



"Our religion is our religion, you either believe in it or you do not. You can leave a faith but you cannot, if you do not accept its tenets, remain within it and claim to "reform" it. You can abandon those tenets, but you cannot try to change them and still protest that you belong to the particular sect that holds them. There has never been any question of changing the Ismaili faith, that faith has remained the same and must remain the same."

Memoirs of Aga Khan
Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, 1954

"I am sure you will never forget that our Faith is based on thousands of years of history, and that we should learn from history and not think that our past is of no use to us now and that it can therefore be rejected, abbreviated or altered."

Ismailia Association for India
Mowlana Hazar Imam, September 25, 1964

Rope of Allah



ISMAILI TARIQAH

PART II

Over 130 rites and rituals of the Ismaili Nizari Tariqah
explained in the light of Islamic mysticism

Abualy A. Aziz, Ph.D.
Missionary

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**Over 130 rites and rituals of the Ismaili Nizari
Tariqah explained in the light of Islamic mysticism**

**Ceremonies
Customs
History
Maxims
Precepts
Rites and Rituals
Traditions**

**Abu'aly A. Aziz, Ph.D.
Missionary**

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At the feet of the

HOLY SHAH-PIR,

Khalifatullah wa Khalifatur Rasoolallah

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DEDICATION

To our future generations

with

love and prayer

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Bismilla hir Rahma nir Raheem

PREFACE

Our Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had written a book in Arabic and Persian, *Usool wa Furoo-e Deen*, for the Arab and Iranian mureeds. He ordered Kamaria Haji Nazerali to translate it into the Cutchhi language. Kamaria Nazerali translated the book into Cutchhi using the Khojki script, and published it in 1894 in Bombay¹. In this book the Imam had explained the fundamental principles and precepts of our holy faith in Islam. In fact, my book, *Ismaili Tariqah Part One*, I was inspired and influenced by this book of the Imam.²

Ismaili Tariqah Part One was published in English in 1985 in Toronto and became popular. It is now out of print. This volume, Part Two of *Ismaili Tariqah*, has been designed to enable the members of our jamat to appreciate and understand our various rites and practices. I have attempted to expound the historical and religious significance of our practices that go back to the traditions of our Prophet Mohammed and the teaching of the Holy Quran. I have explained the ceremonies and customs that were prevalent during the Imamate of Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah. Some of these practices have been discontinued by our institutions, who failed to offer any convincing justification for their decisions.

As far back as 1957 the Shia Imami Ismailia Associations for Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda had jointly published my book, *Ismaili Dharmic Course*, which I had written in Gujarati. The book explained most of our religious ceremonies and their significance. Subsequently, in 1971, I wrote *Ismaili Faith: Its Ceremonies and Customs*, in English. I did not publish the book; however, photocopies of the manuscript were distributed widely.³

It has taken me a long time to complete this volume. The most challenging task was to find the appropriate references from the Holy Quran, the Hadith, the Holy Farmans, the sacred Ginans and many other books on Islam and other eastern religions and faiths.

Our Holy Shah-Pir Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah had personally witnessed all our ceremonies in 1899 in Zanzibar and made certain changes. He did not see anything wrong in all these ceremonies, some of which have since been discontinued by the I.T.R.E.B. On September 16, 1899, the Holy Imam appointed the mukhis and kamarias of all the mandlis. For Saatmi Raat Mandli he appointed Fazal Dina as mukhi, and Nurmohamed Pirani as kamaria. Today, however, the Saatmi Raat Mandli is not observed in some jamats. This is yet one more example of practices that have been discontinued by our Tariqah Board without any convincing justification.

The significance of our ceremonies and traditions has never been taught in our mission classes since the closure of the Ismailia Mission Centre, Dar es Salaam, in 1948, where I, as its Principal appointed by the Holy Imam, was teaching the significance of our rites and rituals. Sometimes a ceremony, or a procedure, is altered to suite an ignorant person's own convenience. Example: Pir Sadruddin taught us to place the bundle of the ghatpaat on the paat before you, sit down on your knees and with folded hands say loudly the opening prayer, "Ghatpaat Sthapna." We have been following this procedure since the time of Pir Sadruddin. Sometime in the late sixties a very fat man was given the duty of conducting the ceremony of ghatpaat, at the Darkhana, Nairobi. He could not sit on the floor with folded knees so he took the bundle in his hands and said the opening prayer while standing. Lo! Everybody, since that time, has been following this practice which is not respectful. You must sit on your folded knees in humility as we sit in namaz.

Another example: On one special occasion a family brought a very big tray full of varieties of foods as mehmani in the Darkhana of Nairobi. The person conducting the Naadi ceremony shouted in awe "Allah mehriya this is DARBAARI." The word 'darbaari' became popular even though it has no significant meaning in our Tariqah. Actually a darbaari is a person who has a seat in the court of a king, a courtier.

Unfortunately, most of us are quite ignorant of our faith, its doctrines and the traditions. Even those who are in some responsible position in the jamat have no aptness for reading our history and tariqah material for knowledge. Consequently, because of ignorance, they become critics of our traditions and believe that because we were Hindus in the past our rituals have been derived from that source. It is not true. Some say that our sacred ginans are full of Hindu elements. Some say that our sacred ginans were actually composed by others than our Holy Pirs. Such people, in the past, have made an allegation that our Pir Sadaruddin was a Sunni and not a Shia. There are so many misconceptions among us that consequently the faith of our new generation is affected. I have labored hard here and throughout my missionary career to explain that all the ceremonies of our faith are directly connected with the traditions of the Prophet of Islam and based on the teaching of the Holy Quran.

Ismaili settlement in North America started in the late sixties. Those who arrived first were mostly youngsters who had little knowledge about their faith. They did not know more than the holy Dua, a few ginans, tasbeehs, aab e-safa and naadi etc. Most of them did not know the meaning of all these ceremonies. They were quite strong in their faith but there was no teacher to impart understanding of the ceremonies. They started make-shift "jamatkhanas" in a basement or in a school hall or a rented place. Gradually the jamat increased all over Canada and the United States. Then the Councils and the Ismailia Association (now ITREB) came into being in the seventies under the aegis of Count Sir Eboo Purbhai. Right from the beginning systematic and proper religious teaching has never been taken into

consideration, even now. How many leaders know the meaning and the significance of the Quranic ayat in our holy Dua? How many of us know the significance of naadi? Juro? Chhanto? etc. Some youngsters deposit their juro in their shoes because they had no pocket big enough to contain it. Some people do not make sajdah in the Dua. Some take the holy aab e-safa but avoid the holy sukreet. Inshallah this book of ceremonies will be useful to understand our holy faith to a great extent.

To those among us who criticise our ceremonies and want to change them, our Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had this to say:

"Our religion is our religion, you either believe in it or you do not. You can leave a faith but you cannot, if you do not accept its tenets, remain within it and claim to "reform" it. You can abandon those tenets, but you cannot try to change them and still protest that you belong to the particular sect that holds them. There has never been any question of changing the Ismaili faith, that faith has remained the same and must remain the same."⁴

We must remember these words of the Holy Imam:

"THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION OF CHANGING THE ISMAILI FAITH, THAT FAITH HAS REMAINED THE SAME AND MUST REMAIN THE SAME"

I have used 'holy' as a prefix before the words "Imam" and "Pir" because both Imam and Pir are holy according to the Holy Quran.⁵ Our ginans are sacred because these are the "Tafseer-e-Quran."⁶ Mullah Jami had written that the Mathnawi of Rumi was the Quran in Persian, which, in fact, is not a Tafseer-e-Quran. A Pir is the direct descendant of the Holy Prophet, appointed by the Imam of the time from his own family.⁷ Under certain conditions an Imam takes up the responsibility of a Pir as well and does not appoint a Pir. Our Holy Hazar Imam is also our holy Pir.

It is my hope and prayer that this volume will inspire the younger members of the jamat to understand in greater depth the historical significance of our traditions. It is high time we came out of our slumber and started thinking about our holy faith and the fate of our future generations. We are responsible for that and Allah will judge us on that. All of us must remember that death is inevitable so we should be prepared for the account of this responsibility.

May the Almighty Lord bless us all.

Abualy A. Aziz Ph.D.
Missionary
Vancouver Canada
21 August 2004

AN IMPORTANT FARMAN

I would like my spiritual children here to remember that they are part of a large community that lives all over the world. My spiritual children are keeping to their old traditions, their own habits and I want them to keep to these traditions and to keep these habits. I want you as in the past to say your prayers regularly, to teach your children not only their faith and how they should understand it, but also how it should be practiced. I would like the parents of my spiritual children, of my young spiritual children, to make it their duty to teach the faith to their children and to teach it in the most correct form. I would like my jamat to remember that without this, there is no point in doing any work whatsoever.

Mowlana Hazar Imam at Karachi,
26 October, 1960

INTRODUCTION

Our Ismaili Tariqah is not a random offshoot of Islam, nor is it a hotchpotch of other faiths. The Ismaili Tariqah is the kernel of Islam that the Holy Prophet (sallallahu Alay wa Aaleyhi wassallam) himself very carefully separated from the common instructions of the shariah. The Holy Prophet reserved this kernel for the privileged few, and kept the shariah for the mass of ummah. There is much more in Islam than performing namaz and fasting. There were some advanced individuals who wanted to learn more about Islam, and they were lucky to have the Holy Prophet amidst them who taught them the deeper realities. They were aware that the revelation the Prophet had received, from Allah, was much more than what was collected in the Holy Quran.⁸ Only a select group of the companions of the Prophet were privileged to have access to this additional revelation. I call them *Satpanthis*, those who were favoured by Allah. Sat-panth means True Path. I have used this term for those who were favoured by Allah.

That Satpanthi⁹ group was the nucleus of our Tariqah. Most of them were practising the system of *baitul khayal*. The Holy Quran testifies this in these words:

“Thy Lord knows that thou keepest vigil nearly two-third of the night, or a half of it, or a third of it, and a party of those with thee; and God determines the night and the day.”¹⁰

The vast majority of the Muslims during the Prophet’s lifetime had not understood the real meaning of the faith even though they had embraced Islam.¹¹ Most of them accepted Islam because their tribal chief had converted to Islam. To unite them all, the Prophet had laid a great stress upon the performance of the obligatory prayer *salat* (*namaz*). The Arabs had never experienced a unified society before the advent of Islam. The mighty trend of conversion to Islam forced them to follow the tide. But the glory of Islam remained in the hearts of a few who loved the Holy Messenger more than anything in their lives. They had not seen Allah but they had felt their love for Allah in their love for Mohammed. The Holy Prophet had told the Muslims:

“No one has complete faith (*iman*) until he loves me more than he loves his children, his parents and all others whom he loves.”¹²

True believers loved their Holy Master and obeyed him in letter and spirit. This was the level of *iman* that the Prophet asked the Muslims to show for Ali, when he delivered his farewell speech to them at Ghadir-e Khumm. He declared: "To whomsoever I am his Mowla, Ali is his Mowla." He knew that not all Muslims loved him, for Allah had already informed him that all were not true believers.

"O Messenger! Let not those who hasten in infidelity grieve thee, of those who say "We believe" with their mouths and their hearts believe not,"¹³

Commenting on this verse Mir Ahmed Ali, in his translation of the Holy Quran, writes:

"The words "*Among those who say with their mouths, We believe, and their hearts do not believe*" disclose the position of some of the people in the faith that they had made a verbal profession of the faith with their mouths and in fact they were not believers at heart. Hence every one who professed belief in Islam during the time of the Holy Prophet was not also actually a believer by conviction. It was such hypocrites who immediately as the Holy Prophet departed from this world, turned against the Holy Ahlul-Bait and inflicted upon them the worst miseries and usurped their rights and subjected them to all sorts of sufferings."

There is sufficient evidence in the history of Islam that shows that not all Muslims of the Prophet's time believed him in the true sense of faith. Only a handful of them loved him truly. Even his close companions disregarded his orders. For instance: At his death bed the Holy Prophet demanded paper and pen to dictate something important for the ummah. But Hazrat Omar bin Khattab prevented the Prophet from receiving these items, telling those present in the room that the Prophet was out of his senses. He said: "The Book of Allah is enough for us."¹⁴ Strange! Very strange, a man like Hazrat Omar, one of the closest companions of the Prophet, openly disobeyed his Master. Hazrat Omar was also the father-in-law of the Prophet. This book is not a book of history; one can refer such instances in the books of history. My point here is that even the Holy Prophet's close companions were not altogether obedient to him.¹⁵

Take another example at Ghadir-e Khumm: Hazrat Omar was the first person to accept Mowla Ali as his Mowla, yet he was the first to reject Ali for the caliphate. Omar ignored even the Prophet's words: *man kuntu Mowlahu*". While Ali and Banu Hashim were engaged in the preparation of the burial of the Prophet, the closest companions were seizing this opportunity to grab the caliphate. Here one must remember that both Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Omar were the fathers-in-law of the Prophet. They preferred to ignore the burial ceremonies of the Holy Prophet for the sake of grabbing the caliphate.

As soon as Hazrat Abu Bakr became caliph he launched a series of battles to establish his authority. Abu Bakr was followed by Hazrat Omar, who spent more than ten years of his caliphate in the conquest of foreign lands. While this was going on, those who had loved the Prophet, transferred their love to Ali and followed him as their Mowla, the Master. They were known as *Shiatul Ali*, the followers of Ali. They were the adherents of the Right Path, the *Satpanth*. With Ali as their Mowla they continued to practise Islam as they had practised during the lifetime of the Prophet. They continued the practice of offering mehmani to their Imam, and they continued to get the chances of his holy didaar, blessings and personal guidance, just as they had during the presence of the Prophet. They served the Imam of the time and even sacrificed their lives in wars and other ways, for the sake of their faith and the love of the Imam. The *Satpanth* jamat within the general Shia jamat remained quite secret but active.¹⁶ The jamat has always remained loyal to the Imams of the time. Some of the religious ceremonies could not be performed because of the hostile atmosphere, but these were resumed as soon as circumstances turned favourable.

In India our Holy Pirs introduced certain ceremonies as time and circumstances allowed. Instead of giving an Arabic or Persian name for the place where the believers gathered for worship, Pir Satgur Noor used the Sanskrit word "guth," (pronounced 'u' as in but, shut, just etc) which means "a place of protection." For the Pir, establishing the Guth Jamat was the first priority. Initially the guth-jamat was established in such places as a godown or a storage room. In the guth-jamat there was the mukhi and the thanak (caretaker). Simple ceremonies like dua', ghatpaat, dua karavi, dasond, etc. were introduced. I strongly recommend the reader to study "*Satveni Ni Vail*" by Sayyid Nur Mohammed Shah for the explanation of various ceremonies.

