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# Ibn Sina's "Al-Isharat Wa Al-Tanbihat" and its Mystical-Philosophical Interpretation

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes Abu Ali Ibn Sina's "Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat" and its mystical-philosophical interpretation. Based on the sections of the work on logic and metaphysics, Ibn Sina's views on the mind, soul, active mind, enlightenment, happiness, and divine love are highlighted. The study reveals the thinker's concept of philosophical mysticism, which combines rational thinking with spiritual experience. Also, the mystical and metaphysical content of the concepts of "al-'ārif", "al-wuṣūl", "sa'āda" and "inayat" is scientifically analyzed. The work's place in postclassical Islamic philosophy, the commentaries written on it, and the views of modern researchers are used to justify Ibn Sina's creation of an intellectual bridge between Sufism and philosophy.

**Keywords:** Abu Ali Ibn Sina, Al-Isharat Wa Al-Tanbihat, Sufism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Logic, Active Mind, Enlightenment, Sage, Divine Love, Bliss, Grace, Philosophical Mysticism, Spiritual Perfection

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## 1. Introduction

Ibn Sina's "Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat" consists of two main sections. The first section is the Logic section, in which Ibn Sina briefly but very clearly explains the laws of thinking, the processes of understanding, judgment and inference. For example, he describes logic not only as a means of argumentation, but also as a weapon that protects the human mind from errors. Ibn Sina emphasizes the importance of internal meanings (ma'qulat) rather than external words in drawing logical conclusions. Through this, he criticizes arguments based solely on wordplay and shows that true knowledge depends on the purity and clarity of the mind.[1] The second section is the Philosophy section, which covers issues of metaphysics, nature and the soul. In particular, in this section, Ibn Sina's philosophical views, which are close to Sufism, are clearly visible. He analyzes the levels of existence, types of mind, the perfection of the soul and the path of man to the highest truth. In this work, Ibn Sina explains the development of the human spirit through the gradual development of the intellect. First, the potential intellect (the intellect in a state of consciousness), then the active intellect (the intellect in an active state), and finally the idea of union with the active intellect is put forward. This process is very close to the concepts of enlightenment, discovery, and observation in Sufism.[2]

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study used historical-philosophical, comparative and hermeneutic analysis methods. The main source was the work Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat and the comments of

commentators such as Nasir al-Din Tusi, Fakhr al-Razi and Qutb al-Din Razi. During the study, Ibn Sina's logical and metaphysical views were analyzed in comparison with the concepts of enlightenment, discovery, observation and *wuṣūl* in Sufism. Also, the place of the work in postclassical Islamic philosophy was analyzed based on the research of modern orientalists - Ayman Shihadeh, Dimitri Gutas and Robert Wisnovsky. The research methodology was based on the methods of textual studies, conceptual analysis and philosophical interpretation.[3]

### 3. Results and Discussion

*Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* is one of Abu Ali ibn Sina's most mature and final works, and it is a concise but profound systematized expression of the science of philosophy. The work consists of two main sections: logic and philosophy, which cover different aspects of thought. Its title - *Isharat* ("signs, instructions") and *Tanbihat* ("warnings, reminders") - reflects the conceptual approach [4]. This work appears as a short, symbolic and high-level summary of the ideas expressed in Ibn Sina's previous major philosophical works such as "*Kitab ush-Shifa*", "*Najāṭ*", "*Donishnama*". Therefore, this work is not intended for any reader, but for thinkers and students with advanced training. The main feature of the work is that Ibn Sina thinks in it through hints, warnings and short logical formulas, rather than direct explanations.[5]

It is not accidental that the work is called "*Ishārāt*" (hints) and "*Tanbīhāt*" (warnings). Ibn Sina thereby indicates that he abandons simple explanations, that he aims not only to provide knowledge in a ready-made form, but to awaken and warn the mind. In some places, Ibn Sina does not give a clear verdict, but limits himself to a short sentence or symbolic expression. This encourages the reader to think independently and use their inner perception. This method is in line with the tradition of "teaching by hint" in Sufism. "*Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*" is not only a philosophical work, but also a unique source that combines intellectual knowledge with spiritual perception.[6]

