

## **The Roots of Toleration in Civil and Moral Thoughts of “Ekhvanossafa”**

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### **Abstract**

*Toleration is a salient characteristic of thoughts and teachings of “Ekhvanossafa and Khellanolvafa” (sincere and loyal friends) community, who emerged about two thousand years ago during the flowering time of Islamic civilization. Their tolerance and forbearance have been observed in some studies conducted about them inside and outside our country, while the roots of their approach, which was put forward centuries before emergence of these themes in the West, have been neglected. This research was conducted with the aim to recognize the roots and destiny of their salient thought characteristic. Meanwhile, it was tried to, beside briefly introducing this thinking way, answer the innovative question of where the roots and factors of toleration of Ekhvanossafa have originated from. It should be noted that to do this research, the descriptive method and interpretation of texts were employed.*

### **Keywords**

*Toleration, Civil and Thoughts, Ekhvanossafa, Theosophy.*

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## **Introduction**

Toleration against beliefs of other people and teachings of different schools is considered to be among subsequents of human thinking changes in the West since 18<sup>th</sup> century, but in the West and during the flowering time of the Islamic civilization, a Shiite community known as “Ekhvanossafa and Khalanolvafa” represented their teachings in an encyclopedia called “Arrasael” about ten centuries ago. In fact, they were considered as the serious supporters of tolerance toward beliefs of other people and teachings of other religious schools. Some studies have been conducted on their teachings in different realms by the Islamic thinkers and orientalists. The researcher of this paper also has investigated their ideology on politics and moralities as well as their attitude about nature and environment which nowadays are in the center of universal public focus (Ahmadi Tabatabaee, 1382, 1<sup>st</sup> section & 1392: 1-24). Also, some studies have been done about recognition of their common thoughts through summarizing papers as well as explaining their socioeconomic thoughts and have been represented to researchers and those who are interested in the renovation of native Islamic thinking during last years (Halabi, 1380, & Delavari, 1384).

This paper is going to have a revision on the roots of tolerance in the teachings of Ekhvan, both, in using religious resources of others, and in using different intellectual and philosophical scientific schools as well as their practical approach in encountering with other ideologies and schools. This is an innovative approach employed in this paper. For this reason, the orientation of this research in studying Ekhvan is different from other ones. In fact investigation on the factors that contributed to tolerance by them

in the Islamic world about 1000 years ago is a new approach in this realm and in recognition of intellectual heritage of Islamic and Iranian civilizations. Lovely and sincere brothers (Ekhvanossafa and khelanolvafa) refer to a learned, philosopher, new thinking group interested in acquisition of science that lived during the third and fourth centuries with different moral and mystical tendencies. They were a secret, hidden group for several reasons that there is no need to mention in this paper. They selected their members from among smart and talented young people and taught them using special and secret techniques in the direction of their own specific goals. They gathered their thoughts and teachings or, in more exact words, their encyclopedia in a series of books called "Arrasael". Their "Rasael" includes 52 sections. Since the activity of this population was hidden, they always kept the names of the writers, the time, and the place of their writing as well as their goals and attitudes concealed from Abbasid khalifs. Of course in some translation books the names of some individuals can be seen as the compilers of "Rasael". It should be noted that Iranians had played roles in formation and direction of this group. The names of some Iranians among the compilers of "Rasael" along with more than thirty poems in Farsi, all are evident supporting the involvement of Iranians in the formation of this group. Jamaledin Ghefti in "Akhbarolhokama" quoting Abuhayyan Towhidi, attributes these "Rasael" to a group of scientists and thinking in Basra city including Abusoleiman Mohammad- Ibne Ma'shar Bosti, Abolhassan Ali-Ibne Haroon Zanjani, Abolhamd Mehrjani (Nahrejoori), Oufi, and Zeid-Ibne Rafeah as the writers of "Rasael" (Halabi, 1380: 33). Shahrzoori also in his "Nezhatolarvah va Rowzatolafrah" introduces the above-mentioned individuals as the compilers of Ras-

ael (Shahrzoori, 1365: 368).

