



*Nasir Khusraw's Philosophical
And intellectual tradition*
سنت فلسفی و عقلانی ناصر خسرو

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"If some one is not your brother in faith, for sure he is your brother in humanity" Imam Ali

" شاید فردی برادر هم کیش و هم آئین شما نباشد، اما بدون تردید و حتم برادر شما از دیدانداز بشری است " امام علی



Abu Mo'in Hamid ad-Din Nasir ibn Khusraw al-Qubadiani or Nāsir Khusraw Qubādiyānī [also spelled as *Nasir Khusrow* and *Naser Khosrow*] (1004 – 1088 CE) (Persian: ناصر خسرو قبادیانی, Tajik: *Hocupu Xycpae*) was a Persian and Tajik poet, philosopher, Isma'ili scholar, traveler and one of the greatest writers in Persian literature. He was born in Qubadian province of Tajikistan (part of former Khorasan, and died in Yamagan, Central Asia (now in Afghanistan). He is considered one of the great poets and writers in Persian literature. The *Safarnama*, an account of his travels, is his most famous work. Nasir Khusraw was born in 1004 AD, in Balkh, a province in north of Afghanistan. He was well versed in the branches of the natural sciences, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, Greek philosophy, and the writings of al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina; and in the interpretation of the Qur'an. He also studied Arabic, Turkish, Greek, the vernacular languages of India and Sindh, and perhaps even Hebrew; and had visited Multan and Lahore, and the splendid Ghaznavid court under Sultan Mahmud, Firdousi's patron. He later chose Merv for his residence, and was the owner of a house and garden there. Until A.H. 437 (1046 AD), he worked as a financial secretary and revenue collector for the Seljuk sultan Toghrul Beg, or rather for his brother Jaghir Beg, the Emir of Khorasan, who had conquered Merv in 1037. At around this time, inspired by a heavenly voice in a dream, he

abjured all the luxuries of his life, and resolved upon a pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina, hoping to find there the solution to his spiritual crisis. The graphic description of this journey is contained in the *Safarnama*, which still possesses special value among books of travel, as it contains the most authentic account of the state of the Muslim world in the middle of the 11th century. The minute sketches of Jerusalem and its environs are even today of practical value. During the seven years of his 19,000-kilometre journey (1046–1052), Nasir visited Mecca four times, and performed all the rites and observances of a zealous pilgrim; but he was far more attracted by Cairo, the capital of Egypt, and the residence of the Fatimid caliph-imam Ma'ad al-Mustansir Billah, the Imam of the Ismaili Shi'a Muslims, which was just then waging a deadly war against the Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, and Toghrul Beg the Seljuk, the great defender of the Sunni creed. At the very time of Nasir's visit to Cairo, the power of the Egyptian Fatimids was in its zenith; Syria, the Hejaz, Africa, and Sicily obeyed al-Mustansir's sway, and the utmost order, security and prosperity reigned in Egypt. At Cairo, he learned mainly under the Fatimid *dā'ī* ("missionary") Mu'ayyad fid-Din al-Shirazi, and became thoroughly imbued with the Shi'a Isma'ili doctrines of the Fatimids, and their introduction into his native country was henceforth the sole object of his life. He was raised to the position of *dā'ī* "missionary" and appointed as the *Hujjat-i Khorasan*, though the hostility he encountered in the propagation of these new religious ideas after his return to Greater Khorasan in 1052 A.D. and Sunnite fanaticism compelled him at last to flee. After wandering from place to place, he found refuge in Yamgan (about 1060 A.D.) in the mountains of Badakhshan, where he spent as a hermit the last decades of his life, gathering a considerable number of devoted adherents, who have handed down his doctrines to succeeding generations.

Safarnama Persian: سفرنامه (The Book of Travels) is his most famous work. He visited dozens of cities in about seven years (1046, March 6 – 1052, October 23) and wrote comprehensively about them, including details about colleges, caravanserais, mosques, scientists, kings, the public, the population, the area of the cities, and, of course, his interesting memories. After 1000 years, his *Safarnama* is still readable for Persian-speaking people.

Diwan (Persian: دیوان) Among his other works, most of the lyrical poems in his *Diwan* were composed in his retirement, and their chief topics are an enthusiastic praise of Ali, his descendants, and al-Mustansir in particular, along with passionate outcries against Khorasan and its rulers, who had driven him from his home. It also explores his immense satisfaction with the quiet solitude of Yumgan, and his utter despondency again in seeing himself despised by his former associates and excluded from participation in the glorious contest of life. Scattered through all these alternating outbursts of hope and despair, there are lessons of morality, and solemn warnings against the tricks and perfidy of the world, the vanity of all earthly splendour and greatness, the folly and injustice of men, and the hypocrisy, frivolity and viciousness of fashionable society and princely courts in particular WA Rahayish

Gushayish (Persian: گشایش و رهایش): Another work of Nasir Khusraw is the Persian philosophical work "Gushayish wa Rahayish" which has been translated into English by F.M. Hunzai under the title: "Knowledge and Liberation". The work discusses creation, questions related to the soul, epistemology, creation, and Ismaili Islamic doctrines. From a linguistic point of view, the work is an example of early philosophical writing in new Persian. It is the same strain which runs, although in a somewhat lower key, through his two larger *mathnavis*, the *Rawshana-i-nama* (Persian: روشنائی نامه) (or Book of Enlightenment, also known as *Shish Fasl*), and the *Sa'datnama* (Book of Felicity). The former is divided into two sections: the first, of a metaphysical character, contains a sort of practical cosmography, chiefly based on Avicenna's theories, but frequently intermixed both with the freer speculations of the well-known philosophical brotherhood of Basra, the Ikhwan al-Safa, and purely Shi'ite or Isma'ili ideas; the second, or ethical section of the poem, abounds in

moral maxims and ingenious thoughts on man's good and bad qualities, on the necessity of shunning the company of fools and double-faced friends, on the deceptive allurements of the world and the secret snares of ambitious men craving for rank and wealth. It concludes with an imaginary vision of a beautiful work of spirits who have stripped off the fetters of earthly cares and sorrows and revel in the pure light of divine wisdom and love. If we compare this with a similar [allegory](#) in [Nasir's Diwan](#), which culminates in the praise of Mustansir, we are fairly entitled to look upon it as a covert allusion to the eminent men who revealed to the poet in Cairo the secrets of the Isma'ili faith, and showed him what he considered the heavenly ladder to superior knowledge and spiritual bliss.

A similar series of excellent teachings on practical wisdom and the blessings of a virtuous life, only of a more severe and uncompromising character, is contained in the *Sa'datnama*; and, judging from the extreme bitterness of tone manifested in the reproaches of kings and emirs, we should be inclined to consider it a protest against the vile aspersions poured out upon Nasir's moral and religious attitude during those persecutions which drove him at last to [Yumgan](#). Of all other works of the author, the *Zaad al-Musafirin* (or Travelling Provisions of Pilgrims) and the *Wajh-i-Din* (or The Face of Religion) are theoretical descriptions of his religious and philosophical principles; the rest of them can be dismissed as being probably just as [apocryphal](#) as Nasir's famous autobiography (found in several [Persian tadhkiras](#) or [biographies of poets](#)), a mere forgery of the most extravagant description, which is mainly responsible for the confusion in names and dates in older accounts of our author. Book on Mathematics ([Arabic: عجايب الحساب و غراب الحساب](#)) Nasir Khusraw wrote a book on mathematics which has now been lost. He states in his other work that he could: *not find one single scholar throughout all of Khorasan and eastern lands like myself [who] could grapple with the solutions to these problems*. But he felt it his responsibility to take the task for readers he would never see, 'those yet to come, in a time yet to come' the poetry of Nasir Khusraw is replete with advice and wisdom. Being the representative of the Fatimid Imams in Khorasan, Nasir guided his followers through his poetry. His Persian poetry is enjoyed by the average Persian speaker of today and is taught in grade school.

