

## A Dream-Work: An Analysis of Nasser Khosro's Dream and Intellectual Transformation

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### Introduction

Despite a visible and a long historical presence, the history of the Ismaili *da'wat* (summons) and communities in Khurasan has largely remained unexplored. Primarily, this is because conventional historiography still dominates mainstream historiography, which mainly focuses on 'big narratives,' and rarely pays attention to the history and events of minority groups. Lack of attention to the overall history of the Ismaili *da'wat* in Khurasan also appears to have had its impact on the study of Nasser Khosro and his ideas. Therefore, despite an increasing interest in the study of Nasser Khosro's thought and ideas in Persian and major European languages, the field of Ismaili studies and that of Nasser Khosro are comparatively unexplored.

Until the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Nasser Khosro was one of the most ignored persons. Over the past nine centuries, since his death in 469/1077 or 486/1093 until the beginning of the twentieth century, only a handful sources are known to be written about Nasser Khosro. Some of them do not exceed beyond a few lines of prose and poetry, which only give a passing mention. Others are often mixed with polemical and unhistorical views. Alice Hunsberger provides a brief survey of these sources, starting from the earliest period, contemporaries of Nasser Khosro, to the nineteenth century (2000:18-32). These sources mostly present uncritical, and often repetitive, pseudo biographies of Nasser Khosro. For instance, as Hunsberger analyses, Amir Dawlat Shah's *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā* (893/1487) extensively copies Qādī al-Bayḍāwī's *Nizām al-tawārīkh* (674/1275). The accounts of many others, like Muḥammad ibn Ni'mat ibn 'Ubayd Allāh, known as Abū al-Ma'ālī, are clearly influenced by anti-Ismaili polemics.<sup>2</sup> Abū al-Ma'ālī's account of Nasser Khosro itself belongs to this genre of anti-Ismaili literature. From the viewpoint of modern scholarship, such accounts are still valuable, because they inform modern readers about the political and religious perceptions of the authors of those accounts on the one hand, and what image Nasser Khosro had in the eyes of the ordinary people and scholars of the time on the other hand.

There are also a few accounts that are either neutral or positive about Nasser Khosro. These include al-Qazwīnī's geographical account of *Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-'Ibād*, Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh's *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's *Bahāristān*, and Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat's *Majma' al-fuṣahā'* and *Rawaḍat al-taslīm*.<sup>3</sup> As an example of these sources, al-Qazwīnī composed his account a hundred and fifty years after Nasser Khosro's death. It is one of the rare accounts that mentions Nasser Khosro in a neutral light. He dedicates a section to Nasser Khosro under the title of 'Yumkān' (Yumgān), a valley in the north-eastern province of Badakhshān in modern-day Afghanistan. In this account of Yumgān, al-Qazwīnī mentions Nasser Khosro, his rebellion against the dominant religious views of his hometown Balkh, and his refuge in Yumgān (1960: 489-90). As has previously been mentioned, Nasser Khosro remains an ignored intellectual in the history of Islamic thought until the late nineteenth century. Edward Granville Browne states most of the historians, chronologists and biographers ignored Nasser Khosro because of his Ismaili faith (Browne, 1905: 325). However, historians' and scholars' perception of Nasser Khosro and Ismaili faith has been changing over the course of history. Today, his works are widely accessible, read and venerated by scholars in the field of Islamic and oriental studies.

There have been two key factors that facilitated this change in the study of Nasser Khosro's thoughts: (i) the European exploration into the oriental cultural, scientific and literary sources, particularly during the colonial period, and (ii) developments in printing press technology. Prior to the twentieth century, Nasser Khosro's books were in the form of handwritten manuscripts, and often preserved by the Ismaili communities of modern-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. The French and English colonial explorers in North Africa and modern Middle East and South Asia, and the Russian colonial explorers in

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<sup>2</sup> See, Hunsberger, A., *Nasser Khosro, The Ruby of Badakhshan*, 2000:19-20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2000:24-30.

Central Asia began the collection and translation of African and oriental literary source into European languages. It was amid this wave of translation that orientalist also noticed the richness, depth, beauty, simplicity and eloquence of Nasser Khosro's thoughts. Modern printing technology further facilitated the speed and quantity of knowledge sharing among scholars across the globe. It also benefitted scholars who engaged in the study of Nasser Khosro's ideas.

Nasser Khosro attracted the attention of his native Persian speakers only after his thoughts had migrated to Europe and were translated into French, German and English. The earliest European orientalist who paid attention to Nasser Khosro and wrote about him included A. R. Fuller (1872), Hermann Ethé (1879 and 1880), Charles Schefer (1881), F. Teufel (1882), Guy le Strange (1888), V. Shukovski (1890), Edward G. Browne (1906), and Bartholomae, Chr. *et al.* (1896-1904). Orientalists were particularly keen about *Safar-nāmah*, because it entailed some very detailed observation about architecture, culture, traditions, markets, trade and people in many different cities in modern-day Iran and the Middle East. Nasser Khosro's *Safar-nāmah* (Travelogue) and poetries, including parts of his *dīwān* (collection of poems), received the light of modern publication in the late nineteenth century. These publications raised awareness among his fellow native speakers of Persian, who slowly but steadily began to explore, analyse and interpret Nasser Khosro's thoughts, which gained a further momentum from the mid twentieth century onwards.