Badiozzaman Foroozanfar also pointing to the idea of Abuhayyan Towhidi in “Alamta va Almoanese” as well Ibnolebri in “Mokhtasaroddoval”, believes that the time of compilation of Rasael probably has not been before the first half of fourth century (Foroozanfar, 1386: 326). It should be noted that although the emergence of Ekhvan was before the fourth century, they attentively tried to hide their teachings and ideology, and consequently there is no sign of Rasael until the year 334 and before the government of Alebuyeh dynasty in Baghdad. There is dispute among scholars about the religion of Ekhvan. But regarding the ideology and teachings represented in Rasael by Ekhvan there is no doubt that they were Shiite, and the disagreement among scholars is about their belief in Imamieh or Ismaeelid. It is necessary to note that many Islamic researchers and also orientalist believe that they were followers of Ismaeelid. Ahmad Zaki Pasha and Taha Hossein in an introduction to Rasael, and Aref Namer who himself was the follower of Ismaeelid and had written a treatise under the title of “Haghighatol Ekhvano-ssafa va Khellanolvafa” claimed that they were Ismaeelid. Aref Namer believes that the original writer of Rasael, Abdollah-Ibne Mohammad-Ibne Ismaeel-Ibne Ja’far was one of Imam Sadiq’s grandsons, (Nasr, 1377: 50). The great Shiite writer, Agha Bozorg Tehrani has represented the same idea in “Alzariaton Ala Tasanifoshie” (Agha Bozorg Altehrani, 1360, Vol. 4: 360). It should be noted that the viewpoints of Ekhvan about Imamate and Khalifate after the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) represented in “Rasael” clearly denote their being Shiite and acceptance of Imam Ali (A. S.) as the first Imam, and other Imams as his proge-

ny. They have also pointed to the absence of Imam Mahdi and its reasons, but they haven't mentioned the number of Imams in their book. Sobki has claimed in "Tabaghato shafeie" that Ahmad Ibne Abdollah Ibne Mohammad Ibne Ismaeel was from Neishabur city and died when he was 78 in the year 368 (Sobki, *Bitā*, Vol. 3: 17). Also most of contemporary orientalist have attributed "Rasael" of Ekhvan to Ismaeelids, among which are Henry Corbin (1380: 113), Madelung (1387: 306), Antony Black (Black, 2001: 61), Lin Pool, Goldziher, Massignon, and Ivanov (Nasr, 1377: 53). It should be reminded that some researchers such as Tibawi also believed that Ekhvan were the followers of Imamieh. He suggested that during centuries after the fourth century, Ismaeelids used their "Rasael" to publish their ideology, while they were not the writers of "Rasael" (Tibawi, 1955: 28-96). Edward Brown and Nickelson also introduce "Rasael" as the mixture of the ideology of Shiite with Mo'tazele. There is controversy among the Islamic scholars and orientatists about the goals and ideology of Ekhvan as a new thinking and forbearing group during 3rd and fourth centuries. Abu Hayyan Towhidi suggests that their main purpose had been the renovation of philosophy and combining the Greek philosophy with Islam. Rejecting the viewpoints of Ekhvan, he appreciates their sincerity and their internal purity and moral characteristics (Alfakhoori va Aljar, 1377: 194). Taha Hossein points to their purpose as to create great changes in the realm of politics and to overthrow Abbasids (Halabi, 1380: 37). On the other hand, Omar Foroukh rejects their attempts to change the government of Abbasids and represents some reason for it in the treatise of "Tarikhoh Fekrol Arabi" (Foroukh, 1962: 293). Some researchers point to their moral goals such as their spiritual behavior and purification