- Have you heard? A squash vine grew beneath a towering tree.
- In only twenty days it grew and spread and put forth fruit.
- Of the tree it asked: "How old are you? How many years?"
- Replied the tree: "Two hundred it would be, and surely more."
- The squash laughed and said: "Look, in twenty days, I've done
- More than you; tell me, why are you so slow?"
- The tree responded: "O little Squash, today is not the day
- Of reckoning between the two of us.
- "Tomorrow, when winds of autumn howl down on you me
- Then shall it be known for sure which one of us is the most resilient!"

[PIR NASIR KHUSRAW'S CONCEPT OF INTELLECT AND THEORY OF INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION](#)

This statue of the Ismaili [da'i](#) and intellectual giant Pir Nasir Khusraw stands in his memory in Badakhshan. "Kindle the candle of intellect in your heart and hasten with it to the world of brightness; If you want to light a candle in your heart, make knowledge and goodness its wick and oil," he wrote. The relationship between intellect (['aql](#)) and faith has always been of fundamental importance to Muslims and has been widely discussed amongst Muslim philosophers and intellectuals. Etymologically the word ['aqlin](#) Arabic is derived from the trilateral verb ['-q-l](#) which means to hobble with the ['iqal](#) (cord used for hobbling the feet of a camel), to arrest, to pay blood money, to restrain, to reason, to comprehend etc. In Islamic philosophy ['aql](#) is generally understood to be an immaterial substance, active in itself, through which are comprehended the

realities of things. In this first part of the essay, we will attempt to see the concept of intellect from the point of the [Fatimid philosopher Nasir-i Khusraw](#) (also referred henceforth as [Hakim Nasir](#)). The next part will focus on his theory of Intellectual Education. Khusraw's Life Changing Dream, Pilgrimage to Mecca and Joining the Fatimid Cause. Nasir Khusraw was a Persian poet, philosopher, Isma'ili scholar and a traveler. He was born in Qubadyan in 1004 AC in the district of Marv, in the eastern Iranian province of Khurasan. He died in Yumghan, a village in Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. He is considered as one of the great poets and writers in Persian literature. Hakim Nasir received an excellent education in the sciences, literatures and philosophies of his time, including the study of Greek and [Neoplatonic philosophy](#). He was well versed with the philosophies of al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina as well as the interpretation of the Qur'an. Khusraw occupied a high position in the administrative ranks of the [Saljuq](#) court – reportedly in the revenue department. Evidence also suggests that he was familiar with the court of the previous dynasty, the [Ghaznavids](#). Around the year 1046 AC, Hakim Nasir had a strange dream in which someone warned him against wasting his time in senseless pursuits, and admonished him to search for something which could increase his intellectual potential and wisdom. Deeply influenced by that dream, he gave up all the luxuries of life, resigned from his post and set out on a seven year journey hoping to find the solution to his spiritual crisis. His journey has been documented in his famous work *Safarnama*. ([1] [Nasir-i Khusraw, Safar Nama](#), 2nd edition by M. Siyaqi, (Tehran, n.d.) pp. 1-2).

On his way back after a pilgrimage to Mecca, he visited Cairo, the then capital of the Fatimids, where he met the chief Ismaili [da'i al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi](#) (d. 470 AH/1077 AC), who initiated him in the Fatimid [Da'wah](#). In the three years that Hakim Nasir spent in Egypt, he attained the high rank of [hujjat](#), and was sent to Khurasan by the Fatimid authority to propagate the Fatimid mission. He stayed in Yumghan to fulfil his duties which also included composing Isma'ili doctrinal and philosophical works until his death in 481 AH/1088 AC. ([2] [W. Ivanow, Nasir-i Khusraw and Ismailism](#), (Bombay, 1948); [Bertels, A.E. Nasir-i Khosrivi ismailism](#) tran. in *Persian as Nasir-i Khusraw va Isma'iliyan*, by Arin Pur (Tehran, 1346 H.S.) pp. 149-232)

Khusraw's Definition of 'Aql and the General Categories of Knowledge :Basing his definition of '[aql](#)' on the concept of '[aql](#)' in the Qur'an as well as on the Aristotelian and Neo-platonic psychologies available at that time, which he had adopted and adapted according to the Isma'ili doctrine of the time, Hakim Nasir defines human '[aql](#)' as an immaterial substance, immortal in its essence which comprehends the realities of the things as they are. The term human intellect is also interchangeably used by him as '[aql-i gharizi](#) (innate intellect), [nafs-i natiqa](#) (speaking soul), and [nafs-i 'aqila](#) (intellectual soul). A human being's distinction from animal, according to him, is based on the former's power to think. As the highest of the evolved creatures created by God, the human being possesses powers that rise above other creatures on the evolutionary ladder. Hakim Nasir classifies the various faculties (powers) in a human being as follows: (a) Vegetative soul ([nafs-i nabati](#)): it is understood to be the powers of nutrition, growth and reproduction. [ZM: [Zadal Musafirin](#), 219] (b) Animal soul ([nafs-i haywani](#) or [nafs-i shahvani](#)): it is understood to be the five external senses and their powers which are: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste; five internal powers such as: *sensus communis* (the centre in which the data of the external senses are collected), imagination, memory, remembrance, apprehension, powers of motion, desire, lust and anger. [ZM: [Zadal Musafirin](#), 23] (c) Human or intellectual soul ([nafs-i 'aqila](#)): it is a divine, created substance having the powers of reasoning, inference, organization, creating arts and crafts ([sanaye'](#)), understanding the deeper meaning of things, extracting laws from the nature, perceiving the intelligible ([ma 'qulat](#), i.e. principles of science, intellectual/spiritual forms and truths, deeper meaning of the Qur'an, and transcendental bliss). [ZM: [Zadal Musafirin](#), 71, 196, 249, 210-11, 290] Human intellect, according to him, is partial intellect ('[aql-i juzvi](#)'), i.e. part of the Universal Intellect and hence linked to its Source. He also calls it the proof ([hujjat](#)) of the Universal Intellect. [KI:22] Being

potentially perfect, the human intellect needs training for its development and perfection. Forms of Knowledge for the Intellect's Perfection: *Mar'ifah* and *'Ilm*. The human intellect's perfection, according to Hakim Nasir, lies in the acquisition of knowledge. According to him, there are two categories of knowledge: *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*. He defines *ma'rifah* as something which cannot be acquired but which is inherent in human beings and animals. [KI: 94] For instance, he says, life (*jan*) in man which is subtle (*latif*) can only be recognized (*shinakhthani*) and not understood (*danistani*). This recognition, according to him, is due to the fact that man innately knows that there is something in the body called *jan* by which that body is alive. But the *jan's* howness, whatness, whereness and whyness is not understood. [KI: Jamal Hikmatayn, 194]

An example that Hakim Nasir gives is as follows: In a dialogue between Aristotle and a student seeking to know the difference between *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*, Aristotle asks him whether he has visited a certain city, and if so, to describe what he saw on the way. The student describes that he saw the villages, the running water, some parts of the desert, and a river until he reached that city, which was populated and its description was such and such. Aristotle then says to the student that what he has described is *'ilm*, that is knowledge that he has acquired. Aristotle then asks him if there are any lands and cities beyond that city and if he can describe them. The student replies, "I know (*danam*) of their existence but I do not know what they are like." At this Aristotle remarks that this he said out of *ma'rifah*. This is called *ma'rifah* (the awareness) – that a thing exists, but not how it exists. [KI: Jamal Hikmatayn 194] In *Jami' al-Hikmatayn*, quoting an Iranian philosopher in the context of *ma'rifah*, Hakim Nasir says that it is unvarying in man from the time of his childhood to his old age. For instance, the *ma'rifah* of thirst, hunger, fear of something which he does not know, *ma'rifah* of shapes, colours and other sensibilia, and the *ma'rifah* of pain and other things which man knows by nature (*bi-tab'*) but the names of those things he must learn from someone. Many animals which are completely formed also share *ma'rifah* with man. [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn 248] In the language of the Qur'an it could be called the *fitri* knowledge. *'Ilm*, on the other hand is a trace of the *'aql*, and according to Hakim Nasir, it is not innate but is acquired (*kasb kardani*). [KI: 194] He defines *'ilm* as the concept (*tasavvur*) of a thing as it is, whereas an *'alim* who possesses *'ilm* is the one who conceives (*tasavvur kunad*) a thing as it is. [JH: Jamiul Hikmatayn, 249] He describes *'ilm* as whatever skills, professions or crafts a man learns whether through thought (*tafakkur*), instinct (*ilham*), inspiration (*wahi*) or from others, whether willingly or out of constraint. It spans the range from language to professions, to philosophy. He further states that *'ilm* is the activity of the *'aql* and the *ma'rifah* is the basis of the *'aql* [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn, 249] implying that *'ilm*, whether of the sensory or mental realm, is always accompanied by *ma'rifah* which is innate in the human intellect/soul and a much nobler mode of attaining knowledge. The difference between an *'alim* and *'aqil*, according to Hakim Nasir, is the former conceives (*tasavvur kunad*) a thing as it is, whereas the latter perceives (*andar yafi*) the reality of a thing through the intellect. [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn 32] Otherwise said, the former attains knowledge through conceptualization which is an indirect way of attaining knowledge, whereas the latter attains knowledge directly. The example of the former could be the concept of pain, and the latter the experience of pain. Some of the terms that appears in this reading. How is Knowledge Acquired? Hakim Nasir refers to two modes whereby the knowledge is acquired.