Historically speaking, it is not surprising that a nation forgets its own intellectual heritage and traditions, and begins to appreciate them once others adopt and polish them and make them shine. This has happened in Europe, too. As Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897), in his response to Ernest Renan's criticism of Islam and the Arabs, states that, "the Europeans welcomed Aristotle, who had emigrated and become Arab; they did not think of him at all when he was Greek and their neighbor" (2002:109). European scholars came to appreciate ancient Greek philosophers, thinkers and scientists, whose works had fallen to dust over centuries, after Muslims discovered them, polished and shined their work, and gave them a new intellectual life. As the Europeans are indebted to the Muslim discovery of ancient European thoughts, similarly modern scholarship on Nasser Khosro owes much gratitude to the European explorers, and development in modern print technology, and then to the scholarly passion of his wider native Persian speakers. Unfortunately, his countrymen, except for a small literary circle, and governments in Afghanistan have not yet taken the due step to appreciate Nasser Khosro's thoughts.

Nasser Khosro: an insight into his intellectual crisis

It would not be unreasonable to think that Nasser Khosro was familiar with the Ismaili *da'wat* in Khurasan, prior to his journey to the west. The Ismaili *da'wat* always maintained a secret network, which was also present in his hometown, Balkh.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, the conversion of a talented middle class young man like Nasser Khosro must have been a priority target for the local Ismaili *da'is* in Khurasan. As shall be discussed in this section, it seems very likely that he was in touch with local Ismaili *dā'īs*, who appear to have succeeded in winning his loyalty. However, it is also safe to argue that while the Ismaili *da'wat* was appealing to Nasser Khosro, the local Ismaili *dā'īs* could not satisfy his search for more profound sources of knowledge. He was in the search of a master, a teacher, a learned man who could guide him towards the truth he was searching. This and other aspects of Nasser Khosro's pursuit for a thorough intellectual transformation are discernible from *Safar-nāmah*.

The book hides in itself certain unspoken facts about Nasser Khosro. One of these secrets, which shall be discussed here, is the author's state of personal identity crisis. As we know him, through his *Safar-nāmah*, he was a learned man, with a professional position in the local Seljuqid administration in Balkh, an important city in former Khurasan and in northern part of modern-day Afghanistan, and a comfortable life. The question is what kind of personal crisis Nasser Khosro was in. The answer to this question could be found in his *Safar-nāmah*.

A close and analytical reading of *Safar-nāmah*, particularly Nasser Khosro's narration of events prior to his dream, suggests that the author was experiencing a person-specific intellectual crisis. This crisis appears to be the result of his initiation into the Ismaili *da'wat* on the one hand, and his personal search for a more in-depth source of knowledge. In the words of Nasser Khosro himself, he was in search of *tawāngarī haqīqī*, literally, true power (Nasser Khosro, 1956:1). Apparently, it was this search for true power and his inability to find it that led him to enter into a temporary intellectual crisis. His description of his life and everything around him, including the official position as a tax collector, material wealth,

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on the Ismaili *da'wat* in Khurasan, see my forthcoming article, "The Ismaili *Da'wat* in Khurasan: from Its Earliest Beginning to the Ghaznawid Era", in: *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2015.

and social status, were not satisfying his thirst for true power, which I term here as *true knowledge*. Undoubtedly, he was not after more material power or wealth. True power for him meant true knowledge. In other words, he was in the pursuit of a type of knowledge that would enable him to find answers to his questions about himself, such as who he was, where he came from and where he goes once he passes away from this material life. Years later, he articulates and answers these questions in the beginning of his philosophical book, *Zād al-Musāfir*, popularly known as *Zād al-Musāfirīn*. Apparently, he was also seeking answers to questions concerning the true meaning of religion, the meaning of the divine revelation and scripture, the difference between different schools of jurisprudence, and the difference and hostile relationship between theological and rational schools of thought. These questions must have been deeply concerning him prior to undertaking his journey to the west. We find his answers to these questions in his books, such as *Gushāyesh wa Rehāyesh*, *Jāmi' al-Ḥikmataīn*, *Khwān al-Ikhwān* and *Wajh-e Dīn*. The failure to find a true source of knowledge, which he was seeking, apparently had created in him a state of personal crisis – a crisis that was very much the result of his personal pursuit for true knowledge, and contemplation about himself, his life and the world around him.