Some members of our jamat are under the misperception that our precepts and ceremonies have been borrowed and adapted from the Hindu religion. This argument is a fallacy and has no historical basis. Most of our ceremonies have their roots in Islam from the time of the Holy Prophet. For example: The paying of religious dues goes back to the Prophet's time. Allah orders the Prophet:

"Take alms of their wealth, wherewith thou mayst purify them and mayst make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, Knower."¹⁷

The Muslims were paying their religious dues to the Prophet and received his blessings for purification, for growth and for peace and tranquility. After the death of the Prophet, only those who followed Imam Ali, the rightful successor of the Prophet, were fortunate to receive the blessings of Allah and His Prophet in accordance with the above verse of the Holy Quran. The Holy Prophet said: "Ali and I are from one Noor."

Our Holy Pirs, who were themselves the direct descendants of the Holy Prophet, were the holders of the Noor-e Mohammed. A Pir is appointed by the Imam of the time from his family. Presently the Imamate and the Piratan are combined in our most beloved Hazar Imam Shah Karim Al-Husaini, the Aga Khan-IV, as per the Will (*nass*) of the Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah. Refer to Appendix-I for more on Piratan.

Our ceremonies in India were carefully introduced, bit by bit, by our Holy Pirs on the basis of the tradition of the Prophet of Islam. The Ismailia Association for India convened a religious conference in Bombay, in 1964, to which our Mowlana Hazar Imam had sent the following message, addressed to the conference:

“25th September, 1964.

My dear President,

The following is my message to the All India Religious Conference on inauguration. I send to all my spiritual children participating in the All India Religious Conference my most affectionate paternal maternal loving blessings on this most important occasion.

I am sure that you will all use your knowledge and ability so as to reach conclusions, which will be in the best interest of my Jamats of India. The ceremonies and customs, which you will be discussing, are back bone of our Faith, and for this reason your discussions should be guided by clear thinking, restraint and above all Faith.

While working through the topics which you must discuss, I am sure you will never forget that our Faith is based on thousands of years of history, and that we should learn from history and not think that our past is of no use to us now and that it can therefore be rejected, abbreviated or altered.

I send to each and every one of you individually my most affectionate loving blessings, and I pray for the success of your Conference.”

AGA KHAN

The words in this Taliqah, “our Faith is based on thousands of years of history” and “not think that our past is of no use to us now that it can therefore be rejected, abbreviated or altered” are very important; and the

reference to “the ceremonies and customs, which you will be discussing, are the back bone of our Faith” form the basis of the discussions in this volume.

To understand the significance of our ceremonies one must, I repeat, one must, study the basic tenets of our Tariqah.¹⁸ The Holy Prophet said:

“I am leaving behind two weighty things: one is my progeny and the other is the Book of Allah. If you will reject one and follow the other you will go astray.”

Hazrat Omar declared “hasbna kitabullah” “the Book of Allah is enough for us”. The vast majority of the Muslims ignored the second weighty thing, the Holy Ahlul Bait, *i.e.* Imamate. They followed a deviated path, away from higher Islam, gnosis and mysticism. Mowla Ali was deliberately ignored, in spite of the repeated utterances of the Prophet about the obedience and love of Ali. A small minority remained faithful to the Prophet and Ali and subsequently to his progeny, as stipulated in the Holy Quran¹⁹ and the sayings of the Holy Prophet. The majority of the Muslims were occupied in the conquest of the foreign lands in the name of Islam, during the first three caliphates. Then, during the caliphate of Bani Omayya the persecution of the Shia of Ali forced them to hide their faith.

Most of the ceremonies and customs in our jamat, explained in this volume, have come down from the time of the Prophet, not taken from Hinduism in India. Our Mowlana Hazar Imam’s words, “our faith is based on thousands of years of history,” are very significant. Take for example our system of Naadi: It is based on the Divine Command to the Prophet Moses, to convert into money the offerings that he had received in kind or in stock.

“Then shalt thou turn it into money and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.”²⁰

We have been following that system since the pre-Islamic period.²¹ Our Holy Prophet used to receive gifts (mehmani) of varieties of things including cooked food, raw food, clothes and many other things which he distributed among his *sahabah* (companions), particularly among the “ashaab-e sufa”, who had sacrificed their family life and normal comforts for the sake of the propagation of Islam. The Holy Prophet, who was the beloved of the momineen, was living in the city. It was easy and convenient to take a cup of fresh milk or a leg of roasted mutton to the house of the Prophet, who used to share these with his companions. Similarly, the practice of mehmani continued after the death of the Holy Prophet, the mehmani now being offered to the Imam of the time.

In India, the jamats followed the same system of offering their gifts of food and clothes to the Holy Pir. But when the jamat spread to other parts of the country the mureeds were not able to bring their offerings to the Imam’s home; instead, they

brought the mehmani to the jamatkhana where they auctioned the items and collected the money to be sent to the Darkhana for the Imam. No exact time or period can be determined in history as to when this practice started. But with respect to India we can safely say that the mureeds started this system when they felt the absence of the Pir. The practice later came to be known as "Pir ni Maani", bread for the Pir. The mureeds felt lucky to play host to the Pir. The Pir did not stay for long at one place. In his absence the followers were contributing cash or sending some food to be auctioned and in this way the sum collected was presented to the Pir on his next visit. The practice gradually developed into the system we know today in the jamats of India and Africa.

Take another example: juro (*plu. jura*): Whenever the Holy Prophet received any item of food he would distribute it among his companions who were present. This system was introduced by our Pirs in the jamat as a token of barakat and blessings. Some other ancient traditions are: (a) The juro of ghoogri was a set rule²² on all occasions with an addition of a better stuff on special festivals; (b) the kumbh bowl, the cups and plates of ghatpaat were earthenware but are today high class chinaware; (c) Dast Bosi, which means hand kissing, is an age-old tradition since the time of our Holy Prophet and Mowla Murtaza Ali. Dast bosi²³ is an occasion of meeting the Beloved Hazar Imam personally; (d) Jamatbhai in jamatkhana; Hazrat Bilal was appointed the jamatbhai of the Prophet's mosque (Darkhana) in Medina. His "call to prayer" is our jamatbhai's call of 'bando'.

In short almost all of our ceremonies have their roots in the practice of the faith during the time of the Prophet. Most of these ceremonies were developed over the course of 400 years from the time of Pir Satgur Noor, who came to India in 462 A.H./1070 C.E.. After the demise of Pir Tajdin (d. 876/1471) the jamats of India were left alone without a Pir from the Holy Imam. A delegation, led by Mukhi Shandass Lahori, from India went to the Imam of the time Mowlana Abdus Salam and prayed to him to send a Pir to India. The Holy Imam gave them the book of farmans of his father Mowlana Imam Mustansir Billah-II and said that that was their Pir. The book is known as "Pir Pandiyat e-Jawanmard" in Persian.

Later, the Imam had appointed his wakil, an agent in India.

The next Pir was Sayyid Haider Ali Shah who had spent most of his life in Turkey and Central Asia. The jamats of India were lucky to have the presence of the Piratan from Pir Satgur Noor to Pir Tajdin.

During the period between the demise of our Pir Tajdin and the arrival in India of the Holy Imam Aga Hassanali Shah and the Holy Pir Aga Ali Shah in 1258/1842, the jamats were scattered far and wide, from Peshawar to Calcutta. They were in an extremely poor state of affairs financially, educationally, physically as well as socially. These material conditions affected the religious practices, making them weaker. Pir Aga Ali Shah used to attend the jamatkhana on a regular basis and guided the jamats in their spiritual matters. He also added two tasbeehs of fourteen

beads each in our holy Dua'. These were: 14 times "Ya Ali" and 14 times "Salwaat". Later Pir Aga Shihabuddin Shah made additions to the Dua. Even Pir Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah made some changes in our holy Dua' and took a great interest in the religious affairs of the jamats worldwide.

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah visited Zanzibar for the first time in 1899, arriving there on the twenty eighth of June. He stayed there for more than two months. He personally took part in all the ceremonies and taught the jamat how to practice these ceremonies. These practices have been followed till today by the jamats of Africa. Today the sthapna' of ghatpaat occurs after the first Dua', before the upstanding tasbeeh. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah ordered the singing of a ginan, reading of a holy farman or delivering of a sermon to take place before the second Dua'. Thereafter the naadi may take place.

On the sixteenth of September, 1899 he told the jamat in Zanzibar that he had been their Pir for the past fifteen years,²⁴ and he had to remind them that the changes he made in the customs and the ceremonies were made because he was their Pir. It is the institution of the Piratan appointed by the Holy Imam of the time which is responsible for the practice of religion. When Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah became our Imam at the age of eight, on the seventeenth day of August, 1885, the Pir was Aga Abul Hasan Shah, the infant son of our Pir Aga Shihabuddin Shah. Aga Abul Hasan Shah died after a few months. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah then took over the duties of the Pir as well. Thus, Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah was the forty-eighth Imam and forty-ninth Pir.

A question may arise in the mind of someone about the Piratan (Pirhood) of an infant who could not even speak yet was expected to guide the jamat. Our Ismaili Nizari Tariqah is based on the mystical understanding of the concept of Noor. The Holy Prophet Issa (Jesus) was a few days old when he was brought out to the town in his mother's arms, and spoke to the people:

"Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a prophet. And hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive."²⁵

Prophethood is an assignment of Noor. Piratan is the same Noor but without any new revelation (*vahi*). Revelation stopped after the Prophet Mohammed. In May 1885 our forty-seventh Pir Shehabuddin Shah died in Poona. Mowlana Imam Aga Ali Shah appointed Pir Abul Hasan Shah, the infant son of Pir Shihabuddin Shah, as the forty-eighth Pir of the Nizari Ismailis. The mukhi, kameran and other leaders of the Darkhana jamat, in their robes and pagrees, came to greet the Pir. When they saw him lying in the cradle, they all bowed down in respect. The Pir gave them a smile and lifted his right hand as a gesture of acceptance and blessing. He was about six months old and died at the age of about one year, during the Imamate of Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah.²⁶

The believers receive barakat (blessing) and spiritual benefits even by the mere physical presence of the Prophet or the Imam or the Pir amidst them. Though our Pir Abul Hasan Shah was an infant physically, his light of Pir bestowed the spiritual and the worldly benefits upon the jamat.

An eye witness to the above event of 1899, Count Moloo Allarakhia of Zanzibar, who died in Dar es Salaam in the late 1960s at the age of over eighty-five, informed me personally that the Holy Shah-Pir Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah had made certain changes in our ceremonies, in this order:

1. Perform the first Dua'.
2. Stand for the usual tasbeeh of mushkil-asaan. (In the event of ghatpaat, it should be established before the upstanding tasbeeh.)
3. The recitations of ginan and the holy farman should be performed or a wa'z should be delivered.
4. The second Dua' may be recited, followed by thaar sufro, mehmani, naadi. Jamat disperses.

The old system, which was imported into Africa from India in the nineteenth century, consisted of items in the following order:

1. First Dua'.
2. Ginan or Farman.
3. Naadi. In the event of ghatpaat, it was established before the second Dua'.
4. Second Dua'.
5. Upstanding tasbeeh.
6. Thaar Sufra.

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had observed all the ceremonies personally being performed in the jamatkhana and issued instructions accordingly. Ever since, the jamats of Africa have been following the system in the order that the Shah-Pir had introduced in 1899 and 1905.

The special four tasbeehs, bestowed by Mowlana Imam Aga Hasanali Shah in 1870 upon the jamats in Africa, were performed after the evening prayer. These were changed to be performed in the morning by Mowlana Imam Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah in 1905.²⁷ These tasbeehs were given only to the jamats in Africa. It was during the Diamond Jubilee, in August 1946 at Dar es Salaam that the leaders of Indian jamats had requested the permission of the Holy Imam to introduce the four tasbeehs in their country. They got the permission. The jamats of India and Pakistan have been saying these four tasbeehs since 1946, after the morning prayer.

It is the sole prerogative of the Holy Shah-Pir Mowlana Hazar Imam, no one else, to change, alter or abrogate any ceremony or custom of our Tariqah. We are only the obedient followers of the Imam of the time.

JAMATKHANA

"His Light is found in Houses which Allah has sanctioned to be built for the remembrance of His name. In them, morning and evening, His praise is sung by men whom neither trade nor profit can divert from remembering Him, from offering prayers, or from giving alms..."

**Holy Quran.
24:36,37**

In this holy verse the word "Houses" means houses other than the common mosques, where the servants of Allah remember His name, sing His praise, offer prayers and give alms. This description is most appropriate for jamatkhana rather than for mosques. Singing is not allowed within mosques; nor is almsgiving such as dasand or mehmani carried out in mosques. The remembrance of Allah such as our Baitul Khayal is not being practised by other Muslims the way Ismailis practice it in their jamatkhana.

The word "jamatkhana" is Persian for a meeting place of the jamat or community for prayer and meditation. The word is made up of two words, one Arabic (jamat), the other Persian (khana). A masjid (mosque) is a place of prostration where the worshippers gather together for the obligatory prayer or sermons. Every religion has a place of worship; the name for this place of worship differs from religion to religion, as the examples below show:

Christians - Church
Jews - Synagogue
Muslims - Mosque, masjid
Hindus - Mandir, deval, temple
Sikhs - Gurdwara
Parsees - Agyari
Buddhists - Aasan, Sthaan

The word "jamatkhana" was coined by our Holy Pir Shamsuddin Sabzvari in India. He mentions jamatkhans in his *Mansamjhani*, a grunth he composed about his visit to Tibet and China where he had established eighty-four jamatkhans and appointed mukhis. He had also travelled to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Kashmir, Malaya, Russia, Turkey etc. He had visited twenty-four countries²⁸ as a part of his mission and established jamatkhans in most of those places.

In Islam, generally, a mosque or masjid is a meeting place of the worshippers. The prayer hall in a mosque (or jamatkhana) is used exclusively for religious purposes, whereas the other parts of the building may be used for other communal needs. In its most general usage, a place of worship is called masjid or jamatkhana. It is considered a House of God because of its association with the divine.

The difference between a jamatkhana and a mosque is that a jamatkhana is the property of the Imam of the time in which the Light of Allah is found. What about a mosque? Allah is present everywhere, including in the mosques. But the Light of Allah, the Noor of Imamate is found only in the jamatkhana. Allah had condemned the Masjid-e Zarar near Medina (H.Q. 9:107). It was built by some hypocrites among the Muslims to create mischief. The mosque was demolished and burnt to ashes. Mowla Ali was assassinated in the mosque of Kufa. Caliph Muawiya used the mosque for his personal objectives. He used to insult Mowla Ali in his speeches in the mosque.

The Imam of the time is the sole proprietor of all the jamatkhans in the world, physically as well as spiritually. A mosque is built by donors who take care of it. It is known as a House of Allah but it is usually named after a person, for example the "mosque of Omru Aas", the "mosque of Sahaba", the "Osmaniya Mosque", the "Badshahi Masjid", etc. A jamatkhana is a jamatkhana; no personal name is attached to it. It is a House of Allah in which the Noor of Imamate is present all the time.