(1) Through the five external senses whereby the sensible objects are perceived. As he states, the soul has five perceptible faculties (*hissat, quvvat*), which lie underneath or behind the five senses. [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn 252– 253; KI: Khowanal Ikhwan, 194]

(2) Through the essential mode (*dhati*). In this mode the human intellect/soul knows through its own essence without the help of the external senses or demonstration. This, according to Hakim Nasir, is a much more noble mode of attaining knowledge than the former. As he states, "The acts acts which arise from the essence

(*dhat*) of the soul are nobler than the accidental acts.” [KI: Khowanal Ikhwan 54] In another passage he says, “Human soul has the essential sight which is not the physical sight – it has all the acts parallel to the external sense–perceptual acts. The essential acts of the human intellect are more exalted than the accidental acts.” [KI: 52–53] The knowledge of the intelligible (*ma ‘qulat*) and the hidden mysteries in the creation, according to him, are all attained through the essential mode of knowledge. [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn: 199] Hakim Nasir’s recognition of the two modes of knowledge, the first one, which includes the sensory and mental modes, and the second one which is the essential mode, are quite similar to what Sufis and gnostics in various traditions have consistently recognized. In the Qur’anic language they are called: the knowledge by certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqin*), the “eye” of certainty (*‘ayin al-yaqin*), and the knowledge by reality (*haqq al-yaqin*). The first gives access to the outer, sensory realm; the second to the mental realm; and the third to the transcendent, spiritual realm. To come back to Hakim Nasir’s concept of *‘ilm* and *ma‘rifah*, he says that *‘ilm* is the activity of the *‘aql*, and *ma‘rifah* is the basis of *‘aql* [JH: Jamal Hikmatayn: 249] implying that *‘ilm* whether of sensory or mental realm is always accompanied by *ma‘rifah* which is innate in the human intellect/soul and much nobler mode of attaining knowledge. The Human Soul and its Relationship to the Universal Soul. Since *ma‘rifah* is the basis and source of all sciences, arts and crafts and it cannot be acquired by man’s effort according to Hakim Nasir, a question that may be posed is whether it is subject to increase, that is whether it gives birth to more creative arts and sciences or not. From his works it is understood that *ma‘rifah* can increase in the human soul. But there is an epistemological problem related to this mode of knowledge. Pointing to this problem he says: the human soul is not receptive to all forms of knowledge which are in the Universal Intellect because the human soul is *potentially* perfect and not actually. He calls the rational soul a weak form of *wahi* (divine revelation), which is distributed in the mankind in varying degrees of intensity. (Zadal Musafirin: 211)

Besides, human intellect/soul, according to him, is limited by being subject to senses and sense pleasures, which prevent it from penetrating through its essence and becoming receptive to the knowledge of intelligible. Being *potential*, with unlimited capacity for development, the individual intellect/soul needs the assistance of the one who is an *actual intellect*, who can assist the individual soul to become actual and be a recipient to intellectual/spiritual knowledge. People who possess *actual intellect*, according to him, are *ahl al-ta‘yid*, the divinely assisted people who according to him is the Prophet and the legitimate Imams from his progeny). [ZM: Zada l-Musafirin 346; KI: Khwan al-Ikhwan 27]

According to Hakim Nasir, it is not possible to have a direct access to intellectual/spiritual knowledge (i.e. *ma‘rifah*) through one’s personal endeavour. He provides a Qur’anic reference for the support of his view. The specific verse is, “O company of *jinn* and men, if ye have power to penetrate (all) regions of heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them)! Ye will never penetrate them save through *hujjah* (the word sultan in the verse has been translated by him as *hujjah*).” (Holy Qur’an, 55:3) His interpretation of this verse is: “men and jinn cannot penetrate through their substance and discover what is in the heavens and the earth except through the training (*parvarish*) by the proof (*hujjah*) of God on the earth who is the Imam of the time.” [GR: Gusha’ish VA Raha’ish 4; KI: 44]. It implies that man’s access to the spiritual/intellectual realm is only possible through the assistance of the divinely assisted Imam. It is through the Imam of the Time whereby the human soul becomes recipient to the divine knowledge and the eternal bliss, and thus takes the steps to perfection. [KI: Khanal Ikhwan 39–40, 185; ZM: WA Zadal Musafirin: 211]

Nasir Khusraw and philosophy:

Abu Mo'in Hamid al-Din Nasir ibn Khusraw is an important figure in the development of **Ismaili philosophy**. Much of his biography and philosophical ideology has been obtained through fragmented texts, both in poetry and prose. Born into a politically connected family, Khusraw was well-educated and in the sciences and humanities. Having spent most of his life occupying prestigious positions within the **Sajuq court**, Khusraw converted to the Ismaili faith at the age of forty after careful study. He spent the rest of his life writing and advocating for the Ismaili faith, and eventually was forced into exile by Sunni authorities. Consistent with other Ismaili philosopher, Khusraw's cosmology is heavily inspired by **Neoplatonism**. His metaphysics describes a God from which everything emanates and consistently strives back towards. Through God, existence is cast into being through Universal Soul and Universal Intellect. Each of these concepts provides the foundation for material objects, ascending from minerals to human beings. Within each human being exists a soul and intellect, imperfect in form but existing within the **Universals**? Khusraw interweaves his metaphysics within the **Shi'i doctrine**, requiring a divinely inspired guide to assist us in our journey to reconnect with Universal Intellect and Soul. In holding to this **cosmogonic description**, Khusraw distinguishes his philosophy from previous Ismaili thought introduced by al-Farabi and picked up by Ibn Sina and al-Kirmani. In striking contrast to other Ismaili writers of the time (s.v., **Hamid al-din al Kirmani**; **Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani**), many sources of information exist pertaining to Khusraw's life. Documentation was recorded, with vary degrees of accuracy, by Khusraw himself, a (hostile) contemporary, and by later historians. Since his death, Khusraw has been included in every major literary or historical survey of Ismailism. Khusraw's life can be divided into four periods: his early years up to the age of forty (discernible from fragments of various texts); his conversion to Ismailism (of which he has left two different versions in the form of prose and poetry); his seven-year journey (documented in **Safarnama**); and his years of preaching followed by persecution and exile (drawn primarily from his poetry, but also a few statements in his philosophical works). In 1004, Abu Mo'in Hamid al-Din Nasir ibn Khusraw was born in **Qobadiyan**, the district of Marv, in the eastern Iranian province of Khurasan. Along with two of his brothers, Khusraw occupied a high position in the administrative ranks of the Saljuq court – reportedly in the revenue department. Evidence also suggests that he was familiar with the court of previous dynasty, the Ghaznavids. Based on the quality of his writings, he received an excellent education in the sciences, literatures and philosophies of his time, including the study of Greek and Neoplatonic philosophy. In his writing, Khusraw reports examining the doctrines of the different Islamic schools and not being satisfied until he found and understood the Ismaili faith. As a result of his conversion to Ismailism he embarked on a seven-year journey, during which time he spent three years in the Ismaili court in Cairo under the **Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir (1029–1094)**. The **Fatimid dynasty (909–1171)** aimed at creating an Islamic state based on Ismaili tenets, and thus presented a direct theological and military challenge to the Sunni 'Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad. Khusraw left Cairo as the head (**hujjat**) of Ismaili missionary activities in his home province of Khurasan. After leaving Cairo, Khusraw was forced into exile by the Sunni authorities. He spent the rest of his life exiled in the **Pamir Mountains in Badakhshan, located in modern-day Tajikistan and Afghanistan**. **Khusraw's philosophical works reveal a strong Neoplatonic structure and vocabulary**. For example, his cosmogony closely follows **Plotinus**, moving from God and God's word (**logos**) to Intellect, Soul, and the world of Nature. Underlying each of the Ismaili cosmogonic systems is a fundamental division of the world into two realms, the esoteric (**batin**) and the exoteric (**zahir**). From this division, everything in the physical world points to its counterpart in the spiritual, which is seen as its source, or true form. The cosmogonic structure itself reveals a purposeful, providential unfolding from the spiritual realm into the physical world. Conversely, as a reflection, the physical world seeks to grasp the spiritual realm and comprehend it. In holding to this cosmogonic description, Khusraw follows his fellow Ismailis (**Nasafi and al-Sijistani**) while differentiating his

