

# THE CONCEPT OF THE INTELLECT ACCORDING TO NURUDDIN AL-RANIRI IN THE *BUSTAN AL-SALATIN*

*(Konsep Akal Menurut Nuruddin Al-Raniri dalam Bustan Al-Salatin)*

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## Abstract

Written by Nuruddin al-Raniri, *Bustan al-Salatin* ranks among the most well-known pieces of traditional Malay literature. One of the issues discussed in the *Bustan al-Salatin* concerns the intellect. The present article will focus on two objectives that is, to identify the concept of the intellect in the manuscript, and to analyse the categories which al-Raniri divides the intellect as in his *Bustan al-Salatin*. Library research and content analysis was employed to achieve this. Early findings show that there are several categories into which al-Raniri divides the intellect in *Bustan al-Salatin*, namely: understanding, function, position, the different categories of the intellect and the ideal life through the use of the intellect. The content of this manuscript is not only aimed at giving rulers direction but also to educate the community to become servants of Allah who know their Creator.

Keywords: The intellect, *Bustan al-Salatin*, Nuruddin al-Raniri, Malay literature, rulers, ideal life

**Abstrak**

*Bustan al-Salatin merupakan antara karya termasyhur dalam kesusasteraan Melayu tradisional yang dikarang oleh Nuruddin al-Raniri. Salah satu perkara yang dibincangkannya adalah tentang akal. Penulisan ini akan memfokuskan kepada dua tujuan, iaitu mengenal pasti konsep akal dalam naskhah dan menganalisis pembahagian akal menurut Nuruddin al-Raniri menerusi Bustan al-Salatin. Bagi mencapai tujuan ini, kaedah kepustakaan dan analisis kandungan akan digunakan. Melalui pembacaan awal, hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa pembahagian tentang konsep akal menurut Nuruddin al-Raniri menerusi Bustan al-Salatin, iaitu pengertian, fungsi, kedudukan dan pembahagian akal dan kehidupan yang sempurna melalui penggunaan akal. Kandungan naskhah ini bukan sahaja bertujuan untuk menentukan hala tuju dalam pemerintahan tetapi juga mendidik masyarakat menjadi hamba Allah yang mengenal pencipta-Nya.*

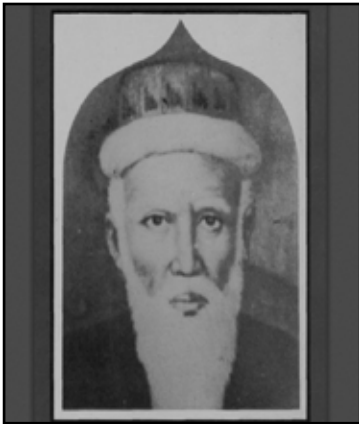
*Kata kunci: akal, Bustan al-Salatin, Nuruddin al-Raniri, Kesusasteraan Melayu, pemerintah, kehidupan yang sempurna*

**INTRODUCTION**

*Bustan al-Salatin* ranks among the most well-known pieces of traditional Malay literature. This work discusses issues of varying themes, such as religion, politics, customs and culture, in order for a kingdom to function and as a guide for the rulers of a kingdom. One of the issues discussed in the *Bustan al-Salatin* concerns the intellect. The intellect is the highest gift awarded by Allah to humankind. Therefore, Nuruddin al-Raniri, the author of *Bustan al-Salatin*, deals at length with this and uses several sources as references to strengthen his argument.

**SHEIKH NURUDDIN AL-RANIRI**

Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri Muhammad Jailani bin Ali Has Anji Ibn Muhammad Hamid was born in Ranir which is situated in Gujarat (India). Of Arab-Hadrami descent, al-Raniri belonged to the Shafi'i school of Islam. Obtaining his early education in Ranir, he then furthered his studies in Mecca. While studying there, he delved further into *tasawwuf* (sufism), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *tawhid* (Oneness of God) under his teacher, Abu Hafis 'Umar bin 'Abdullah Ba Syaiban. In India, al-Raniri came to be known as *al-Alim al-Allamah* (Most Knowledgeable of the Most



**Figure 1** Nuruddin al-Raniri.

Source: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:132710>

Edwar Djamaris, Saksono Prijanto. University Leiden Special Collection

Learned) because of his piety and his great level of religious knowledge. After completing his studies, al-Raniri sailed to Aceh on 31 May 1637 (Teuku Iskandar, 1966), during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda. In Malay peninsula, he studied Malay and explored several works of Malay literature, such as *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*, *Taj al-Salatin*, and *Sejarah Melayu*.

The product of his studies of these works were two books, titled *Durrat al-Fara'id* (before 1045 of the hijri calendar) and *Hidayat al-Habib* (after 1045 H). Sultan Iskandar Thani subsequently appointed al-Raniri as the royal advisor. According to Mahayuddin (1994), the appointment of Nuruddin as the king's right-hand man may have been because Sultan Iskandar Thani had studied under Nuruddin while in the Malay peninsula. Ahmad Daudy (1983) states that al-Raniri returned to his home country in 1054 H (1644 CE) and passed away on the 22 Dhu'lhijjah 1069 H (21 September 1658). Over the course of his lifetime, Nuruddin al-Raniri successfully produced 30 works.

### ***BUSTAN AL-SALATIN* AS A SOURCE FOR GOVERNANCE**

According to Jelani Harun (2004), there are 60 *fasal* (clauses) mentioned in the *Raffles Malay 8* version. Tudjimah (1960), Ahmad Daudy (1983) and Siti Hawa Salleh (1992) unanimously state that *Bustan al-Salatin* contains altogether 40 clauses. Chapter I contains 10 clauses, while Chapter II has 13 clauses, Chapter III six clauses, while Chapters IV to VI contain two

clauses each, and Chapter VII contains five. The content of *Bustan al Salatin* is similar to *Taj al-Salatin*, however, an analysis of this manuscript, which is also influenced by Arab-Persian writings, reveals that it is more in-depth in its narrative and includes additional topics taken from various sources, which elevates it to the level of main text for government. The author draws on the Qur'an, hadith, and the sayings of the Prophet's companions, such as Abu Hurairah r.a., and Umar al-Khattab r.a., the *tabi'in* (the generation of successors of the Prophet's companions) such as Dahhak and Sufyan b. Uyaynah r.a., historians such as Ibn Ishaq, al-Tabari, and religious scholars such as Imam Shafi'I, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Ghazali, and Imam Nawawi as sources. Al-Raniri also uses oral and general sources, indicating these with phrases such as "*kata ahl al-tawarikh*" ("historians tell us"), "*kata sahibulhikayat*" ("the author tells us") and "*kata setengah ulama*" ("some religious scholars say").