of soul, being inspired by Islamic teachings and mystical attitudes (Tibawi, 1930: 14). In order to better understand the tendencies and teaching of Ekhvan it is inevitable to consider their thoughts and ideas in “Rasael” which is their encyclopedia about sciences and techniques of that era. They interpreted the policy of Abbasids as a corporal, outward policy. Although they explained many kinds of sciences and techniques in their “Rasael”, they never neglected moral and educational goals. In fact, they employed different sciences in the direction of recognition of monotheism and harmony of Creation System and paying attention to the Almighty Allah. They believed in a negative relation between inattention to these issues and human prosperity, and suggested: “Our life span is very short, and death will sometime come to us. Let’s return and behave differently. People are asleep and they will wake up after dying. Wake up from negligence my brother! Wake up before leaving this world and entering the hell!” (Arrasael, 2005, vol. 2: 384). They pointed to a part of Imam Ali (A. S.)’s advice to Komeil who says: “Keep company with this world through your body so that your soul remains pending in the kingdom of heaven” (Arrasael, 2005, vol. 1: 317).

The normative analysis of this world by Ekhvan contributed to their tolerative, normative and moral approach toward different religions and ideologies. Moral and mystical attitudes of compilers of “Rasael” is such that the selection of name of “Ekhvanossafa” also maybe in the direction of purification of souls and inward purity, because some scholars see the word “Tasavvof” (meaning mysticism), as derived from the word “safa” (meaning sincerity). Sheikh Abolhassan Alghannad says: “Sufism is derived from

safa meaning paying attention to Allah in all cases, and all times" (Abunaser Alsarraj Altoosi, 1914: 26, & Nasr, 1377: 47). It should be noted that moral and educational objectives of these "sincere brothers" were not separate from their political objectives. In fact, they accepted only that kind of government and policy that itself was the pattern of obligation to moral and religious teachings within the realm of practical policy. They believed that such a scholarly policy can promote Godly manners among people. As mentioned before, "Ekhvanossafa" were a new-thinking group during the first centuries of the Islamic civilization whose viewpoint and teachings were considerable philosophically, morally, religiously, socially, and politically. But in this paper it has been tried to investigate about the origin of their forbearing teachings by explaining their instances of tolerance and forbearance within their ideology. Investigation about tolerative thoughts of a new-thinking, Shiite group belonging to a thousand years ago is by no means some kind of hardening in the past history; rather, it is completely in the direction of necessities of the modern world on the basis of peaceful coexistence with different religions and civilizations across the world.

## **1. Research Method**

The method employed in this research to understand the teachings of Ekhvanossafa is analytical, interpretive. Focusing on the text and loyalty toward it to understand and interpret is among the characteristics of this method. One of its branches is the hermeneutic one, in which regardless of different viewpoints about it, is finding the roots of the terminology in the modern time of interpretation

science of texts. Since the entire teachings of Ekhvan have been gathered in “Arrasael” in a new edition, four volumes in Arabic, the descriptive-analytical and interpretive method with a hermeneutical approach can be used in order to understand the outstanding phrases of Ekhvan’s thoughts. Regarding research method, the descriptive researcher focuses on understanding the subject or the text in order to find out the historical texts or social phenomena. The descriptive method is an extensive, comprehensive method not only involving the ideal manner of followers of interpretation such as Dilthey, but also is extended to the manner of thinkers and sociologists such as Max Weber. Regarding its extensive application, the descriptive method and focusing on different perusals, is employed to understand texts. Philosophical, lingual, religious, and sociological schools (Seyyed Imami, 1386: 44). Three factors are important in interpretation of texts, namely, the author, the text, and the interpreter. Dilthey as one of great thinkers in interpretive methodology believed that liberal arts, contrary to the claim of positivists, have entirety and topicality different from natural sciences. Therefore, the liberal arts researcher shouldn’t employ natural sciences in order to understand the topic. Within the realm of Islamic studies and texts related to grasping thoughts of the outstanding thinking and schools in the Islamic realm, the descriptive method, especially with Dilthey approach can be highly useful. In order to understand the teachings of Ekhvan and to pursue their tolerance roots, their mystical approach should be focused. Just as Mollasadra suggests, “Allah closed the door of divine message after the prophetic mission of Mohammad (p.b.u.h.), but he opened the doors of inspiration and spiritual insight for the sake of his mercy to his servants”. Ekhvan also considered such spiritual in-



sights as related to the purification of soul and rejection of worldly vanities and attention to the after-death world. This mystical feature of their behavior should be focused while studying and interpreting their teachings.