For anything that is in a state of crisis, the first and foremost questions one asks are: what to do next, how to improve and correct the situation, in what ways one could end the crisis, and change one's state of affairs. While the question may sound natural, there may not always be ready and straightforward answers. However, what naturally happens is that man often, at least in the initial phase of one's crisis, tries to supplement something new in order to correct the situation. However, supplements are not always based on an informed analysis and decision. Rather it could represent one's natural reaction to the crisis. Therefore, supplements are not ways helpful. They could prolong, but not cure, the problem.

Nasser Khosro must have also thought about *how to correct the situation*, and *what to do next*. Equally, he must have also thought of a supplement. The question now is what supplement Nasser Khosro thought of, and how effective it was in correcting his situation. One of these supplements we read in *Safar-nāmah* is drinking wine. He confesses of his wine drinking. Apparently, he was not drinking wine for physical pleasure, but as he states, he was drinking wine to lessen the sorrows of the world. As he further confesses, he had become a regular wine drinker for at least a month in Jūzjānān (Nasser Khosro, 1956:1). His confession of regular wine drinking suggests that he was almost addicted to wine. Analysing this intense wine drinking in the context of his intellectual circumstances and his search for true knowledge in Khurasan, one could claim that it did represent a personal crisis in him.

He was aware of how the Saljūq sultans and their local administrators and governors were void of intellectual thought. Unlike the previous Ghaznawid period, when Khurasan was one of the important centres of Muslim civilizations, the Saljuqids paid little attention to the continuation of knowledge and scholarship. The intellectual emptiness that had been created by the departure of beacons of knowledge of his time, from Avicenna (d. 428/1037) to Firdawsī (d. 410/1020) and al-Bīrūnī (d. 439/1048), must have been very disturbing to him. His books, which have just been mentioned, also signify the type of questions and themes he was interested in, and for which he was seeking answers. He was surrounded by good friends, bureaucrats, and poets, but none appear to be of any significant intellectual and philosophical level. The intellectual emptiness he was experiencing in his time could have been one of the key elements why his official position, material wealth and social status could not satisfy him. His personal search for true knowledge, coupled with the intellectual emptiness of his environment, appear to have led Nasser Khosro to enter into an intellectual crisis. His wine drinking could also be understood as a supplement in relation to this crisis.

As this paper shall further discuss, in the initial years of his intellectual crisis, Nasser Khosro himself appears not to have the right understanding of his situation and what the correct answer would be. It is very natural to spend years of contemplation in order to refine one's thoughts and ideas, particularly when it concerns a deep personal crisis. In the realm of Sufi traditions, for example, a seeker of spiritual truth spends years in refining his thought, ideas and purifies his soul to understand oneself, long before he could reach the realm of a glimpse of the divine presence. It must have also taken Nasser Khosro many years of contemplation to refine his search, from wine drinking to seeking comfort in the presence of poets and learned men. It is only in the fortieth year of his life that he knows what exactly he needs. Therefore, he asks God to grant him *tawāngarī ḥaqīqī*, i. e. , the true wealth and knowledge.

A dream-work: an insight into Nasser Khosro's intellectual transformation

The search for *tawāngarī ḥaqīqī*, which I would call here a search for critical intellectual means to change one's *framework*, now appears to be a right way out of, and a plausible solution to end, the crisis.

A change of *framework*, and what it means in the context of Nasser Khosro, is the key theme of this section. In order to explain this point, I would like to repeat that supplements and making adjustments did not help the situation in which Nasser Khosro was caught. Drinking wine could only provide a temporary comfort by way of making him unconscious. Similarly, writing poetry, spending time in the company of learned men, which undoubtedly has always been a popular culture in Khurasan, could only give him a temporary and momentary satisfaction. Such supplements were far from correcting the situation. Rather they were prolonging the problem. What Nasser Khosro needed was something more profound and beyond all these supplements and adjustments. He needed critical intellectual tools that could enable him to change or more precisely to break his existing and create a new framework, which I would call *intellectual framework*. How this change of intellectual framework or transformation could happen, was the biggest challenge that disturbed Nasser Khosro and caused his personal crisis.

The change of framework could, in other words, be described as a *revolution*, an *intellectual revolution*. This was precisely what he meant by asking God to give him *true power*, *tawāngarī ḥaqīqī*. He developed this precise analysis of his situation gradually and over time. He became aware of the fact that only an intellectual revolution – a thorough intellectual transformation, could correct the error. It is at this junction of his life that Nasser Khosro sees a dream, in which he enters into a brief conversation with someone, who questions Nasser Khosro's way of life and logic behind wine drinking, which destroys intellect. Instead, he encourages him to search for something that nourishes reason and intellect. Before disappearing from his dream, the person guides him to travel in the direction of the *qibla*, where he could find the source of true knowledge. Nasser Khosro narrates his dream in the following words:

One night in a dream I saw someone saying to me, "How long will you continue to drink of this wine, which destroys man's intellect? If you were to stay sober, it would be better for you."