Summarized, the contents of *Bustan al-Salatin* are as follows:

**Table 1** List of contents of *Bustan al-Salatin*.

CHAPTER	CONTENT	TOTAL NO. OF FASAL
I.	Explains about the creation of the seven levels of heaven and the seven levels of the Earth and whatever is linked to it; the creation of the <i>nur</i> (light) of Muhammad, angels, jinn, and Satan.	10
II.	Discusses the beginning of the history of all the Prophets and Messengers and their conduct, from Allah and Adam to our holy Prophet, Muhammad pbuh, and of the conduct of some of the kings of the ancient times and their affairs, and the course of their lives, from the time of Sultan Kiyamurti up till the tome of the reign of Paduka Seri Sultan Iskandar Thani Alauddin Mughayat Syah Johan Berdaulat <i>Zillulahu fil Alam</i> .	13
III.	Explains how a king is made, and tells of his followers. What the conditions are, and about the conduct of the <i>khalifah</i> (successors) and all just kings, with all the related conditions, and talks of all wise viziers and their conduct.	6
IV.	Tells about all the ascetic kings and the faithful holy men.	2

CHAPTER	CONTENT	TOTAL NO. OF FASAL
V.	Explains about the conduct of cruel kings and those nobles who are oppressors and who commit treachery against their king.	2
VI.	Narrates the stories of those who are generous and honourable and of all the people who are both brave and important.	2
VII.	Points to the special nature of the intellect and knowledge, the knowledge of insight and reckoning, medicine, and discusses the superiority of marriage, and the conduct of all women, good and bad, as well as narrating some from among the unusual tales to delight those who read and hear them, and from which those who see with wisdom may learn a moral.	5

Until today, the original manuscript of *Bustan al-Salatin* has not yet been found. What exists are merely copies of the manuscript in microfilm form. According to Mulyadi (1994), 18 versions of *Bustan al-Salatin* have been identified; the findings of Jelani Harun (2004), however, are that there are at least 34 copies of *Bustan al-Salatin* in existence around the world. Among these, there is one each in Aceh, Brussels, Cape Town, Colombo, and Frankfurt; two in Berlin; three in Jakarta; 13 in Leiden; five in London; three in Paris; two in Kuala Lumpur and one other copy in Kuala Terengganu. It is possible that the total number of copies may have increased more recently. The wide dissemination of this manuscript proves that *Bustan al-Salatin* is one of the valuable masterpieces of Malay literature, and as such a reference work for learning more about the high level of governance and administration that existed in the Malay-Islamic sultanates of the past. However, a complete manuscript of *Bustan al-Salatin*, containing Chapters I through VII, does not yet exist. Yayasan Karyawan is in the process of compiling these for the purpose of publication. It is hoped that this effort by Yayasan Karyawan will be successful because the publication of such a great work of Malay literature will be of great benefit for the entire community.

Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (1992) states that there have not been any extensive studies of *Bustan al-Salatin* due to its vast extent, and the fact



Figure 2 Raffles Malay 8, Royal Asiatic Society  
Source :[https://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/BS\\_illus.html](https://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/BS_illus.html)

that its contents touch on various fields. Jelani Harun (2004), in each of his writings, urges that more studies of *Bustan al-Salatin* be undertaken; similarly, Salmah Jan Noor Muhammad (2021) calls for the same. Among the studies concerned with this Malay magnum opus are those of (just to name a few):

- R. J. Wilkinson - Chapter I and Chapter II
- Jelani Harun - Chapter I, II dan III

- Siti Hawa Salleh - Chapter II Fasal 13
- T. Iskandar Chapter II, Fasal 13
- Russell Jones Chapter IV, Fasal 1
- Nasaer Sobree Chapter VII, fasal 3

The limitations of the studies on *Bustan al-Salatin* are indeed obvious because studies of this manuscript are inconsistent. It cannot be denied that exploring this manuscript is not an easy task because it requires the skill of being able to read the Jawi script, among others. Nevertheless, it must be undertaken so that this manuscript can be brought to the attention of the public and can then be studied from various angles. Hence, this piece will foreground the seventh and final chapter, with emphasis on al-Raniri's concept of the intellect. The objective of this study is to identify and explain the concept of the intellect based on the findings of Nuruddin al-Raniri in *Bustan al-Salatin*. Library research and content analysis will be performed to achieve the main objectives of this study. There are three levels that can be applied in this methodology, that is, collecting studies, analysing, and formulating a conclusion based on the previously-determined objectives.

### **THE FIRST FASAL OF CHAPTER SEVEN**

Al-Raniri discusses the concept of the intellect in the first *fasal* of this manuscript, titled *Pada menyatakan ilmu dan akal dan kemuliaan martabat keduanya. dan pada menyatakan peri kebajikan dan kejahatan segala manusia* (Concerns knowledge and the intellect, and the degree of nobleness of both, and the good and bad in all of humankind). On the whole, this *fasal* is about the subtopic which deals with the meaning and function of the intellect, and how it benefits humankind, as well as the relationships between the intellect and knowledge, and the intellect and thought, and that which differentiates rational from irrational people.

To further strengthen the argument concerning the concept of the intellect, Nuruddin al-Raniri buttresses it with sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, and the sayings of the Prophet's companions, such as Abu Hurairah r.a., Umar al-Khattab r.a., and the *tabi'in*, such as Dahhak, Sufyan bin Uyaynah r.a., historians such as Ibn Ishaq, al-Tabari, and religious scholars such as Imam Shafi'i, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Ghazali, and Imam Nawawi. Apart from this, he also uses oral and general sources, which he indicates with phrases such as "*kata ahl al-tawarikh*", "*kata sahibulhikayat*" and "*kata setengah ulama*". One other interesting point is that when he explains something, each explanation is accompanied by a narrative. So,

for example, he includes the advice Lukman al-Hakim gives his son, stories from the time of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh and Sulaiman a.s.