## **2. Toleration and Forbearance and Their Instance in Ekhvan's Thinking**

Toleration is one the important components of modern civilization in the contemporary world. Following the religious reformation movement in the West and creation of a gap and discord among the followers of Christianity in Europe and emergence of Protestant and Calvin School, the sixteenth century became the time of discord and disunity in Europe and conflicts and the massacre of coreligionists started (Baumer, 1380: 219-232). Toleration toward the beliefs of the followers of other religions beside the observance of rights of all citizens regardless of their religion, race, ideology and language was a remedy suggested by great thinkers in order to prevent from conflicts and domestic war and fratricide. John Lock who is known as the father of new legislature system in his important book "Two Treatises of Governments" attempted to explain the new social and political systems with the centrality of toleration and peaceful coexistence (Lock, 2005 384-394). John also recommended the necessity of toleration and peaceful coexistence among different religious and political groups in an article under the title of "Letter Concerning Toleration", (Lock, 2003 215). Gradually toleration and observance of all citizens became the factor of formation of the new system, and conduction of elections with the participation of different groups, and soon spread all over Europe. Rousseau also in his "Social Convention"

spoke about public will (and not certain groups) and elections and appointment of different representatives of parliament (Rousseau, 1968: 149-157). Although this concept was first put forward in Europe within the evolutionary process of social and political history of thoughts, in the East also its origin is noticeable specially with moral and mystical realms, but with other grounds including remarkable thoughts in this realm such as the ideology represented in "Arrasael" belonging to about one thousand years ago being far away from the modern world evolutions of the West. Ekhvan wanted their followers not to be intolerant toward different ideologies and religions, and to gather different sciences and techniques from diverse religious, philosophic and scientific resource of the time, beside keeping their own religious and social thoughts. Ekhvan's recommendations to their followers in "Rasael" are highly insightful. In a place they say "... It is not reasonable that any of our brothers (God protect them) reject a science among sciences or a book among books or be intolerant toward a religion among religions because our school encompasses all other schools and our science agrees with all other sciences" (Arrasael, 2005, Vol. 4 35). Based on this attitude, Ekhvan tried to obtain all scientific and philosophical books to extract their best points and gather in their own encyclopedia as a comprehensive collection of sciences of that time, and at the same time, full of monotheistic, specially Islamic teachings. Based on this tolerative tendency, Ekhvan found out salient characteristics of different nations and tried to invite their followers toward their ideal qualities and employ them in the direction of their scientific, educational and moral objectives. Ekhvan believed that by using the tolerative manner, away from dogmatism, they can take the advantage of different nations in the

direction of perfection and education.

