

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE GREAT MUSLIM MORALIST, MISKAWAYH (D.1030)

Mohd Nasir Omar

Department of Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia,  
43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia, Email: [abunansir@ukm.edu.my](mailto:abunansir@ukm.edu.my)

Tel: +6013-3322833

**ABSTRACT:** Early Muslim discussions on ethics, such as those by al-Kindi (d.873), al-Farabi (d.950), and Ibn Sina (d.1037), did not attain to the status of a discipline though invariably serving as parts of their wider studies on politics, theology, law and other fields of knowledge. Miskawayh, through his major work on ethics, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (The Refinement of character), have separated ethics from other disciplines, offering a very thorough analytical system of Islamic ethics. Miskawayh's work was thus occupying a prominent place in this particular branch of Islamic ethical literature. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that most of the later works that deal with this subject, such as those by al-Ghazali, al-Tusi and al-Dawwani, use it as their main authority. Thus, the objective of this qualitative study which applies conceptual content analysis method, is to introduce such a great Muslim moralist in terms of his life, history, education, career and writings. Accordingly, the result of the study on the empirical circumstances of Miskawayh's life, show him to have been well placed in the heart of Islamic civilization which provided him with the opportunity to develop his own respective skills and interests, and to participate in his contemporary events, both political and intellectual.

**Keywords:** Miskawayh, his life, education, career, writings

## INTRODUCTION

In order to appreciate fully Miskawayh's contribution to ethical thought, it is desirable to see the development of his life and thought, since it is through such progress that he finally came to realise the purpose of his creation and the end of which he should achieve, that is happiness. It was also because of his interest in leading others towards that end that he devoted considerable effort to formulating the ways towards it, which are by means of practical philosophy, namely, ethics. A study on Miskawayh's life and thought enables us to subsume them into several stages which are: (a) his early life, until to the age of about 20; (b) the period when he served under the Buwayhids, approximately 45 years, from 953 to 998; and (c) the period when he left that service until his death, i.e. between 998 and 1030.

### Miskawayh's Early Life and Education

Ibn Miskawayh, or simply Miskawayh, was born probably around the year 320/932 in al-Rayy (somewhere in the area of Teheran today), and died at an old age on the 9th of Safar 421/16th February 1030, though the question regarding his date of birth is still unresolved [1]. Margoliouth [2], gave it as provisionally fixed as 330/941 or a little earlier. 'Izzat [3] tentatively fixes his birth date as 325/936, while Badawi [4] holds that it should be 320/932 if not earlier. The writer feels that Badawi's view is probably the most nearly correct because Miskawayh, in Badawi's argument, took over as secretary to the Buwayhids' vizier al-Muhallabi in 341/953, by which time he must have been around 19 to 21 years old to hold such an important office. Moreover, Miskawayh's [5] own view that a boy of twenty years is decidedly young, might also persuade us that the date as suggested by Badawi is most likely to be accurate.

His full name is Abu 'Ali Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub Miskawayh. He is also called Miskawayh, but wrongly known as *ibn* or *son* of Miskawayh. The title (*laqab*) "*Miskawayh*" ("*Maskawayh*" is also a well attested vocalisation) is his own and not that of his father or grandfather. This is supported by the fact that there are just a few of his biographers, mostly those belonging to the later

generations, such as al-Shahrastani [6], al-Bayhaqi [7], and Hajji Khalifah [1], who assume that he was the son of Miskawayh (*Ibn Miskawayh*). In contrast to this, many of them, including al-Tawhidi [8], al-Tha'alibi [9] and al-Sijistani [10], who were closely associated with Miskawayh, and who may rightly be supposed to have correct information about his name, call him "*Abu 'Ali Miskawayh*" or simply "*Miskawayh*". Trusting their evidence we may safely maintain that "*Miskawayh*" was his personal title and that the form "*Abu 'Ali Miskawayh*" is his own name, and not that of his father or grandfather. Accordingly, we will refer hereafter to him as Miskawayh.