### **The Intellect and its Meaning**

The intellect is the most special and highest gift given to humankind by Allah SWT. The creation of the intellect is to differentiate human beings from Allah's other creations so that they can think in the best way whether a matter is good or bad, and what should be followed and what is forbidden by Him. Imam al-Ghazali, as quoted in Abdul Mukti bin Baharudin (2019), states that the intellect is what provides meaning to the character that differentiates humans from animals. Ibn Rushd, quoted in Harun Nasution (2011), is of the opinion that the creation of the intellect is a kind of recognition of the human spirit (soul), and is the ultimate 'crown', capable of differentiating the human spirit from those of animals and plants. Evidently, the intellect was created so that human beings may recognize their Creator and His Oneness. Because of the creation of the intellect, human beings are able to be *khalifah* (vicegerents) and thus have the ability to govern countries.

According to Junaini Kasdan (2020), the intellect refers to the ability to think which completes a human being through *ilmu* (knowledge); thinking about all ideas and necessary actions in his relationship with his surroundings, and thus being able to differentiate between good and bad in all aspects of life. Aminudin Mansor (2015) is of the opinion that the intellect, or the brain or mind, is important in one's learning and development process. In Chapter VII of *Bustan al-Salatin*, al-Raniri states that the mind is a gift beyond compare awarded to human beings by Allah SWT, for which there is nothing like it in terms of honour, because the intellect is considered to be the 'officer' or the medium through which human beings recognize their God, the Creator of the world. Al-Raniri's opinion concerning the intellect is based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh, as well as statements by religious scholars. In order to explain his views concerning the intellect, al-Raniri quotes from a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh, which can be translated as follows:

*Telah dijadikan Allah Taala yang akal itu kelam. Kemudian maka dicelakinya akan dia dengan cahayanya, maka akal pun melihatlah. Maka firman Allah Taala akan dia, "Hai akal, siapa Aku?" Maka sembahnya, "Ya Tuanku, Engkau Tuhan yang tiada Tuhan hanya Engkau." Maka firman Allah Taala, "Hai akal berbelaknglah*



*Engkau kepada Aku.” Maka ia pun berbelaknglah ke hadhrat Allah Taala. Maka firman Allah Taala, “Demi kebesaranku dan demi kemuliaanku bahawa tiada dijadikan sesuatu makhluk yang terlebih kasih daripadamu. Maka dengan keranamulah Ku ambil dan kerana mulah Ku anugerahi.” (BS B7:2)*

[Allah Most High created the mind in darkness. Then, He framed it with His light, upon which the intellect could see. Then Allah said to it, “O mind, who am I?”, and it replied, “O my Lord, you are God, the One, the only God.” And Allah said, “O mind, follow me.” Upon which the mind followed Allah Most High. And Allah Taala said, “By my Majesty and Honour, never was there a creation more loved than you. And for you I take and for you I give.”]

The high and honourable status awarded by Allah SWT to humankind should be used to think appropriately in order to receive His blessings. Every action that is taken must be analysed deeply and one must always be steadfast in faith in order not to fall into the category of those who are at a loss, and who commit sinful acts and cause destruction to the world. This is in line with the statements of Nuruddin al-Raniri, who bases what he says about the intellect on the views of scholars, that is, that the intellect, when seen from another angle, is that which prevents or limits all the *mu'min* (faithful) from committing acts which are forbidden in Islam. Human beings, who have been made great through the advantage of having the intellect created for them, which forms the axis of human dignity, must analyse and synthesize themselves so that they can balance the scales of good and bad which lead them to recognize the signs of the great blessing of Allah Azza wa Jalla. Wise men say:

*Yang akal itu, sebaik-baik taulan. Ia mengubati segala pekerjaan yang salah. Dan jikalau ada orang itu hina, nescaya ialah memuliakan dia. Dan jikalau ada orang itu kasih, nescaya ialah mengiyakan akan dia dan dengan dialah tanda kebajikan dalam dunia dan dalam akhirat. (BS B7:9-10)*

[The intellect is the best companion. It can make up for all bad deeds. And if someone is base, it can make him honourable. And if one is loved, it can confirm this and with this he will have the signs of goodness in this world and the Hereafter.]

### **Position and Type of Intellect**

This first *fasal* also mentions the location of the intellect and the types of intellect. According to al-Raniri, quoting from those considered *akil* (intellectuals), intellectual thinking comes from the heart:

*... bahawa tempat kediaman akal itu pada hati. Dari kerana segala bicara itu terbitnya daripada hati. Dan kejadian bicara itu daripada akal. Cahayanya sampai ke otak. (BS B7:4)*

[...and the location of intellectual thinking is in the heart. Because all opinions have their spark in the heart. Opinions are engendered in the intellect. Their light reaches the brain.]

What can be related to this is that everything that is argued is built by the intellect, and everything that is argued comes from the heart. According to Pahrol Muhamad Juoi (2017), at certain times, the way one thinks will influence his heart and this will have implications on his actions. In other words, the heart shapes one's thoughts. However, in many cases, the intellect plays a large role in shaping thought, followed by the heart.

Apart from this, al-Raniri also quotes Ali r.a., who said that the intellect or thought is of two types, namely that which is imagined and that which is listened to. The type that is imagined is that which is not accompanied by action, while that which is listened to is that which is accompanied by action (BS B7:5-6). Al-Raniri adds that the better of these is the one that is listened to because if there is no action, there is no benefit; it is like sunlight to a blind person. According to the sages, the intellect is like a light which increases when listened to and acted upon (BS B7:12).

Besides this, the author of this manuscript also explains the divisions of the mind; that is divided into four parts. The first part is for praying to Allah. The second, for evaluating oneself. The third is for meeting with religious scholars for advice, while the fourth is for doing those actions which are permitted by Allah and enjoying them. This is shown in the example below:

*Pertama, berbuat ibadat akan Tuhannya, kedua, mengira-ngira perbuatan dirinya, ketiga, mengunjungi segala ulama yang mengajar ilmu agama dan yang memberi nasihat akan dia, keempat, bersuka-sukaan dengan barang yang dihalalkan oleh Allah Taala. (BS B7:40)*

[Firstly, worship your God. Secondly, do a self-reckoning. Thirdly, seek all religious scholars who teach religion for advice. Fourthly, enjoy that which has been permitted by Allah Most High.