In reply I said, "The wise have not been able to come up with anything other than this to lessen the sorrow of this world".

"To be without one's senses is no repose," he answered me. "He cannot be called wise who leads men to senselessness. Rather, one should seek out that which increases reason and wisdom."

"Where can I find such a thing?" I asked.

"Seek and you shall find," he said, and then he pointed toward the *qibla* and said nothing more.

(Nasser Khosro, 1986:1, trns. Thackston, Jr. )

It is this dream that stands at the heart of Nasser Khosro's intellectual transformation. The dream, as Nasser Khosro himself confesses, had left a deep impact on him. He narrates that:

When I woke up, I remembered everything from the dream, which had truly worked on me. "You have woken up from last night's sleep, now I must wake up from a forty-year long dream", I said to myself. "Unless I shall not alter all my deeds and attitudes, I shall not find liberation", I said to myself.

(Nasser Khosro, 1956:2)

A key point in the above quotation, which supports the main thesis of this paper, is that the dream stands at the centre of Nasser Khosro's life and intellectual transformation. The dream becomes a mechanism that translates his search for, and dream of finding, true knowledge into a reality. Nasser Khosro highlights the power and impact of his dream in very clear words: [*khwāb*] *bar man kār kard*, meaning, [the dream] had truly worked, or made a great impression, on me. There are several evidences that signify the influence of the dream in his real life. First, he confesses the psychological impression he had from his dream, as he acknowledges that the dream had truly worked and made a great impression on him. Secondly, the psychological impression leads him to pledge a solemn promise to himself that now it is the right time to wake up from a forty-year long dream. Thirdly, he also commits to change his way of life, all his past habits, among which wine drinking was a major issue. Fourthly, he cleanses himself from head to toe, goes to mosque for prayer, and asks God for help. Understandably, he would also make a vow to God that he would do everything to achieve what he saw in his dream. Now it becomes clear that the dream leads him to an initiation into a new life and a new world. In doing so, he cuts himself off with his past, including his job and position as a tax collector. He is fully committed to break his existing and build a new intellectual framework. The final sign of how his dream turns into a dream-work is his full intention to undertake a journey towards the *qibla*. As shall be explored and analysed in the next section,

the dream becomes a transformative power and a dream-work in Nasser Khosro's intellectual transformation.

Although the dream itself gradually moves to the backstage of Nasser Khosro's journey into an intellectual transformation, it remains the turning point in his life. The dream remains in progress until it completely changes his way of life, intellectual career, and turns the dream of acquiring true power and knowledge a true reality. This new reality is a thorough transformation and revolution, which leads him to break his existing and develop a new intellectual framework.

Undoubtedly, each dream has its own logic and form of thinking. The power of logic and thinking of what Nasser Khosro saw in his dream convinced him that piecemeal adjustments were not the right answer to his crisis nor they were worth of being considered wise. This is why he undertook a long journey to find the source of true knowledge that could increase his intellect and wisdom, which I termed in this paper a new intellectual framework and an intellectual revolution. Undoubtedly, one of the key reasons why this dream takes such a central stage in Nasser Khosro's life is that he is convinced by its logic, and is profoundly influenced by its form of thinking. Consequently, he acts upon it by way of leaving his existing framework and begins his search for a new intellectual framework.

Journey to the west: developing a new intellectual framework

Moving from his dream to his action, this section focuses on how his dream creates a dream-work through a long and exciting journey towards the *qibla* and then to Cairo. One of the key issues that directly relates to Nasser Khosro's journey to Mecca and subsequently to Cairo is his association with the Ismaili *da'wat*. The question is whether he was an Ismaili prior to reaching Cairo or he was initiated into the Ismaili esoteric doctrine during his stay in Cairo.

It is important to ponder upon this question before analysing his journey to the west. Edward G. Browne believes that he was initiated into the Ismaili *da'wat* during his two to three years of stay in Cairo. He states that it was after his initiation into the esoteric doctrine of the Ismaili creed in Cairo that he received the title of *hujjat* (proof) and was commissioned to carry on the Fatimid Ismaili *da'wat* mission in Khurasan (1906:222). In contrast, Wladimir Ivanow argues that Nasser Khosro was initiated into the Ismaili faith and *da'wat* system at least several years before undertaking his journey to Mecca and Cairo (1956: 20-1). Farhad Daftary also accepts the view of Wladimir Ivanow and Henri Corbin about Nasser Khosro's conversion to the Ismaili *da'wat*, from probably a Twelver Shi'i background, prior to his departure for Egypt (Daftary, 2007:206). Here, I shall briefly analyse and elaborate Nasser Khosro's association with the Ismaili *da'wat* system prior to his journey. My argument goes along with that of Ivanow, Corbin and Daftary, and I shall elaborate it in the following debates.