Miskawayh was also known as *Abu 'Ali al-Khazin*, and *al-Mu'allim al-Thalith* (the third teacher). The first is probably because of his long service as librarian to several Buwayhids [8]. A Library in those days was known as *khizanat al-kutub* (treasury of books) and the librarian thereof was as *khazin*. The second is attributed to him by al-'Amili [11]. But there is no further indication of the basis on which this title is given to Miskawayh. It is possible, then, that al-'Amili refers to Miskawayh as the third teacher of ethics, the first and the second, as we have noted above, being Aristotle and al-Farabi respectively. That he was also called "*Abu 'Ali*" is of course due to his real name, but the form "*Abu 'Ali Miskawayh*" is presumably attributed to him also for the sake of distinguishing himself from another of his great contemporaries, Ibn Sina, who also appeared to have the same name, "*Abu 'Ali*". However, he was given a different title, *Sina*, and was therefore called "*Abu 'Ali Sina*", while Miskawayh was known as, "*Abu 'Ali Miskawayh*".

Yaqut [12] states: "*wakana Miskawayh majusiyyan wa-aslama*" (Miskawayh was a Magian who was converted to Islam). But this statement cannot be correct. The Islamic names of his father, Muhammad, and grandfather Ya'qub, which have been given by Miskawayh himself everywhere in his writings, entirely rule out that assumption [13, 14, 15]. However, it might be true that it was his father or grandfather who had actually converted to Islam from Magianism, as has

been suggested by Badawi [4] and Muhammad Yusuf Musa [16].

That Miskawayh was a *Shi'i* is also evident. He not only served successive Buwayhid rulers, whose families were of Iranian origin and of *Shi'i* persuasion, but he was also familiar himself with the *Shi'i* traditions and quoted extensively from the sayings of 'Ali, in a section of his work entitled *Jawidan Khirad*. It was also perhaps because of Miskawayh being a *Shi'i*, that al-'Amili [11] dedicated a considerable section of his work, *A'yan al-Shi'a*, to him. Miskawayh's views [17], that the *imam* and the philosophers are, in many respects, similar to the prophet except that the latter is confirmed by God through obtaining revelation, might also indicate that he was a *Shi'i*. However, we have not found any clear evidence in Miskawayh's writings which could, in some way, reveal that he was proud to be a *Shi'i* or that he made an effort to disparage other Muslim sects, especially the *Sunni*. Yet his frequent references to several *Sunni* scholars including Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi'i, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Hasan al-Basri, and others, proved that he was not fanatically inclined towards any school of thought but instead took the stand of an open-minded scholar, who loved and appreciated knowledge and truth regardless of their sources. The same is also with regard to his reaction to Greek thought [15].

The information available to us about Miskawayh's early life and thought is rather scanty. Despite that, the letter sent to him by his friend al-Khawarazmi [18], provided us with two important clues. Firstly, it tells us that his father died when Miskawayh was still young; and secondly, that his mother was remarried to another man far below her age, which Miskawayh did not approve of very much. The fact that he lamented about not having a good chance in his early life and tended to admire those who were provided with such an opportunity, in his opinion, by being accustomed to observe the morality of the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and later studied works on ethics, arithmetic, geometry and philosophy, which he himself seemed to have missed, reveals that his parents did not pay much attention to the education and training of their son. All of these factors served to handicap his moral development, as he himself deploras:

"He (i.e., Miskawayh), on the other hand, who does not have this chance in his early life and whose ill luck it is to be brought up by his parents to recite immoral poetry, to accept its lies, and to admire its references to vile deeds and the pursuit of pleasures as is found, for instance, in the poetry of Imru'l-Qays, al-Nabighah and their like" [14].

It is probable that the events of his younger days led Miskawayh to turn to philosophy, choosing particularly ethics, a field in which his early life, he felt, left much to be desired. It is here that the origin of his concern with ethics can be located which subsequently turned to be his main preoccupation. Despite the above disadvantages in his upbringing, it seemed that it was his parents who helped him to complete his early education, as was usual in those days in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* which had formed the basis of Islamic education since the first century of Islam [19]. His knowledge of these basic subjects is featured later in all his

works, notably the *Jawidan Khirad* [15]. The fact that he was appointed as a secretary to the Buwayhids' viziers, al-Muhallabi, at a young age, shows also that he must have completed this basic training, even if he did not have a sound knowledge of it, to enable him to qualify for such an important office at such an early age.