Concepts such as *al-arif* (gnostic), *al-wushul* (attainment to Allah), divine love, happiness, and enlightenment in Ibn Sina's works are seen as elements of "philosophical mysticism." This approach — the combination of rational thought and spiritual experience — is the main feature that defines Ibn Sina's mystical-philosophical views [7]. These concepts are not limited to emotional and spiritual experience, as in traditional Sufism, but are explained through reason, logic, and metaphysical foundations. Therefore, Ibn Sina's views are often described by the term "philosophical mysticism." For Ibn Sina, *al-ʿārif* is not a simple knower, but a person who has perceived reality through intellectual perfection. He does not reject the image of the ascetic or *arif* in Sufism, but interprets it as a person armed with reason. For Ibn Sina, a true *arif* does not reject logic, but rather masters it perfectly and rises to a higher level. In his work "*Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*", Ibn Sina describes the *arif* in such a way that he attaches more importance to the purity of inner perception and contemplation than to external worship. This is the philosophical interpretation of the enlightened people in Sufism. In Sufism, *wuṣūl* is often explained through spiritual experience, asceticism, and divine inspiration. Ibn Sina explains this concept through the union of reason with the active mind. Ibn Sina shows the connection with the active mind as the result of the perfection of the human mind.[8] This situation is close to the concept of *fano* in Sufism, but it is interpreted as a rationally based metaphysical process. According to Ibn Sina, *ishq* or divine love is not an emotional state, but the power of beings to strive for perfection. According to him, every being strives for its own perfection, and in man this striving is manifested in the form of knowledge and understanding of truth. In the "*Treatise on Love*", Ibn Sina compares divine love with physical love and elevates it to a higher level. While physical love is temporary, divine love is directed towards eternal truth. In Ibn Sina's philosophy, happiness is not material well-being or emotional satisfaction. True happiness is the intellectual perfection of the soul and the realization of the highest truth.[9] This view is consistent with the concept of

"bliss" in Sufism, but Ibn Sina explains it on a philosophical basis. According to him, an ignorant person sees pleasure as happiness, while a sage sees happiness in knowledge and approaching the truth. This is the point of contact between mystical ethics and philosophical ethics. The most important aspect of Ibn Sina's mystical-philosophical views is that he does not contrast reason and spiritual experience. On the contrary, he interprets them as a complementary process. Reason is the path leading to enlightenment, and spiritual perception is the highest stage of this path. The concepts of al-*ʿārif*, al-*wuṣūl*, divine love, happiness, and enlightenment found in Ibn Sina's works are not purely religious or mystical, but the product of a rational-mystical synthesis. It is this approach - the harmony of intellectual thinking with spiritual experience - that is the main feature that defines Ibn Sina's mystical-philosophical heritage, making him a unique thinker in the history of Eastern and Western philosophy.[10]

Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat is methodologically oriented towards metaphysical concepts with philosophical analysis, and it also discusses the inner experience of the Sufi and the spiritual stages of reaching true knowledge in a philosophical context. In particular, issues related to happiness (*saʿāda*) and the soul's connection with God are raised in the metaphysical section of the work and embody elements of Sufi philosophy [11]. In the metaphysical section of Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat, Ibn Sina distinguishes the concept of true knowledge (al-*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqī*) from simple conceptual knowledge. True knowledge is not only a logical conclusion, but also a perception that results from the ontological elevation of the soul. Although this process is close to the state called enlightenment in Sufism, Ibn Sina associates it with the perfection of the mind. Ibn Sina shows the process of establishing contact with the active mind as the highest stage of spiritual elevation. In this case, human knowledge does not need external evidence, but comprehends reality through direct perception. In Sufi language, this state is called *kashf* or *mushahada*, but Ibn Sina explains it on a philosophical basis. One of the important issues raised in the metaphysical section of the work is the concept of happiness (*saʿāda*). Ibn Sina does not associate happiness with emotional satisfaction or worldly success. In his opinion, true happiness is the soul's approach to the divine source and the highest level of perfection of the mind. While an ordinary person considers pleasure and wealth to be happiness, for Ibn Sina this is false happiness. True happiness is a stable and eternal state that arises as a result of the soul's perception of divine truth through active reason. This view corresponds in content to the concept of bliss in Sufism. Ibn Sina interprets the soul's connection with God not as an anthropomorphic or emotional unity, but as an ontological and intellectual relationship. The soul approaches God not physically, but through knowledge and perfection. This process occurs with the ascension of the mind to higher levels. While in Sufism, reaching God (*wuṣūl*) is often associated with asceticism and inner experience, Ibn Sina sees it as the highest form of knowledge. In this respect, his views are a clear example of the concept of "philosophical mysticism".[12]

Ibn Sina's work has received many commentaries, and a number of oriental scholars have commented on Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat and analyzed its mystical and philosophical aspects. European and Oriental scholars Michael Rapoport, Ayman Shihadeh, and others have conducted scientific research on this work, and their analyses serve to shed light on the place of the work in postclassical Islamic philosophy and the spiritual and logical concepts contained in it [13].