Apparently, Nasser Khosro was familiar with the Ismaili *da'wat* in Khurasan and the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt prior to undertaking his journey to Cairo. The Ismaili *da'wat* had a long and eventful history and rich tradition before Nasser Khosro stepped in the world of the Ismaili esoteric doctrine. It would not be unreasonable to expect him to be familiar with the overall thoughts and ideas of the Ismaili scholars and *dā'īs* of the past. Since Khurasan, particularly Balkh, was an important *da'wat* territory, and the local Ismaili *dā'īs* were searching for intellectual, political and military elites, it would not be unreasonable to think of some kind of connection between him and local Ismaili *dā'īs* in Khurasan. Nasser Khosro was one of the intellectual elite of his time in Balkh. In addition, he also had a respectable position in the Saljuqid administration. He must have been a high and priority target for the local Ismaili *dā'īs*, who would have made their best efforts to win the loyalty of a talented and learned middle class man like Nasser Khosro. Therefore, it would not be surprising that the local Ismaili *dā'īs* had approached him at some point of time prior to his journey.

There appears to be, however, a plausible reason why any link between Nasser Khosro and local Ismaili *da'wat* network should have remained unknown to the public. The Ismaili *da'wat* always maintained a secret network. The Ghaznawid as well as the Saljuqid local authorities and non-Ismaili religious jurists were hostile towards the Ismaili *dā'īs* and communities. Therefore, it is not surprising why such a link was kept in secret. However, there is also an evidence in the Nasser Khosro's journey, i. e. , in his itinerary and sojourns in different towns and cities, from which one could discern such a link between him and Ismaili *da'wat* networks.

In order to elaborate Nasser Khosro's initiation into the Ismaili *da'wat* prior to his journey, it is useful to begin with an analysis of a fragment of biography of the Persian legendary *dā'ī*, Hasan Šabbāh (d. 518/1124). The remaining fragment of Hasan Šabbāh's biography *Sarguzasht-e Sayyidnā* (Biography of our Master) gives us an indication that Nasser Khosro had a close contact with local Ismaili leaders. In

this biography, Hasan Ṣabbāh writes about his search for various sciences since his early childhood, being born in an Ithnā ‘Ash‘ārī family, and meeting the Ismaili *dā‘ī* by the name of Amīr Zarrāb. He states that:

In Rayy I met a person by the name of Amira Dharrab [Amīr Zarrāb]; from time to time he explained the doctrine of the [Ismaili Fatimid] caliphs of Egypt, as before him Nasser Khosro, hujja of Khurasan and Georgia... Amira Dharrab was a man of good morals ... I saw that the Nizari group god-fearing, pious, abstinent and anxious about drink ... Then I sought [to give the oath of allegiance to an Ismaili *dā‘ī*]... He said, ‘You who are Hasan have a great rank than I ... how then shall I take your oath and receive the allegiance to the imam from you?’ After much arguing he took my oath. Then in the month of Ramadan of the year 464 (May 1072), ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Attash came to Rayy. After seeing me, he approved of me, and appointed me a deputy in the *da‘wat*. He said to me, ‘You must go to [the Fatimid] court’.

(Hodgson, 1955:44-45)

The last sentence in the above quotation clearly demonstrates that the Ismaili *dā‘īs* were facilitating the intellectual development of their brightest talents by sending them for further education and training to Cairo. Applying the analogy of Hasan Ṣabbāh to Nasser Khosro, who undoubtedly was one of the brightest talents of his time, one could safely assume that Nasser Khosro must have already given his oath of allegiance to a local Ismaili *dā‘ī*, before he was sent to Cairo for further education and *da‘wat* training. Ivanow’s analysis also leads him to a similar conclusion that Nasser Khosro’s conversion to Ismailism happened prior to his journey to Cairo. Ivanow states that Nasser Khosro must have been converted to Ismailism (if not born in an Ismaili family) at least several years before taking his journey to Mecca and then Cairo. He further argues that it is unlikely that a newly convert would have been sent to Cairo and become a *dā‘ī*. He must have already passed some tests before going for further education to Cairo (1956:20-1). The above quotation from Hasan Ṣabbāh’s biography also suggests that that Nasser Khosro was the *hujjat* for Khurasan and Georgia, while the mainstream literature knows him primarily as the *hujjat* of Khurasan and *bilād mashriq* (literally, the eastern lands).

Another question in relation to Nasser Khosro’s initiation into the Ismaili *da‘wat* system is, how it was possible for him to undertake a long and expensive journey from Balkh to Mecca and Cairo without financial concerns. Any answer to this question ought to take into account the possibility of his association with the Ismaili *da‘wat*. This assumption also raises another question as why he went for pilgrimage alone, instead of travelling with the usual annual pilgrimage caravans. Nasser Khosro’s itinerary and his sojourn in different cities and towns provide an answer to these questions. In his seven-year long journey (1046-52), he left Jūzjānān by way of Shibirghān for Marw, from where he travelled to Bisṭām and Dāmghān and through Daylamān and Tabrīz in northern part of Persia or modern-day Iran, before he reached Akhlāt and Ḥarrān in Turkey, and came down to and Aleppo, and via Tripoli and Beirut reached Jerusalem and then Bethlehem, from where he made his first pilgrimage to Mecca. Finally, he arrived in Cairo in 7 Safār 439/3 August 1047.