theory from the structure introduced by al-Farabi and later adopted by Ibn Sina and the Ismaili philosopher al-Kirmani.

Khusraw begins with a discussion of *tawhid* (oneness, God's unity), the clear understanding of which is the only way to achieve spiritual perfection. For Nasir, God Himself is indescribable beyond all categories of being and non-being (nothing which has an opposite can be ascribed to Him, since that would be limiting Him to human concepts). However, from God emerges his Word (*kalmia*, 'Be!'), which brings into existence Universal Intellect, perfect in potentiality and actuality. Universal Intellect transcends time and space, containing all being within itself. Universal Intellect enjoys a worshipful intimacy with God and derives perfection from this intimacy. From this worship emerges Universal Soul, perfect in potentiality but not in actuality because it is separated from God by Intellect. Universal Soul recognizes its separation from God, and moves closer to God in a desire for the perfection enjoyed by Intellect. Through its search for perfection, Universal Soul introduces the first movement into the entire structure, manifest in time and space. The entire cosmos is set into motion through the movement of Universal Soul. As a corollary, being is differentiated into two sets of opposites: hot and cold, wet and dry. Derived from these sets of opposites are the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. From these four elements arise the successive development of minerals, plants, and animals. Finally, as the summit of physical creation, human beings arise. Within each human being exists an individual intellect and individual soul manifesting the same characteristics (but on a smaller level) as the universals. In fact, the entire cosmos is formed on a matrix of Intellect and Soul; everything within the cosmos displays original intelligence and the searches for perfection exhibited by the soul. Khusraw's ethics grow from and reflect this cosmogony. Each individual's task is to recognize his or her own imperfections and then move to correct them, seeking the closest relationship possible with God. For Khusraw, this is achieved by stringent and repeated application of the intellect to both physical and spiritual matters. In order to correct these imperfections a believer must find a guide and study diligently, perform all required religious acts with a full understanding, and supplement new understanding with higher levels of worldly activity. As an Ismaili, Khusraw held the Shi'i doctrine that God would not send a revelation without a guide to interpret it. For the Ismailis, this guide must be a living person, the Imam of the Time. As a living bridge between the two realms, this person must be divinely inspired, infallible, and perfectly capable of providing guidance in spiritual and worldly affairs.

The Esoteric World Vision of Nasir Khusraw : In the tradition of esoteric Islam, the philosophies of the Ismailis warrant particular attention, and among the Ismailis, the figure of Nasir Khusraw calls for even more particular study. Born into a well-placed, highly educated family in Khurasan in 1004 CE, Nasir Khusraw, along with at least two brothers, rose to prominence in the Ghaznavid and Saljuq courts, as a leading financial administrator. Evidence of his high level of education and training can be found in his writings, of which an unusual variety remains in existence; we possess not only a number of prose philosophical and religious treatises, and a much-quoted collection of highly spiritual and philosophical poetry, but also a unique prose travelogue of an important seven-year journey he undertook throughout Islamic lands from 1045 to 1052. Most likely his family was of Shi'i persuasion, possibly even Ismaili. Unsatisfied with most of the religious teachings of his day, he tells us he studied broadly in an attempt to find a belief system that would provide answers to the questions of the meaning of life and the existence of the entire creation. His conversion, or 'rebirth', to the Ismaili faith led him to deeper study and his subsequent writing of a great number of theological and religious texts about the beliefs of Ismailism. Nasir Khusraw's teachings follow in the strong intellectual tradition supported by the Fatimid dynasty, which controlled North Africa, Egypt, the Sudan, the Hijaz—for which they were charged with protecting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina—and the Levant up to Byzantine lands. This support of intellectual activity is evident not only in the Fatimids'

tremendous output of theological, philosophical and legal Ismaili texts, but also in their founding and funding of the al-Azhar school of religious sciences in Cairo which today still stands as the leading producer of religious scholars of Islam. The Ismaili philosophical tradition shows a great familiarity with several branches of Greek philosophy (though, as with other Muslim writers, it did not always discern the differences) as well as a readiness to absorb the latest thinking on philosophical questions and to incorporate these new ways of thinking (such as alFarabi's depiction of ten levels of the numinous realm) into official outreach (*da'wa*) materials. For Nasir Khusraw, one of the most attractive aspects of Ismailism was its esoteric approach to knowledge. What is apparent to the senses—words in a book, sounds of speech, even the structures of society—are merely the external representations of an inner reality, the true meaning. Thus Ismailis would not accept a literal reading of the scriptures, nor in fact even of scholarly commentaries of the meaning of the word of God, but insisted, instead, on a deeper investigation, a spiritual hermeneutic called *ta'wil*, to uncover the eternal significance of the words. While not very clear about the process of *ta'wil* itself (was it a rational process? did it occur in the brain or the heart?), Ismaili intellectuals wrote about the sacred meaning of life revealed by *ta'wil*. For example, among Nasir Khusraw's surviving texts, his *Wajh-e Din* (*The Face of Religion*) has probably the most liberal lacing of phrases like, "the *ta'wil* of this is..". But it is in another text that we find this effort to unveil the profound fundamental meaning of religious texts and practices most overtly undertaken. Following on his conviction that external forms (*zahir*) may be many but underlying truth (*batin*) is one, Nasir Khusraw, in his *Kitab Jami' al-Hikmatain* (*The Book Combining the Two Wisdoms*), sets out to achieve a synthesis of, or rather, to discern the commonality inherent in both Greek philosophy and religious theology. In the preamble to *Jami' al-Hikmatain*, he writes: Since the very basis for this book is to disentangle knotty problems in religion and perplexing issues in philosophy, I have entitled it *The Book Combining the Two Wisdoms*. In this volume, I have spoken with sages of religion, following verses from God Almighty's Book and the sayings of His Prophet, as well as with sages of philosophy and scholars of logic, following rational proofs and propositions both conclusive and pleasing. The reason for this is that the treasure-house of wisdom is the heart and soul of the one who is the Seal of the Prophets and a trace of the perfume of wisdom is inside the books of the ancients as well. (JH, p. 18) The impetus for Nasir Khusraw's composition of the *Jami' al-Hikmatain* arose from a series of questions posed in a long poem by the Ismaili poet-philosopher Abu'l-Haitham which had come to the attention of the prince of Badakhshan, 'Ali ibn Asad. The prince requested Nasir Khusraw to write a commentary on the poem. Abu'l-Haitham's poem refers to, alludes to, and directly questions various religious beliefs and practices. The methodology Nasir Khusraw chooses to employ in *Jami' al-Hikmatain* is first to quote directly the verses he is commenting on, then to summarize what the "philosophers" say (including Plato and Aristotle and the philosophers of his own day), then to describe the opinion of the "People of *ta'wil*" (or, variously, *hukama-ye din-e haqq*, literally, the sages of the Religion of Truth), that is, the people who practice esoteric hermeneutics. Following the accepted practice of his day, Nasir Khusraw rarely cites particular thinkers but, instead, gives a summary of the general position of either the "philosophers" or the "esotericists". If we look closely at a number of Nasir Khusraw's responses we can witness his intellectual approach to spiritual matters, particularly how he views various levels of connection between the physical world and the spiritual world.