Among the commentaries written on the work "Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat", the explanatory and critical comments of classical thinkers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi, Fakhr al-Razi, Qutb al-Din Razi occupy an important place. They sought to reveal not only the logical and metaphysical aspects of the work, but also its mystical-philosophical layer. In these commentaries, Ibn Sina's views on the mind, soul, active reason, happiness, and divine perception are analyzed in connection with the main problems of postclassical Islamic philosophy. The commentators paid special attention to the metaphysical section of the work, and analyzed the issues of spiritual perfection, enlightenment, and true

knowledge in it in a comparative manner with Sufism. In modern times, the work "Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt" is being studied by Western and Eastern scholars based on new methodologies. In particular, researchers such as Michael Rapoport, Ayman Shihadeh, Dimitri Gutas, Robert Wisnovsky evaluate this work of Ibn Sina as a point of formation of postclassical Islamic philosophy.

Michael Rapoport's research analyzes how the logical structure and metaphysical arguments in the work "Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat" influenced subsequent Islamic philosophical schools. He interprets Ibn Sina not only as a systematic philosopher, but also as the creator of an intellectual tradition. Ayman Shihadeh, by analyzing the commentaries written on the work, shows how Ibn Sina's legacy was reinterpreted in the postclassical period. In his opinion, a complex intellectual dialogue was formed between philosophy, kalam, and mysticism through the commentaries on "Al-Ishārāt". In modern research, the mystical aspects of the work are given special attention. Scholars have noted that Ibn Sina's views on the ascetic (al-ʿārif), the path of the soul's perfection, the concept of true happiness (saʿāda), and the idea of communication with the active mind were expressed in purely philosophical terms. This allows us to evaluate "Al-Ishārāt" as a bridge between Sufism and philosophy. "Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt" had a strong influence on the processes of further abstraction of the philosophical method in postclassical Islamic philosophy, the connection of logic and metaphysics with spiritual goals, and the expression of mystical concepts in rational language. Therefore, it is considered not only a personal philosophical legacy of Ibn Sina, but also an important turning point in the development of the entire Islamic intellectual tradition.[14]

Some studies suggest that the terminological approach in Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat – for example, "grace" – was used as a concept expressing the spiritual connection between man and God. In this approach, Ibn Sina expressed ideas about divine goodness, the order of the world, and the spiritual elevation of man as philosophical concepts [15]. In Ibn Sina's interpretation, grace means that existence is created in a perfect and purposeful order. That is, divine goodness reaches beings not by chance, but on the basis of a necessary and rational order. Although this view was formed under the influence of Aristotle and Neoplatonism, Ibn Sina reinterprets it in the spirit of Islamic metaphysics. In this approach, God is the source of absolute goodness, and the grace emanating from him regulates existence and creates ontological opportunities for the perfection of the human spirit. Thus, grace is not an emotional expression of divine mercy, but a cosmic and intellectual law. Through the concept of "grace", Ibn Sina interprets the relationship between man and God not as an emotional or anthropomorphic connection, but as a relationship based on knowledge and perfection. Man approaches God not through worship, but through reason and spiritual maturity. In this process, grace is manifested in man's intellectual perfection and connection with the active mind. If a person cultivates his mind and frees himself from sensual attachments, he begins to understand the divine order. This understanding is a form of manifestation of grace in the human soul. In Sufism, this state is called guidance or grace, and in Ibn Sina it is explained as a philosophical-intellectual process. In Al-Ishārāt, Ibn Sina connects divine goodness with a hierarchy of beings. Being is organized in a certain order from top to bottom, and each level receives its share of divine grace. Man occupies a special place in this hierarchy as a being with reason, and he is the only being who can consciously perceive divine goodness. The concept of "grace" occupies a central place in the process of spiritual ascension. According to Ibn Sina, a person perfects the mind through his own efforts, but the soul cannot reach the highest level of perception without divine grace. In Sufism, there is a view that "a servant cannot achieve anything unless Allah wills." Ibn Sina does not deny this idea, but interprets it in such a way that the will of Allah is the ontological order itself, which has created existence open to knowledge. Man uses this order through reason. Thus, the concept of "grace" is an important term within the framework of Ibn Sina's philosophical mysticism. Through it, divine goodness is interpreted as a metaphysical principle, the world order as a necessary

and rational system, and human spiritual elevation as an intellectual-spiritual process. This approach reworks the symbolic expressions of Sufism in philosophical language, demonstrating the harmony between reason and spirit.

#### 4. Conclusion

Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat is one of the most mature examples of the philosophical heritage of Abu Ali ibn Sina, in which logic, metaphysics and mystical views are harmoniously combined. The work interprets the issues of the perfection of the human spirit, connection with the active mind, true happiness and divine enlightenment on a rational-philosophical basis. Without denying the spiritual experiences in Sufism, Ibn Sina tries to explain them through the system of reason and metaphysics. In this regard, his views are a vivid example of "philosophical mysticism". The results of the study show that "Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat" is not only an important source of medieval Islamic philosophy, but also serves as an important theoretical basis for understanding the intellectual connections between Sufism and philosophy. The work has had a strong influence on subsequent postclassical Islamic thought and occupies a special place in the history of Eastern philosophy.

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