Undoubtedly, such a long journey was very costly. Financially, it would be questionable if he had taken a large sum of cash money to fund a two-year long journey. Even if he had taken that amount of gold or silver coins, it would still be questionable as why he circled all north-western part of Khurasan and northern Iran, and reaching Mecca through south-eastern Turkey, then down to Lebanon, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. He could also travel on a shorter route from Marw through Isfahan, al-Basra, Bahrain, to Riyadh and Mecca, which he took on his return journey from Cairo to Balkh. Equally, he could travel with the pilgrimage caravans. An analysis of his itinerary allows us to believe that it is beyond doubt that Nasser Khosro was initiated into the Ismaili esoteric doctrine long before his journey. His travelling to Mecca and Cairo across the named cities, where Ismailis had their *da‘wat* networks, signifies the fact that, like Hasan Ṣabbāh, he was chosen for further education and training. Therefore, he passed through the Ismaili areas, where he was not only supported on his journey, but also gained first-hand knowledge of the Ismaili places, where he would also meet local *da‘īs*. The journey was indeed an orientation tour of the Ismaili places, which was very vital and needed for someone who was expected to return with an important *da‘wat* mission. On his return journey from Cairo to Balkh, he was obviously supported by the Ismaili *da‘wat* network.

Nasser Khosro experienced the final stage of his transformational journey during his two to three years of stay in Cairo. Here, he met the Fatimid Ismaili chief *da‘ī*, Mu‘ayyad fi’l Dīn Shīrāzī (b.

396/1006), who became his personal master and mentor in Ismaili esoteric doctrine. His meeting with Mu'ayyad that culminated in meeting the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mustansir bi Allāh (427-487/1036-1095) marked the highest epoch in his life; and, consequently, in the life of Ismailis of Khurasan. Nasser Khosro credits Mu'ayyad for preparing him to give his *bay'at* (oath of allegiance) to Imam Mustansir billah (Nasser Khosro, *qaṣida* No. 104, 1928), who appointed Nasser Khosro as the *hujjat*<sup>1</sup> (proof) for the *jazīra* (island, pl. *jazā'ir*) of Khurasan, a commission to which he dedicated the rest of his life. Apparently, it is this oath of allegiance that, as previously mentioned, led Browne to believe that Nasser Khosro was initiated into the Ismaili esoteric doctrine in Cairo. It is worth noting that Nasser Khosro's oath of allegiance in the presence of the Fatimid Imam-Caliph is different from the oath of allegiance of the first initiation. It would be surprising that Mu'ayyad would have taught Ismaili doctrine to someone who had not taken the oath of allegiance, and yet to take the same person to the presence of his imam of the time. Nasser Khosro's oath of allegiance in the presence of al-Mustansir bi Allāh must have been for his new title and responsibility as the *hujjat* of the imam of the time for the island of Khurasan. On the term island, as Faquir Hunzai states, the Fatimid Ismaili imams divided the world into twelve islands, and appointed a *hujjat* for each island to oversee the *da'wat* mission and activities (Hunzai, 2011:1). Nasser Khosro was one of the twelve *hujjats* and responsible for Khurasan, which represented an independent *jazīra*. Since *hujjat* had full authority over the designated *da'wat* territory, Nasser Khosro was also known as *ṣāhib-e jazīra-e Khurasan* (the lord of the island of Khurasan).

Upon his return to Khurasan in 444/1052, Nasser Khosro's new task was to disseminate and share his true power, i. e. , true knowledge, with the people of Khurasan. His new task involved his *da'wat* activities and summoning people to the Ismaili esoteric doctrine and allegiance to the Ismaili Fatimid Imam-Caliph of the time. As expected, Nasser Khosro's new doctrine and mission soon antagonized local Sunni clerics, who accused him of being a *mulhid* (heretic). In order to punish and stop his preaching, they incited people's religious sentiment against him by accusing him of being irreligious (Persian, *bad-din*), *mulhid*, Qarmaṭi and *rāfiḍī* (rejecter of truth). In this way they also demolished his house, plundered his property, and threatened to assassinate him (Daftary, 2007: 206). Consequently, Nasser Khosro sought refuge in the valley of Yumgān, in Badakhshān of present-day Afghanistan. At this time, Yumgān was one of the territories of autonomous local ruler Amīr Abūl Ma'ālī 'Alī b. Asad (Nasser Khosro, 1953; Daftary, 2007: 206), who was either an Ismaili or a sympathizer of the Ismaili *da'wat*. Apparently, the presence of this Amīr in Badakhshān, and probably Ismaili communities in Badakhshān itself, were the key reasons why Nasser Khosro chose the valley of Yumgān in Badakhshān as his headquarters.