### **The Role and Duties of the Intellect**

In this fasal, al-Raniri also quotes the Prophet Muhammad pbuh about the meaning associated with the duties or tasks of the intellect. For example, he quotes a saying that can be translated as follows:

*Yang ilmu itu taulan mukmin. Dan menahan amarah itu wazirnya. Dan akal itu menunjuk jalan akan dia. Dan amal itu menyampaikan dia. Dan perangai yang perlahan itu bapanya. Dan kebajikan itu saudaranya. Dan sabar itu raja segala tenteranya.*

[Knowledge is the companion of the faithful. Withholding anger is their vizier. The intellect is their pathfinder. And deeds are what will transport him. And gentle behaviour is his father. And goodness is his brother. And patience is the leader of his army.]

Another saying that is quoted is as follows:

*Adalah bagi tiap-tiap sesuatu itu pegawai dan kelengkapan, dan bahawasanya pegawai segala mukmin itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap segala yang mencari itu kenderaan (manusia) itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap rumah itu tiang, dan tiang agama itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap kaum itu menolong dia, dan yang menolong manusia itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap kaum itu memelihara dia dan memelihara segala ibadah itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap saudagar itu adalah dagangannya, dan dagangan segala yang menuntut ilmu itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap rumah itu ada yang menyelenggarakan dia, dan yang menyelenggarakan segala orang yang siddiq (amanah) itu adalah akal. Dan adalah tiap-tiap yang binasa itu ada yang meramaikan dia, dan yang meramaikan akhirat itu akal. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap manusia itu peninggalan yang dinasihatkan orang kepadanya dan disebutkan orang akan dia kerananya, maka peninggalan segala yang siddiq itu disebutkan orang kepadanya, dan disebutkan orang kepadanya dengan dia iaitu akalnya. Dan adalah bagi tiap-tiap pelayaran itu hikmah, dan hikmah segala mukmin itu akal. (BS B7:10-11)*

[Everything has its chief and regalia, and the chief for all believers is the intellect. Each that is seeking has a vehicle, which for man is his intellect. Every house has pillars, and the pillar of religion is the intellect. Every race of people has a helper, and that which helps man is the intellect. Every race of people has a preserver, and that which preserves worship is the intellect. And every trader has his wares, and the ware of all seekers of knowledge is the intellect. Every house has someone to maintain it, that which maintains truthful people is the intellect. Everything that is destroyed has that which enlivens it, and that which enlivens life in the Hereafter is the intellect. Everyone has advice that is left behind which makes him remembered by others, and that which is left behind by the truthful, which people remember and cause him to be remembered, is his intellect. Every journey has its wisdom behind it, and the wisdom of the faithful is their intellect.]

In order to strengthen his argument concerning the intellect, Nuruddin al-Raniri also narrates several events involving questions and answers between certain figures concerning the duties or tasks of the intellect. So, for example, he narrates a conversation between ‘Abdullah ibn Abbas r.a. with a man who came to ask about the difference between an intellectual mind and a stupid one. The difference is shown in Table 2.

The categories mentioned above provide a choice for people to choose between good or bad actions. People are prone to consciously do those bad actions that are associated with a stupid mind, although they are unlikely to admit to it. Hence, every individual is urged to weigh the conditions of each matter so relevant and logical actions are performed, just as in the old Malay saying, “*sesal dahulu pendapatan, sesal kemudian tiada gunanya*”: think before doing anything. Al-Raniri states that

*Seseorang yang mempunyai akal yang banyak akan menjadi berharga, dan semakin sempurna akal seseorang itu semakin berkuranganlah ia berkata-kata yang sia-sia. Seseorang yang tidak tahu menggunakan*

**Table 2** The division of duties or tasks of the intellect in *Bustan al-Salatin* Chapter 7.

No.	Intellectual Mind	Stupid Mind
1	Forgives the mistakes of others	Is proud or vainglorious
2	Is humble despite one’s position	Speaks without bringing any benefit
3	Thinks thoroughly before speaking	Likes to humiliate others

*akalnya, tidak akan dapat melawan musuhnya kerana ia takut disebabkan kekebalannya. (BS B7:14)*

[One who has much intellect will become valuable, and the more perfect the intellect, the less he will say that which brings no use. One who does not know how to use his intellect will be unable to overcome his enemies because he is afraid of his own stupidity]

What is referenced by al-Raniri here is meant to show that people who are able to balance between the intellect and passion will be able to manage this gift in the best way, and vice versa. Al-Raniri also quotes Ali r.a. advising people not to be friends with stupid people because such people will ruin religious rulings. Besides this, al-Raniri also quotes Ibn Abbas, who reminds human beings about their thinking and actions; to destroy a people, one must first destroy their thinking (BS B7:16).

Al-Raniri also takes into consideration the opinions of other sages who have discussed the role of the intellect. There are interesting comparisons made concerning this matter, as can be seen from the excerpt below:

*bahawa jika dibandingkan antara akal dan matahari, padamlah cahaya matahari dan jika dibandingkan antara bebal dengan malam, lebih gelaplah bebal. Orang yang lebih papa ialah yang tidak mempunyai akal. (BS B7: 14)*

[for when we compare the intellect and the sun, the sun's rays are eclipsed; and if we compare between stupidity and night, stupidity is darker. Truly poor are the people who do not possess an intellect.]

The metaphor in the lines above suggest that the intellect plays a bigger role than the sun. The sun acts as an illuminator for all planets apart from being beneficial for people's health and for the growth of Allah's creation, especially on Earth. This means that a human being who has a perfect intellect will be enlightened to know Allah, as well as for seriously analysing and following His commandments. The 'light' thus received focuses not only on the intellect alone, but also radiates to the other senses. A human being who is thus enlightened will have peace in his heart and will easily receive knowledge from Allah. Apart from this, this 'light' also shines on other individuals or groups to guide them to the true path. According to Ni'mat Shidiq (1989), the intellect that Allah Most High has awarded human beings is meant for them to understand and carry out the

commandments of their Creator. Meanwhile, the stupidity of human beings is that they do not make an effort to truly know their God. Although this group has been given unusual intelligence, their arrogance in finding their true selves has ruined their intellect and their hearts to the extent that this stupid group of people cannot truly think and will continue to go against God.