The reason why we Ismailis call our prayer house a jamatkhana (even the Arab Ismailis call it "jamatkhana") is obvious. It is a Persian word and was coined during the Persian period of our history. The Ismaili Faith is a Tariqah. In Islam there are four levels of religious teaching and understanding:

1. Shariat (exoteric, external, zahir)
2. Tariqat (esoteric, inner, secret, ba'tin)
3. Haqiqat (ultimate reality, truth, essence)
4. Ma'rifat (gnosis, higher understanding, knowledge)

Generally speaking Muslims follow the Shariat that is prayer, fasting in the month of Ramazan, zakat and hajj. Some thinkers and seekers of higher knowledge follow a few Tariqah methods, for instance: spending more time in the remembrance of Allah (zikr), meditating, detachment from lust and carnal

pleasures, sacrificing wealth in the way of God. Some go further and learn mysticism from a Shaykh. Our Ismaili Tariqah, since the time of the Holy Prophet, has been guided by the Holy Imams. Like other Sufi Tariqahs who assemble for their Tariqah practice not in a mosque but in a separate and private place, we have our jamatkhans for that purpose.

The achievement of success at the levels of Haqiqat and Ma'rifat depends upon one's absolute obedience to the Holy Imam, perseverance and striving. Haqiqat is the understanding of reality. Ma'rifat is the spiritual experience of the Noor (Light).

"Allah guideth unto His Light whom He Will".

Holy Qura'n, 24:35

After the death of our Holy Prophet the Muslims started to disintegrate and divided into various factions and sects, thus losing the real spirit of Islam of the Prophet's time. Anas bin Malik, a famous companion of the Holy Prophet, had reported: "Darkness prevailed over everything after the death of the Prophet. We had not yet finished his burial and we found our hearts were strangers to each other."²⁹ After the death of the Prophet the conspiracies of the enemy within had forced the true momineen, the Shias of Ali, to hide their faith to avoid confrontation. The use of the mosque as a sacred place was degraded when Amir Muawiya used the mosque for his personal grandeur. He ordered that after prayer the congregation should curse and abuse Mowla Ali from the pulpit and that this should be done throughout his kingdom.³⁰

During the Prophet's time the mosque was used for many purposes, one of which was: As a cultural centre. The prayer hall was considered sacred. The use of a mosque, even the compound, for any personal or business purpose was totally forbidden.³¹ The Holy Prophet ordered: "Respect your mosques and do not raise loud voices in talking."³² To keep a mosque clean and tidy is an act of high merit.³³ The Muslim women freely took part in all religious services and even attended the morning prayer.³⁴ Mothers brought their babies with them to the mosque. All this has been explained to make the reader understand the position of our jamatkhana from the Islamic point of view.

It is our tradition that every Ismaili must attend jamatkhana, morning and evening, for the obligatory prayer, for thanking God and for his own spiritual benefit, at least once daily.³⁵ A great importance is attached to the regular attendance for prayer in jamatkhana. It is an obligation, a duty. Those who do not attend jamatkhana will not be able to keep up the habit of praying regularly and punctually. They will drift away from the faith, gradually.³⁶ Our Holy Pir Shams said that those who do not attend jamatkhana regularly will turn into devils.³⁷ Daily attendance of jamatkhana, for prayer, is the first foundation of Faith.³⁸

The Holy Prophet said, "He who performs wudzu and leaves his house for the mosque to pray, gets the benefit of a person who performs the Hajj".³⁹ He said: "The sawaab of a prayer, performed with the jamat, is twenty-seven folds greater than if it is said alone".⁴⁰ Sawaab means spiritual benefit.

It is necessary and important to go to jamatkhana daily for ibadat (worship); one should go there with devotion and in a clean and pure state of mind, body and dress.⁴¹ The habit of sleeping or feeling drowsy in jamatkhana, during the religious activities, is denounced by our Holy Imam,⁴² because that is the House of Allah⁴³ and, therefore, it should be revered and considered as such. Thus, when we go to jamatkhana, we should prepare ourselves mentally and physically because we are going to meet the Lord. We may not see Him physically but He watches over us.

The Holy Prophet has said: "Verily, Allah is with the jamat." Wherever the jamat assembles for prayer, that place is a mosque or a jamatkhana, with all its blessings. He also said: "The entire earth, except graves and toilet rooms, is considered to be mosque".⁴⁴ Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had explained that even if only one Ismaili family lives in a town, the husband as the mukhi and his wife as the kameria should gather with their children as the jamat, in a corner of a room reserved for religious purposes. That was their jamatkhana.⁴⁵

On the 26th of July 1982, at the foundation-laying ceremony of the Darkhana Jamatkhana at Burnaby BC, our Holy Hazar Imam Mowlana Shah Karim al-Husaini spoke about the significance of a jamatkhana in the following historic words:

"A jamatkhana is a place
of congregation,
of order,
of peace,
of prayer,
of hope,
of humility, and
of brotherhood."

He further added:

"From it should come forth those THOUGHTS, those SENTIMENTS, those ATTITUDES, which bind men together and which unite. It has been conceived and will exist in a mood of friendship, courtesy and harmony."

GUTH JAMAT

Jamat means community, group and members of a tariqah as a whole. The word "guth" means a place of protection, gathering of the momineen in a jamatkhana for religious purpose. Thus, guth-jamat means members of the jamat present at a certain time, in jamatkhana, with their mukhi and kameria, appointed by the Holy Imam. There is no guth-jamat without the mukhi and the kameria.

Women sit in a separate section in the prayer hall where usually the wives of the mukhi and the kameria represent them and conduct all the ceremonies accordingly. All without exception follow the command of the mukhi. The Holy Prophet has said: Prayer (with the jamat) is like bathing in a canal for purification.⁴⁶ Pir Satgur Noor has said: The guth is like a lake in which there are countless pearls; swim in it and get the priceless pearls.⁴⁷ The spiritual benefits and blessing are the priceless pearls which are available only in the guth-jamat.

HAI ZINDAH QAYAM PAYA

*He (God) is the Alive, the Eternal (present here in jamatkhana).*⁴⁸

Every Ismaili, when entering the prayer hall, utters "Hai Zindah" meaning "Allah is Alive." This call is answered by the jamatbhai, standing at the entrance, with "Qayam Paya," that is, "He is Eternal and is present here (in this house). Then the person who comes in says: Allahuma sali ala Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad], bows his head humbly and enters. Everyone follows this practice strictly. It is reported by Ibn Maajah that the Holy Prophet used to utter "Bismillah wassalaam ala Rasoolillah" when entering the mosque. Sometimes he would say "Salli ala Mohammed wassalaam".⁴⁹

Allah had ordered the followers of Moses: "Enter the gate (of township) and prostrate and say: 'Hittatun' (Repentance). We will forgive you your sins and increase reward for the righteous."⁵⁰ Ibn Abi-Shibah has reported that Hazrat Ali said, "We are like Noah's Ark and the Gate of Repentance (Bab-e Hittah) for our people".⁵¹ Hence the entrance of a jamatkhana, being the House of Ali's Noor, is the Gate of Repentance, Bab-e Hittah.

Pir Sadruddin says, "He who says 'Hai Zindah' will get the sawaab (spiritual benefit) equal to an elephant given away in charity; and he who says 'Qayam Paya' will get the sawaab as if he has given a horse in charity. O momin, do this; you will get eternal reward."⁵² The Holy Prophet said: "He who comes early to attend the Juma (Friday) prayer will get the sawaab as if he has sacrificed a camel. The one who follows him will get the sawaab as if he has sacrificed a cow and he who follows him will get the sawaab of sacrificing a ram."⁵³

By uttering Hai Zindah Qayam Paya the momin prepares psychologically to be present before the Lord. The Holy Prophet says: "Worship God as if you see Him".⁵⁴ Our Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "He who does not see God (feeling God's presence) is a blind person".⁵⁵ Thus, Hai Zindah Qayam Paya is a prayer directed at one's self, an autosuggestion of faith and a feeling of the presence of the Divine. The Jamatkhana is the House of the Imam where the Noor of Imamate dwells night and day; therefore it is considered as the Paradise. It must be respected and revered highly. Every Ismaili is taught from the early years to say 'Hai Zindah' at the entrance. It is a declaration of his faith that the Noor of Allah is Alive, and is present in the Manifest Imam. The declaration of "Hai Zindah" is a sign of belonging to the Ismaili Batini Tariqah. The two Attributes of Allah, al-HAYY and al-QAYYOOM, from which the expression "Hai Zindah Qayam Paya" is derived, are remembered much by most of the Sufis in their meditation. The next step after entering the jamatkhana is to go to the mukhi or kamera for dua' karavi and to present any offering one has intended.

After taking a seat in the prayer hall a momin makes a sajdah (prostration) and recites a tasbeeh or two and then joins in singing the ginan being recited till the commencement of the holy dua'.

SAJDHAH

In Islam sajdah is prostration in worship. The forehead, the two knees and the palms of both hands must touch the ground simultaneously. It is a sign of utmost humility and submission to the Almighty. The prostration of the angels before Adam, mentioned in the Holy Quran, represented submission or surrender to Adam. A sajdah itself is an act of *ibadat* (worship) and forms an essential part of it. In case of a disability, when complete prostration on the ground is not possible, a low bow is permitted in Islam.⁵⁶

In our jamatkhana, when the attendance is full, it is not possible to bring the forehead to the floor in sajdah. Instead, bowing down as much as possible is accepted as an intended sajdah. But whenever and wherever it is possible to make a complete sajdah it should be performed. The Holy Prophet has said that God is nearest to His servant when he is in the state of a sajdah. He also said: "Keep your eyes on the spot of the sajdah while you are praying and do not see hither and thither."⁵⁷ He also said that if one cannot find a place to make a sajdah then it can be done even on the back of the hand.⁵⁸

COMMENCEMENT OF THE HOLY DUA'

The first dua' is known as "sanji dua'"—'sanj' means: evening, dusk, sunset. This is our first dua' because the date changes at 6 p.m. according to the Islamic calendar. It is the obligatory prayer. At the time of the holy dua' the mukhi says: "Bismillah". The leader of the dua' asks the mukhi: "Amray mukhi sahib." (I ask the order of the honourable mukhi). The mukhi replies: "Amray Hazar Imam (the Order of the Hazar Imam). Since the mukhi has been appointed by the Holy Imam, he has the authority to give order on behalf of the Hazar Imam. The mukhi has transferred his power to the leader of the dua' and himself follows him like all in the jamat. As soon as the holy dua' is over the mukhi resumes his authority and recites a tasbeeh and prays for the good of all.

Traditionally, the duty of leading the dua' in the jamat rests upon the Holy Pir, who is the holder of the Noor of Nabi. Our Holy Prophet always used to lead the prayer. He never allowed anyone to lead the prayer in all his twenty-three years of prophethood. I was told by an eyewitness, Sayyid Mushtaqali Didarali, that many a time our Holy Pirs Aga Ali Shah and Aga Shihabuddin Shah, had led dua' in the jamat at Darkhana, Bombay (now Mumbai), whenever they visited the jamat. Thus, the person who leads the dua' is actually doing it on behalf of the Pir.

UPSTANDING TASBEEH

The jamat stands up for the obligatory tasbeeh and prayer for the mushkil-asaan of the entire jamat of the world, known as "jumla jamat", as taught by our Pir Shams. Sometimes a person may request the mukhi for a special prayer for his mushkil, so the mukhi includes it in the upstanding tasbeeh. This is the process for requesting the jamat to perform a personal mushkil-asaan.

While standing and praying in tasbeeh the correct way is to raise your hands opposite to the heart, palms upward joined in the form of a bowl. This procedure applies to all situations; whenever a person prays to God his hands should be raised to the level of his heart in the begging mode. Pray as if you are begging to Him.

The lovers of God perform tasbeehs often while sitting on the floor, but they also stand as a gesture of greater humility and pray. We, therefore, stand while performing certain tasbeehs in our mijalas (*sing:majlis*) as well as after the evening prayer. We stand respectfully with forearms across the chest, and we cast our eyes on the ground with the awareness that we are standing in front of our Omnipresent Supreme Master. At the end of the tasbeeh we join our two hands shaped like a bowl, and hold them in front of our heart as we pray and beg for mushkil aasan. Finally the members of the jamat take their seat. A sacred ginan is recited.

RECITATION OF A GINAN

When a ginan is recited, all should sing in low tune and try to understand its message. The Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah told us that the ginans are the interpretation of the Holy Quran.

Certain ginans are meant for special occasions. For example: The *munajaat* is sung only on the holy Imamate Day. There are ginans to be recited only on Thursday. These are known as *choghadias*. Whenever there is ghatpaat ceremony special ginans are recited. These "*ghatpaat na ginano*" are not sung when there is no ghatpaat. It is a mark of respect to obey the Pir.

According to the Islamic calendar the date changes in the evening at 6 PM. The night forms the first half of the day, while the second half is marked by daylight. The first day of the week is Friday. The night beginning at 6:00 PM on Thursday evening and ending at 6:00 AM on Friday morning is the first half of Friday, according to the Islamic calendar. On Thursday evenings we are told to recite a *choghadia*. A *choghadia* is a song in praise of the Lord on a propitious time such as the beginning of the new day and also at the beginning of the week. These *choghadias* are qasaid (*sig*: qasidah) in the vernacular. Thus the *choghadia* is recited on Thursday evenings after the upstanding tasbeeh. At the end of the *choghadia* a tasbeeh of Pir-Shah is recited in shukrguzari by the mukhi who begins with the words: "*Tasbeeh kadho Pir Sadaruddin jey choghadiayji, haqq naam Pirshah.*" This tasbeeh consists of 33 beads.

For the morning session, at the end of the bandgi session, either a choghadia---one of twenty four choghadias---or a holy farman is recited before the ghatpaat ceremony is performed.

READING OF A HOLY FARMAN

A holy farman is read in the jamat to remind the momineen about the guidance of the Imam of the time. Mowla Ali declared that he was the Speaking Quran. The holy farmans are the guidance of the Holy Quran and must be treated with great respect, and should be handled with care. Every time when a holy farman is read we say a salwaat and then say Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem before the farman is read. Every Ismaili must read a holy farman once or twice a day to keep afresh his memory about his obligation towards his faith.

The foundation of our iman (faith) depends upon the degree of ones obedience to the Imam of the time.

SECOND HOLY DUA'

After the recitation of the holy farman, the second holy dua' known as "sumani dua'" is performed. After the dua' a usual tasbeeh of mushkil-aasan is performed by the kamaria, then the "dua'ay khair" is offered by the mukhi or the kamaria as follows:

Dua' niyyat khair.	Let us pray with the pure intent.
Ilahi Tu khair kariyain.	O my Lord! Bestow upon us all goodness.
Aaquibat jo kair kariyain.	Let there be goodness in Hereafter.
Ya Ali Tu khair kariyain.	O Ali! Bestow upon us all goodness.
Khair ji vainti Shah To-jey dargah main qabool kar Noor Mowlana Shah Karim al-Husaini Hazar Imam.	O Noor Mowlana Shah Karim al-Husaini Hazar Imam please accept this humble prayer for all goodness.
Ash-hado-un-la ilaha illallah.*	I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah.
Wa ash-hado-unna Muhammedan Rasoolallah.*	And I bear witness that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah.
Wa ash-hadu-un Ali-yun Amirul momineen Ali-yullah.*	And I bear Witness that the Commander of the faithful Ali is Allah's Ali.