They suggested about the outstanding characteristics of different nations and following them by their followers: "The perfect man arises from Iran, obtains Arabic faith, and has Iraqi education. He is like the Jewish in smartness, like Christians in behavior, like a Christian in behavior, like a Syrian monk in piety, like a Greek in having circumstantial sciences, like an Indian in interpretation of secrets, and like a Sufi in spiritually living and divine morality, (Arrasael, 2005, vol. 2 317). It is noticeable that Ekhvan took this tolerative manner, which today is known as religious pluralism in the West, in an age being centuries away from today's Western civilization and religious reformative movement and Renaissance and teachings of thinkers such as Lock. Of course, such an attitude which was in the direction of serious opposition to the oppression of Abbasids, in some scholars' viewpoint, not only contributed to the hostility of Abbasids, but also, led to the enmity of other Muslim groups toward Ekhvan (Ibrahimi Dinani, 1385 vol. 2: 137). Another instance of toleration in the teachings of "sincere brothers" is their approach toward employment of diverse resources. Based on their moderate policy, Ekhvan chose the best parts of scientific resources and wise teachings, diverse philosophical, moral, and religious treasures of human knowledge as well as religious, divine teachings specially, citing the monotheistic religions resources and at the head of them the Holy Quran. In their "Rasael", Ekhvan mention that they have collected their "Rasael", using four resources. Firstly, compiled and written scientific works of scholars and philosophers and scientists. Secondly, holy books, especially the Holy Quran as the major pivot of Ekhvan's teachings in moral, and educational realms. They also used narrations represented by

prophets specially Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) and his right successor Imam Ali: in “Rasael”. The third resource (as Ekhvan declared) was “the book of nature in its general meaning” involving subjects related to universe, different forms of creatures, numbers, and the movement of stars based on that day’s knowledge. The fourth resource is a secret and related-to-spiritual-insight resource. In their “Rasael” they suggest: Our fourth resource is the “divine book” to which, no one can have access, except for pure, refined individuals whose intermediators are the angels (Arrassael, 2005, Vol. 4: 36). This fourth resource is surrounded by ambiguity so that it cannot be explained within this paper. Briefly, the fourth resource becomes available only through direct resorting to Allah and his angels and heartfelt inspirations. Ekhvan selected their followers from among different races with complete ability and motivation in four age groups of 15 to 30, 30 to 40, 40 to 50 and older than it. They believed that if the followers successfully covered the spiritual and moral stages, after 50 years, they could visit the world of soul searching in this world and before death. They believed that such an individual can visit angels and divine blessings of the other world. The fourth resource of Ekhvan represents the stage in which man achieves the final mystic teachings.

### **3- Factors Impacting the Formation of Tolerative Thoughts of Ekhvan**

Tolerative thoughts of Ekhvan in 1000 years ago which are unique within the history of social, religious and political Islamic thoughts are the products of several factors. We will briefly explain their most important origins.

### **3-1. Ekhvan's Attempt to Acquire Different Sciences and Techniques of the Day Specially Theological Sciences**

As mentioned before, Ekhvan sought to compile and publish diverse sciences within different theological, philosophical, mathematical, and natural realms. In fact, they published the first encyclopedia not only across the Islamic world but also probably across all the world. Of course their objective was not merely to publish an encyclopedia, rather they advised their followers to acquire certain educational and moral virtues and intellectual, and behavioral perfection, but regarding their approach to gather different sciences, they wanted their followers not to reject any book involving scientific subjects. Therefore, achievement of such a goal, necessitated toleration, and gathering and selection of scientific, philosophical, and religious works, of course this approach caused them to introduce a mixed and sometimes non-homogeneous worldview to their followers. They don't follow a single school and intellectual manner even in philosophical realm. For example, they follow Aristotle's ideology about permanence of soul, and the ideology of Pythagoras about the Creation System. They were inclined toward Haranis' thinking way about the sky and stars, while they believed in Pythagoras on numbers and their qualities (Nasr, 1377: 68). At the same time, they never neglected their moral and educational objectives and considered prosperity as the center of their trainings.

### **3-2. Mystical and Monotheistic Approach**

Another factor impacting on tolerative thoughts of Ekhvan was their mystical approach toward Islamic, and religious, educational

teachings with the centrality of monotheism. Ekhvan believed that through asceticism and spiritual and mystical manners, one can achieve the stage of visiting the realities of the kingdom of heaven. Achievement of such a stage necessitates sincerity, honesty and truthfulness as well as moral interaction with all classes of servants of Allah and regulation of correct relationship and submission to Allah. In their Rasael, Ekhvan want their followers to be tolerant toward all religions and schools. In their opinion, it is because all creatures originate from one factor. In their viewpoint, every thinking epitomizes God's will, and the entire Creation System is the product of one luster of God's face. This thinking manner causes them to be tolerant toward God, other people and other creatures in their thinking and behavior.