A healthy intellect, if not used correctly, will bring negative results. Therefore, by having a guide for using the intellect correctly, human beings will be guided and will obtain understanding of religion, as well as being rational in deciding on actions, or when speaking to listeners or entire communities. A mind that is filled with emotions, or that allows itself to be led by emotions, will be overcome by passion when making decisions, without considering the consequences of any actions. Idiotic people will always regret only after they have committed an act.

### **The Perfect Intellect**

Within the scope of the perfection of the intellect, al-Raniri takes the arguments of Luqmanul Hakim as the basis of his discussion. His writings in this *fasal* state that a perfect intellect is capable of shaping one's character. There are ten characteristics that are mentioned as being a person with a perfect intellect, which are: a) not being arrogant, b) always adhering to religion c) seeking wealth and giving alms, d) being humble, e) preferring to self-deprecate rather than praise oneself, f) zealously seeking religious knowledge, g) not easily turning away other people's requests for help, h) liking to contribute good deeds in the community, i) being industrious, and j) being well-known for all of one's good deeds. This is recorded in the following excerpt:

*Kata Luqmanul Hakim kepada anaknya, "Hai anakku, bahawa tiada jua sempurna akal seseorang manusia melainkan hingga padanya sepuluh perkara. Pertama, tiada ia takbur; kedua, memelihara agama, ketiga, menghasilkan [h]arta serta dengan (pe) murahannya, keempat, terlebih gemar ia merendahkan dirinya daripada membesarkan dirinya, kelima, terlebih gemar ia menghinakan dirinya daripada memuliakan dirinya, keenam, tiada ia segan pada menuntut ilmu Islam hidupnya, ketujuh, tiada ia memutuskan atas orang yang meminta kepadanya, kedelapan, kebajikan orang*

*sedikit diperbanyaknya, kesembilan, menyediakan akan perbuatan kebajikan yang banyak, kesepuluh, berbanyak kebajikan hingga jadi terghalah namanya. (BS B7: 6-7)*

[Said Luqmanul Hakim to his son, “O my son, the intellect of a person is not perfect unless he has ten things. First, he is not arrogant, secondly, he maintains his religion, thirdly, he produces wealth and is generous, fourthly, he prefers to be humble rather than boastful, fifthly, he prefers to denigrate himself than to show respect to himself, sixthly, he is not ashamed to make religious study his life, seventhly, he does not stop people who seek help from him, eighthly, what little good done by others is increased by him, ninthly, he prepares to do much good, and, tenthly, he does much good till he gains fame for doing so.]

Al-Raniri also explains that the perfect intellect will raise a person’s status among people. He backs this up with the advice that Luqmanul Hakim gives his son about the lives of people who use their intellect well and who therefore are honoured and protected by Allah from the trials of this world:

*“Hai anakku, bahawasanya yang kesudah-sudahan kemuliaan dan kebesaran itu, sebaik-baik akal. Dan barangsiapa baik akalnya, maka tertolaklah ia daripada segala kejahatan dan kecelaan. Digemari tuhanialah akan dia.” (BS B7: 7)*

[“O my son, verily the highest of honour and greatness is the best intellect. And whosoever has a good intellect, he is protected from everything bad and evil. And his God loves him.”]

### **The Intellect and Thinking**

In explaining the concept of intellectual people, al-Raniri touches on what is meant by *fikir* (thinking). He likens thinking to a lantern that can illuminate the secrets of the heart, whether these be good or evil, for benefit or for harm. A mind that does not think will be dark and will be led astray by Satan. According to Luqmanul Hakim, thinking is what will lead one to paradise. Al-Raniri uses a quote where Allah SWT has said, “The signs of goodness in nature are human beings who think”.

Al-Raniri also quotes commentators of the Qur’an who have said that thinking is a decree of the heart that produces something. Similarly, according to the sages, thinking protects the heart from sinking before

attaining success. Muslim jurists were of the opinion that thinking was like a shining light for being morally exemplary and its key was effort. According to the Prophet (pbuh), “thinking for a second is better than worshipping for 70 years”. This means, thinking that brings knowledge of Allah even surpasses 70 years of worship without thinking, because thinking generates knowledge. While *ingat* (remembering) is carrying out thinking in the best way. As such, thinking is only awarded to human beings by Allah SWT, and not to animals.

According to the sages, silence is the ornament of intellectual people and the closure of all that is stupid. Al-Raniri states that the Prophet Muhammad pbuh said that the tongue of an intellectual person is in his heart. When saying anything, think of its benefit. If what is said can bring oneself harm, one should hold one’s tongue. On that note, a stupid heart is also situated at the tongue—that is, speaking without considering the consequences, whether good or bad.

### **The Intellect and Knowledge**

In explaining knowledge, al-Raniri also quotes several verses from the Qur’an and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh, as well as quoting the sages and religious scholars. Among these, he presents the opinion of Muhammad ibn Fadhilullah, who divides *ilmu* (knowledge) into three: *ilmu billah*, *ilmu minallah*, and *ilmu maallah*. *Ilmu billah* is knowledge concerning reward from Allah. *Ilmu minallah* is knowledge concerning that which is external and internal, forbidden and permissible, and knowledge of *amar maaruf wa nahi munkar* (enjoining what is good and prohibiting what is evil). *Ilmu maallah* is knowledge which leads to fearing the punishment of Allah and striving for His blessings and love, as well as longing to be in His presence.

To show the high status of knowledge, al-Raniri also states that Allah SWT has made a statement that can be interpreted as: “*Katakan olehmu ya Muhammad, adakah sama martabat mereka yang berilmu dengan mereka yang tiada berilmu*” [“Say, O Muhammad, are those of knowledge of the same status as those who do not have knowledge?”]. He also includes a saying of the Prophet that he translates as “*Terlebih damping martabat nubuwah itu segala alim dan segala orang perang sabilullah*” [“Those who are closest to the Prophets in status are the faithful in religion, and those who war in the name of religion”]. Al-Raniri also records another saying attributed to the Prophet,



*“Apabila hari kiamat, maka firman Allah Taala akan segala ‘abid dan segala ‘azid [mujjahid] di dalam perang sabilullah, “Hai hambaKu, masuklah kamu ke dalam syurga” Maka sembah segala ulama, “Ya Tuhanku bahawasanya segala mereka itu berbuat ibadat akan dikau dengan kelebihan ilmu kami jua.” Maka firman Allah Taala, “Hai segala hambaKu, bahawa kamu kepadaKu seperti malaikatKu. Minta syafaatlah kamu akan mereka itu. Maka kamu masuklah syurga.” (BS B7: 48)*

[“On the Last Day, Allah Most High will call on all worshippers and defenders of the religion, “O my servants, come into paradise!”, whereupon those with religious knowledge will reply, “O our Lord, they worship you because of the knowledge we have given them.”. And Allah will reply, “O my servants, verily you are mine as the angels are mine. Ask them to intercede for you. And you will enter paradise.”]