**At this moment keep the palm of your right hand at the place of sajdah and rub it across your face three times as the Holy Prophet used to do.⁵⁹ This will brighten your face with spiritual hue.*

PERSONAL OFFERING

After the Dua' Niyyat Khair, the mukhi or kameria announces: "Khatto thaar sufro, dua', mehmani, Allah mehriya." The members of the jamat are free to move and offer their personal mehmani or fulfil their vows or anything else if desired.

"Thaar" means a plate or a tray; "sufro" means placement of food on the low tables (paat). Those who wish to offer a mehmani to the Holy Shah-Pir may do so. Someone may wish to make a ruhani dua' so that the sawaab from it goes to a deceased momin. All Muslims, regardless of the tariqah or madhhab they belong to, believe that an act of charity or prayer performed for the benefit of the deceased is beneficial to the soul of the deceased.⁶⁰

VOLUNTARY OFFERING

Sometimes the mureed wishes to offer smething for the swaab or a vow. It is highly commended and appreciated in Islam. Voluntary offering is not restricted to cash. A material help or some personal service is equally appreciated. It is an act of service to God.

GUTH JO DORO

In every society there are superstitious people, there are weak minded people, there are people with wavering faith. Such people need some kind of mental or spiritual support, some kind of assuagement. These are the people who look for a charm, a talisman, an amulet, as a token of spiritual support. For this reason our elders, in the past, have created the guth-jo-doro; also known as Ghatpaat-jo-doro.

It is a cotton twine of seven strands about ten inches long having seven knots about one and a half inches apart. At each knot the sacred "Naad Ali" is recited by the person, who prepares this doro by the order of the mukhi, to make it spiritually effective. It is placed by the order of the mukhi around the plate, under the main bowl (the kumbh) before the beginning of the ghatpaat ceremony and collected after the ceremony is over. The mukhi, or the mukhiani among the ladies, gives it to the seeker, with the blessing on behalf of the Holy Shah-Pir. Usually the thread is tied around the right wrist but it can be tied around the neck or the right upper arm.

Those who use it, say it is effective. The practice of Ismaili faith, with understanding, improves the spiritual awareness of the follower. He does not depend on amulets or any psycho-magician.

DARKHANA

The root of the word "darkhana" is DARI KHANA, a residence with big windows, normally used for the royal meetings.⁶¹ With frequent usage it has become DARKHANA, the Seat of Imamate, the residence of the Holy Imam e-Zaman, and as such, it is the Centre or HQ for communication and guidance for the Ismailis all over the world. Officially, the present Darkhana is the Khadak jamatkhana at Bombay⁶². It was appointed by Mowlana Imam Aga Shah Hasanali Shah, after he moved to India from Iran in 1842. The first mukhi of the Darkhana was Hasanhai, who died in 1878. The Holy Imam appointed Ladakhbhai Haji as the new mukhi. The status of the Darkhana has not changed since. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had lived most of his life in Europe yet the Darkhana remained in Bombay.⁶³ Our Holy Hazar Imam has designated some jamatkhans as territorial Darkhanas such as in London, Vancouver, Lisbon, and Karachi but the World Darkhana remains in Bombay. As a matter of fact the Darkhana is situated at Aiglemont though it is undeclared. It is the sole prerogative of the Imam to designate his Darkhana.

The Holy Prophet had declared the Masjid e-Nabawi, in Medina, as his headquarters (Darkhana). It was the Islamic Centre of guidance and command. Mowla Ali had shifted his Darkhana to Kufa from Medina.

The two main compilers of hadith collections, Bukhari and Muslim, have reported that the Holy Prophet had said that a prayer performed in his mosque (Darkhana) was a thousand times better than prayer said elsewhere, except in the Kaba.⁶⁴ About the sanctity and importance of a mosque the Prophet said:

- Each step taken towards the mosque is a charity for the sake of God.⁶⁵
- Sit in mosque as near each other as possible.⁶⁶
- To attend mosque for prayer is better than praying whole night at home.⁶⁷
- Don't go to mosque if you are unclean.⁶⁸
- Do not stretch your legs in front of you while you are sitting in the mosque.⁶⁹
- Children without escort and mad persons are not allowed to enter a mosque.⁷⁰
- It was a habit of the Holy Prophet to visit the mosque before going to his residence whenever he returned from a trip outside Medina.⁷¹
- Do not create disturbance in the mosque.⁷²
- Leaders of the jamat should sit in the front rows.⁷³

All these injunctions of the Prophet apply to our jamatkhana.

CODE OF CONDUCT IN JAMATKHANA

1. The jamatkhana is the House of Noor e-Imamate, therefore, it must be treated with great respect.
2. Men and women sit in their respective sections. They should not move to the other section until the ceremonies are over.
3. Pause at the entrance of the prayer hall, bow and say Hai Zindah in a low voice.
4. Try to come to jamatkhana a few minutes before the time of the holy dua', pay your homage to the Lord at the hands of the mukhi or the kameeria. Sit in the front rows, as near as possible. Greet your brothers on your right and on your left with a smile and *Ya Ali madad*. Our Holy Prophet said that a smile is an act of charity.
5. Take out your tasbeeh and say "ASTAGHFIRULLAH" 33-times and SALWAAT 33-times before the prayer. There is a Holy Farman of Mowlana Hazar Imam to keep a tasbeeh in your pocket always. Remember the Lord frequently during the day whenever it is possible.
6. Be courteous toward the brothers who follow you in the queue, for dua' karavi or when in the line for the holy niaz. Be brief in your performance of the ceremonies.
7. Symbolically a jamatkhana is the Paradise on earth, hence utmost cleanliness should be observed. Have a wash or bath before coming to jamatkhana, and if possible, use some non-alcoholic perfume. Our Holy Prophet liked perfume.
8. It is bad manners to sneeze or cough loudly. Try to repress it with a handkerchief.
9. Do not blow your nose loudly. Gently press your nostrils in your handkerchief and wipe it clean without noise.
10. Do not chew gum or candy or beetle leaf or anything in jamatkhana. It is bad manners and a sign of disrespect.
11. Do not stretch your legs in front of you where you prostrate. If you are tired from sitting, change your posture without stretching your legs in front of you, or go out and come back.
12. Sit or stand in humility and respectfully at all times in the presence of the Lord.
13. Avoid talking. Listen attentively to the Holy Farman or the Ginan being sung or the sermon being delivered by an alwaiz. It is part of our worship and our spiritual obligation.
14. It is respectful not to go to the main paat for dua' karavi during the recitation of the Holy Farman or a Taliqah or while a sermon is delivered.
15. Do not engage in worldly affairs, with others, in the prayer hall; go out and talk.
16. If you do not want to take away a Naadi, go out of the prayer hall immediately after the prayer, to avoid crowding.
17. It is bad manners to reserve a seat by keeping your tasbeeh at the place. You may keep a handkerchief but certainly not the tasbeeh. Every bead of your tasbeeh is charged spiritually with the Divine Name of the Lord. You have used it hundreds or thousands of times with the Divine Name. A tasbeeh is a symbol of religiosity and devotion. Respect it.
18. It is contrary to the humility of a worshipper to sit in a chair inside the prayer hall, during the prayer and other religious ceremonies. Chairs may be provided for the invalids only outside the prayer hall. A person who is able to sit on the floor but chooses to sit in a chair violates the spiritual bond between him and the Lord. He commits a sin of insulting God. Nowhere does a mosque accommodate chairs because it is un-Islamic.
19. It is improper for a person to use a chair, even outside the prayer hall, if he or she is able to sit on the floor. It is an act of disrespect. Be humble in the presence of your Lord and sit on the floor.
20. It is a farman of our Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah not to allow outsiders in to jamatkhana. ⁷⁴ According to our belief and the "fundamental principles" of Tariqat, the Ismailis are the spiritual children of the Holy Imam. He is the Spiritual Father and Spiritual Mother. Outsiders can not attend the gathering of the Spiritual Family. A spiritual child is a person who has performed bay'at of the Hazar Imam.
21. Attending jamatkhana in black dress is contrary to the principles of our faith. It is what distinguishes the Ismailis from other Shias who mourn their Imams by wearing black. We do not, because our Imam is always alive and present. ⁷⁵ Moreover, it was the colour of our enemies.
22. Do not eat or drink or chew anything during the Prayer. It is bad manners and an act of disrespect in the presence of the Lord.

INCENSE IN JAMATKHANA

Incense has a traditional link with religion throughout the ages. In Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity, and even in Islam, the practice of burning incense is common and essential at all religious places and ceremonies.

In the authorized version of the Bible the word "incense" is translated into two wholly distinct Hebrew words. In various passages in the latter portion of Isaiah (xl-lxvi), in Jeremiah and in Chronicles it represents the Hebrew 'lebonah,' usually rendered "frankincense".⁷⁶ The word lebonah is *lobaan* which is used extensively to refer to incense throughout the eastern countries. Lobaan, also known as benzoin, is resinous juice, like gum, of a certain tree.

The burning of incense is mentioned in the Holy Bible at various places. For instance: "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning; when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it; a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations".⁷⁷ Islam continued this tradition. The Holy Prophet ordered the burning of incense in the mosques.⁷⁸ Ibn Maajah has reported that the Prophet emphatically ordered the burning of benzoin and frankincense, particularly on Friday, in all mosques.⁷⁹

Pir Sadaruddin wrote the following prayer, to be recited while incense is burning, in profound reverence to the utensils of sacred Ghatpaat and to purify the atmosphere:

Frankincense and benzoin are burning,
Amber and sandalwood are burning,
This incense is burning before the Lord, the Prophets and the Spirits
It is used and enjoyed by all Prophets and Pirs;
It descends from Heaven,
It purifies the vessels of Ghatpaat,
The Lord is Truth, the Everliving, the Everpresent.⁸⁰

We burn incense daily, morning and evening, everywhere in our jamatkhana. It is our tradition since the time of our Holy Prophet. The sweet smell of *lobaan* is a heavenly substance. It is not uncommon that we, sometime, smell *lobaan* in our houses when no *lobaan* was burning. This is a sign that a ruhani (spirit) has visited and has brought us blessings. Before reciting the Holy Quran a Muslim must burn incense and it should remain burning till the end of the recitation. We burn incense while a Taliqah mubarak is recited, and also during the ceremony of Aab e-Safa, Ghatpaat.

AGARBATTI IN JAMATKHANA

The use of agarbatti, joss stick, is shunned by people because it is made of unpleasant material, such as saw dust, glue and wood stick in the centre. People are deceived by its fragrance, which is mixed with the harmful smell of other ingredients. Burning agarbatti produces carbon, which harms the atmosphere. Lobaan or dhooop produces antiseptic elements, purifies the atmosphere, cleans the lungs and smells unique. There is no harmful carbon in it. Lobaan ointment cures even some stubborn skin diseases. The smell and smoke of lobaan kills harmful bacteria and repels flying insects inside the home. Nearly a thousand years ago our Holy Pir Satgur Noor had mentioned that the fragrance of "agar and kastoori" (incense: benzoin and musk) was heavenly smell.⁸¹ Burning incense in jamatkhana is an essential part of our religious ceremonies and one of our oldest traditions.

CHAIRS IN JAMATKHANA

The provision of chairs in the prayer hall of jamatkhana is unIslamic. No mosque in the world entertains this practice. It is an act of disrespect and immodesty to sit in a chair while prayer is being recited in the jamatkhana. The use of chairs in a mosque is un-Islamic. Humility is a part of prayer. A jamatkhana is not a Christian church. Members of the jamat who cannot sit on the floor due to a disability may sit in a chair outside the prayer hall, with the consent of the mukhi or the kamera.

MUKHI and KAMERIA

Mukhi and kamera are the Imam's representatives in every jamat. The mukhi is the Master of Ceremonies and the kamera is his deputy, who assists him in handling the accounts and affairs of the jamat and the jamatkhana. Our Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said that mukhi was his right hand and kamera was his left hand. The mukhi of a jamat facilitates and encourages the jamat to follow the traditions of our faith and its ethics. He has no authority to abrogate or alter any tradition or ceremony without a prior permission from the Holy Imam because he is the representative not a partner in the Imamate.

Among the Sunni Muslims there is an "imam of the mosque," also known as "mullah," who looks after the affairs of the mosque. The imam of a mosque is elected by individuals who are regular members of the mosque; and thus he represents them. Mukhis and kamarias are appointed by the Holy Imam e-Zaman as his representatives. They serve as a liaison between Hazar Imam and the jamat. The Shia doctrine has no system of election in religion. Religion is a divine province.

During the Arabic period of our history, a mukhi was known as amir, ma'zoon, aamil or shaykh; and in the Persian period he was known as vizier or aziz or khalifa. The word mukhi was coined, in India, by our Pir Satgur Noor, which means a chief, a leader, a convener. The first mukhi was Rajah Jaysingh Siddhraj of Paatan, Gujrat in India.

The word kamera is derived from kamdar, assistant.⁸² There is no mention of kamera in our ginans. In fact a district kamdar was appointed by the Vakil of the Imam to go around the jamats of the district to preach and collect religious dues. Later, when communications improved and the faithful themselves brought their contributions to the Centre, the kamdar (now called kamera) assisted the mukhi and took his seat next to him. Today they both are appointed by the Hazar Imam. They must be respected and trusted because they represent the Holy Shah-Pir in the jamat. They convey the blessings of the Imam and accept offerings on his behalf. It was the habit of the Holy Prophet to bless the person who brought him any offering.

The mukhi and kamera, on their part, realize their high position and responsibility. They take care of the jamat as they are responsible for the religious

affairs of the jamat on behalf of the Holy Imam. Therefore they must not both be absent from the jamat at the same time. One of them must remain with the jamat if the other needs to be absent for some unavoidable circumstance. Every jamat must have a mukhi and a kamera. Without them the jamat is a headless body. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said that if there was a single family living in a town, the husband should sit as the mukhi and his wife and the children as the jamat. They should set aside one room to be used as the jamatkhana.⁸³

It is our tradition that one must never argue with or disobey the mukhi or the kamera while they are sitting on the Throne of the Imam in the jamatkhana. When they are outside the jamatkhana we can politely and respectfully explain our point. They are like parents to the jamat because they represent the Holy Spiritual Father and Spiritual Mother; therefore, it is enjoined upon them to look after each member of the jamat with care and affection. In jamatkhana no one is above mukhi and kamera who are usually kind, sympathetic, patient, polite and tolerant because they have to deal with a wide range of personalities in the jamat. Therefore, they are expected to maintain the highest degree of ethics and clean habits because they are sitting on the Seat of the Holy Imam. For this reason they are always properly dressed suitable to their position.. So, they must not wear black dress while sitting on the Throne of the living Imam. Their service is exemplary and an act of great sacrifice of time, money and energy. The same applies to the mukhiani and the kameriani.

