

The Safa Brotherhood

The history of mankind has been witness to countless wars and revolutions, many of which reveal the exploitative nature of man.

The underlying aim of any revolution or movement can be understood by the behaviour of its leaders and the results of their achievements. With the passage of time, the true face of these leaders and their goals can be determined.

Expanding the almost daily establishment of schools, universities and libraries and collecting and compiling many books on Islam is clear proof of the good intentions of this Islamic scientific movement. The leaders of the Islamic lands following this aim did their best to present these God-given gifts to scholars and scientists, and the attention paid to students was in accordance with this policy.

For instance, Sharafuddin Ayubi, the ruler of Damascus, once declared that anyone who memorised the book of *Al mofassa* written by Zomokh-Shari would win a prize worth a hundred dinars, and as a result, many learned that book by heart.

Public opinion was so concerned about the development of science and knowledge that rulers occasionally were obliged to do something, to show that they, too, cared.

[Mourning Meeting in Baghdad](#)

In order to have a clearer picture of the public's views at that time, this surprising event of history is sufficient:

When Iraqi scholars were informed of the students financial facilities at Nizamiyyah, they gathered together and held a mourning meeting, lamenting the fact that from that time onwards, seeking knowledge was not purely a matter of knowledge itself, because materialistic matters were also concerned.

The formation of the Safa brotherhood is one example of the deep effect of the scientific movement on

the people. Those involved in forming this educational centre abandoned government support and to show their sincerity towards science they refused to print their names on their publications and hence rejected fame.

In the fourth century after hijra, a secret society was formed in Baghdad and Basra; the members of this society were among the great Islamic scientists and scholars. They called themselves the "Safa brotherhood" which means the brothers and followers of clarity.

They had much influence in scientific and cultural centres. The scholars and scientists who belonged to the Brotherhood were learned in most of the subjects known at that time.

In their meetings, they held detailed discussions about various matters, such as the social and religious histories of nations. An agreement was reached to publish their conclusions in a series of articles.

Although the brothers and followers of clarity did not sign their names to these papers and books, they occupied an elevated position in the history of science and they performed a valuable and admirable service to the advancement of science, introducing new initiatives and ideas concerning different scientific subjects. Even after the passing of thousands of years, scientists still recognize their contributions. The level of human thinking after the tenth century was at its zenith.

Ikhwanul Safa were very popular among people and they usually nominated representative from different classes of society to guide them and tell them what they had learnt from Ikhwanul Safa.

The Goals And Constitution Of The Brotherhood of Clarity

By reading the articles written by the Brotherhood's members it can be concluded that they were not motivated by political aims, but were concerned with scientific and moral matters. A member once wrote:

“We do not have any intention of competing with the kings and our activities are not directed towards securing positions or gaining wealth, but we surely seek the positions of angels in the heavens.” It was also stated:

“We harbour no hostility or enmity towards any of the subjects of religious science and every book by any scientist deserves to be valued and respected, but our reliance rests mainly on the books of prophets and matters which are revealed.”

In their constitution, it was written that the religion of Islam had become mixed with the superstitions and ideas of the people and in order to purify this great religion from these corruptions, the only way to do so was by propagating Islamic culture, science and, in particular, philosophy. People would then become enlightened and Islam would be of use to them when they realised the truth of this divine religion purified from any superstition.

They must apply scientific methods and discoveries which have been discussed in Islam in order to assist and influence the advancement of Islam until it is accepted by the scientists of other nations.

Other opinions of this group which have been explained in a number of their articles include the acknowledgement that since philosophical matters had been translated from one language into another, some of the translated facts were rendered ambiguous and complicated. Perversions and deviations have also affected philosophical matters, and therefore the original meanings of philosophy must be understood directly from the original texts.

Members Of The Society And Their Contributions

Since the members of this society never printed their names, different opinions emerged in understanding the mentality of different authors most of whom were usually determined by guessing. Sometimes an article was believed to be related to one of the Imams descended from Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib (A.S) and some believed differently. Others said that the writer of the article was from the Mutakallim of Mu'utazilite. But from what Abu Hayyan Tawhidi told the Minister of Samsam-ud-Dolah, some of the writers of these articles and members of this society are known.

When Samsam-ud-Dolah asked Abu Hayyan who was one of the professors and brothers of this society he explained about Zaid Ibn Rafa'ah and said that the people whom Zaid was close to were Abu Sulayman Muhammad ibn Ma'ashar al-Basti, who was nicknamed Al-Qudsi, Abul-Hassan Ali Ibn Harunul Zanjani, Abu-Ahmad Mehrejani, and Abul-Hassan Ali Ibn Raminas al-Ufi.

The Four Levels of The Safan brotherhood

1. Ikhwanul Abrar and Ar-ruhama (after fifteen years),
2. Ikhwanul Akhyar and Al-Fuzala (after thirty years),
3. Ikhwanul Fuzala'ul Kiram (after forty years)
4. The highest level consisted of members who, with the support of the unseen power, increased their writing ability and this level could be reached after fifty years. Over fifty articles were written by the Ikhwanul Safa. The articles dealt with such subjects as natural matters, divine matters, matters of logic and social matters.

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