Besides this, to again show the high status of knowledge, al-Raniri presents the tale of the Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) a.s, who, as he was flying on his magic carpet, saw a country and flew towards it. At its gates, he saw written the words,

*“Usaha sehari suntuk itu, upahnya seemas dirham, dan rupa yang baik lagi elok itu satu dinar juga upahnya. Dan menuntut ilmu satu saat [tidak] terpermanai harganya. Dan segala suatu itu berkehendak kepada ilmu jua dan ilmu itu berkehendak kepada akal. Maka barang siapa dianugerahi Allah Taala akal, maka sesungguhnya dianugerahi Allah Taala akan dia kebajikan yang amat banyak”.*

[“The effort of a day’s work is rewarded with a dirham, while good looks are worth one dinar. But seeking knowledge is priceless. And everything requires knowledge, and knowledge requires an intellect. Therefore, whoever is given an intellect by Allah Most High, he has been given the greatest amount of good by Allah Most High.”].

A Qur’anic verse is also referred to, and interpreted as, “*Dianugerahi Allah Taala ilmu serta akal kepada barang siapa yang dikehendakiNya*” [“Allah Most High awards whosoever He wishes knowledge and an intellect”]. Abu Darda’ is quoted as saying, “*Belajar suatu masalah ilmu lebih baik daripada beribadat semalaman suntuk.*” [“Studying knowledge is better than worshipping all night.”], and Shu’ib (may Allah’s Mercy

and peace be upon him) that “*Jikalau seorang lelaki belayar dari benua Syam ke benua Yaman kerana belajar sepatah kata daripada ilmu, tiadalah sia-sia pelayarannya.*” [“If a man sails from Sham (Syria) to Yemen to learn one word of knowledge, his journey is not wasted.”] (*BS B7: 50*); and, whoever is awarded such knowledge, he has obtained immeasurable benefit, that is, happiness in this world and the Hereafter (*BS B7:49-50*).

Based on this evidence compiled by al-Raniri, it is clear that a person who is knowledgeable possesses a high status in the eyes of Allah SWT and is also important to other people, because according to the Prophet Muhammad pbuh, “*Yang alim itu kepercayaan Allah di bumi. Jikalau tiada ulama nescaya kebanyakan binasalah umatku.*” [“Those who have knowledge are trusted by Allah on this Earth. Without people of knowledge, most of my community will be ruined.”] (*BS B7: 52*) Al-Raniri further states that the intellect is like the life of something. Whosoever has no intellect, it is as if he is dead. The high level of someone’s intellect is seen from his words. Based on the advice given by Sultan Mu’minin al-Rashid to his son, someone who has an intellect will divide his day into four parts. Firstly, to worship his God; secondly, to evaluate himself; thirdly, to seek out those religious scholars who teach knowledge; fourthly, to enjoy whatever has been made lawful by Allah Most High. Ali r.a. is stated as saying, “*Sayugianya bagi segala yang akal mengerjakan tiga perkara. Pertama, mencari kehidupan untuk dirinya; kedua, menghasilkan bekal ke akhirat; ketiga, mengambil lazat daripada segala yang tiada haram.*” [“Verily, all those who are of intellect will carry out three things. Firstly, to seek a living for themselves; secondly, to make provision for the Hereafter; thirdly, to take enjoyment from all that is not forbidden.”] While the sages are narrated to have stated that a person of intellect is one who minds and thinks about his actions, takes note of the condition of the people around him, guards his tongue against saying bad things and goes about his affairs with patience (*BS B7:43*).

To show the greatness and high status of the intellect, al-Raniri uses two stories as examples: that of a debate between ten *zindiq* with Sheikh Muqotal, and the story of Imam Hanafi with his would-be murderer. Both these discussions show how an intellectual mind is able to solve problems. Knowledge without intellect will not bring any benefit; knowledge is incomplete without a perfect intellect.

In elaborating on the relationship between the intellect and knowledge, al-Raniri presents the tale of King Amir al-Mu’minin al-Rashid and a religious scholar who came before him during a meeting of scholars. The

scholar appeared destitute in the beginning and was not invited to sit near the king. However, the scholar presented a very good opinion when asked, and was rewarded with an important position and riches. This example clearly shows that the intellect and knowledge can exalt a person's position. This is supported with a verse from the Qur'an which can be interpreted as meaning, "*Ditinggikan Allah Taala martabat segala mukmin yang berbuat ibadat, dan ditinggikan Allah Taala martabat mukmin yang berilmu berbanding mukmin yang tidak berilmu dengan beberapa martabat.*" ["Allah elevates the position of all the pious who perform worship, and He raises the position of the pious who have knowledge over those who do not by several degrees"]. Al-Raniri quotes a saying attributed to the Prophet,

"Datang kepadaku Jibrail alaihissalam, maka katanya, '*Hai Muhammad, jangan kau hinakan seseorang hamba Allah yang dianugerahi Allah taala akan dia ilmu. Maka bahawasanya Allah Taala membesarkan dia dengan martabat yang lebih tinggi daripada tujuh puluh orang abid.*'" (BS B7: 22-25)

["The angel Gabriel (a.s.) came to me and said, 'O Muhammad, do not denigrate a servant of Allah whom Allah Most High has given knowledge. For verily Allah Most High has raised him to a higher position than 70 worshippers.'"]

Al-Raniri also narrates the story of Sultan Mansur Duanaqi and his old friend named A'shim, who possessed knowledge and was eloquent in speech but did not have the intellect to support his opinions. In the end, he fell afoul of Sultan Mansur Duanaqi. This example is in line with the saying attributed to Luqmanul Hakim in this text, "*Barangkali ada lelaki itu alim, maka bahawasanya tiadalah memberi ia manfaat selama tiada serta ilmunya akal.*" ["There may be a knowledgeable man whose knowledge is useless to him as long as his knowledge is not accompanied by intellect."]. This means that even though someone has a lot of knowledge, if it is not accompanied with an intellect, it will not bring him any benefit (BS B7:26-28).