In Yumgān, Nasser Khosro became deeply engaged in the *da'wat* mission and intellectual activities. He trained local *dā'īs*, supervised their work in different parts of Khurasan, and wrote his books. His *qaṣidas* reveal that he monitored *da'wat* activities in different part of Khurasan, and, for the instruction of local *dā'īs*, he used to send *da'wat* treatises (books of *da'wat*) every year (Nasser Khosro, 1928: *qaṣida* No. 167). Today, the Pashayie, Hazara, Tajik and Badakhshani Ismaili communities in Afghanistan, the Badakhshani or Pamiri Ismailis in Tajikistan, the Tajik Ismailis in the westernmost part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China, and the Ismailis of Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly known as Northern Areas of Pakistan), show great honour and respect to Nasser Khosro. They read and regard Nasser Khosro's poetry and prose as fundamental Ismaili texts. It was also here in Yumgān that he wrote numerous books and treatises on various issues, from religion and philosophy to esoteric interpretation of the *shari'a* and reconciliation between religious and rational wisdoms.

Nasser Khosro's books clearly demonstrate the true power and knowledge, and the new intellectual framework, which he acquired during his seven-year long journey. His intellectual legacy became an everlasting source of intellectual guidance, inspiration and support for the Ismaili communities of the named regions in Khurasan as well as other Ismaili communities in other parts of the world. Apart from transforming the *da'wat* school of Khurasan into a long lasting system, his intellectual legacies also made major contributions to Persian-Dari language, literature, philosophy, science of *ta'wīl*, and supporting the mutual relationship between rational and religious sciences.

The intellectual and *da'wat* mission earned Nasser Khosro a special position in the history of the Ismaili *da'wat* in general and in Khurasan in particular. Under his leadership, the Ismaili *da'wat* and communities entered a new phase of history. He not only continued the *da'wat* tradition, but also transformed the Khurasanian *da'wat* school into an organized system, the legacy of which has lasted until

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion on the term *hujjat* and its usage in the Shi'a tradition, see Daftary, 2007: 117-18.

the current date. He further developed and articulated the Fatimid Ismaili religious beliefs, practices, and interpretations through a set of finely elaborated poetical and theo-philosophical literature, and made them accessible to the people of Khurasan for the first time in the Persian-Dari language. In doing so, he has also entered into the list of the pioneers of the renaissance of the Persian-Dari language.

Nasser Khosro may have died after seventy years of age, sometimes between the age of 71 (469/1077) or 87 (486/1093), which are the two most quoted dates. This would mean that he did not experience the split of the Fatimid caliphate and Ismaili *da'wat* that occurred after the death of Imam-Caliph Mustanşir bi Allāh in 487/1094. As in his writings, including his *dīwān*, there is no indication of the Musta'lawī-Nizārī split, it can safely be claimed that Nasser Khosro died before the year 487/1094. He was also the last Fatimid *dā'ī* of Khurasan.

#### Conclusion

This paper has analysed Nasser Khosro's dream and his intellectual transformation. It argued that Nasser Khosro's dream played a central role and fully revolutionized and transformed his intellectual life beyond imagination. It turned his dream of gaining true power, i. e. , the true knowledge, into an everlasting reality. The dream not only transformed his life and career, but also influenced the life of hundreds of thousand people in Khurasan until this date.

The intellectual transformation Nasser Khosro achieved was the result of continuous, complex, eventful and tireless struggle. Apparently, soon after his initiation into the Ismaili esoteric doctrine in his home town, Balkh in Khurasan, Nasser Khosro began to question things, such as the purpose of life, religion, world, the political authorities, and the growing intellectual decay in Khurasan. The absence of a true master, who could guide and answer his questions, led him to experience an intellectual crisis, which must have been very disturbing for his inquisitive mind. He must have lived with this crisis for some times, during which he tried certain piecemeal supplements and adjustments, among which wine drinking appeared to have been one of such measures, in order to correct the situation.

It was in his fortieth year of life that he eventually finds the correct answer to his situation. He expresses it in two simple words: *true power*. He begins to believe that only true power or true knowledge, which I termed it as a thorough intellectual transformation, an intellectual revolution, or creating a new intellectual framework, could bring him out of the crisis, and open a new horizon of knowledge for him. It is at this moment of his life that he experiences a dream that becomes a dream-work and a life changing experience. Eventually, it is this dream-work that transforms his life, nourishes an intellectual revolution in him, and builds a new intellectual framework, through which he begins to influence and impact the life of Ismaili communities in the former Khurasan until the current date.