#### **His Relations with the Buwayhids**

It is not known how Miskawayh gained the favour of al-Muhallabi, the vizier of the Buwayhid prince Mu'izz al-Dawla in Baghdad, in being appointed secretary to al-Muhallabi in the year 341/953, when he was in his early 20s. However, his connection is obvious as Miskawayh himself writes: "*wakuntu unadimuhu fi'l-waqt*" (I, who was (al-Muhallabi's) companion at that time) [5]. This is confirmed by two of his close friends, al-Sijistani [10] and al-Tawhidi [20]. Probably one who had a basic knowledge, a mature cultural background and who knew Persian well would have this advantage, especially as the Persian Buwayhids were inclined to appoint as their viziers learned men, who extended patronage to scholars. That the Buwayhids favoured the Persian nationality and most possibly, the *Shi'i* scholar, is thus another factor which seems to have helped Miskawayh in obtaining that post [21].

Miskawayh [5], stated that he served al-Muhallabi for 12 years, from 341/953 until his death in 352/964. During this time, when he was aged between 20 to 32, he lived mainly in Baghdad, which was beyond doubt one of the most important centres of learning and philosophical activities of the time. Its philosophers were not only well-acquainted with both Islamic and Greek thought but also held a continuing philosophical discussion in which many scholars took part. Among the philosophers who flourished in Baghdad at that time were al-Sijistani, Yahya Ibn 'Adi, Ibn al-Khammar, 'Isa b. 'Ali, Ibn Zur'a and many others. Miskawayh appears to have not only associated himself with this circle of philosophers but also to have participated in their common discussions. The statement made by al-Tawhidi [20, 8], who was both a friend of his and also a member of the group, that Miskawayh was one of them, bears out this supposition.

When al-Muhallabi died in 352/964, Miskawayh obtained the favour of his successor, Abu al-Fadl Ibn al-'Amid, the vizier of Bakhtiyar 'Izz al-Dawla. Miskawayh became his companion and librarian, and it was most probable that he was also the keeper of the state record, and tutor to his son Abu al-Fath. This is attested by his own statement to the effect that he served Abu al-Fadl Ibn al-'Amid for seven years, and that he was also in charge of his library [5]. After the death of Abu al-Fadl, his son Abu al-Fath succeeded him as the vizier of Rukn al-Dawla. It is very likely that Miskawayh also served Abu al-Fath as mentioned by his contemporaries al-Tawhidi [8] and al-Sijistani [10], though his biographers are silent about this. Furthermore, Miskawayh's statement that he went to Baghdad with the army of Abu al-Fath in 364/975 may indirectly substantiate that he was in the service of Abu al-Fath.

Following the death of Abu al-Fath and his replacement by al-Sahib Ibn 'Abbad, Miskawayh refused to accept an appointment under al-Sahib. Instead, he returned to Baghdad

and joined the service of 'Adud al-Dawla at Siraz in a threefold function: as secretary, companion and librarian [9, 10]. On the decease of 'Adud al-Dawla in 372/982, it was most likely that Miskawayh took service under his son and successor, Samsam al-Dawla. This is supported by a statement made by his close associate al-Sijistani [10]. But it seems improbable that Miskawayh ever served Samsam al-Dawla's successor, Baha' al-Dawla, because there is no mention of his service by either his contemporaries such as al-Sijistani and al-Tawhidi or by the later biographers like Yaqut, al-Qifti, and Ibn Abi Usaybi'a. Further, Samsam al-Dawla and Baha' al-Dawla were rivals. Hence, it was impossible for Miskawayh to be in the employment of them both.

Miskawayh's long association with the Buwayhids gave him the opportunity to observe closely the workings of both the political and cultural systems of his own day. His role as a librarian to several Buwayhids provided him with usually good access to the sources of learning both Islamic and Greek. His statement that the library of Abu al-Fadl contained every kind of books on science and philosophy [5], is also in agreement with that of his contemporary Ibn al-Nadim [22], who mentioned that he himself saw Abu al-Fadl transporting some torn books to Baghdad. This reveals that Miskawayh [23], must have consulted these books as well and used them since he was both a scholar and writer. Besides, his suggestion that one of the conditions necessary for studying philosophy was to have good access to books, means also most probably that one should refer to various sources of learning in any serious attempt to understand the nature of knowledge, particularly philosophy, as he himself had done. His duties as a companion and a secretary put him in a position not only to observe events in that distinguished centre, but to some extent to take part in them from the standpoint of both ruler and ruled. In the context of Miskawayh's intellectual life, this meant that he was never remote from political and social realities, but actively engaged in them as one who consciously placed his intellectual powers at the practical service of the community.