The Seven Lights, Seven *Lights shine, each to the extent, Its subtlety accepts the fire.* [6](#) *Jami' al-Hikmatain*, pp. 107–112)

In order to comment on the verse quoted above, Nasir Khusraw first presents the position of the leading philosophers, who liken the seven revolving planets (*sitarah*) to windows which let in light from the upper realm. "The philosopher sages say" that all light and subtlety which has reached the elements in this world came from the upper realm through these seven planets, which act like windows from that world to this.

However, while light and subtlety arrive from that world in a single manner, the sources of light (the planets) differ in their natures. Moreover, those who would receive the light down here below differ even more, both in their natures and in their positions on the earth, and therefore have received differing amounts of spiritual light and subtlety. It is this difference in receptivity, therefore, that accounts for the great differences in minerals, plants and animals in the physical world. In contrast to the philosophers, the People of Conviction (*Ahl-e Tayid*), however, see a more direct "effect" (*athar*) between the hierarchies of the macrocosmos and the microcosmos. They say that all that exists in the sensible world is an "effect" of all that which exists in the upper world. (See Chart I.) Things on earth draw their light and subtlety from seven planets, and these planets "are proof" that in the numinous realm are Seven Primordial Lights, primordial and pre-eternal, which are the source of all light in material bodies.

CHART I: DIAGRAM OF THE SEVEN LIGHTS
Based on Chapter 8 of the *Kitab Jam'i 'al-Hikmatayn* of Nasir Khusraw (1004 to c. 1077)

Seven Primordial Lights	Seven Stars of the Physical World	Seven Effects in Human Beings	Seven Degrees of the Human Soul (<i>Da'wa</i>)	Seven Elements (Metals)	Seven Illustrious Lights (The Esoteric Heaven)
Originating from nothing	Sun	Life	Prophet	Gold	Adam
Intellect in its substance	Moon	Knowledge	<i>Wazir</i> (Spiritual Heir)	Silver	Noah
Triad of Intellection, the Intelligizing and the Intelligized	Saturn	Capability	<i>Imam</i> (Spiritual Guide)	Iron	Abraham
Soul	Jupiter	Perception	<i>Hujjat</i> (The Proof)	Copper	Moses
Fortune (Gabriel)	Mars	Act	<i>Da'i</i> (Preacher)	Tin	Jesus
Victory (Michael)	Venus	Wish/Will	The Authorized One	Lead	Mohammed
Imagination	Mercury	Listeningness	The One who Heeds, The One who Answers	Mercury	The Resurrection to Come

The seven planets of the corporeal world also have seven effects, namely the seven levels within each human being. Then, following the philosophers but not saying so, Nasir Khusraw explains that each human being has his or her own measure of receptivity. That is, each soul differs in its ability to receive and accept the influx of the seven primordial substances (i.e., the Primordial Lights). In the same way, each of the seven essences or elements (i.e., the metals) can receive, in its particular measure, the influx of the seven planets. (Chart 1, Columns 1 and 3, and Columns 2 and 5.) Thus, "according to the measure of the substance in its soul" each human being can receive light and subtlety from the Primordial Lights, and "according to the measure of the substance in its soul" each metal can receive light and subtlety from the seven planets. Accordingly, one soul resides at the level of **Prophethood** and one element at the level of gold; not all human beings can be prophets and not all elements can be gold. This has particular import in the hierarchy of the Ismaili outreach structure (*da'wa*). Within Universal Intellect, which Nasir Khusraw terms "the king of the upper world," there is a ranking for each member of the Ismaili community. This ranking derives from a sharing, a participation in the nature of the Prophet himself. The Prophet, who is "noble to the extreme for [partly because] he has received the totality of the Light." This sharing or "communion" in or with the nature of the Prophet means that each Ismaili believer, to the degree he or she is able, participates in the grace of the Prophet. Nasir Khusraw quotes a *hadith* of the Prophet: "Ali is a part of me as I am a part of him." Therefore, just as, for example, all metals partake, to the measure of their own receptivity, of the light from the seven planets, so all Ismaili believers partake, to the measure of their own receptivity, of the light from the Prophet. However, Nasir Khusraw appears to ignore the hierarchical implications and concentrates instead on the chronological in his concluding statement that just as in the astronomical heavens seven planets shine, so too in the esoteric heavens do Seven Lights shine. These Seven Lights in the esoteric heaven signify the series of seven Prophets who have come, as well as the one who will come at the end of time.

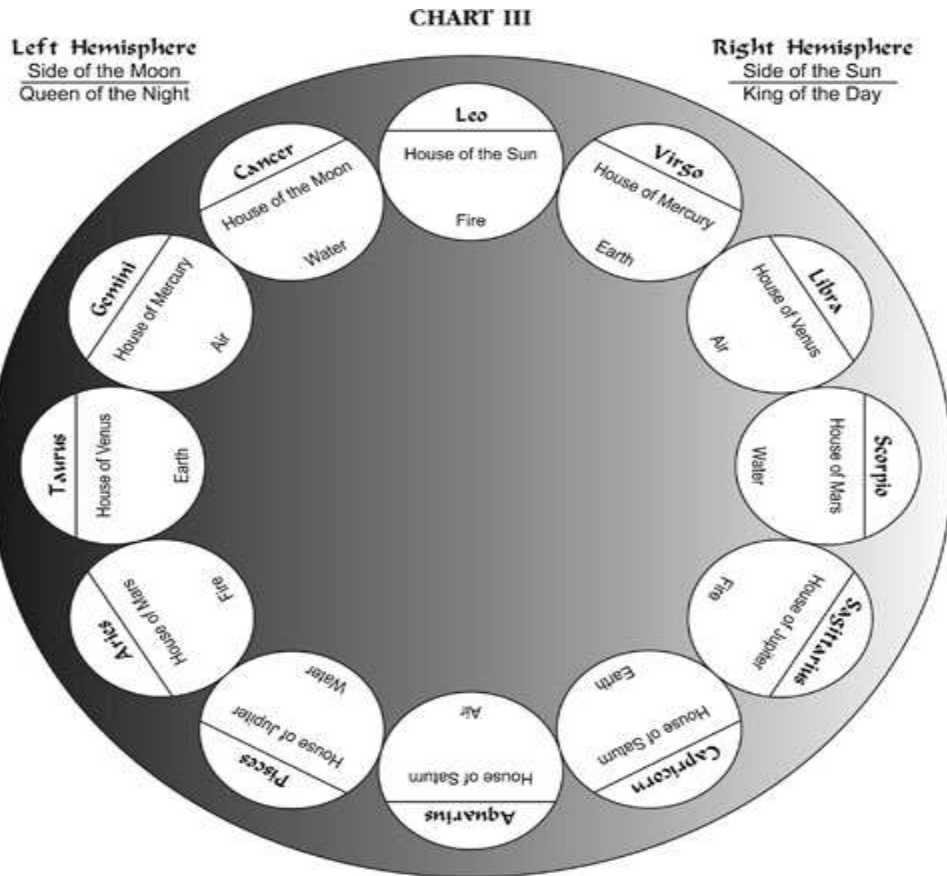
[Cosmic Correspondences](#) , *Why, Leo in the House of the Sun ,And Cancer in the House of the Moon, Are they walled inside a fortress strong? Why, to each of these does but one House belong, When all the rest have two, One to the right, and one to the left?* [7\(Jami' al-Hikmatain, pp. 274–292.\)](#)

