Then these *asma*’ are placed in speech, in *kehutbas* and *maqalaat*, which is like logical deduction.

c. Power of Memorization (القوة الحافظة):

After the thinking faculty has contemplated the information received – and sometimes without that contemplation – it transfers it to the power of memory, where it is stored until needed. Thus, all knowledge is stored in the mind, and *Quran*, history, stories, poems etc. are memorized. The Ikhwan us Safa say that it is a marvelous thing that all the countless diverse pieces of information taken in by the senses, further contemplated and then finally stored in the memory, still remain – usually – in separate compartments and do not get mixed up; just as all the images come to converge on the lens of the eye but yet remain separate.

d. Power of Speech (القوة الناطقة):

The human being has been given the power to speak intelligibly and intelligently. When he wants to inform others about the knowledge that he has gathered, he conveys it using this power to speak intelligibly. Allah has given man the ability to communicate, with eloquence of speech and the wonder of thousands of different languages.

e. Power of Action and Creation (القوة الصانعة):

With this faculty the human being can translate his knowledge into action, into the creation of arts and crafts with his hands, architectural wonders and engineering

feats, etc. Even more significantly, he is able to do good deeds and acts of worship, which is the ultimate purpose of his existence.

4. Divine Inspiration and the Reception of Spiritual Communication from God (Qabul al-wahy wal-ilhaam)

This power of the intellect is the utmost level a human being can attain. It is reserved only for the *Anliya ul-Lah*; only the *Anliya ul-Lah* have the exaltation of mind and the purity of soul to receive and interpret divine communication. It is because of this ability that the *anbiya'* are able to translate the spiritual communication into language and thereby compose the divine holy books and lay down the holy *shari'at*. In the lifetime given to ordinary humans it is not possible for them to attain this level of their own accord and by their own efforts. It is incumbent upon human beings to accept and believe the divine message conveyed by the *Anliya ul-Lah*. Thereupon they are encouraged, indeed commanded, to pursue and gain and rise in the levels of knowledge, to their utmost individual intellectual ability.

Conclusion: "Strive to Complete"

God has given the human being amazing faculties to be able to strive towards his ultimate potential, purification and perfection, *takmeel*, as much as possible while still in the prison of the body. The soul is alive, potentially knowledgeable, potentially an angel, and potentially eternal. All the above faculties are in preparation for this soul to receive and accept knowledge, thus becoming actually knowledgeable, and then to make manifest this knowledge in the form of actions and creations. "...Is all of this just so that you can spend your lives like animals, occupied only with your desires of eating and drinking, and then you die, and become nothing? Indeed no! The wisdom of the Wise Creator in creating you will not end in nothing. Indeed no! Verily you will be raised again for a great day [the Day of Judgement], when the fortunate (the purified souls) will be in *jannat*, and the wretched (the incomplete impure souls) will be in *jahannam*, when some shells (bodies) will break open and give forth their pearls (the purified soul), while from others only stones (the uncompleted impure soul) will emerge..."

أَكُلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَجْلِ أَنْ تَنْشَبَهُوا بِالْبَهَائِمِ، عَكُوفًا عَلَى مَا تَشْتَهُونَ مِنَ الْمَشَارِبِ وَالْمَطَاعِمِ، ثُمَّ تَمُوتُونَ فَتَبْطُلُونَ،
وَتَنْقَرِضُونَ فَتُهْمَلُونَ، كَلَّا إِنَّهُ لَنْ تَبْطُلَ فِي خَلْقِكُمْ حِكْمَةُ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ، ثُمَّ كَلَّا إِنَّكُمْ لَمَبْعُوثُونَ لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ،
مِنْ سَعِيدٍ ذِي مَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ، وَشَقِيٍّ فِي عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ، فَبَيْنَ أَصْدَافٍ تَنْشَقُّ عَنْ دُرْرِهَا، وَأُخْرَى تُفْتَرُّ عَنْ مَدْرِهَا

Sayyedna al-Muayyad al-Shirazi

To end with a verse from the Ikhwan us Safa:

فَاَجْمَدْ عَلَى النَّفْسِ فَاسْتَكْمِلْ فَصَائِلَهَا * فَأَنْتِ بِالنَّفْسِ لَا بِالْجِسْمِ إِنْسَانُ

So strive to complete / perfect the potential virtues of your soul.
For you are by your rational soul and not by your body human.