It was during this period that he wrote his famous history, *Tajarib al-Umam (The Experiences of the Nations)* which reflects not only his grasp of historical detail but also his interest in the moral foundation of the individual and his social behaviour. It is at this point that Miskawayh turned his attention to ethics, the lack of which handicapped his early life. He began to develop his interest gradually, and later became his chief concern. Hence, Miskawayh's ethics are rooted in his individual search for values, as well as in his experiences of history, both contemporary and general. This was observed by Khan [24] in his study of Miskawayh's historical writings, when he wrote:

"Throughout the *Tajarib*, he upholds the idea of Divine intervention and Divine justice and the triumph of virtue over vice. Miskawayh often adopts a moralising tone in his history and lays emphasis on good works (*al-a'mal al-saliha*)".

Miskawayh's attitude towards history was that of scholar who was closely involved in the political and social life of his times. He was not only connected with the Buwayhids and

their viziers, but also himself gave an intelligent account of their activities and engaged in contemporary events which lends his history more political colour and more reality than those of his predecessors. Yet he used history as a source of practical ethics, and often emphasised on the triumph of the virtuous nations over those who had deflected from the path of morality [25]. Those ethics, as he seems to interpret, are the essence of history. It is perhaps for this reason that Western scholars, including Caetani [26], Geoeje [27] and their like, esteem Miskawayh's history as an invaluable source of information on the period of the Buwayhids. Besides this, Miskawayh showed a marked superiority as an historian over his predecessors, notably al-Tabari. To substantiate this, we quote from Caetani [26]:

"He has left us a work conceived on a plan that is much akin in method to the principles followed by western and more modern historians. Unlike his celebrated predecessor Tabari, whose chief aim was merely to gather materials and set them forth fully in due order, Ibn Miskawayh decided that his History should be composed as an organic structure, and that throughout it certain fundamental ideas, serving to bind the whole together, should as it were become the creative element in the work."

Miskawayh's history ends in the year 369/979, when he was still in the service of the Buwayhid ruler, 'Adud al-Dawla. At this juncture, his interest in philosophy became greater. His friend al-Tawhidi [8] mentioned that he lent Miskawayh a commentary on the *Isagoge* by Porphyry and the *Categories* of Aristotle, shortly after the death of 'Adud al-Dawla in 372/982 when Miskawayh, at the age of about 50, was at the house of his friend Ibn al-Khammar. This shows that his familiarity with these philosophical works belonged to the middle part of his life.

Although Miskawayh [5], does not inform us of his teacher of philosophy as he does regarding his teacher of history, Ibn Kamil al-Qadi, it is very likely that Ibn al-Khammar was among the philosophers whom he admired and consulted, particularly, on philosophy. His being present at the house of Ibn al-Khammar, may serve to confirm this conjecture. It is also possible that Miskawayh could have attended the philosophical lectures given by two of the most prominent masters of philosophy at that period, namely, Yahya Ibn 'Adi and al-Sijistani. This is again borne out by al-Tawhidi [8], who informs us that Miskawayh had developed a relationship with these teachers of philosophy. Likewise, Ibn al-Khammar, Yahya Ibn 'Adi, and al-Sijistani, according to earlier Arabic biographers, such as Ibn al-Nadim [22], al-Qifti [28], and Ibn Abi Usaybi'a [29], also appear to have been interested in ethics, a subject of direct concern to Miskawayh. Miskawayh also admired other philosophical figures in his time, including al-'Amiri and Abu 'Uthman al-Dimashqi. He was, not only apparently well-acquainted with their writings, but also cited long excerpts from the former in his *Jawidan Khirad*, and from the latter in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.