Lines 64 and 65 of the poem provide Nasir Khusraw another opportunity to show the correspondence between the spiritual and physical realms and between the heavenly and the earthly worlds, and ultimately their relation to the world of religion. He states that the poem asks why the Sun has been placed in Leo and the Moon in Cancer, and why the Sun and Moon each has only one astrological house while the five other planets each has two? He says that the answer to one question is also the answer to the other, and then takes up the first question first. The influence of the Sun and the Moon on the earth, he explains, is greater than that of the other five planets – the Sun because it is bigger and the Moon because it is closer. In addition, the two have a special rapport with each other so that when one is gone the other appears, the Moon acting as a vizier to the caliphal Sun. Basically, what house each one is in couldn't be otherwise, he points out, because Cancer is a sign of water and the Moon is a star of water, while Leo is a sign of fire and the Sun a star of fire; it would be impossible to have them reversed. Nor could the astronomers have placed them in other houses. The twelve signs of the zodiac are evenly spaced across the sphere, six in the hemisphere of the Sun and six in the hemisphere of the Moon, with six on one side facing six on the other side. The Sun and the Moon could not be placed in other houses even in their own hemispheres, for example to Aries and Pisces, he argues, for those are the beginning and ends of the series of houses, rather than the highest houses in relation to the North Star [\(JH 276\)](#). Now Nasir Khusraw introduces a topic he will expand upon in the next section, the notion that the whole cosmos can be likened to a body, in which the flaming ball of the Sun is the spirit (*ruh*) which animates it. All the movements that happen when the sun shows its face – the blossoming of the buds, fresh growth on the mountains and plains, the splendor with which fruits and trees bedeck themselves, the rousing of animals from their sleep – all these, declares Nasir Khusraw, "bear witness to the veracity of my statement that 'the Sun is the spirit of this world' [\(JH 275\)](#)." In his answer to the second question, Nasir Khusraw builds on the first. Having explained how the Sun and Moon have greater influence, he says they are therefore like lords (*sultans*) and the other five planets like servants to help accomplish the main goal, which is creation. The seven planets are like tools of the Universal Soul, which also has the assistance of the Universal Intellect, in fashioning (*sakhtan*) the multiplicity of individuals in the world. The ultimate aim of this creation (*san'*) is the form of individual man (*surat-e shakhs-e mardom*). With the help of these tools, the Universal Soul delineates the form of man, the apogee of creation, the finest and most perfect form, capable of receiving knowledge and wisdom (*'ilm wa hikmat*) [\(JH 279–281\)](#). So that the favor (the strength, the blessings) [\(ihsan, p. 280\)](#) will come equally to each planet from the Sun and the Moon, each 'servant' has one house with the 'king' and one house with the 'queen'. That is, each of the five planets has a house with both the Sun and the Moon; together these total ten houses, plus one each for the Sun and the Moon, totals the twelve houses of the Zodiac.

CHART II: DIAGRAM OF SINGLE AND DOUBLE COSMIC CORRESPONDENCES
Based on Chapter 28 of the *Kitab Jami' al-Hikmatayn* of Nasir Khusraw (1004 to c. 1077)

MACROCOSMOS	MICROCOSMOS	RELIGION: ISMA'ILI DA'WA
Sun (animates the cosmos)	Heart: seat of the Soul (animates the body)	Prophet: brings the exoteric Book and Law (animates religion)
Moon (governs the cosmos)	Brain: seat of the speaking Soul (governs the body)	<i>Wasi</i> : brings the exegesis (governs religion)
Mercury (right house: Virgo left house: Gemini)	Eyes: sight (right eye, left eye)	<i>Imam</i> (exoteric lesson, esoteric lesson)
Venus (right house: Libra left house: Taurus)	Ears: hearing (right ear, left ear)	<i>Bab</i> (exoteric lesson, esoteric lesson)
Mars (right house: Scorpio left house: Aries)	Nose: smell (right nostril, left nostril)	<i>Hujjat</i> (exoteric lesson, esoteric lesson)
Jupiter (right house: Sagittarius left house: Pisces)	Mouth: taste (right side, left side)	<i>Da'i</i> (exoteric lesson, esoteric lesson)
Saturn (right house: Capricorn left house: Aquarius)	Hands: touch (right hand, left hand)	<i>Ma'dhun</i> (exoteric lesson, esoteric lesson)

Nasir Khusraw holds (JH 281) that the influence of the Sun produces the heart in the human being, which is the seat of the soul and the source of life itself. Just as the Sun is in the center of the spheres and gives life to the world, so does the heart reside in the center of the human body and give it life. The influence of the Moon produces the brain in the human being, which is the seat of the speaking soul (*nafse nateqeh*) and the abode of imagination (*takhayyul*), memory (*hifz*), recall (*zikh*) and discernment (*tamiz*). And just as the Sun and the Moon enjoy an intimate rapport, so too do the heart and the brain. Thoughts originate in the heart, which sends them on to the brain, where the [speaking] soul weighs them carefully to distinguish true from false (JH 282). Thus is the Sun in the **macrocosmos** (*'alam-e kabir*) at the level of the heart in the **microcosmos** (*'alam-e saghir*), which is man, and the Moon of the macrocosmos is at the level of the brain in the microcosmos. Because of this correspondence, the sages call the macrocosmos, **Cosmic Man** (or **Homo Maximus**, *insan-i kabir*),⁸ (Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1969), 131-133, 211, 317.) The five planets of the macrocosmos function at the level of the five senses of Earthly Man. But here we have a problem in interpreting Nasir Khusraw's writing. Twice (JH 282, 284) he lists the planets in descending order (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury) followed by the senses listed in descending order of importance (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch). But twice he seems to contradict this hierarchical correspondence: once in the narrative (p. 286) and in the diagram (p. 287). We can see his problem in both schemata. In the first instance, he wants to follow a hierarchy of importance for both the planets (using size/distance) and the senses (sight is always most important for Nasir Khusraw). In the second, he is bound by the diagram of relative positions of the twelve zodiacal houses. Let us refer to that diagram.



At the top, we have the two houses of the Moon (on the left) and the Sun (on the right). Closest on both sides are the two houses of Mercury (Gemini (left), Virgo (right)); then the two houses of Venus (Taurus left, Libra right); then the two houses of Mars (Aries left, Scorpio right); then next to the bottom the two houses of Jupiter (Pisces left, Sagittarius right), and at the bottom the two houses of Saturn (Aquarius left, Capricorn right). For Nasir Khusraw, just as each of the five 'attending' planets has two houses, the five senses each has two tools. For example, we have two eyes but our sight is one; two ears, but hearing is one; two nostrils, but smell is one; two sides of the mouth, but taste is one; and two hands, but the sense of touch is one. But simply finding a neat correspondence between the two worlds is not the point for Nasir Khusraw. It is not enough for him to say that the form of the world (which is Cosmic Man) corresponds to the form of Earthly Man (JH 288). Indeed, toward the end of his chapter on these verses, he states that all the discussion so far is mere preamble, paving the way toward reaching the words of the one on whom depends everlasting salvation from eternal suffering and happiness without end in eternal bliss (JH 288). This wise one said that God Almighty created man in the image of the world because the seed of the world is actually the substance of Mankind. In fact, the world is like a tree whose fruit is Mankind endowed with intelligence (*mardum-i 'Aqil*). Since the point of planting a tree is to reap the harvest of fruits and not merely to have the tree, then trees which would bear the fruit of knowledge and wisdom must be planted in the garden of the Religion of Truth (*din-e haqq*). Nasir Khusraw cites a *hadith* of the Prophet, "Every tree which is not planted by us is destined for the fire." He comments that this saying is a metaphor for the whole creation, and that "the wise understand by this *hadith* that trees which are planted in the garden of the religion of the ignorant are the ones the Prophet condemns to burn in the fire" (JH 288). The lesson here is that just as God created the structure of the human body on the model of the world, so too did the Prophet establish the Religion of Truth on the model of the creation of