It is our age old tradition for a family to invite mukhi-kamera to some happy occasion (betrothal, marriage, laying of the foundation of a building, opening ceremony of a business, giving a name to a baby, etc). Their presence fills the occasion with the blessings of the Holy Imam. Whenever a person is seriously sick we seek mukhi-kamera's blessing for the quick recovery of health. If someone is close to death we request them to pray for the person and give a 'chhanto'⁸⁴ on behalf of the Shah-Pir for the "purification of the person's soul".

The mukhi and the kamera of any mandli or majlis have the same authority of accepting the dues and offerings from the faithful, while they are sitting on their 'gaadi', the Seat.

The mukhi and the kamera of a jamat are also responsible for the preaching, over and above other religious ceremonies. Although the preaching is arranged by the ITREB, in the jamatkhana it is the responsibility of the mukhi-kamera. Preaching is an important and essential part of religion--in all religions. In the olden days the mukhi himself used to deliver a sermon regularly in the jamat. Preaching is teaching, which enhances the religious knowledge of the momineen, which in turn improves the faith and ethics in the jamat. If a person loses faith for want of knowledge and renounces our Tariqah, then, according to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, one half of his sins are charged to his parents and the other half to the mukhi and the kamera.⁸⁵ Therefore, it is most essential to set up preaching

sessions regularly. The Holy Imam has also made it clear that thirty to forty-five minutes of preaching (wa'z), after the Dua', are necessary.⁸⁶

It is the duty of the mukhi or the kamera, as a matter of principle as well as of tradition, to pray for and on behalf of the jamat in their affairs of *deen and duniya*. The most important part of their obligation is to lead the upstanding tasbeeh in the jamat, morning and evening. They represent the Holy Shah-Pir in the jamat, likewise, they also submit and present the supplications of the jamat in the Huzur pur Noor of the Holy Imam. Because of this twofold duty they should not leave their seats in the jamat at the same time until the ceremonies are over.

Since the time of our Pir Satgur Noor the appointment of a mukhi was life long, until his death. In some countries it was hereditary. This practice or system lasted up to the first quarter of the twentieth century. After the Diamond Jubilee of our Imam Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah in 1946, the system was changed to a limited period of appointment by the Imam. The mukhi and kamera are the custodians of our religion and its tradition. It is enjoined upon them to keep up the tradition without any alteration in the ceremonies unless it is ordered by the Holy Imam.

JAMATBHAI

Jamatbhai means "Brother of the Jamat". It is a title of respect. According to Islamic tradition he is the caretaker of jamatkhana. Our Holy Prophet said: "He who looks after a mosque is a good Muslim."⁸⁷ He appointed Bilal as the jamatbhai, the caretaker of the mosque in Medina. Bilal's duties included the arrangements of water, light, cleanliness, incense in the mosque, delivering the azaan, and various jamati matters. He also served as his Master's personal valet.⁸⁸

Pir Shams had reorganized jamatkhana in India and China, more than 170 years after Pir Satgur Noor. He had appointed a mukhi and a "thanaak" in each jamatkhana. The word thanak means the resident keeper. There was no kamera in those days. The name of the mukhi was Musafar and the name of the thanak was Vasta, of the chief jamatkhana in Bangla Desh. The jamatkhana was accommodated in a bhandara (a godown) for secrecy.⁸⁹

The system of bringing the bundle of ghatpaat by the jamatbhai to the person responsible for conducting the ceremony was introduced by Pir Shams. In those days the thanak was conducting the ceremony of ghatpaat.⁹⁰ Later, when the position of kamera was created, the jamatbhai took up the duty as a caretaker of jamatkhana and its water and light and cleaning services etc., under the supervision of the mukhi and the kamera. They made his appointment, either full time or as a part time volunteer. A jamatbhai is required in every jamatkhana. One of the duties of the jamatbhai is to stand at the entrance of the prayer hall and answer the call of every entrant's "HAI ZINDAH" with "QAYAM PAYA". If the

jamatbhai is busy with some other duty, someone in the jamat may take this duty. There is a great significance in the position of the jamatbhai. In our Tariqah we believe that jamatkhana is the House of the Noor of Imamate and as such it is the Paradise on earth. According to our Holy Prophet the Angel Rizwan is standing at the entrance of the Paradise to greet every entrant.⁹¹

In our Tariqah there are many significant symbols of heavenly existence. For example: The bowl and cups, of our holy aab'e safa, are the Pool of Kauther and the drinking bowls (small cups) in the Paradise. The jamatkhana is Paradise symbolically. The jamatbhai, at the entrance of the prayer hall, is representing angel Rizwa'n standing at the entrance of the Paradise. The seat of the mukhi and the kamera in jamatkhana is the Throne of Imamate symbolically. The Noor of Imamate in jamatkhana is the Noor of Allah in the Paradise.

AZAAN

We have no system of azaan because it is not a fundamental principle of Islam. It is a regular ritual among the Muslims and may be useful as a reminder. There was no time piece, like a personal watch or public clock, during the Prophet's time, hence a crier was appointed to announce the time of the prayer. In this modern world everyone is wearing a watch and mindful of keeping up time. We have no system of such a call to prayer. It was adopted after the Hijrah in Medina to call the believers to congregational prayer. Most of the Sufi Tariqahs in Islam do not follow the practice of azaan because they have no rigid rules of Shariah.

Azaan is simply a call of a muazzin to invite Muslims to prayer. The famous Muslim scholar Muhammad Ali writes: "When the Muslims came to Medina, they used, at first, to have a time appointed for prayer, but, this arrangement being unsatisfactory, a consultation was held at which suggestions for ringing a bell or blowing a horn having been rejected, Omar proposed that a man should be appointed who should call out for prayer, at which the Holy Prophet ordered Bilal to call out for prayers in the words of adhan (azaan) as we now have it".⁹² Actually Hazrat Omar had suggested that a man should be appointed to go around the town calling out the Muslims for prayer. But it was modified to the present system after a suggestion from Abdullah bin Zaid.⁹³

The practices of a tariqah are reserved for its members only. The azaan is an invitation to all; therefore, no Sufi tariqah uses the azaan, because the tariqah is not open to all.

BANDO

In our jamatkhana the jamatbhai stands at the entrance and cries out 'BANDO!' meaning "the servant of God is present." The cry of "Bando!" announces the commencement of prayer. In some jamats the jamatbhai cries "DUA' KE' RASSO ALLAH MEHRIYA" (join the Dua', may God's mercy be upon you). There is some significance in this practice. It is like saying "attention please". In many religions there is some way or method to draw the attention of the worshippers. Since a jamat is composed of members of all ages, a call for bringing members together to prepare for the prayer is necessary. It is a call drawing everyone's attention.

The call of "Bando!" is like the call of "QAD QA'MATIS SALA" (rise for the prayer) in the mosques around the world, before the prayer starts. A call of 'bando' is an age old practice in our jamatkhanas to make everyone attentive.

Note: The call of "BANDO" has been abolished by the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board in some countries, and in Canada since 11th of July, 2000.

PURIFICATION

(Tahaarat)

Islam teaches purification of the soul, mind and body. Prayer is the means for spiritual purification, good deeds for mental purification, and water for physical purification. Allah loves those who purify themselves.⁹⁴ All religions, especially Islam, lay a great emphasis upon cleanliness.

It is a common practice in our Tariqah that everyone takes a bath before coming to jamatkhana. However, there are circumstances when a bath may not be possible, as when one is sick or old; in that case they can have a wash or perform a wudzu. Most members of the Jamat in the past were engaged in physical labour; they preferred to take a bath before going to jamatkhana. This has been our tradition for hundreds of years. There are scores of references in our ginans and holy farmans about taking a bath for purification. Our Holy Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said: "Take a bath for purification, then remember your Lord."⁹⁵

Our skin is porous. Consequently, toxic substances can pass through the skin by way of perspiration. According to a ginan the human body has 35 million pores.⁹⁶ These microscopic openings have tiny hair at the edge, which are also breathing. Unclean skin becomes dirty and diseased, its pores become clogged and emit offensive odor. This state of affair is harmful to health if it persists for long. For this reason the Creator has enjoined upon the faithful to keep clean and remain in a physically purified state before Him.

The first step toward physical cleanliness⁹⁷ is wudzu or ablution. The root of this Arabic word is *wadza'*, which means shape or beauty. In Islam it is obligatory to perform wudzu before prayer. Allah says:

"O you who believe, before you rise for your prayers, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows and rub your heads with wet palms and wash your feet up to the ankles. And if you are unclean, purify yourselves."⁹⁷

According to the last sentence a complete bath is necessary after a seminal evacuation. If a bath is taken, wudzu is not necessary. Personal hygiene is necessary for purification. Wudzu or partial wudzu is needed after a visit to a

washroom. In modern society the use of toilet paper is common, but from the Islamic point of view use of water is necessary for a thorough cleanup. If water is not available, paper or clay or cloth may be used for cleansing purposes. Later, water should be used for a perfect purification and for good health. Those who do not use water for personal hygiene, stink. Similarly, superfluous hair should be removed and nails should be trimmed regularly. In a report by Bibi Ayisha the Holy Prophet instructed the Muslims to follow these ten habits for the sake of their religion:

1. Trim the moustache over the upper lip
2. Circumcise male offspring
3. Use a toothbrush regularly
4. Suck water through nose
5. Trim your nails
6. Clean the areas between the fingers
7. Remove the hair of the armpits
8. Remove pubic hair
9. Use water for nature's call for cleanliness
10. Wash the mouth after eating.⁹⁸

Observing physical cleanliness affects the mental state, which in turn improves thinking. Allah loves those who keep clean. "...Allah loves the purifiers."⁹⁹

WUDZU (WUDHU)

As stated above the first precondition for physical cleanliness in Islam is wudzu, ablution. In Islam it is a law to perform wudzu before prayer. Wudzu, or partial wudzu, is necessary after a nature's call. It is also absolutely necessary to use water after the exclusive use of toilet paper. But in the event of scarcity or unavailability of water, toilet paper or cloth or clay may be used for cleanliness. Similarly the superfluous hair should be removed.¹⁰⁰ The Holy Prophet said: "Trim your nails frequently. Look smart and clean." These are very minor details of life but they play an important part in the preservation of cleanliness and health.

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "When you go for prayer (to jamatkhana) go willingly with the fear of God. Before leaving your house take a bath, be clean and pure so that God may be pleased with you."¹⁰¹ We are also told in our ginans to "take a bath, purify yourself and then remember your Lord."¹⁰²

TAYAMMUM

Most of Arabia is desert, so water is scarce. Allah allowed the use of dust to clean the body. This practice is known as tayammum. Allah enjoined upon the Muslims to perform tayammum when water was not available. Tayammum is ablution with dust instead of water. Allah has commanded:

"...and if you find not water, then go to clean,
high ground and rub your faces and your hands
with some of it"¹⁰³.

This also applies to our personal hygiene. If there is no water to wash our private parts after natural evacuation, then use toilet paper; however, a thorough wash is advisable when water is available. The purpose is cleanliness of the body.

In modern times we generally live in cities or towns where water is readily available. Therefore the question of tayammum does not arise.

CLOTHES

Among all the living beings only humans cover their bodies with some material. In the beginning, when man became aware of his nakedness, he started covering his shame with a leaf. After some progress he used hide and skins of various animals. After further progress he invented cloth to cover his body-- also for pride and vanity. Technology has created thousands of varieties, colours, designs and qualities of texture and material. Various cultures and societies have invented their own customs, colours and designs for distinction such as uniforms, certain patterns and quality.

Scientific studies have revealed that the colour of the garments we wear and the colour of the environment such as inside the house we live, affects the mood of the person who lives there. For instance:

White-	is a sign of purity, piety, peace and coolness;
Red-	is hot, agitating, hostile and selfish;
Yellow-	is humble, generous and spiritual;
Blue-	conduces pride, ego and authority;
Green-	depicts softness, weakness and service;
Indigo-	Induces selfishness, anger, carelessness;
Black-	is the sign of mourning, creates sadness, depression and gloom.

We have been instructed by our Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah that, "when you go for prayer, wear simple, clean and decent clothes".¹⁰⁴ To wear indecent and improper dress is a sign of moral depravity; and it reflects the mentality of the wearer. The believers are ordered to "lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them".¹⁰⁵ The successful believers are those

"who are humble in their prayers, who keep aloof from what is vain, who act aiming at purification, and who guard their modesty".¹⁰⁶

Many people have a tendency of following others blindly, without thinking about good or bad. Allah says,

"O men follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge;

for the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that".¹⁰⁷

Simple clothes depict humility and the purity of mind of the wearer while expensive, gaudy and conspicuous dresses, particularly in a place of worship, are the sign of egoistic personality. Clean and respectful clothes should be worn. Allah says:

"O children of Adam, we have sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and for smartness; and clothing that guards against evil, that is the best. This is the revelation of Allah, that you may be mindful. Let not Satan cause you to fall into affliction."¹⁰⁸

Clothing has some relationship with morality. The words 'libaasut-taqwa' in the verse means the clothing that guards against evil. Indecent clothing reveals the indecent nakedness of the body which spreads immorality. Again, Allah has mentioned this clearly in the following verse:

"O children of Adam, Look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not prodigal. Allah does not like the prodigals".¹⁰⁹

The word adornment stands for decency and good looking; thus, clothing should be respectful, clean and decent befitting the holy place like jamatkhana. Embroidered clothes, shining dresses for show and obnoxious fashion garment (like sleeveless dresses, mini skirts and tight pants etc. particularly among women) and black clothes are condemned by our Imam.¹¹⁰

According to our Holy Prophet the woman who attracts men by wearing indecent dresses and immodest behaviour is a sinner.¹¹¹ He was ordered to convey to the Muslims the following message:

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is Aware of what they do."¹¹²

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to draw their veils over their bosoms and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands...."¹¹³

Mowlana Hazar Imam had sent the following holy Taliqah to the jamats of Africa

25th October, 1967

My beloved spiritual children,

From year to year customs and tradition in human clothing are changing and it has become necessary to draw your attention to the fact that when you go to jamatkhana you should do so in proper and suitable attire. I do not want those spiritual children who have done well in a worldly manner to make demonstration of their success nor do I wish clothes to be worn which are not compatible with the practice of your faith in an atmosphere of calm and serenity.

The aforementioned matters are universal and binding principles of Islam and must be followed by all Muslims, for indeed these principles were established by the Prophet himself. I give my most affectionate paternal loving blessings to all beloved spiritual children of Africa.

Yours Affectionately,
AGA KHAN

BLACK CLOTHES

Black clothes are against our Ismaili tradition. Black was the colour of our enemies, the Abbasids, during their caliphate. They were the murderers of hundreds of people of the Fatimids. Black is the colour of those who believe their Imam was slain by Yezid. They also believe that their last Imam had gone in hiding and they have been mourning on both the occasions.