Perhaps it was after completing his study on philosophy that Miskawayh wrote his *al-Fawz al-Asghar*, which expounded a metaphysical basis of his ethics. This work is on metaphysics and theology consisting of a philosophical interpretation of

the three fundamentals of Islam, the existence of God, life after death and prophethood. It was written presumably soon after his famous history, *Tajarib al-Umam*, but before another work entitled *al-Hawamil wa'l-Shawamil*, because in the latter work, which he seems to have completed before the year 383/993, he makes a reference to *al-Fawz al-Asghar* [13]. It is through this metaphysical writing that Miskawayh's talent as one of the most eminent theistic thinkers of Persia is acknowledged by Iqbal [30]. His metaphysical outlook is, in Iqbal's view, decidedly more systematic than that of al-Farabi. Al-Hamid [31], on the other hand, noted the importance of Miskawayh's *al-Fawz al-Asghar*, particularly with regard to its role in the development of Islamic rational theology.

It has now been established that Miskawayh wrote his *al-Fawz al-Asghar* before *al-Hawamil wa'l-Shawamil*, but both of them are most likely to have been dated between the year 979 to 993, when he was mainly in the service of the Buwayhid prince, Samsam al-Dawla, who died in 998. After his death, we have no clear proof whether Miskawayh had served Samsam al-Dawla's successor, Baha' al-Dawla, or any other Buwayhid princes. Hence, the evidence at our disposal might be accepted as the basis of a preliminary supposition that Miskawayh formally left the Buwayhid courts after the year 998, when he was aged about 66. Even though Miskawayh's association with the Buwayhids, on the one hand, provided him with a comprehensive and sound intellectual foundation, which qualified him well to be an eminent writer later, on the other hand, he did not feel satisfied in his heart and inner being. The reason is that he finds that such an association will not secure for him real and lasting happiness. Thus, he confesses:

"...who (Miskawayh) later serves under chiefs, who encourage him to recite such poetry (i.e., the poetry of Imru'l-Qays, al-Nabighah and their like) or to compose its like and bestow generous gifts upon him; who has the misfortune of being associated with fellows that assist him in the quest of bodily pleasures, and becomes inclined to covet excessively food, drink, vehicles, ornaments, and the possession of thoroughbred horses and handsome slaves, as was the case with me at certain times in my life; and who then indulges in them and neglects for their sake the happiness to which he is fitted." [14].

Possibly it was with the intention of fulfilling what he had missed in his early life and also during his association with the Buwayhids, i.e. the happiness of his inner being, that he eventually left that service in order to search for such a real purpose of his existence. His senior contemporary, Ibn al-Nadim [22], has provided in his important catalogue on philosophy among the Arabs, *al-Fihrist*, a brief biography of Miskawayh's contemporaries including Yahya Ibn 'Adi, al-Sijistani, Ibn Zur'a, and Ibn al-Khammar. This catalogue ends with the year 987. Significant for our interests, is the fact that the catalogue does not include a reference to either Miskawayh or to his well-known ethical treatise, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. Al-Sijistani [10], another companion of his, who specified Miskawayh's writings at about the same date as the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim, also failed to mention Miskawayh's

ethical work. Hence, we must conclude that Miskawayh was not known as a philosopher or a moralist prior to the year 377/987 when he was still in the employment of the Buwayhids. Nevertheless, the fact that he was concerned with morality and began to subject himself to practising it by this time, is attested by two of his friends al-Sijistani [10], and al-Tawhidi [32].

#### **His Life after Leaving the Buwayhids**

Little is known about Miskawayh's life and activities during this third phase of his life. This is due to the fact that neither Miskawayh, nor his contemporaries such as al-Tawhidi, al-Tha'alabi, al-Sijistani, and al-Khawarazmi, nor his biographers including Ibn al-Nadim, al-Qifti, Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, al-Bayhaqi, Yaqut, Hajji Khalifa, and others have left us any clear record of his activities during the period of his retirement. However, such a period seems to represent a high point in his intellectual creativity. Most of his well-known writings, particularly in the field of ethics, were the product of this time.

The only hint which has been given by Miskawayh himself in his writings is his statement that he wrote his famous ethical treatise, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, in his declining years. And in the same book he mentions that he has already produced *Kitab al-Sa'ada* [33]. Though these reports do not supply us with any conclusive information regarding his life and thought, at least they show that it is during these years of his life that Miskawayh appears to have put his interests and concepts on ethics into practice. We shall now see how he developed such theories on ethics into reality.