### **3-3. Agreement between Wisdom and Religion**

One of Ekhvan's objectives of gathering sciences and intellectual knowledge beside theosophical knowledge is to create accordance between wisdom and religion, the revival of intellectual learnings, specially philosophical learnings, and attempt to make a combination between Greek philosophy and neo-platonic philosophy with religious teachings were highly important for Ekhvan. They emphasized on intellectual and philosophical learnings so far that they put forward the philosophical devotion beside religious devotion and represented some instructions in this realm to their followers. This, contributed to the enmity of different groups toward them and accusing them to atheism. Regardless of their extremism in this realm, their attempt to integrate intellectual learnings with theosophical learnings, demanded toleration toward books and thoughts related to the above-mentioned subjects. Therefore a rea-

son for their tolerative discourse in "Rasael" can be their serious commitment to intellectual and rational learnings of that time beside theosophical sciences as two shining torch of knowledge for the prosperity of human beings.

### **3-4. Shiism and Ekhvan's Toleration**

Another reason for tolerative thoughts of Ekhvan is that they were Shiites. In Islam, Shiism, as the pioneer in commitment to religious teachings and the recommendations represented by the holy Prophet and his right successors has always been the supporter of rationality and intellectual and Scientific learnings beside theosophical learning. Some Imams and religious leaders such as Imam Sadiq (A. S.) and Imam Reza (A. S.) who found appropriate opportunities to have debates with great individual from different religions or with atheists, had reasonable and insightful conversations with them in defense of Islam. The holy prophet's progeny, who are divine scientific treasures, were the most knowledgeable people of their own time. In fact they enjoyed divine knowledge. Ekhvanossafa a Muslem group whose teachings in "Rasael" are very interesting and thoughtful. Even if the famous claim of researchers is true and Ekhvan were Sabeeyeh Shiite (the followers of seven Imams), they considered only six Imams as innocent, whose sixth one was Imam Sadiq (A. S.) who had hundreds of students in different realms of science and technique. In their forty second forty seventh, forty, ninth, and their fifty second treatises, explaining the problem of prophecy and the duties of God's messengers in the direction of guidance of different nations, Ekhvan point to Mohammad (p.b.u.h.) as the last prophet, and then speak about the necessity of leadership of Imams to continue the holy

prophets' way and protect the Islamic orders after his death. They emphasize on obedience of their orders. Somewhere in their forty second treatise, under the title of "the reasons for disagreement among scholars about Imamate, after explaining the necessity of solidarity of Muslims after the holy Prophet's death, they suggest that none of the present disputes and disparities are the products of the principle of Imamate, rather, they are due to non-identification of Imam and the real successor of the holy Prophet. Then they accept two viewpoints of text and selection of text which are based on the indisputable religious anecdotal texts, and emphasize on Imamate, executorship and the love of Imam Ali (A. S.) as the first successor of the holy Prophet, and his progeny known as Taherin (pure believers). The following is part of "Rasael" suggesting their viewpoint: "Oh, benefactor and kind brothers! Among factors linking us and you to each other is the love toward the holy Prophet and his progeny" (Arrasael. 2005, Vol. 4: 161). Then they point to the necessity of presence of the innocent Imam in all times and the hiddenness of Imam during a certain period of time. In fact they believe that Imam's absence is from the eyes of common people, and he is present to the eyes of God's special believers and all of them are familiar with him (Arrasael, 2005, vol. 4: 122 and 312). This viewpoint of Ekhvan which is very close to the viewpoint of Imamieh Shiism, is based on following the manner of innocent Imams in order to achieve prosperity in both worlds.

