**Name: Laiba Fatima Khan**

**ID: lk04067**

**Section: S5**

**Al-Ghazali: The Alchemy of Happiness**

**(Final Essay)**

**May 12th, 2019.**

*Kimiya-e-Sa’ada* (The Alchemy of Happiness), is a book by famous 11th century Persian Muslim theologian, jurist and mystic, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali is known for his revolutionary writings which provided a new perspective to Islamic religious life. After Al-Ghazali expressed his philosophy on Islamic ideologies, based on his own religious experiences, in his book *Ihya Ulum-ud-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), a lot of philosophical and mystical ideas become acceptable in the orthodox Islam.

But *Ihya Ulum-ud-Din* was written in Arabic language, not understood by many of the local Persian people. Al-Ghazali then wrote *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada,* a generalized reflection of *Ihya* and other theological writings of Al-Ghazali. Since *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada* was in Persian language, and simply demonstrated the complicated concepts of Islamic philosophy, it became an important source among the public, for easy consultation about topics on theology.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In this paper, I will review Al-Ghazali’s *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada*, in the light of three themes. Firstly, I will look into the philosophy of *Happiness* in Islam, and the quest of true happiness by a man, as addressed by Al Ghazali. Secondly, I will discuss the two entities that a human being is comprised of, *the ‘Zahir’ and ‘Batin’* (the body and the soul). I will explain the contrasting features of these two entities, their tasks and impacts throughout a human’s life and also the relationship between the body and soul. Lastly, we will see how Al-Ghazali describes *the Spiritual Warfare* of a human being, a journey starting with the knowledge of spiritual alchemy, progressing towards training and purification of oneself, and finally achieving the end goal, the Love of God and the Ultimate Happiness.

**(a) Happiness in Islam:**

Islam is the divine religion which does not ask its followers just to pray and worship Allah, but also provides them with a complete code of conduct, to show them the right path for every aspect of their lives. The guidance of Islam is not limited to how one should eat and clean, or the laws for worldly matters like marriage and divorce, in fact, it is far beyond these dimensions. Islam is the religion which helps an individual to experience the best of his meta-physical and spiritual life.

Happiness is one of the most important aspects of human life. Every single thought or action, all the decisions a person makes, is directly or indirectly related to the desire of happiness. Islam has its own explanation for the concept and search of true happiness, and it is well-explained in many Islamic philosophical works, one of them being Al-Ghazali’s *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada.*

According to Al-Ghazali, the first key to open the doors to happiness is knowledge, the knowledge of self, the two worlds and the knowledge of God[[2]](#footnote-2). Man should know about his true self, the purpose of his life, the real meaning of happiness and misery, and the fact that this world is just a temporary place to prepare himself for a secure future in the everlasting next world. He should realize that true happiness can only be achieved by living a meaningful life in this world, according to the teachings of the *Quran* and *Hadith[[3]](#footnote-3)*, as being rewarded with Paradise is the real and perpetual happiness, and punishment in Hell is the real misery.[[4]](#footnote-4)

When man finally discovers the reason of his existence and the definition of eternal happiness, the next step is the search for this happiness. Man tries to seek his happiness through various worldly and spiritual means of pleasure, but only those who think carefully and make decisions under proper guidance, can successfully discover the eternal happiness.

In the higher stages of this quest for knowledge and discovery of happiness, man strives to achieve the ultimate happiness, the love of God. This stage is the most crucial and it is either the easiest or the hardest, since one can only love God when he knows God, and the knowledge and love of God comes after a lot of sacrifices and struggle to purify one’s heart. Allah’s love conquering the heart and soul is the perfection of a human being and his happiness. When a person loves God, he desires to be loved by God, a blessing which can be achieved by sincerely worshipping Him, doing good deeds and loving Allah’s creations and His beloved Prophet Muhammad.

As Allah Himself says in the *Quran*,

*“Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection.”*[[5]](#footnote-5)

**(b) The *Zahir* and *Batin*:**

In Al-Ghazali’s philosophy, man is described as a marvelous creation of Allah, composed of an outward shape, body, and an inward entity, soul (heart). The soul is an invisible entity, originated from the upper spiritual world, which controls the physical body, and even when the body perishes, the soul remains and goes back to its origin. The nature of physical body is mean and low, while the soul is great and divine.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The physical body requires three facilities: food, clothing and accommodation. The body is like a system, which performs all the actions, while the soul is its powerhouse or control-room. The role of the soul is to take care of the physical body, improving and purifying itself alongside. The five senses of the body are there to help the purification of soul from all the wrongs.