In parallel to the story mentioned above, al-Raniri also includes the story of a man from Medina who also comes to seek an audience with Sultan Mansur Duanaqi. This man is intellectual and, moreover, wise, but does not possess knowledge. He does not come to sit close to Sultan Mansur until he is bid to do so, whereupon the man approaches the Sultan full of courtesy and humility. Upon this, Sultan Mansur deigns to dispense

advice to the man, which the latter follows. Hence, the man is awarded riches and a high position by Sultan Mansur (*BS B7:28-29*). Al-Raniri also records the tale of Raja Parwin, who advises his son, Raja Khasru thus:

*“Hai anakku, peliharakan olehmu segala rakyatmu. Dan peliharakan olehmu daripada segala kejahatan dan menjauhkan dikau daripada segala kejahatan itu adalah akalmu. Ketahui olehmu bahawasanya engkau jadi hakim atas segala manusia, maka akalmulah hakim atas dirimu. Hai anakku, bahawa hendaklah segala manusia sukacita daripadamu, dan engkau beroleh sukacita daripada akalmu.”*  
(*BS B7: 31-33*)

[“O my son, protect your people. It is your intellect that will protect you from all evil and distance you from all evil. Know that you are the judge of all people, and therefore your intellect must be your judge. O my son, may all of humankind obtain happiness through you, and may you obtain happiness through your intellect.”

Therefore, based on the stories presented by al-Raniri, it can be summarized that whosoever has knowledge and intellect, his intellect will lead him to a high status; whosoever has knowledge but lacks intellect, he will not get benefit from his knowledge. Therefore, all honour, beauty, goodness, perfection, greatness, and status in this world and in the Hereafter are linked to the intellect, because the intellect is the root of *iman* (faith). It is the intellect, too, that is the strength of humankind. Should one have much knowledge but no intellect, his knowledge is for nought and of no benefit to him.

Related to this matter, al-Raniri tells the story of a slave who is to be sold to a king at the price of one thousand Dirham. The king, who at first agrees to buy the slave, changes his mind as he thinks the price is too high. When the slave sees that the king does not want to buy him, the slave requests permission to speak his mind and states that the unwillingness of the king to buy him is a blemish on the king’s reputation as one famed for his wealth, magnanimity, and honour. The slave reminds the king that every Dirham paid binds the slave in service to the king. As a person who has been bound in this way, he would clearly honour the one who had entrusted him with this responsibility. As such, if the king should refuse the price, it would mean that the king was also refusing a thousand honours. Upon hearing the slave’s words, the king agrees to buy the slave at the agreed price of 1000 Dirham. With this story, al-Raniri is in agreement with

the sages who say that for each boon there is a bane. Therefore, we should always be humble and down to earth, because humility before people who are due a greater honour than we are honourable, while humility itself is the greatest honour (*BS B7: 39*).

### The Signs of Intellectual People

An intellectual and wise person will be able to understand, and will know how to assess truth and falsehood in religion, as stated by Allah SWT in the following verse:

Is he who is devoutly (praying) at various times of the night, prostrate and upright, being wary of the Hereafter, and hoping for the mercy of his Lord (the same as the disbeliever)? Say, “Are the ones who know equal to the ones who do not know?” Surely only the ones endowed with intellects would remind themselves. (Surah Az-Zumar 39: 9)

In this topic, al-Raniri quotes the views of several important figures and scholars of Islam in order to identify the signs of intellectual people. Among these are the views of Aishah r.a., who listed 10 items that can categorize one as an intellectual person. These items can be divided into two, namely those that are exterior signs and those that are interior.

Al-Raniri refers to the opinion of Abu al-Darda’ r.a. concerning six signs that indicate intellectual people:

- a) being humble towards those of higher status
- b) not trivializing matters concerned with people of lower status
- c) controlling one’s tongue from saying anything that is not beneficial or useful
- d) maintaining good relations with others, such as close friends

**Table 3** Signs of intellectual people, according to Aishah r.a.

No.	Exterior Signs	Interior Signs
1.	Staying quiet	Saying that which brings goodness
2.	Controlling anger	Performing worship
3.	Being humble	Fearing Allah
4.	Not being arrogant	Being concerned about sins committed
5.	Performing good and pious deeds	Minding one’s etiquette before Allah

- e) maintaining the covenant with God, who created him
- f) fearing God, his Creator. (*BS B7: 7-8*)

Apart from this, al-Raniri includes in this manuscript the seven signs of intellectual people as pointed out by scholars:

- a) requiting evil deeds with good ones. An intellectual person will always make others happy and will forgive those who have wronged him. Such good deeds are stated in the following verse of the Qur'an:

Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. (*Surah al-Fussilat 41:34*)

- b) not being proud before those who have less knowledge and always honouring those who have knowledge. This characteristic is closely related to etiquette in dealing with others.
- c) making the effort to do good deeds, and doing them as soon as possible. This is because intellectual people do not want to be in a state of loss and waste time. Therefore, this group of people will not delay any deeds that will bring benefit to themselves and to others.
- d) hating evil and sinful deeds. Being proud of committing sins is a sign of a ruined nature.
- e) continuously remembering God and begging His forgiveness
- f) always delivering something with knowledge and according to the relevant field
- g) depending solely on Allah SWT

Furthermore, al-Raniri describes the signs of intellectual people by narrating a dialogue between a man and a judge. Al-Raniri lists the signs of intellectual people based on this narration. Firstly, worshipping Allah. Secondly, preserving one's good character. Thirdly, receiving whatever Allah awards, whether good or bad, with forbearance and acceptance. Intellectuals also say that the signs of an intellectual person include loving his brethren of the same faith.

At the same time, al-Raniri documents several statements by scholars and intellectuals. For example:

- a) According to various religious scholars, an intellectual person does not do something by stealth.