### **3-5. Moral Approach of Ekhvan in Education**

Another important reason for tolerative thoughts of Ekhvan is their moral and mystical approach and their serious attention to moral teachings of monotheistic religions and specially Islam. It is notable



that religious learnings in Islam are dividable to several important realms such as the realm of ideology, devotion, commandments, and moralities. Moral teachings in all monotheistic religions, especially the last of them, holy Islam with its emphasis social and individual aspects of human life are highly payed attention by Ekhvan and their toleration originates, to a large extent, from this attitude. Everywhere in "Raseal" point to normative components and moral teachings related to human prosperity according to religious orders specially the Holy Quran. It should be mentioned that Ekhvan were not the innovators of sciences and knowledge, but in the light of their tolerative approach they could gather and obtain the sciences and knowledge of that time in all realms appropriate to their own thinking manner, and classified them in their "Rasael" based on their own interests, employing an eloquent, clear Arabic language. Ekhvan's teachings within moralities are influenced by the Islamic moral discourse and other monotheistic schools as well as the thoughts of outstanding thinkers in the realm of theoretical morality such as Ibne Moskuye Razi (death in 421). In their "Ba's" treatise, Ekhvan represent a teaching within verbal realm saying that general soul of human is the successor of Allah on the earth and it, naturally and inherently, has got a quality to which all moral generousities are inclined, but the trifling soul is in need of commandments of Allah in order to obtain good qualities and behavior, specifically those who are not so committed to moral virtues due to family and social environment. Their interpretation of general soul or God's successor belong to the inward interpretations of Ekhvan, similar to the disposition of Ismaeelids (Arrasael, 2005. Vol. 1: 259). Ekhvan saw the original essence of human or general soul (successor of Allah) fluent in the body of trifling hu-

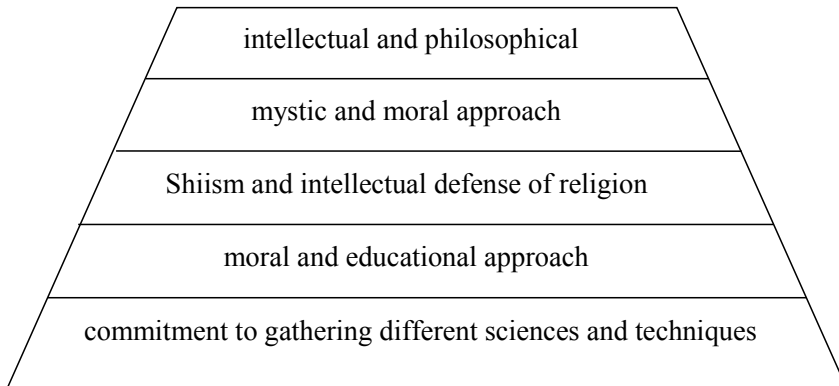
man in different degrees (weak and strong). Mowlavi employs the words “sweet water” and “salty water” to convey this concept in his poem (Mowlavi, 1377 36). On the other hand, Ekhvan believed that all divine religion have the capability to guide people toward prosperity and this capability reaches its highest point in Islam, and for this reason, the holy Prophet is the last of other prophets and his duty was to complete moral virtues (Majlesi, 1403, Vol. 66: 405). According to this approach, Ekhvan suggest that the followers of different religions struggle to obtain prosperity, but the manner represented by the holy Prophet is the best of all to get the final goal. Based on this attitude, Ekhvan seriously forewarned their followers against fanaticism and prejudice and rejection of other religions or teachings represented by non-muslem scholars. They wanted their coreligionists to be tolerant toward the followers of diverse schools and ideologies (Arrasael, Vol. 4: 35). On the other hand, they believed that man is imprisoned in this world according to monotheistic religions’ teachings facing different kinds of hardship, and he should open the door of this prison with the key of knowledge along with good deeds and moral virtues in order to get ready to leave this world and return to eternity. They suggested that the prerequisite of all of these, is the purification of soul and avoiding forbidden acts through following Islamic teachings. In Ekhvan’s viewpoint all creatures were created by Allah and all humans had the capability to achieve salvation through correct interaction. The quality of salvation and prosperity employing moral, mystic, and tolerative approach of Ekhvan formed the central column of their teachings. It should be noted that Ekhvan at the same time warn that if humans get away from God’s path, they will be afflicted with atrocity and disaster. Accordingly, they divide in-