Al-Ghazali further divides soul into two components: the animal soul and the spiritual soul. The part of the soul which contains all the worldly qualities is called the animal soul, and it dies with the death of physical body. On the other hand, the angelic qualities of a human are enclosed in his spiritual soul, which remains even after the death and it will accompany man in the next life.[[7]](#footnote-7)

With the knowledge of self and the two worlds, man finds out the relationship between his body and his soul, he becomes aware of his true essence, the reason, and realizes that he needs to master this essence and prioritize it over passion and emotions in order to purify his soul to reach perfection. But, in order to successfully master the essence, man should strongly believe that he is nothing in himself, and all the achievements and perfections that he has, and even his very existence, are the blessings and attributes of God[[8]](#footnote-8), and with God lies all the perfection and happiness.

Once man discovers his true essence, and uses it to facilitate his ability of rational thinking and judgement, he can excel knowledge and power. Al-Ghazali gives us the examples of advancements in arts and sciences, which has made man conquer the world, and even the stars and the entire universe. All this became possible with this special feature bestowed to man, rational thinking and reason.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**(c) Man’s Spiritual Warfare:**

Essentially, every human being possesses the ray of light, which directs towards the right path, hidden inside his heart. All the human souls have testified ‘Yes’ to when Allah asked them, ‘Am I not your Lord?’[[10]](#footnote-10)

It is the ignorance of this light, that man does not realize the real purpose of his life, like a rusty iron or a dusty mirror, waiting for some polishing to manifest their true essence. Al-Ghazali has expressed this idea, quoting the Prophet,

*“Every child is born with a true faith of Islam (i.e. to worship none but Allah alone) and his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism”[[11]](#footnote-11)*

Spirituality is an important aspect of Al-Ghazali’s philosophy, a process of turning oneself from the world towards Allah. Man seeks spiritual purity through various means, but only those who think carefully about how to find the happiness are able to succeed. Without proper guidance and understanding of the process and consequences, man can actually ruin himself and his spirit. Dealing with worldly matters with no sense of *huqooq-o-faraa’iz[[12]](#footnote-12)* can actually turn a man into a sinner, participation in spiritual rituals like music and dance without consideration of one’s spiritual and emotional state can give rise to the adverse traits, ruining his soul. And this is why knowledge is given this much importance.

**The Core of Al-Ghazali’s Philosophy:**

After looking into multiple themes of Al-Ghazali’s philosophy, it becomes quite clear that his philosophy expresses Knowledge as the core of every achievement in this world and the eternity, the basic step for every action and thought process. Knowledge is what makes man realize his true self and individuality, and helps him reach the highest levels of perfection, it is knowledge that polishes man’s essence of reasoning and gives him dominance over other creations of the Lord, and it is with the help of knowledge that man finds his true happiness, cleans the dust from the mirror of his soul and makes himself a clear reflection of Allah’s attributes.

This idea, of knowledge being the first step to achieve anything, also shows the impact of Islamic ideologies on Al-Ghazali and his philosophy, as it reflects the very first teaching of Islam, when at the cave of *Hira[[13]](#footnote-13)*, the angel asked the Prophet Muhammad to read, to seek knowledge:

“*Recite in the name of your Lord who created.*”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Al-Ghazali’s Alchemy of Happiness is the process of a man turning from the world towards God, and achieving the perfect state of a human being. Even though Claud Field’s work is just a translation of selected pieces, it shows how Al-Ghazali used simple context and explanations so that even if there are things which some people might not be able to relate to, but everyone can understand his ideology of true happiness.

**Al-Ghazali: The Alchemy of Happiness**

**(Essay Outline)**

*Kimiya-e-Sa’ada* (The Alchemy of Happiness), is a book by famous 11th century Persian Muslim theologian, jurist and mystic, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali is known for his revolutionary writings which provided a new perspective to Islamic religious life. After Al-Ghazali expressed his philosophy on Islamic ideologies, based on his own religious experiences, in his book *Ihya Ulum-ud-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), a lot of philosophical and mystical ideas become acceptable in the orthodox Islam.