man. By so doing, the Sages of Religion would know that the Prophet established the Religion on the order of the Creator and that, for example, the six days of material world are also reflected in the world of religion. Thus in the sacred cosmos, the Prophet holds the place of the Sun, for it is he who animates the world of Religion. The *Wasi* (the spiritual heir of the Prophet) holds the place of the Moon, for the *Wasi* establishes order and harmony in the world of religion, indeed, he is the soul of the mystic body of religion. In the mystic body of the Religion of Truth, the Prophet holds the place of the heart, for it is the heart which gives life to the body and it is the Prophet who gives life to the world of religion, while the *Wasi* holds the place of the brain, for the brain governs this body and the *Wasi* governs the world of religion. Each member of this pair governing the world of religion is singular and has one abode, mirroring the astronomical and human models. Just as each of the five planets has two houses, so too in the world of religion does each of the five 'servants' to the Prophet and *Wasi* have two abodes within which to work. The Prophet brought the exoteric Book and Law; the *Wasi* brings the exegesis of the Book and the Law. The five servants in the world of religion, the *Imam*, *Bab*, *Hujjat*, *Da'i*, and *Ma'dhun*, each are responsible for both the exoteric and the esoteric 'houses' of their level in the Ismaili convocation (*da'wa*). It is altogether too tempting and too easy to see the correspondences drawn here as mere allegory, that 'this' stands for 'that'. This would be wrong. For Nasir Khusraw and the other Ismailis too, these correspondences were the very foundation of all being, the inner workings of the entire cosmos (in all its possible levels), the theoretical and visionary structures coursing through every aspect of being: ontological, spiritual, intellectual, religious, physical, social, human, animal, plant, mineral. In this way, sacred purpose is spread through every thing and every act. Indeed, with this vision, nothing was left untouched by the sacred.

Nasir Khusraw Shia Ismaili Muslim Dai and Poet :Nasir Khusraw is acknowledged as one of the foremost poets of the Persian language. Born in the Balkh district of Central Asia in 394/1004, Nasir was inspired from an early age by a tremendous thirst for knowledge. His intellectual abilities brought him much fame, a promising career in government service, and a life of ease and pleasure. But he was always dissatisfied by a lack of meaning and purpose in his life until one day, at the age of 42, he was dramatically transformed by a visionary dream. He converted to Ismailism, renounced his worldly life and embarked on his famous seven-year journey to Egypt. Nasir arrived in Cairo in 439/1047, where he stayed for three years and became acquainted with Ismaili dignitaries such as *Al Muayyad Fi Din Al Shirazi*. He was appointed to a high rank in the Fatimid *da'wa* organization, and was later regarded as the *hujja* of greater *Khurasan*. When he returned to *Transoxania*, Nasir established his residence at Balkh, from where he began to propagate the Ismaili faith in the surrounding provinces. But Nasir's success provoked the local people to burn down his house and compel him to seek refuge in Yumgan, a remote mountainous region of *Badakhshan*, today situated on both sides of the Oxus river in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Nasir spent the remainder of his life there, writing his philosophical works and composing poetry until his death after 465/1072. He is venerated to this day in Central Asia as a great saint, poet and philosopher. The following poems are from his *Diwan*, ed. N. Taqawi (Tehran, 1925–28), also edited by M. Minuwi and M. Muhaqqiq (Tehran, 1974).

The Eye of the Intellect : Do you not see that God is inviting you to heaven? Why do you throw yourself into the pit of hell-fire? In order to ascend to the abode of the righteous, make knowledge your feet and obedience your wings. In the battleground of our demented world, make a sword from patience and a shield from the faith. Pluck the bud of wisdom from the branch of religion; graze the hyacinth of obedience from the fields of knowledge. This world is not the abode of people who are wise; it is but a passage for us; therefore traverse it. Of what use is the branch which yields no fruit, whether it belongs to a fruit-bearing tree or not? In the sight of God, the Absolute Sovereign, this world has not the value of even an atom. Had it any value in His reckoning, do you think the unbelievers would get even one sip of water? This world is only

a place of attainment for us; therefore gather quickly provisions for the Return. In fact, this world is a book in which you see inscribed the writings of God the Almighty. O do not reject these allusions of the hujja, because truth should never become an abomination.

The Momentum of Time : O you who have been sleeping at night! If you have rested, do not think that time too has been resting. Consider that your personality is always on the move – do not think it eats or sleeps even for a moment! The momentum of time and the turning sphere draws all animals, by night and day, to ceaseless motion.

The Master and the Disciple: The master turned my night into broad daylight with proofs as clear as radiant sunlight. Since he made me drink from the water of life, death has become quite insignificant to me. When I looked from the corner of his eye, I saw the earth rotating beneath my feet. He showed me the visible and hidden worlds, both located in one place, my own body. I saw the two guardians of paradise and hell inhabiting the same place, my own breast. He pointed to one who is the keeper of paradise and said to me: "I am his disciple." I saw eight gates, closed in the same place, and seven other gates open, one above the other.

He said to me: "If you wish to enter a gate, time, chosen by God from men and jinns." you have to obtain his permission first." When I asked him to explain the secret to me, he recited its story from beginning to end. The master said: "He is the lord of the universe !

The Esoteric and the Exoteric: The exoteric of revelation is like brackish water, but the esoteric is like pearls for people who are wise. Since pearls and jewels are to be found on the sea-bed, look for the pearl-diver instead of running on the shore. Why does the Maintainer of the world keep so many precious pearls concealed upon the bottom of the sea? He kept them for the Prophet with the instruction: "The esoteric is for the wise, the exoteric for the ignorant." You will get nothing but mud and salty water from the pearl-diver because of your animosity towards him. When you are searching for the meaning of revelation, do not be content with speech like a donkey braying aloud.

On the Night of Power, when you kindle the lamp, the mosque is filled with light, but your heart remains pitch-dark. Whether you kindle the lamp or not, understand that it will not dispel the darkness of ignorance in your heart.

The Sovereign of the Time : The soul of the universe is the sovereign of time, for God has raised up the body through the soul. When the auspicious Jupiter saw his face, it became the source of munificence, the mine of good fortune. As long as the clouds of Navroz wash all quarters of the garden with showers of lustrous pearls; and the nightingale laments the rose at the break of dawn, like a grieving soul separated from its lover: may the authority of the sovereign of time prevail over space and time and the denizens of the world! prevail over space and time and the denizens of the world!

Journey to the Light : My heart is filled with the slander of the people; I am therefore separated from them in speech and action. As long as my heart was blind like that of **Zayd and Amr**, no one could find fault in me, wherever I went. Sometimes burning with passion I followed beautiful maidens; sometimes out of greed I sought the philosopher's stone, I did not fear that my life was being wasted, nor was I ashamed that I had vulgar or evil thoughts. During autumn my heart was dissipated with wine; in the springtime I happily looked for water and pasture. Complacently I sat in the midst of the watermill turning, until the hair on my head turned white as snow. I thought that the world had become my meadow, until like the cattle I became fodder for the world. If it injured me in any way, I returned to it yet again like a drunkard always drawn towards goblets of wine. The world kept me firmly under its control; thus sometimes I became prosperous and sometimes a pauper. And when my soul was worn out with the afflictions of time, I went to the door of the king to bestow praise on him. I was prepared to seek justice from the devil of the time, but all I found in the king's service was enslavement. I had to perform a hundred acts of servitude to him before I was able to

fulfill even a single hope of mine. I gained nothing at all except toil and suffering from the one to whom I had gone for the sake of healing. When my heart became disappointed with kings and princes, I turned to the people of the mantle, turban and cloak. I told myself that they would show me the path of religion because the people of the world had tormented my heart. They said: "Be happy, you have been delivered from your burden" so my soul became happy and I prayed along with them. I told myself that since these were men of knowledge, I would be released from the grip of ignorance and poverty. Therefore I wasted some years of my life with them in a lot of empty prattle and useless disputations. But their wealth and piety was only corruption and hypocrisy, and I said: "O God, why have I become afflicted again?" It was as if by going from the king to the jurist, I had entered a dragon's mouth for fear of an ant! Time had countless ruses and pretexts to entrap me; I became caught in just such a pretext, such a deception. When it betrayed me and no escape was left to me, at last I went to the progeny of Mustafa for help. I found help against the devil's persecution and cunning when I entered the sanctuary of the Imam of mankind. Shall I tell you what happened to me when I fled the devil? Suddenly I found myself in the company of angels. When the light of the Imam shone upon my soul, even though I was black as night, I became the shining sun. The Supreme Name is with the Imam of the time; through him, Venus-like, I ascended to the heavens.