Miskawayh's first step was to discover the nature of the human end, which he himself for some time has been trying to realise, and at which, he believes, all men ought to aim. He describes that end as being *al-sa'ada*, which is usually translated as "happiness", and analyses its nature in his book entitled *Kitab al-Sa'ada*. This work comprises both theoretical and practical ethics, but the theoretical aspect is dominant. This is why Miskawayh makes frequent references to it in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* for the purpose of completing his theoretical work on ethics, which is the former one, by that of his practical aspect, which is the latter. These references also show that *Kitab al-Sa'ada* was written in the early days of his retirement in order to stand for the objective of his ethics, as himself affirms, to be first noted and then sought subsequently by actions [33]. He was by now in his early 70s.

A further problem which Miskawayh appears to have encountered at this stage was the practical question of how to realise that happiness. From his writings, we can gather that he finally came to the conclusion that the prerequisite for attaining such a goal is nothing more than to strive against oneself. So he affirms: "Happiness is acquired always by continuous effort and by much striving (*jihad*) on account of the unceasing struggle (*al-harb*) between man and his own self" [32]. Evidently, Miskawayh had then committed himself to realising his ideas of *jihad* by training himself to abide by the fifteen rules of moral conduct which he promised before God to observe. This code of moral principles was thereafter recorded in words and known as *Wasiyya* (Testament) [12].

Such work, though short, is essential for a proper understanding of the development of Miskawayh's ethical thought, since it is here that he outlines his concepts and principles of ethics, which he later extends comprehensively throughout his ethical writings, mainly *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.

The *Wasiyya* was admired and recorded by Miskawayh's close friend al-Tawhidi in his *al-Muqabasat* [32] which dated from between 1000 and 1023. But the really surprising fact is that al-Tawhidi did not ascribe it to Miskawayh by name. He only mentioned that the *Wasiyya* was observed and followed in life by one of his friends (*ashabuna*). Yet it is an established fact that Miskawayh was his friend for he himself refers to Miskawayh twice as one of his companions in *Kitab al-Imta' wa'l-Mu'anasa* [8]. It was also possible for al-Tawhidi to reproduce Miskawayh's works, as reflected in their joint writings, *al-Hawamil wa'l-Shawamil* [13], as well as in *Risala fi Mahiyat al-'Adl* [34]. Moreover, Miskawayh and al-Tawhidi corresponded with one another, which goes to prove that they both appreciate each other's works [10].

However, the authenticity of the *Wasiyya* as a genuine work of Miskawayh is brought to light by Yaqut [12] who not only reproduced the *Wasiyya* but also attributed it as an authentic work to Miskawayh, for he asserts: "*hadha ma 'ahada 'alayhi Ahmad Ibn Muhammad*" (this pledge was made by Ahmad Ibn Muhammad (Miskawayh)). The *Wasiyya* appears to have been written and observed by Miskawayh in his own life presumably after the year 1000, when he was in his early 70s. His age is inferred from al-Tawhidi's *al-Muqabasat*, which dates approximately after that year and in which the *Wasiyya* was recorded for the first time. By then, or perhaps shortly before the year 1000, Miskawayh had already produced *Kitab al-Sa'ada*. This is also supported by his own suggestion that theory, i.e., *al-sa'ada* (happiness), precedes practice, i.e., *Wasiyya* (the ways towards happiness) [14]. Therefore, we are now almost certain that the *Wasiyya* was dated shortly after *Kitab al-Sa'ada*.

On the other hand, it is very likely that Miskawayh produced the *Wasiyya* before his chief ethical treatise *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. The former, as we have just noted, appears to have been written soon after the year 1000; while the latter, possibly several years later, when Miskawayh was in his late 70s or early 80s. Thus, most of the contents of the former work including the four cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance, courage and justice, as well as its conceptions of the soul, happiness and the like, are treated in greater detail in the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. Hence, it is also reasonable to suppose that the *Wasiyya* was intended as a prolegomena to the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* [33], outlining a definite concept of ethics, in the same way as he outlined his concept of history in the "introduction" to his *Tajarib al-Umam* [5].