But *Ihya Ulum-ud-Din* was written in Arabic language, not understood by many of the local Persian people. Al-Ghazali then wrote *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada,* a generalized reflection of *Ihya* and other theological writings of Al-Ghazali. Since *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada* was in Persian language, and simply demonstrated the complicated concepts of Islamic philosophy, it became an important source among the public, for easy consultation about topics on theology.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In this paper, I will review Al-Ghazali’s *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada*, in the light of three themes. Firstly, I will look into the philosophy of *Happiness* in Islam, and the quest of true happiness by a man, as addressed by Al Ghazali. Secondly, I will discuss the two entities that a human being is comprised of, *the ‘Zahir’ and ‘Batin’* (the body and the soul). I will explain the contrasting features of these two entities, their tasks and impacts throughout a human’s life and also the relationship between the body and soul. Lastly, we will see how Al-Ghazali describes *the Spiritual Warfare* of a human being, a journey starting with the knowledge of spiritual alchemy, progressing towards training and purification of oneself, and finally achieving the end goal, the Love of God and the Ultimate Happiness.

**Happiness in Islam:**

Happiness is one of the most important aspects of human life. Every single thought or action, all the decisions a person makes, is directly or indirectly related to the desire of happiness. Islam has its own explanation for the concept and search of true happiness, and it is well-explained in many Islamic philosophical works, one of them being Al-Ghazali’s *Kimiya-e-Sa’ada.*

According to Al-Ghazali, the first key to open the doors to happiness is knowledge, the knowledge of self, the two worlds and the knowledge of God[[16]](#footnote-16). Man should know about his true self, the purpose of his life, the real meaning of happiness and misery, and the fact that this world is just a temporary place to prepare himself for a secure future in the everlasting next world. He should realize that true happiness can only be achieved by living a meaningful life in this world, according to the teachings of the *Quran* and *Hadith[[17]](#footnote-17)*, as being rewarded with Paradise is the real and perpetual happiness, and punishment in Hell is the real misery.[[18]](#footnote-18)

**The *Zahir* and *Batin*:**

In Al-Ghazali’s philosophy, man is described as a marvelous creation of Allah, composed of an outward shape, body, and an inward entity, soul (heart). The soul is an invisible entity, originated from the upper spiritual world, which controls the physical body, and even when the body perishes, the soul remains and goes back to its origin. The nature of physical body is mean and low, while the soul is great and divine.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The physical body requires three facilities: food, clothing and accommodation. The body is like a system, which performs all the actions, while the soul is its powerhouse or control-room. The role of the soul is to take care of the physical body, improving and purifying itself alongside. The five senses of the body are there to help the purification of soul from all the wrongs.

With the knowledge of self and the two worlds, man finds out the relationship between his body and his soul, he becomes aware of his true essence, the reason, and realizes that he needs to master this essence and prioritize it over passion and emotions in order to purify his soul to reach perfection. But, in order to successfully master the essence, man should strongly believe that he is nothing in himself, and all the achievements and perfections that he has, and even his very existence, are the blessings and attributes of God[[20]](#footnote-20), and with God lies all the perfection and happiness.

**Man’s Spiritual Warfare:**

Spirituality is an important aspect of Al-Ghazali’s philosophy, a process of turning oneself from the world towards Allah. Man seeks spiritual purity through various means, but only those who think carefully about how to find the happiness are able to succeed. Without proper guidance and understanding of the process and consequences, man can actually ruin himself and his spirit. Dealing with worldly matters with no sense of *huqooq-o-faraa’iz[[21]](#footnote-21)* can actually turn a man into a sinner, participation in spiritual rituals like music and dance without consideration of one’s spiritual and emotional state can give rise to the adverse traits, ruining his soul. And this is why knowledge is given so much importance in Islamic philosophy.

Al-Ghazali’s Alchemy of Happiness is the process of a man turning from the world towards God, and achieving the perfect state of a human being. Even though Claud Field’s work is just a translation of selected pieces, it shows how Al-Ghazali used simple context and explanations so that even if there are things which some people might not be able to relate to, but everyone can understand his ideology of true happiness.