Ismailis believe that Imamate is perpetual; it is everlasting, never disappears. The Noor of Imamate is always present. The physical body of an Imam may die but Imam never dies. We are the only people who have buried the earthly bodies of their Imam one day and rejoiced and celebrated, with all happiness, the enthronement of the succeeding Imam the next day.

Those who wear black, particularly in jamatkhana or in religious functions, are ignorant of our faith and its traditions. Such people have no respect for their faith and the Imam.¹¹⁴ It is a fact that black colour absorbs ultraviolet rays of the sun which harms the skin of the wearer.

Abdullah bin Omru Aas has reported that he was wearing clothes dyed in the bark of the *kusm* when he went to see the Holy Prophet, who told him to shun such

clothes as black was the colour of the kafireen. The Prophet ordered him to go and burn those clothes.¹¹⁵ Speaking about his enemies and the enemies of his Ahl-Bait, he said: "The sign of our enemies will be that they will wear black clothes."¹¹⁶

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had made the following holy farman to the ladies at Karachi, on 29th of April, 1920:

"Why have you come here, in front (of me) wearing black clothes. It is not good (for you) to come to jamatkhana wearing black clothes. You must have read my farmans I had made in Zanzibar about it. I am not happy at all to see you here in such (black) and expensive dresses."¹¹⁷

DUA' KARAABI (DUA' ISTIGHFAR)

To err is human. The human being is weak and forgetful. Everyone, without exception, makes mistakes and commits sinful deeds. It means that he violates the Divine Law frequently. Temptation, greed, ego and selfishness etc. make him a rebel of Allah. For a defiant and unrepentant person there is a punishment but for those who realize and repent, Allah has ample mercy and forgiveness for them. Allah says:

"And He it is Who accepteth repentance from His servant and pardons the evil deeds, and He knoweth what you do."¹¹⁸

Accordingly, every Ismaili begs for Allah's pardon in these words:

"Toboh, toboh taqseedar bando sirta'pa guney gaar
Ya Shah toon bakshiyain Bakshanhaar."

(Meaning:

I beg Thy pardon, I beg Thy pardon
O Lord, I am wholly at fault. Thou art the Forgiver.)

It is the substance of the following Quranic *ayah*:

"Anta subhaanaka inni kuntu minaz-zaalimeen."¹¹⁹

(Meaning: Be Thou glorified! Lo, I have been a wrong-doer.)

These words are uttered, with utmost humility and sincerity in front of the mukhi or kameria in the jamatkhana, before or after the obligatory prayer, morning and evening. The person receives blessings on behalf of the Lord. The Holy Prophet has assured us that if a person repeats the words: "Astagh-firullahi-Rabbi wa tobo aley" (meaning: Forgive me God. I turn to Thee for my sincere repentance, O my Lord.) Allah will forgive his sins.¹²⁰ On another occasion the Prophet said: "Pray for forgiveness of Allah; surely He is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate."¹²¹ And we Ismailis beg His pardon also in the morning, according to the Holy Quran:

"And in the last part of night they ask for forgiveness."¹²²

Allah has ordered the believers to go to the Holy Prophet to beg for his forgiveness:

"And when they had done wrong to themselves;
and if they had come to thee and asked forgiveness
of Allah and of the Prophet, they would have found
Allah forgiving, Merciful"¹²³

According to this holy verse it is necessary to ask Allah's pardon by asking the Prophet's pardon. After the demise of the Prophet the Shias turned to the Holy Imams for pardon. Therefore, it is necessary to pray for Allah's forgiveness in jamatkhana, in front of the mukhi or the kameria who are appointed by the Holy Imam e-Zaman to represent him. Pir Sadaruddin said:

"O brother come to jamatkhana and beg for pardon,
and obey your Spiritual Master"¹²⁴

One should also say a tasbeeh (rosary) of 101 beads or 40 beads of "ASTAGH FIRULLAH", at least once a day. Allah says:

"Tell My bondmen who believe to establish worship and
spend of that which We have given them, secretly and
publicly, before a day cometh wherein there will be
neither trafficking nor befriending."¹²⁵

In this verse Allah demands sacrifice of money from which He has given us. Therefore, when we go for dua'-karaabi we offer some coins. If someone does not wish to offer any thing he is not compelled to do so.

Money is not the criterion. The idea behind spending money, in the way of God, is the sense of sacrifice and gratefulness, for it is Allah Who has given us our wealth.

BAKSHAMNI

Sometimes a believer takes a vow which he later finds difficult to fulfil it. In such a case we are told to go to the mukhi or kameria and ask for bakshamni, forgiveness, and pay some money (as a "fine" for not fulfilling it). The same principle applies for the chhanta in the night of chandraat which is for the bhoolchook (forgiveness of errors), unintentional mistake in paying the dasond. It is not proper to take chhanta for the bakshamni of dasond without paying the correct amount.

Likewise, it is not proper to take a bakshamni of a satado without fulfilling the vow. If a person who is in a very difficult situation takes a vow of satado but later finds it hard to fulfil, then he can go to the mukhi or kameria and ask for the bakshamni. It can be done. But it is not proper for him to use this bakshamni as a mushkil aasan if he has not first taken the vow to observe satado.

SALWAAT - DUROOD

Salwaat or durood means salutation. The word salwaat is specially used for the salutation and prayer for the Holy Prophet and his progeny. Allah says:

"God and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet.
O believers! Pray for blessing on him and salute him
with a worthy salutation".¹²⁶

Muslims all over the world salute their Holy Prophet and his Progeny day and night in every prayer in this way:

"Allahumma salle' ala Mohammedan wa Aal'e Mohammed."

The words 'Aal'e Mohammed' also mean "Peace be on the Progeny of Ya-seen,"¹²⁷ an expression found in the Holy Quran. Ya-seen is a title of the Holy Prophet.

In the above holy verse Allah has commanded to "salute him with a worthy salutation". "Worthy salutation" is greeting with a humble bow. Muslims all over the world salute the Holy Prophet by touching their forehead with the fingers of the right hand, and bowing when they hear the name of the Prophet and uttering the salwaat. In our Tariqah the Imam is the holder of the Noor of Imam Ali and the Pir is the holder of the Noor of Mohammed. Whenever we hear the name of our Imam or a Pir, we say salwaat and salute him with a worthy salutation.

The sawaab¹²⁸ of salwaat is very great. Our Imam Aga Ali Shah said that the sawaab of salwaat was like rain. He said: "Just as you cannot count the drops of water in the rain, likewise you cannot count the sawaab of a salwaat". Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said:

"Visit the jamatkhana for prayer regularly and say salwaat as much as you can. Inshallah, you will get stronger and stronger, your enemy will run away, you will get Divine forgiveness, and you will go to paradise and you will be blessed with Didaar. Inshallah".¹²⁹

Whenever an Ismaili gets a glimpse of Holy Imam e-Zaman, he recites salwaat. Recitation of salwaat is a part of ibadat, worship. To say salwaat is an act of gratitude towards the Holy Prophet who has shown us the Path of Islam. Frequent recitation of salwaat brings us blessings of the Prophet and his spiritual help in adversity. When we recite salwaat the Prophet and his progeny reciprocate it; they bless us. Imagine! The Holy Prophet and his thousands of descendants, up to now, all bless us spiritually when we say a salwaat.

A tasbeeh of salwaat, 101 beads, is commonly performed for the benefit of a deceased soul. There are people in our jamat who frequently repeat salwaat for a thousand or more times a day. The recitation of salwaat strengthens one's spirit and ethics.

PIR SHAH

Pir-Shah or Shah-Pir means the Noor of Allah and the Noor of Prophet Mohammed. In Persian Shah means the Lord; and Pir means spiritual teacher, guide, murshid. The Holy Prophet is the Murshidil Awwal. The Ismailis believe that the Imam of the time is the manifestation of Allah's Light (Noor) through Ali, and the Pir is the holder of the Noore' Mohammed. The Imam of the time is Khalifa-tullah and Pir is Khalifatur-Rasoolallah. The abbreviation 'Pir-Shah' was introduced in India by our Pir Satgur Noor to the gupti converts, for use as the *mantra* (Ism e Aazam) for meditation.

Revelation, *vahi*, stopped with the death of the Prophet, who was Allah's last and final prophet. But Allah's guidance continued through Ali the Imam of the time. The Message of Allah had been completed at Ghadire' Khomm:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you
and completed My favour unto you, and have
chosen for you as religion Al-Islam..."¹³⁰

The Prophet declared at Ghadire' Khomm: "For those whom I am their Mowla (Master) Ali is their Mowla too."

In Islam no prayer is complete without the Holy Kalimah "La ilaha illallah Mohammed-un Rasoolullah." The holy words Ya Allah, Ya Mohammed are repeated, by certain sufis and saints hundreds of times a day as zikr. Thus, 'Pir Shah' is an abbreviation of the Holy Kalimah Tayyibah. Our Imam Mowlana Sultan Mohammed Shah said, "If you do not know the holy Dua then recite twelve tasbeehs of 'Pir Shah' as a substitute."¹³¹ In 1925, the Holy Imam reduced the number of the tasbeehs from twelve to five.¹³²

Pir Shams said, "Pray to the all-Knowing Lord and repeat Pir Shah in your heart." At another place he said, "Concentrate with devotion in meditation; and repeat Pir Shah all the time." Even non-Ismailis know the zikr of Pir Shah. Sayyid Sadaruddin Dargahwala has translated a ginan by Sayyidah Imam Begum, in his book Tawarikhe' Pir Part Two, and mentioned that "Shah means Allah and Pir means Mohammed."¹³³

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah instructed the jamat to be grateful for being born in the Satpanth. Therefore, he said: "Recite a tasbeeh of Pir Shah, forty beads, and thank the Creator for having been born in the Satpanth and in this jamat."

The Rope of Pirhood has been coming down from the Holy Prophet Mohammed through his grandson Pir Hasan. The Holy Prophet said: "Hasan is from me and I am from Hasan." All the holy Pirs have come down from his progeny.

TASBEEH (ROSARY)

The literary meaning of this word is "to repeat constantly." A string of a certain number of beads is also called a tasbeeh. A tasbeeh is rosary and called *maala* in Hindi. Tasbeeh is used for the remembrance of God. It is made of different sizes of beads strung on a thread. These beads are made of wood, plastic, clay or even from semiprecious stones. The size of a tasbeeh may contain 33 or 101 beads in our Tariqah. Some mystics use tasbeehs of 501 or 1001 beads. In our Tariqah the tasbeeh of 101 beads is used since time immemorial. These represent the Personal Name of Allah, 99 Divine Attributes and the Holy Name of Mohammed.

On the auspicious occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had graciously distributed about one hundred tasbeehs to the leaders of the East African jamat. All the tasbeehs, without exception, had 101 beads each. A tasbeeh of 33 beads may be used but the use of 11 beads for a Holy Name as zikr is not a Shia practice and certainly not our Ismaili tradition. The smallest tasbeeh in our Tariqah is that of 14 beads (the symbolic figure of seven heavens and seven earths mentioned in the Holy Quran), prescribed by our Holy Pir and Imam Aga Ali Shah.

The Sunni theologians have created a tasbeeh of 11 beads as the symbolic figure of 'Ashra-Mubashrah', representing the ten close companions of the Prophet. They are: Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman, Ali, Zubair, Talha, Saad, Sayeed, Abu Obaida, Abdur Rehman bin Auf,¹³⁴ and the eleventh name of Mohammed. But the Shias do not accept this kind of configuration in worship. In our tradition the size of the tasbeeh is 101.

A tasbeeh is needed to keep a physical count of the repetition in our holy Dua' and during a majlis. In fact the remembrance of Allah does not need a material tasbeeh in hand; one can remember Him mentally without a tasbeeh. Even so, various faiths require a count for certain prescribed prayers. A famous mystic of Punjab, sufi Bullhay Shah, says: "the repetition of my breath, inhaling and exhaling, is my tasbeeh." There are various tasbeehs prescribed by the Prophet, Imams and the Pirs to invoke God's mercy for help or for sawaab. Mohaddis Abu Muslim has reported that the Holy Prophet told a group of devotees to recite 'Subhaanallah' 33 times, 'Alhamdulillah' 33 times and 'Allaho Akber' 33 times after every prayer, for sawaab and blessing.¹³⁵ He used to say special prayers at the time of

eclipses of the sun and the moon,¹³⁶ in dry season for rain,¹³⁷ for protection from devastation by wind or famine, and so on.¹³⁸ Also, he instructed his disciples to recite various Suras (chapters) of the Holy Quran for sawaab. I have listed, at the end of this book, some of the tasbeehs suggested by our Imams and the Pirs.

A tasbeeh is not just a convenient tool for counting, it also inspires a person psychologically to fulfil his religious duty. Every Ismaili mureed is asked to keep a tasbeeh with him or her all the time. Our Holy Hazar Imam said:

“So carry with you the memory of Allah, of your faith and even if you cannot come to jamatkhana everyday, keep with you your *tasbeeh* and call the name of Allah or the name of Ali and make sure that every day there is in your mind the presence of your faith in your heart and in your soul because that, in itself, is a prayer.”¹³⁹

(Chicago, 6-November, 1986)

and

“...let the men carry in their suits a *tasbeeh*, let the women carry in their bags a *tasbeeh* and when you have a moment call the name of Allah or Muhammad or Ali for that itself is a search.....”

(Sydney, Australia. 3-January, 1987)

and

“...TASBEEH will give you a sense of happiness, a sense of inner strength, a sense of practice of the Faith which you will find. Most women have bags, most men have pockets, they are both very well equipped to hold a *tasbeeh*.”

(Lisbon, Portugal. 10-April-1987)

One must be obedient to his Imam. Keep a tasbeeh in your pocket.

DUA' MUSHKIL AASA'N

Dua' for mushkil aasan means the jamat prays for you and seeks God's help in difficulties and asks for a solution. Sometimes, in a serious situation man gets confused and disheartened and the worries take control of his mind. No one seems to help him out. At that time prayer is the only best source of comfort, courage and consolation. Allah says:

“Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”¹⁴⁰

Allah is our Protector and Friend; the best Patron and the best Helper.¹⁴¹ There are special prayers to invoke Divine Mercy and help. Hazrat Salman Farsi has reported that the Holy Prophet said, “You can change even your destiny by praying to Allah”.¹⁴² There are many tasbeehs prescribed by our Imams and the Pirs for mushkil aasan.

Apart from individual effort a person in trouble can request the jamat to pray specially for him. This is known as *tasbeeh mushkil aasan*. While the jamat is standing for the regular tasbeehs, a special prayer is added for an individual in distress. In an extraordinary bad situation a satado can be requested. But it depends on the mukhi whether to accept such a request or not.¹⁴³ The mukhi needs to know the intention of the person in trouble before deciding whether to grant the request or not. In the case of an ordinary problem like a common cold or traffic ticket the mukhi would not make the entire jamat stand in prayer for such triflings.