- b) Imam Shafi'i r.a. said, "Speak with evidence and examples."
- c) Other religious scholars state that an intellectual person does not say anything other than what is intended or to dispense advice, and he does not think anything other than concerning the effect and consequences of this. (*BS B7: 19*)

From the above, al-Raniri summarizes that intellectual people will always guard their tongues from speaking that which will not benefit them, and will ever be thankful for all that they receive from Allah S.WT. This is seen from the following:

*Kita juga harus mengikat lidah kita melainkan kerana mencintakan perkataan yang benar atau kerana melarang perbuatan yang sia-sia atau kerana menyatakan sesuatu hikmat atau kerana mengucap syukur akan nikmat yang dikurniakan oleh Allah Taala. (BS B7: 20)*

[We must tie our tongue except for the love of speaking the truth or to forbid that which is of no use, or to state a wisdom, or to give thanks for the blessings that Allah Most High has bestowed on us.]

Al-Raniri states that Sheikh Mawardi is of the opinion that the tongue is the interpreter of the heart and expresses all actions that are to be taken, oftentimes revealing that which is secret. Apart from this, the tongue cannot be used as a filter, whether for good or bad purposes. According to the Prophet (pbuh), silence is a blessing, even though not many people are capable of keeping silent. As such, an intellectual person is one who can preserve himself from saying the wrong thing by keeping silent or saying little in order not to cause harm to himself and others (*BS B7: 20-21*)

From the above discussion, it can be stated that Nuruddin al-Raniri describes intellectual people as those possessing knowledge, ever mindful of their speech, careful in saying things to others, ever subjecting themselves to self-reckoning, and always improving themselves as well as being grateful for all blessings, and accepting of all that has been ordained for them by God.

### **The Signs of Unintellectual People**

People who are unintellectual are those who do not properly enjoy the blessings bestowed on them by Allah because they put their passions first in their actions and speech. This is shown by al-Raniri through stories,

as recounted below, that emphasize two points that reflect unintellectual people: a) that it is as if they are not alive because they are incapable of thinking clearly, and b) that they occupy a lower position in society.

*Maka sabda pula raja Mu'min al-Rasyid akan anaknya, "Hai anakku, bahawasanya akal itu nyawa segala sesuatu. Maka barangsiapa tiada baginya akal, maka iaitu seperti umpama orang mati. ... Maka barangsiapa tiada berakal, nescaya turunlah ia daripada martabatnya." (BS B7: 40)*

[Thus said King Mu'min al-Rashid to his son, "O my son, verily the intellect is the life of everything. Therefore, anyone who has no intellect, it is as if he were dead. ... Anyone who has no intellect is also lowered from his position."]

In the first *fasal* of Chapter VII of *Bustan al-Salatin*, al-Raniri states that there are seven signs of an unintellectual person. Firstly, he is boastful and oppresses those inferior to him. Secondly, he is arrogant and proud as he considers himself better than others. Thirdly, he has bad manners. Fourthly, he loves wrongdoings. Fifthly, he approves of evil actions. Sixthly, he is quick to do whatever is bad but slow to do what is good. Seventh and finally, he is impatient when meeting difficulty. Al-Raniri also likens unintelligent people to the dead, to toads surrounded by idiots.

Al-Raniri's statements concerning this matter show that this group of people is ever at a loss. This is because this kind of people feel pleased when they commit evil deeds and encourage others to do the same. Apart from this, they say bad things, spread slander, and uphold their own errors; are likely to blame others and not accepting of the fate decreed for them by God.

### **Advice for a Good Life**

At the end of the first *fasal*, the author inserts his advice and views concerning good living and bad living. He quotes from the sayings of Abu al-Qasim al-Hakim that there are three things which erase love for this world. Firstly, "*mendengar khabar cerita daripada orang yang tahu akan cerita daripada zaman dahulukala*"—listening to stories from the knowledgeable about the past; secondly, "*mendengar cerita daripada segala hamba Allah yang pilihan*"—listening to the stories of the choicest among Allah's servants; thirdly, "*mengunjungi segala orang yang pilihan*"—seeking out the choicest among Allah's servants. Besides this, al-Raniri also quotes the



**Table 4** Sweetest and Bitterest Matters

No.	Sweetest in this world	Bitterest in this world
1.	Having children	Listening to speech that is not beneficial
2.	Listening to good speech	Listening to the sayings of people who are unintelligent and impious
3.	Sufficient wealth	Poverty

sages that three matters will not meet three other matters. Firstly, “*makan halal serta ia mengikut hawa nafsunya*”—that one who eats only that which is permissible will only follow his passions; secondly, “*sepakat serta amarah*”—that one who is cooperative is bent towards fury; thirdly, “*benar kata serta banyak kata-katanya*”—that one who always tells the truth also speaks a lot. This means that one should be looking for piety and always eat that which is permissible, and not follow one’s passions. Secondly, that agreement will prevent an ill temper and, thirdly, that a person who tells the truth will not speak much.

Al-Raniri also records the views of a judge who, when asked about what is the bitterest and what is sweetest in this world, said that there are three for each, as presented in Table 4.

In *Bustan al-Salatin*, al-Raniri provides advice for a better life by giving guidance to individuals as to how to improve themselves and to set the course of their life. A better life does not just focus on oneself but also on other individuals near us who will be positively impacted. For example, mutual respect will automatically exist because a healthy intellect will reflect in a good heart and good speech. This will bring the blessing of joy and happiness to everyone.

## CONCLUSION

Nuruddin al-Raniri’s concept of the intellect in *Bustan al-Salatin* shows that human beings who have perfect intellects are cognizant of their Creator. An intellect that is used in the best way will bring about the greater good. The first *fasal* of Chapter VII in *Bustan al-Salatin* clearly explains this so that human beings will be ever guided.

In summary, the findings of the writer show that the intention is to make all readers aware that the highest gift by Allah SWT to humankind is to be used in the right place.

Nuruddin al-Raniri has recorded several very important points about the intellect by dealing with the definition of intellect, position and type of intellect, roles and duties of the intellect, and by discussion of the perfect intellect. Al-Raniri also explains aspects of thought and knowledge, and shows the difference between those who are intellectual and those who are not, as well as providing advice for achieving a good life. The concept of the intellect is meant to make the community understand the special nature of the intellect as well as opening up possibilities for self-improvement through self-reckoning. As reported by Shaddad Aus, the Prophet Muhammad pbuh said:

A person who is intelligent is one who does self-reckoning and who performs deeds for life after death. (Hadith narrated by Tarmizi)

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