**Bibliography:**

**Books:**

* Campanini, Massimo, 1996: ‘Al-Ghazzali’, in Nasr, S.H. and Leaman, O. (eds.) *History of Islamic Philosophy* (Oxford: Routledge) pp. 477-507.
* Field, Claud, [trans.] 1909: *The Alchemy of Happiness by Al-Ghazali* (London: John Murray Press)
* Schimmel, Annemarie, 1975: *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Publishers)
* Zwemer, Samuel, 1920:  *A Moslem seeker after God: showing Islam at its best in the life and teaching of al-Ghazali, mystic and theologian of the eleventh century* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company)

**Articles:**

* Abul-Quasem, Muhammad, 1975: ‘Al-Ġazālī's conception of happiness’ in *Arabica* (Leiden: Brill Publishers) pp. 153-161.
* Dallal, Ahmad, 2002: ‘Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation’ in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (New Haven: American Oriental Society) pp. 773-787.
* Bergh, Simon Van Den, 1957: ‘Ghazali on "Gratitude Towards God" and Its Greek Sources’ in *Studia Islamica* (Leiden: Brill Publishers) pp. 77-98.
* Abrahamov, Binyamin. (1993). ‘Al-Ghazali's Supreme Way to Know God’ in *Studia Islamica* (Leiden: Brill Publishers) pp. 141-168.

**Websites:**

* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-ghazali/> (10.05.2019)
* <https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/al-ghazali/> (11.05.2019)
* [https://www.academia.edu/610487/](https://www.academia.edu/610487/Imam_al-Ghazali_The_Original_Philosopher) (11.05.2019)
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Revival_of_the_Religious_Sciences> (12.05.2019)
* <http://corpus.quran.com/>(12.05.2019)
* <https://sunnah.com/> (12.05.2019)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lgf30wFOlA>

SHORT FILM:HUMAN FORM

some people didn't understand the story/ misinterpret it so here's a quick breakdown and interpretation of what is going on. Before getting to the story, viewers should know that Koreans are obsessed with plastic surgery and beauty standard. The scary faces you saw in the movie are the adaptations of the standard beautiful faces in Korea: double eyelids, V-line, tall nose etc. The protagonist in the movie wishes to have plastic surgery just like the other members of the family. Yes, people all look the same, and that's actually a reflection of the plastic surgery craze's repercussion in Korea. Note how the protagonist has the typical Korean face: mono-eyelid, squared jaws, etc. This is in stark contrast to her parents and sister's. Without her parents' approval for plastic surgery, she decides to partake in the experiment in exchange for free surgery when something goes horribly wrong on the surgery table. At the end of the movie, we see her apparently eating with her family, but not sure if she is dead or alive. This is the beauty of the movie: we see her, but we don't hear her make a sound (note how she sits down on the chair without making any sound). We don't know if she exists or not until the family looks up at her. This is a reflection of the Korean society, how some Koreans only exist in the perception of other people. They are the reflection of the society's views of them. She is practically a ghost at this point, only existing as an acknowledgement of other people. Now some people say it was not actually her and it was someone else sent to the family in her place. This is a stupid interpretation in my opinion, because 1. it doesn't make any sense. The doctors should never hold legal liability for surgery complications. 2. it loses the meaning of the ending

1. (Wiki: The Revival of Religious Sciences, Accessed: 12.05.2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (Field, 1909: pp.1-2) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Tradition of Prophet. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (Abul-Quasem, 1975: 157) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (Al-Quran, 19:96) translation from <http://corpus.quran.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. (Field, 1909: p.1) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. (Field, 1909: p.13) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. (Field, 1909: p.32) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. (Field, 1909: pp.2-3) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. (Al-Quran, 7:172), *Surah Al-Aa’raaf.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1385) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *huqooq-o-faraa’iz:* rights and responsibilities [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A cave in *Jabal-un-Nur* (the mountain of light) located near Mecca, where the first revelation ‘*wahi’* to the Prophet was sent, through the angel Gabriel (*Jibrael* in Arabic*).*  [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. (Al-Quran, 96:1) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. (Wiki: The Revival of Religious Sciences, Accessed: 12.05.2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. (Field, 1909: pp.1-2) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Tradition of Prophet. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. (Abul-Quasem, 1975: 157) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. (Field, 1909: p.1) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. (Field, 1909: p.32) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *huqooq-o-faraa’iz:* rights and responsibilities [↑](#footnote-ref-21)