Miskawayh's own statement that by the time he started to write the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, or perhaps by the end of the first decade of the 11th century, he would already have succeeded in controlling and moderating the irrational parts of his self (i.e., passions), in the way it was reflected in the *Wasiyya*. This also leads us to believe that the former work was compiled soon after the latter, when Miskawayh was probably in his late 70s or a little later. Thus he affirms:

"Let it be known to the reader of this work that I, in particular, have gradually succeeded in weaning myself (from these things) since becoming advanced in years with well-established habits. I have struggled hard (*jihadan 'azima*) against them, and I am wishing for you, who are looking for the virtues and seeking the genuine morality, precisely what I have accepted for myself"[14].

The additional evidences given by both al-Bayhaqi [7] and al-Qifti [28], that Miskawayh was surrounded by his students and was holding some fragment on ethics when his great younger contemporary, Ibn Sina, called in, may also be associated with this time of his writing the present *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. This assumption is again supported by his own principle that one should devote oneself to improving others, only after first improving oneself, in the fashion he describes in the *Wasiyya* [14]. It is beyond doubt that the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* is one of the most important books on philosophical ethics, occupying a prominent place in this particular branch of Islamic literature. Almost all of the later Arabic works that deal with this subject, in the views of many modern writers including Donaldson [35], Walzer [36], Watt [37], and others, appear to have been derived from it. This ethical compendium consists of six discourses namely: the principles of ethics, character and its refinement, the good and happiness, justice, love and friendship, and the health of the soul.

## CONCLUSION

The above brief remarks on Miskawayh's life and thought portray him as an active scholar in many fields of knowledge. Ethics are, however, the centre of his interests and contributions to knowledge at large, which can be divided into two categories. The first consists of those works that provide a comprehensive philosophical analysis. Among these we might include his famous works on ethics, namely, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, *Kitab al-Sa'ada*, and *Risala fi Mahiyat al-'Adl* as was noted above. Under the second category fall those works which appear in the collection of moral advises and proverbs, which he himself terms "*adab*" (good manners) [15], such as *Uns al-Farid*, *Kitab al-Siyar*, *al-Mustawfi*, *Nur al-Sa'ada*, and *Adab al-Dunya wa'l-Din*. But unfortunately all these books seem to have been lost. This also means that we are incapable of either establishing the actual date at which Miskawayh devoted himself to compile them or of elaborating their contents.

Nevertheless, the most inclusive work of this category is expounded in his *Jawidan Khirad*, which alone has reached us. As yet there has been no analytical study of the *Jawidan Khirad*, although a critical edition with a useful introduction has been published by Badawi [38]. The present edition also comprises another treatise by Miskawayh, *Laghz Qabas*, which also deals with an accumulation of Greek ethical aphorisms, while the segment on Persian literature in the *Jawidan Khirad* has drawn a brief but valuable comment from Henning [39]. He acknowledges the work as being of prime importance for the history of Phalavi literature. *Jawidan Khirad* appears to us to be the last ethical treatise by Miskawayh for two specific reasons. Firstly, because it is in