dividuals to four groups regarding their life style in this world, and explain the characteristics of each group with an eloquent language in “Rasael”, as follows: “The preperous in two worlds, the accursed in two worlds, the preperous in this world, but accursed in the other world, and finally the unlucky in this world, but lucky in the other world” (Arrasael, 2005, vol. 1: 279).

### **Conclusion**

As represented about teachings, thoughts, and recommendations of “Ekhvanossafa and Khellanolvafa” in this paper one of their salient social and civil features is to abstain from fanaticism, and toleration toward their schools and ideologies. This teaching of them is mainly the product of their intellectual, mystical, and moral approach and their attempt in order to gather different sciences and techniques in their comprehensive encyclopedia known as “Rasael”. Within verbal discourse also, their being Shiite and their attempt to maximally employ wisdom and religion in their tolerative approach, have been highly effective. The analytical, descriptive method employed in this research on their “Rasael” and the understanding of the relationship existing among different parts of that book can highly help clarify the factors impacting on their tolerative approach. Therefore, the toleration shining on the top of Ekhavan’s social thoughts, has roots in the above-mentioned factors.

The following diagram shows those factors:



“Sincere Brothers” tolerative approach during a time, one thousand years before us is remarkable from several viewpoints. Firstly, is the recognition of an important conceptual and social manner in the Islamic world which has been seriously supporting abstention from fanaticism, and theoretical and practical acceptance of different schools and ideologies, while at the same time serious commitment to religious approach and prosperity of all human beings as major components of classic Islamic thought. Interestingly, they were honestly advocating obedience of the holy Prophet’s progeny, giving them the title of “Taherian”, as the rightful protectors of Islam after the holy Prophet’s death. The second remarkable point about Ekhvan is the involvement of Iranians in the formation of this social and conceptual manner in the Islamic world. Although two cities of Baghdad and Basra have been mentioned as their centers of activity, the involvement of Iranians is clearly visible in their formation. The names of some Iranians as the compilers of “Rasael” that have come in translated books and the presence of Farsi poems in “Rasael” which have completely been written in Arabic,

support this idea. The names of individuals such as Abuharoon Zanjani, and Nahrejoori among the compilers of "Rasael" confirm the involvement of Iranians in this case. The third point remarkable in the tolerative teachings of Ekhvan is their serious support of intellectual sciences beside theological sciences and their effort to make a link between wisdom and religion. Rasael has been compiled in 52 chapters, and it can be considered as the commitment of Ekhvan to gather different sciences and techniques in the light of maximal toleration, and interaction between wisdom and religion. Of course, they have sometimes gone to extremes, but here, we are not going to discuss them. Fourthly, Ekhvan have spoken about toleration and have supported a kind of religious pluralism in an age about one thousand years far from the present time. In the teachings of Western thinkers such an approach emerged in the evolution of social and political thought since the 18th century, while Ekhvan put forward their ideology centuries before them, and simultaneously, they didn't neglect their commitment to religion and its teachings, and final prosperity of human beings. In fact, their major goal was the salvation of people beside gathering sciences and techniques. For this reason, their educational origin is completely separate from the approach of secular thinkers in the West. And finally, focusing on Ekhvan's teachings is in the direction of recognition of domestic and original Islamic-Iranian thoughts within the history of political, social, and moral conventional thinking. This type of thinking does not merely belong to the past intellectual heritage, rather, it acts as a blazing torch to enlighten the future way of Islamic civilization.

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