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## عقل در قرآن و اندیشه ناصر خسرو بر مبنای قصاید

منصور پیرانی<sup>۱</sup>

مقدمه

در پهنه ادب فارسی دو شاعر حکیم بیش از دیگران درد خرد و دغدغه خردورزی دارند و بر کارکرد و اهمیت آن تأکید می‌ورزند؛ حکیم فردوسی توسی و حکیم ناصر خسرو قبادیانی. اگرچه مراد از خرد در اندیشه این دو شاعر متفکر، در بُعد و معنای خاص آن منظور است یعنی «خرد دینی» لیکن به تناسب دوره و اوضاع و احوال حیات، از همان بُعد و معنا هم، بسیار قابل تأمل است. ناصر خسرو حکیم و متفکر اسماعیلی مذهب، در آثار تعلیمی و تحلیلی خود: جامع الحکمتین، زادالمسافرین، وجه دین، خوان اخوان و دیوان اشعار چهره‌ای از خود می‌نماید که دغدغه‌اش انسان است و دین؛ دغدغه‌هایی از جهل و گمراهی، و رسیدن به خیر و سعادت و حقیقت. به تأثیر از حکمت یونان و اندیشه‌های افلاتون به ویژه مدینه فاضله اش - دست کم در عالم ذهن - می‌خواهد انسان و جامعه‌ای عاری از فساد و ضلالت و جهالت داشته باشد. بر این روال با دعوت به علم و تعقل، و آراستگی به اخلاق (تخلقی به اخلاق الهی) و پیراستگی از دلبستگی و وابستگی به دنیا بر معاصرانش پیشی می‌گیرد. او و متفکران اسماعیلی همانند غالب علمای دیگر مسلمان در شمار اصحاب عقل هستند. در اندیشه ناصر خسرو مفهوم «عقل = خرد» و «دانش» (= در معنای وسیع کلمه به معنای دانش و دانستن) به نحو جدایی‌ناپذیری به یکدیگر پیوسته و وابسته اند. در نظر وی دانش از عقل سرچشمه می‌گیرد؛ تنها انسان از موهبت عقل (و در نتیجه دانش) برخوردار است و بدون آن به مرتبه حیوانی تنزل می‌یابد. از سوی دیگر نه تنها دین و دانش از یکدیگر جدایی ندارند بلکه دین، دانشی الهی است که به وسیله پیغمبران و امامان به بشر - که باید در به دست آوردن آن بکوشد - ابلاغ می‌شود. بدون دانش درست را از نادرست و راه‌های رستگاری دنیا و آخرت را نمی‌توان تمیز داد و این همه به عنوان دانش فقط به برکت وجود عقل شدنی است. از این رو مفهوم عقل هم در ایجاد جهان بینی او و هم در چگونگی اعتقادات دینی او اهمیتی بنیادین دارد و چگونگی استنباط او از این مفهوم کیفیت بینش او از هستی «دو جهانی» را معین می‌کند. ناصر خسرو شاعر و متفکر اسماعیلی مذهب است و اهل تأویل. از این رو برای مطالعه و دریافت مفهوم عقل در اندیشه‌ی او اشاره‌ای هرچند کوتاه و مناسب مقام و مقال به آیاتی از قرآن و بعضی مکاتب عقلی (کلام، معتزله و نو افلاطونیان) و نظر بعضی مفسران اندیشه‌های اسماعیلیه، می‌تواند ما را در یافتن سرچشمه‌های عقل در اندیشه ناصر خسرو راهگشا باشد. با تأکیدی که قرآن به علم و برتری دانایان بر نادانان می‌کرد<sup>۲</sup>

و با توجه به احادیث قدسی و نبوی، و روایات دینی<sup>۳</sup> بر اهمیت دانش، دانایی، خرد و به طور کلی امر «شناخت» و شعور - خودآگاه و ناخودآگاه - در دوره رونق و گسترش تمدن اسلامی از اساسی‌ترین مسائل فکری و عقیدتی مسلمانان بود. در این مورد اندیشمندان مسلمان به طور کلی به دو گروه بزرگ تقسیم می‌شدند: فلاسفه و متکلمان؛ علمای علوم دینی و به طور کلی طرفداران علوم تحصلی که عقیده داشتند «شناخت» از راه کسب دانش، و با تهیه مقدمات و به درجات امکان پذیر است؛ و گروه دیگر عرفا و متصوفه که معتقد بودند شناخت نه با این ابزار و امکانات

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<sup>۲</sup> و ما علی رسول الا البلاغ المبین (۵۴: ۲۴) وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (۱۷: ۳۶)

<sup>۳</sup> قرآن: (۹/۳۹)، سوره قلم، آیه ۱، الرحمن (۱ تا ۴)، سوره علق: (آیات ۱ تا ۵)، انعام (آیه ۵۰)

<sup>۴</sup> ر.ک: بحار الانوار ج ۱: ۱۴۸، ۱۷۷، ۱۸۰؛ ج ۲: ۳۲، ۹۷، ۹۹؛ ج ۱۲: ۲۰۴.