this work that he refers to the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, which he seems to have completed around the age of 80; and secondly, since the *Jawidan Khirad* is not alluded to in any of his other writings.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Hajji Khalifa, *Kashf al-Zunun*, 7 vols. Leipzig and London (1835-1858), (Oriental Translation Fund Publications, 42).
- [2] Margoliouth, D.F. and Amedroz H.F., *The Eclipse of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, Oxford: Blackwell, vols. IV, V and VII (1920-1921).
- [3] 'Izzat 'A 'A, *Ibn Miskawayh: Falsafatuhu al-Akhlaqiyya wa-Masadiruha*, Cairo: Maktaba al-Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, (1946).
- [4] Badawi 'A R., "Miskawayh", in Sharif M.M., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, I: 469-479 (1963-1966).
- [5] Miskawayh, *Tajarib al-Umam*, in Amedroz, H.F. and Margoliouth D.S., editors. *The Eclipse of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, 2 vols., Cairo: Matba'a Bisharaka al-Tamaddun al-Sina'iyya. (1914, 1916).
- [6] Al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*, 2 vols., Cairo: Maktaba wa-Matba'a Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, (1976).
- [7] Al-Bayhaqi, *Tatimmat Siwan al-Hikma*, Lahore: L. Gurandifta Kapur (1935).
- [8] Al-Tawhidi, *al-Imta' wa'l-Mu'anasa*, 3 vols., Cairo: Matba'a Lujna al-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjama wa'l-Nashr (1953).
- [9] Al-Tha'alibi, *Tatimmat al-Yatima*, 2 vols., Teheran: Matba'a Firdayn (1934).
- [10] Al-Sijistani, *Muntakhab Siwan al-Hikma*, Berlin: W. De Gruyter (1979).
- [11] Al-'Amili, *A'yan al-Shi'a*, 10 vols., Damascus: Ibn Zaydun Press (1938).
- [12] Yaqut, *Irshad al-Arib ila Ma'rifat al-Adib*, ed. Margoliouth D.S., 7 vols. Leiden – London (1907-1926).
- [13] Miskawayh and al-Tawhidi, *al-Hawamil wa'l-Shawamil*, Cairo: Matba'a Lujna al-Ta'lif wa'l-Tarjama wa'l-Nashr (1951).
- [14] Miskawayh, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, trans. Zurayk C. K., *The Refinement of Character*. Beirut: American University of Beirut (1968).
- [15] Miskawayh, *Jawidan Khirad*, Beirut: Dar al-Andalus (1983).
- [16] Muhammad Yusuf Musa, *Falsafah al-Akhlaq fi'l-Islam*, Cairo: Maktabah wa-Matba'ah Muhammad 'Ali Subayh wa-Awladuh (1953).
- [17] Miskawayh, *al-Fawz al-Asghar*, ed. Efendi T., Beirut (1900).
- [18] Al-Khwarazmi, *Rasa'il*, Constantinople : Matba'a al-Jawa'ib, (1879).
- [19] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, F., 3 vols., New York: Pantheon Books (1958).
- [20] Al-Tawhidi, *Al-Sadaqa wa'l-Sadiq*, Constantinople (1883).
- [21] Kabir, M., *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad (334/946-447/1055)*, Calcutta: Iran Society (1964).
- [22] Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitab al-Fihrist*, 2 vols., Leipzig: Verlag Von F.C.E. Vogel (1871-1872).
- [23] Miskawayh, *Kitab al-Sa'ada*, Egypt: al-Madrasa al-Sina'iyyah al-Ilahiyya (1917).
- [24] Khan, M. S., *Studies In Miskawayh's Contemporary History*, Chicago: University Microfilms International (1980).
- [25] Ansari, 'A. H., *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawayh*, Aligarh: Aligarh University Press (1964).
- [26] Caetani, L., *The Tajarib al-Umam or History of Ibn Miskawayh*, 3 vols., Leiden: E.J.Brill (E.W.J.Gibb Memorial Series, Vol. VII) (1909-1917).
- [27] Georje, De, *Fragmenta Historium Arabicorum II*, Leiden: E.J. Brill (1987).
- [28] Al-Qifti, *Ta'rikh al-Hukama'*, Leipzig: Dieterich's che-Verlags (1903).
- [29] Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *'Uyyu al-Anba' fi Tabaqat al-Atibba'*, 2 vols., Konigsberg (1982, 1984).
- [30] Iqbal, M., *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, London: Luzac (1980).
- [31] Al-Hamid, K. 'A., *Ibn Miskawayh: A Study of His al-Fawz al-Asghar*, Lahore: Ashraf Publications (1946).
- [32] Al-Tawhidi, *Al-Muqabasat*, Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Rahmaniyya (1929).
- [33] Miskawayh, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Beirut: American University of Beirut (1966).
- [34] Miskawayh, *Risala fi Mahiyat al-'Adl*, Leiden: E.J. Brill (1964).
- [35] Donaldson, D. M., *Studies In Muslim Ethics*, London: S.P.C.K (1953).
- [36] Walzer, R., *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer (1962).
- [37] Watt, W. M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (1979).
- [38] Badawi, 'A. 'R., *Rasa'il Falsafiyya li'l-Kindi, wa'l-Farabi wa-Ibn Baja, wa-Ibn 'Adi*, Beirut: Dar al-Andalus (1983).
- [39] Henning, W. B., "The Jawidan Khirad of Miskawayh", trans. Khan, M. S., *Islamic Culture*, **35**: 238-243 (1961).