The Candle of the Intellect : Kindle the candle of intellect in your heart and hasten with it to the world of brightness; If you want to light a candle in your heart, make knowledge and goodness its wick and oil. In the path of the hereafter, one should not walk on foot but with the soul and the intellect, and for provisions, you must fill the tablecloth of your heart with obedience and knowledge. O son, your mind is the garden of intellect, turn it not into a furnace with fumes of wine; your heart is the blessed mine of knowledge, why have you planted a perverse hardness in it? Let your heart become soft because a shirt of dusky soft silk does not befit a heart of stone; cast away ignorance from your mind because celebration does not befit a house of lament. Comprehend well the wise poetry of the hujja, for it is elevated and powerful like Mount Qaran, and with the needle of reflection, prick his excellent words in your subtle heart and soul.

Pearls of Heaven : Above the seven spheres are two precious pearls whose light illumines the world and mankind. In the placenta of non-existence, from the sperm of existence, they form images but themselves have no form. Not contained by the senses, they are not sensible; neither dark nor bright, they are not visible. Reared in pre-eternity by the holy wet-nurse, they are not pearls but have the attributes of pearls. From this side of creation and that side of the universe, within and beyond time, they are always together. They are not in the world and yet they are in it; they are not within us but nurture the soul in our bodies. It is said that they are both the worlds; therefore they are in the seven climes but not in the seven climes. This one is the Holy Spirit and that one the Spirit of Gabriel; they are flying angels but have no wings. In the nest of the lower world they appear with open wings, but in the higher world they fly without wings. They are friends with the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet, as are earth and air with fire and water. In the treasure-houses of pre-eternity and post-eternity, they are not pearls but recognized by the name of pearl. They are both the world and mankind, paradise and hell; they are absent and present, poison and sugar. They come from light to darkness, from heaven to earth, from the west to the east, from ocean to land. Existent and non-existent, hidden and manifest, they are without and with you in the same house. In the next world which is their forge and furnace, they are the destroyers of the building and the builder. They are the chiefs of the nine spheres and the seven planets; they give sustenance to the five senses and the four natures." Around their home, there are ten witnesses, of whom five stay inside and five stands at the door. The shopkeepers of heaven come before them in order to purchase what they have to sell. They are not substance, for substance takes accident from them; they make an axis for accident, but they are not the axes. They read to you the book of secrets without letters; they know your deeds without having to see them. They appear because they are hidden; they are without head or body because they are in the head and body. Their attribute is that they are not contained in the world, but they are hidden in our head and body. They have made this world a place for you

to inhabit, but for them there is no place, for they are beyond space. They come to you from a place which is not a place; there they are angels and here they are messengers. In rank, they are higher than the angelic world; like God's essence, they are neither element nor substance. Even though both the worlds are in the possession of this and that, if you wish, they can be subjugated to your soul.

Speech and Silence: O eloquent one! Why do you remain silent? Why do you not string pearls and corals together? If you are a rider on the mount of wisdom, why do you not come to the racecourse of men! You have seen and experienced the world; You have heard the sayings of Arabs and Persians. You have become famous in the Science of Geometry, from Sind and India to the borders of **Khorasan**. And when you are counting, the created world is like a grain of wild rue in your thinking. There are many people in the East and the West who have witnessed your claim to this Science. Now that you are happy to be among the best, you should have pride over your fellow men, Since from the heart of the master Mu'ayyad, God has opened the door of wisdom to you.

And I would like to end this article for our dearly respected readers from different walks of religious life to reflect on one of the very famous, philosophical and intellectually well versed poem / Qasida of NK, "Questions to a Pilgrim", for a deeper and better understanding and reflection of the intellectual, philosophical thoughts and tradition of Pir Sayed Shah Nasir Khusraw, the greatest poet, traveler, astronomer and Ismaili thinkers.

Questions to a Pilgrim by Pir Nasir Khushraw: With gratitude to the Beneficent God for His favours, the pilgrims arrived in all their glory. They had performed the Greater and Lesser Pilgrimage and had safely returned home. In that party was a friend of mine – sincere, intimate and kind.

"Tell me", said I, "How you escaped the hazards of that painful and dangerous journey. During your absence, incessant worry has been my constant companion. Happy I am that you have made the Pilgrimage: **(I think)** there is none like you in the world. Now let me know how exactly you paid your respects to that great sanctuary.

When you donned the pilgrim's garb (ihram) what firm resolve did you make? Did you render unlawful (haram) unto yourself all pleasures save spiritual and divine? **"No", said he.**

"Then" said I: "When you said, 'Here I am' with reverence and full knowledge of its significance, did you hear the Voice of God and give such answer as Moses did?" **"No," said he.**

"Then" said I: "When you stood on the top of Mt. 'Arafat and were admitted to His audience, did the breeze of Ma'rafat (Gnosis) play upon you making you an 'Arif (Knower of God) and an alien to yourself?" **"No," said he.**

"Then" said I: "And when you threw pebbles at the Devil did you also throw stones at the devil within you? Did you renounce your evil ways? Discard all you vicious acts and habits?" **"No," said he.**

"Then" said I: "And when you slaughtered sheep for the sake of the orphan and the captive, did you notice the proximity of God and slaughter your own lower appetitive **'self' first of all?**" **"No," said he.**

“Then” said I: “And when the significance of Abraham’s sacrifice dawned upon you, did you truly, sincerely, totally surrender your very ‘Self to God?” “No,” said he.

“Then” said I: “And when you circumambulated the shrine, making the rounds like an ostrich at his journey’s end, did you recall the circumambulation of angels around the throne of God?” “No,” said he.

“Then” said I: “And when you ran from the Hill of Safa to the Hill of Marwa (as required by the rites of the Pilgrimage), did you feel the progress of ‘Self’ from purity (safa) to manliness (muruvvah) making you indifferent to Heaven and Hell?” “No,” said he.

“Then” said I: “And when you had to leave the shrine did your heart split in two with the agony of parting. And did you bury it in the Holy Place and do you feel now like a decaying bone?” “No,” said he, “for what you have just explained to me I never knew before, right or wrong.”

“Then, my friend,” said I: “You have not performed the Pilgrimage. You never reached the Stage of Self-annihilation: You went, saw Mecca and returned – having purchased with silver the afflictions of desert-travel.”

“And if you perform the Pilgrimage again, then act as I have indoctrinated you for religious acts are null and void unless accompanied by corresponding movements of the heart.”

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² See Alice C. Hunsberger, Nasir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan: A Portrait of the Persian Poet, Traveller and Philosopher (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), 10–16, where Nasir Khusraw’s writings are summarized. For information on unpublished manuscripts, see Ismail K. Poonawala, Biobibliography of Isma’ili Literature (Malibu, California, 1977), 123–5.

³ Henri Corbin and Mohammad Mo’in, editors, Kitab-e Jami’ al-Hikmatain: Le Livre Reunissant les Deux Sagesses (Tehran and Paris, 1984 [1953]), which contains an extensive Etude Preliminaire, with a discussion on this particular topic, page 28.

⁴ Heinz Halm, The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

- 5 – This section is based on chapter twenty-eight of *Jami' al-Hikmatain*, pp. 274–292.
- 6– H. Corbin, “Nasir-i Khusrau and Iranian Ismailism,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran: Volume 4*, ed., R. N. Frye (Cambridge 1975), pp. 520–42 and 689–90;
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