A special tasbeeh or a satado for an individual is in conjunction with a Holy Farman: “It is good to pray for yourself, but it is better to pray for others”.¹⁴⁴ In an extraordinary trouble or affliction one can request the jamat to pray for him for a period of seven days; this special prayer is called “satado.”

We pray to Allah in the name of the Prophet and the Imam of the time when in difficulty or in need. This is a Shia tradition. Caliph Omar used to pray for rain in the name of Hazrat Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib, an uncle of the Holy Prophet. The hadith scholar Bukhari reports, through Anas bin Malik, that “whenever there was a famine Omar bin el-Khattab used to pray: ‘O God, in the name of Thy Prophet and in the name of his uncle Abbas, bestow upon us with rain water’”.¹⁴⁵ The Holy Prophet said:

“Invoke the mercy of Allah through me and through my Ahlul Bait.”¹⁴⁶

The Prophet's uncle, Abbas, was not a member of Ahl Bait. When we say "Ya Ali" we do not refer to the physical Ali ibn Abi Talib but to the Noor of Imam Ali. We must remember that our whole concept of Noor is the foundation of our faith, a concept that is not common among the ummah. Therefore, it is of no use to talk or discuss this subtle point of our holy faith with those who do not understand it.

WORAVO

The word "woravo" means to return safely. In the past whenever our people travelled they would offer a coin in the name of the Holy Pir (the Noor of Mohammed) and prayed for a safe journey and a safe return. This practice is still prevalent in many parts of our jamat. But most of our young generation are not aware of this practice.

We have learnt this practice from the Holy Prophet. Whenever he wanted to start a journey, he would first go to the mosque from his house to pray and start the journey from the mosque and return, from the journey, to the mosque first and then go home.¹⁴⁷ This was a kind of 'woravo'.

SATADA

A satado (*plu. satada*) is a vow of special prayer for seven days to invoke the mercy of Allah for which the whole jamat stands up to pray. When one is in extreme difficulty or fears a calamity one can request a special prayer from the jamat. The entire jamat prays a special prayer for him for seven days during the upstanding tasbeeh. All members of the family of the person attend the jamatkhana without fail and bring mehmani for seven days, also juro of ghoogri¹⁴⁸ to be distributed to the jamat. Such a personal satado is instituted on rare occasions. For minor problems or in sickness or affliction or predicament a satado is not accepted. One should not compel the whole jamat to rise and pray for his own selfish motive or for small matters. In such a case he and his family should say additional prayers for mushkil-aasan.

Historically the system of satada was introduced by our Holy Pirs for the jamat to improve and enhance their spiritual well-being and for the renunciation of some forbidden habits. Attendance in a jamati satado creates restraint. For instance: In a Baitul Khayal satado one should strictly adhere to vegetarian diet and avoid smoking, drinking and the use of toxicants.¹⁴⁹ There were five satada in a year for Baitul Khayal but these have now been reduced to four by the Holy Hazar Imam.

It is also enjoined upon us to establish Jamati satada, twice a year, with the intent of praying for the peace, security, spiritual and worldly betterment of the entire jamat of the world. According to a Holy Farman, additional Jamati satada may be performed if a misfortune strikes the jamat.

For a personal satado one must be careful. As mentioned above no one should compel the whole jamat to stand and pray for his insignificant demands in personal satado. If a young person is hurt seriously in an accident or sickness, a satado is quite appropriate if he has a family with small children. But if an aged person, say of 85 or older, gets sick, a satado for his recovery is not proper. Leave him to Providence, and let his family pray for him individually or request the mukhi for a mushkil-asaan tasbeeh.

Satado is a serious matter. Asking for a satado *bakhshaamani* every now and then for petty problems is not proper. Pir Aga Ali Shah said that a satado should be performed only in an extraordinary difficulty. It is better to ask for a *mushkil aasan tasbeeh* rather than a *bakhshaamani* of a personal satado. It is very

essential that all the members of the family of the person who requests for a satado, must attend jamatkhana for seven days and bring cooked offering daily.

A person can perform his personal satado in difficulty and calamity without disturbing the jamat. He should make a vow to go to jamatkhana for seven or forty days without fail an hour or a half hour before the time of the Dua' and pray for his difficulty to be resolved.. Or he can switch it to the morning session of the bandgi. He may arrive in the jamatkhana much before the arrival of the mukhi and the kameeria, and pray extensively. There are many ways to take a vow when one is faced with a problem. A satado means pray more and let others pray for you.

I'TIKAAF

It is a vow of temporary seclusion for a specified number of days. It is a kind of satado to avoid sensual pleasures such as tasty food and all sorts of pleasure and comfort for a given period to gain more spiritual progress. The Holy Prophet used to retire in the mosque during the last ten days of the month of Ramazan for the worship of Allah day and night, without leaving the mosque except for personal hygiene. This is known as i'tikaaf.

It is hard to perform i'tikaaf in modern times. However, Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had instructed us to avoid eating meat, fish and spicy foods for seven days of the Baitul Khayal satado, and pay extra attention to follow the ethical code; and spend more time in zikr, mentally or verbally, without interrupting your worldly duties. This is for the betterment of our spiritual life. This was the object of itika'f, a partial renunciation of worldly pleasures.

JAMATI SATADA

We are told by the Holy Imam to perform two satada per year in the jamat in the evening session and four satada per year in the morning in Baitul Khayal. The two jamati satada are for the mushkil-asaan of the jamat. It includes each and every person, even a newly born baby. In this jamati satada all families should participate and bring some mehmani in the name of Shah-Pir. If someone is unable to do this there is no sin on him but the excuse must be genuine. Because the jamati satada are for every soul in the jamat, it is not proper to ask for the bakshamni of an individual satado during the seven days of the jamati satado.

BAITUL KHAYAL SATADA

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had ordered the jamat to perform five satada every year. He had instructed the jamat to eat strict vegetarian diet for seven days of the satado and eat at home unless circumstance compels one to eat out.¹⁵⁰ These satada improve the mind and the spirit of the members of the Baitul Khayal. Mowlana Hazar Imam has reduced the number of the satada from five to four in a year.

PERSONAL SATADO

In an intolerable situation of distress one can request the mukhi to establish a personal satado for him or for a relative. In such a personal satado all the members of his family must attend the jamatkhana all the days of the satado. The family should bring the appropriate sufro for the seven days.

BAKHSHAMNI OF A SATADO

If a person takes a vow but due to some reason cannot fulfil it then he should ask the forgiveness of the Holy Imam through the mukhi. This is known as bakhshamni. If there is no vow taken then the question of bakhshamni does not arise. Using the bakhshamni of a satado, as a mean of mushkil aasan, is wrong. In this way the weight and importance of a satado is diluted.

FARMAN

A farman is a command of Hazar Imam, written or verbal, which must be obeyed. The Shah-Pir, the Imam of the time, must be obeyed. Allah says:

“O believers, obey Allah and obey the Prophet and the Ulil-Amr (Imam) among you”.¹⁵¹

Ulil-Amr is the Imam of the time and not any ruler or a caliph. Like the Holy Prophet he must be clean and pure and divinely inspired. Commenting on this holy verse Mir Ahmed Ali writes in his translation of the Holy Quran:

“The duty of the obedience to God and the Holy Prophet imposed on mankind is doubtless but the meaning of the word Ulil-Amr minkum” is contested by the Sunni Commentators to make room for the rulers who they hailed as the Khalifs, some of whom were of such worst conduct and character that even the Sunnis themselves abhor the personalities like Yezid etc. The obedience demanded for the ‘Ulil-Amr’ being the same as for God and the Holy Prophet, demands the ‘Ulil-Amr’ to be of the conduct and character of highest order like that of the Holy Prophet manifesting through their practical lives the divine attributes of God.”

In Islam a believer has no choice of his own. He cannot disregard an order from Allah and His Prophet and the Imam of the time. Allah commands:

“And it becometh not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair for them, that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair and whoso is rebellious to Allah and His Messenger, he verily goeth astray in error manifest”.¹⁵²

According to the Holy Command of Allah if a person is obedient to His Messenger he is in fact obeying Allah. Similarly, if a person is obedient to the Imam of the time, he is in fact obeying Allah. The Holy Prophet is no more physically among us, but that does not mean that this *ayah* (verse) is abrogated or Allah’s Command is withdrawn. Therefore, it is enjoined upon us to obey the Imam of the time who is ever present among us. The Holy Prophet, like any other human being, had to leave the world, therefore, Allah guides the believers to obey the Imam of the time who is the rightful successor of the Holy Prophet.

It was the everlasting Covenant of Allah with the Prophet Ibrahim that there would be Imams in his progeny till the end of the world.¹⁵³

‘INNI JA’ILOKA LIN NASSE’ IMAMAH’
(Lo! I have appointed thee IMAM for mankind.)¹⁵⁴

Hazrat Ibrahim asked: “And of my offspring (will there be Imams?). Allah said: “My Covenant includes not wrongdoers.” History has evidence that those disappeared who did wrong. Hazar Imam is the Ulil-Amr, the manifestation of the Divine Light. He is the true successor of the Holy Prophet and, therefore, he must be obeyed in the same way.

Sense of obedience is itself worship of God. This is submission. Once bay’at is made then intentional disobedience becomes a revolt, and the culprit turns into an enemy of God. There is no greater sin than a well intentioned act of nafarmani, i.e. disobedience. It obliterates all previous services and worship. The example of Iblees, the cursed, is repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Quran. An error in a helpless condition, or an unintentional mistake, is considered a human weakness, therefore, is not accounted for punishment if repented for. Allah says:

“Those who avoid great sins and indecencies, except the unintentional offences, for them thy Lord is of vast mercy”.¹⁵⁵

“And those who commit sins in ignorance and then repent, their repentance will be accepted”.¹⁵⁶

Farman-bardari is obedience with devotion. The degree of one’s faith and love of his Master depends on the degree of his obedience. Obedience is the thermometer of iman. Every Ismaili has given his or her allegiance, a promise of loyalty, to the Holy Imam of the time, which is known as BAI’AT. Hence any disobedience is a sin because it is a breach of trust and a breach of promise to God.

The Imam of the time is the holder of the Noor of Ali, he is the Speaking Quran *i.e.* whatever a farman the Holy Imam makes to the jamat, or to any individual, is an interpretation of the Holy Quran. Mowla Murtaza Ali said: “I am the Speaking Quran.” Thus, the Imam of the time is the Speaking Quran. Allah says:

“Nothing is there hidden in the heavens and the earth, but it is in the manifest Book.”¹⁵⁷

If “the manifest Book” means the printed book of the Holy Quran then it is not true because we do not find many modern things such as cloning, computers, heart transplant, etc. in it. Many a scholar has mentioned the Quran as the “Lauh Mahfooz” which means “a Guarded Tablet of God that contains everything in writing, but it is not manifest. At another place Allah describes it:

“Everything We have accommodated in the Imam Manifest.”¹⁵⁸

That is what Hazrat Ali meant when he said, "I am the speaking Quran." Our thirty-third Holy Imam Mowlana Abdus Salaam, in a poem, mentioned: "Take heed of my words, for I am The Book of God that speaks."¹⁵⁹ Therefore, obedience to the Imam of the time is, in fact, obedience to Allah. Obedience engenders love which in turn lifts the spirit towards the Throne of Allah. It brings discipline and regulates the worldly as well as the spiritual life of a momin.

TALIQAHAH

Literally it means a link or a contact. It is a farman in writing, a holy message from Mowlana Hazar Imam.

Whenever a Taliqah mubarak is read to the jamat the ghatpaat, aab-safa is also arranged as a mark of respect and celebration. Incense of lobaan is burnt to purify the air and to greet the jamat and the spirits (ruhanies). Sweets or candy are distributed along with sukreet as a mark of celebration of this joyous occasion.

In the past some jamats living in different places used to receive a Taliqah from the Holy Imam carried by a trustworthy dai'. A recent example of this occurred in 1923 when our Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah sent a Taliqah to the Jamats of Badakhshan (Tajikistan) with missionary Pir Subzali, from Bombay, India. There is also a reference in our sacred ginans:

"Sahibe' farman lakhi mokalya"¹⁶⁰
(The Master has sent a written farman)

and

"Shah na khatt awaya vira jampudeep ma"¹⁶¹
Ka'yin laviya laviya Chandanvir."
(A letter has come from the Lord, brought by Chandanvir to India)

SEVA (SELFLESS SERVICE)

Seva is voluntary service. This word is also used for worship. Allah says:

"And I created not the jinn and the humans, but that they may worship Me."¹⁶²

In Arabic *abd* means slave or servant and *ibadat* means service or worship. Service to others is a part of worship of God. Once the Holy Prophet was strolling in a street in Medina in the company of companions and found a big stone in the middle of the road. He bent down and moved it on the side. A person suggested that it was not necessary. The Prophet replied that he did it to save someone walking in the dark of the night from getting hurt by it. To think about the safety of others is a service to humanity.

Once Mowla Ali came home and demanded some food. Sayyidah Fatimah said that there was nothing to eat. Mowla went out and borrowed a dinar to buy some food. He was walking towards a shop and met Miqdad who appeared to be in a state of panic. Mowla asked him what the matter was. He said: Please leave me, I am in trouble. Mowla asked what his problem was. He explained that his children were crying in hunger and he was penniless. Mowla gave him the dinar and returned home hungry.

Muslim women including the wives of the Holy Prophet used to render service as nurses and water carriers on the battle fields. Hazrat Shibli the companion of Mansur al-Hallaj used to carry a large water bag on his back and a hand fan while walking in the streets during the hot weather. He would offer water and used the hand fan for cool air while the person drank water.

Seva has a wide range of application. Helping a destitute, feeding a hungry, supporting a good cause, caring for the sick and old, even a prayer for the benefit of others is part of worship of Allah. Alhamdulillah most of us in our community understand the importance of seva. This is our age old tradition. There are hundreds of references in our sacred ginans and the tradition of the Prophet. Seva strengthens ibadat. But sometimes a person rendering seva may be lacking in essential duties towards religion, and may be thinking that his seva is enough for

salvation. It is not true. Seva at the cost of religious duties will not be sufficient at the end. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said: "Service without ibadat becomes pride." Service in any form is part of worship of God provided there is no selfish motive behind it.

Voluntary service has always remained our tradition. Apart from the Volunteer Corps there are hundreds of people in our jamats who render selfless service in various ways. Mowlana Hazar Imam has made the following important holy farman:

"I want to say today how happy I am with the excellent service you are rendering and to remind you that so much of the progress that has been able to be made, in the past in the jamat, is due to the spirit of service which members of the jamat render to the jamat, to the Imam of the time and to the institutions of the jamat. This is a fundamental principle in Islam and in our jamat. It is a principle which has existed for years and years and years. And those who uphold that principle are specially close to me and I hope that this principle, this tradition, will be upheld in our jamat for always, no matter what part of the world the jamat is living in, and that this will be and continue to be a fundamental foundation on which we can build for the betterment of the jamat."

(Vancouver. April 22. 1983)

Seva has always been a part of our faith.

"Seva kijey Ali Nabiji ki bhai
Jinho thi aaway dheer
Deen duni ke deshmay Sukh paaway apno jeev"
(Pir Sahibdin)

Serve Ali and Nabi
This will bring stability and
Happiness will come to you in deen and duniya.

SACRED GINANS

Ginan means knowledge, understanding, wisdom, light, gnosis. Ginans are hymns, songs of praise, and contain the basic knowledge of the Holy Quran, Tradition of the Holy Prophet and other Holy Scriptures. According to Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, the ginans are the interpretation (*tafseer*) of the Holy Quran; that is why they are sacred.¹⁶³ Pir Sadaruddin¹⁶⁴ says: Ginans are full of Noor.

Our sacred ginans are a priceless treasure and according to our Holy Hazar Imam these are a Wonderful Tradition, a Unique Tradition. These hymns were composed and written by our Holy Pirs and their progeny between 1069 C.E. and 1866 C.E. Our eighteenth Imam Mustansir Billah the First, had sent Sayyid Pir Nooruddin to India to propagate Ismailism. He adopted an Indian name "Satgur Noor" to get familiar and popular among the natives. He arrived in India in about 1069 C.E.

It took nine Pirs and eighteen Sayyids of their progeny, some eight hundred years to complete their work in more than a million verses, in twenty-four languages and dialects. This great treasure contains a wealth of knowledge such as ancient history, philosophy, psychology, astrology, astronomy, ethics, examples, parables, prophesies and many other branches of science and learning. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said:

"Pir Sadaruddin came to you from far away and after a great struggle brought you in the fold of this Satpanth. You had no knowledge of his religion because you were Hindus. He preached and introduced this Satpanth to your ancestors. Now you are following the Faith of your forefathers. Keep it. It is the same Path that Pir Sadaruddin had shown to them."¹⁶⁵

"Recite the ginans, attend mijalas and follow what Pir Sadaruddin had told you. Inshallah, you will prosper. If you behave according to the ginans, you will succeed in this life and the Hereafter".¹⁶⁶

"Pir Sadaruddin interpreted the Quran in ginans which were composed in the language of India".¹⁶⁷

"Pir Sadaruddin, Pir Hasan Kabirdin, Pir Naseerdin, Pir Sahibdin and others passed through great difficulties and faced insult with great tolerance, sacrificed property and life and propagated the Ismaili Faith in India. They brought you at the doorsteps of the House of Imam Islam Shah".¹⁶⁸

About DAS AVTA'R in ginans:

"Study the philosophy of DAS-AVTA R and interpret it according to the Islamic principles. Preach about the Noor which existed before the Creation. During the Imamate of Islam Shah, Pir Sadaruddin explained this to you. Preach accordingly".¹⁶⁹

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, on various occasions, said:

"If you follow the ginans you will get barakat in this world and your aakhirat (Hereafter) will be good too."¹⁷⁰

"Saying your regular Dua' and the recitation of ginans are the gifts of the aakhirat."¹⁷¹

"Ginans are the tafseer (interpretation) of the Quran."¹⁷²

"Sing ginans which are full of Noor, sing in such a way that your heart may overflow with joy".¹⁷³

(Pir Sadaruddin)

Someone may think that singing of the ginans in jamatkhana is un-Islamic; others may think that ginans contain Hindu tradition. In fact the ginanic literature is full of knowledge, wisdom and praise of Allah and His Prophet. Allah says:

".....and hymn the praise of thy Lord before the rising and before the setting of the sun".¹⁷⁴

In this Quranic verse the Arabic words *sab-beh* and *be-hamdeh* have been mentioned which mean hymn and praise respectively. Our sacred ginans are hymns as well as praise in poetry. The Holy Zaboor, the book of Psalms, was revealed to Holy Prophet Dawood (David) in poetry. He used to sing melodiously and attracted even birds and the surrounding hills. Allah says:

"And assuredly We gave David grace from Us, (saying): O ye hills and birds, echo his psalms of praise."¹⁷⁵

The words 'hills' and 'birds' mean that when the Prophet used to sing, the whole surrounding would be filled with devotion and praise of the Lord. A spiritual vibrant atmosphere is also felt in our jamatkhanas whenever a sacred ginan is

chanted. For example the following verse sung in proper manner would induce ecstasy in the listener's heart:

"Allah ek Khassam sab-ka
Duniya Oski saari
Avichal naam Khudavand bhaniyeh
Aur sab miti-yah ki baazi"
(Meaning:
"Allah is the Lord of all Creation
Entire Universe belongs to Him
He is the Eternal God
All else is perishable")

The above verse of the ginan contains the gist of the following four verses of the Holy Quran'

"Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (ch.1 v.2)

"His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth." (ch.57 v.2)

"There remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory."
(ch.55 v.27)

"Everyone that is therein will pass away". (ch.55 v.26)

Poetry is a powerful way of expression. It carries more sense in fewer words than in an ordinary speech or prose. Even in the Holy Quran numerous verses sound like poetry, for example Suratul Kauther. Bibi Ayisha has reported that the Holy Prophet ordered a stage to be erected in the mosque on which his poet Hissan bin Thabit used to stand and sing poems.¹⁷⁶ Muslims all over the world sing poems in mosques in their national language.

Musical instruments are not allowed inside the jamatkhana prayer hall but outside the prayer hall devotional music can be played. As mentioned above the Holy Prophet, with his wife Ayisha, witnessed a display of dance with shield and lance, by a party of Abyssinian dancers, in the courtyard of the mosque in Medina.¹⁷⁷ Bukhari and Abu Muslim both have reported that during the battle of The Ditch the Holy Prophet was himself reciting poetry composed by Abdullah bin Rawaha. Again: Bukhari and Abu Muslim both have mentioned a report by Bibi Ayisha, which says:

"My father Abu Bakr came to my station on the day of Eid-el-Hajj, near Mina. At that time two Ansari girls were playing music on tambourine and were singing a battle song of the Ansar while the Holy Prophet was lying on the bed resting and enjoying the music. My father unaware of the presence of the Holy Prophet scolded the girls for such a vice. The Holy Prophet removed the covering from his head and told my father to let them do what they were doing. He said that it was the day of rejoicing"¹⁷⁸

Muslim mystics and sufis hold regular sessions of majlis-e samaa' and sing love songs in praise of their murshid. They play music on drums, flute and tambourine. Many use even cymbals, and dance with jingles tied around their ankles. In extreme emotion they often fall down unconscious. A melodious voice in jamatkhana electrifies the atmosphere with spiritual vibration and fills many an eye with tears of love and ecstasy.

CATEGORIES IN GINANS

Our revered Pirs have categorized ginans according to the time of the day and the night. There are ginans to be sung at midnight, after midnight, before dawn, early morning, after noon, before sunset, after sunset and late in the night. There are ginans for a special occasion such as Naoroz, arrival of a holy Taliqah, Imamate Day, occasion of the Holy Aab'e Safa, Thursday evening for *Choghadia* and special ginans for early morning and so on.

This sacred literature is divided into two parts. One: The ginans which are sung daily in the jamatkhana, morning and evening, selected from the bulk of more than six hundred ginans. Two: The 'grunthas', epic-like composition, which are sung or recited only infrequently. There are more than sixty 'grunthas', the longest one is *Mansamjhani*, by our Pir Shams which contains 401 pages (8020 verses) out of 500 pages (90 are illegible because of decay) of the total of ten thousand verses. The entire literature was written in Khojki script. Our nine Pirs and eighteen of their children have composed the ginanic literature. They are:

1. Pir Satgur Noor
2. Pir Shams
3. Pir Naseerdin
4. Pir Sahibdin
5. Pir Sadaruddin
6. Pir Hasan Kabirdin
7. Pir Tajdin
8. Pir Ali Akber Beg
9. Pir Ali Asghar Beg

The following are the children of our Holy Pirs, who composed ginans. They were, also, addressed as 'pirs' as a respect, but they were not appointed as pirs by the Holy Imam of the time.

1. Sayyid Imam Shah
2. Sayyid Noor Mohammed Shah
3. Sayyid Hasham Shah *
4. Sayyid Ghulmali Shah

5. Sayyid Qutabdin
6. Sayyid Saeed Khan
7. Sayyid Abdul Nabi
8. Sayyid Rehamtullah Shah
9. Sayyid Saleh Shah
10. Sayyid Fatehali Shah
11. Sayyid Fazal Shah
12. Sayyid Mitha Shah
13. Sayyid Husain (Mast Husaini)
14. Sayyid Mira'n Mehdi
15. Sayyid Mira'n Mohammed Shah
16. Sayyid Aal Imam
17. Sayyid Ladha Shah
18. Sayyidah Imam Begum

**Sayyid Hasham Shah, who composed some ginans, was not an appointed Pir. He was mistakenly mentioned as an authorised Pir in the Ginan Collection Book No.3, published and printed by the Ismailia Association for Bharat, Bombay. He was the son of Sayyid Saleh bin Sayyid Saeed Khan, born in Pirana Patan in 1010 A.H. Another Sayyid Hasham Shah was the father of Pir Satgur Noor and was appointed by our Holy Imam Mustansir Billah-I, as the Pir and was sent to Iraq. He never visited India.*

QASIDAH

A qasidah is a poem in praise of someone, of not less than fifteen verses, composed in elegiac meter; a lamentation; a complaint; an elegy. It is composed in the form of a *nazm* or a *rubayi*.

During the Arabic and the Persian periods of our history, many of our dai's and poets composed and sang qasaid (*sing*: qasidah) in praise of our Holy Imams and our Faith. These were very popular, especially during the Fatimid period. Some qasaid were composed by some of our Imams, the Pirs and the dai's, in Arabic and Persian. Except those of Bharat, the Ismailis of other countries are singing these qasaid with devotion, love and as a prayer.

There is a difference between the qasaid and the ginans. A qasidah expresses the devotion and the feeling of love of the composer for the Holy Imam. It is a lamentation; a humble prayer of begging something; some ethics are also taught. A ginan may also contain expression of praise of the Lord but more so it contains ethical instructions, spiritual guidance for the disciple and the mysteries of the creation. Ginanic literature is unique in our holy Tariqah; it is a recovery of our treasure of knowledge we had lost to the Mustalians in Egypt and during the destruction of Alamut, and more.

A few qasaid are popular and have been published but hundreds of these are still unpublished. "*Kulilyaa-te Shams Tabriz*" in Persian, having over a hundred thousand verses, is a treasure of hundreds of qasaid in praise of Ali. This book is very popular in Tajikistan but, unfortunately, it is not easily available.

Arab and Irani Ismailis were not familiar with the ginans just as the Indo-Pak Ismailis had no knowledge of qasidah tradition and the tradition of Sayyid Nasir Khusraw. Most of the Persian speaking Ismailis were converted by him. He laid the foundation in such a way that those Ismailis remain true to their faith in spite of many adversities. Alhamdulillah, it is only recently that our Arabic and Persian speaking brethren have come in close contact with us that we know each other.

MUNAJAAT

Munajaat means a poem in praise of Allah, the Prophet and the Imam. It is also a form of a qasidah. The Munajaat ginan "Ya Ali khoob majlis zeenat karkey" is the famous Munajaat which is recited on Imamate Day only, once a year. This Munajaat was composed by one Shamsi sayyid on the occasion of the enthronement ceremony of Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah in 1885 C. E.

There are many ginans which fall under the category of munajaat or qasidah, such as:

"Tariyen tu Taranhaar Khudavind:
Awwar na taray duja koyi, Ali tuhi tuhi tu,"
(Pir Sadaruddin)

"Haqq tu paak tu Baadshah
Mehrban bhi Ali tuhi tu"
(Pir Shams)

"Swami maraji uneya bhi uneya,
Amay kirya na heena,"
(Pir Sadaruddin)

PREACHING

Preaching in the jamat is very important. Preaching itself is ibadat, both to deliver and to listen. Allah had to send 124,000 preachers - the Prophets - to guide and educate mankind about God and His creation. Our Holy Prophet said, "It is in the human nature to err and to forget." It is, therefore, necessary to remind mankind constantly what is right and what is wrong. Allah says:

"Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and wrongful transgression. He admonishes you that you may take heed."¹⁷⁹

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said,

"He who objects to reading my farmans and preaching in jamatkhana, is **an enemy of the Faith**."¹⁸⁰

"There should be preaching in jamatkhana according to farmans and ginans. Never stop this. The preacher should speak the truth softly."¹⁸¹

"After the prayer there should be a wa'z (preaching) for 30 to 45 minutes."¹⁸²

"Attend to wa'z of missionaries and listen attentively, whenever they stand to preach."¹⁸³

"A half-hour wa'z on farmans and ginans, after the prayer, should always be arranged."¹⁸⁴

The Holy Prophet has placed knowledge and learning, higher than worship. He himself used to deliver khutba (preaching) practically every day. He said:

"Propagate your faith from my guidance even a little. You may relate good stories learnt from Beni Israel, there is nothing wrong in it."¹⁸⁵

Our waizeen often give examples from other faiths which is quite in order. It is one of the most popular sayings of the Holy Prophet that "Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave". He also said: "It is an act of ibadat to deliver a sermon but it is also an act of ibadat to listen to it." He further said: "Seek knowledge even if you find it in China."

Preaching is teaching and training. It is as important as the obligatory prayer. Most of the people have little time for personal reading in the presence of a TV set and other engagements in this modern age. Preaching in jamatkhana gives the jamat knowledge about their Faith by the waizeen, who study the religious literature and reproduce the important items in their wa'z in a simple manner.

DA'WAT

Dawat means to invite others to the holy faith. It is an essential part of the faith in Islam and especially in Ismailism. Without propagation the message of Allah would not spread. Propagation is the most important factor why the jamat exists and why it enjoys the benefits of Ismaili faith. Allah has commanded:

"Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation and argue with them in the best manner."

All the Prophets and Imams have been working as the best propagators of the Religion of God.¹⁸⁶ Allah commands:

"And that there should be among you a group who call (mankind) to virtue and enjoin what is good and forbid evil; and these are they who shall be successful."¹⁸⁷

Dawat is necessary inside the jamat as well as outside it. Inside, to make the jamat strong so that when new converts join us they are absorbed quickly and rightly; otherwise they will find it difficult to become part of the jamat. Some of them might revert to their old faith. Thus it is very important and essential to prepare the jamat for future expansion. For this purpose a strong force of waizeen is required. Moreover, a flood of literature should be created to satisfy the reader. Dawat is one of the pillars of our holy faith since the time of the Holy Prophet and after that the work of our Holy Pirs spread the light of Satpanth Islam in Syria, Yemen, West Africa, Egypt, Iran and then Jampudweep, India.

After Sayyid Imam Shah (b.856/1452) the dawat of Satpanth became weak in India. Later, the activity of conversion had slowed down to a halt. He died in the

month of Ramazan, 919 A.H. (December, 1513 CE). After his death there was a little movement of the Nizari Satpanth mission outside the jamat for the next four centuries.

With the blessings of the Imam the Recreation Club Institute came in existence, in 1919 at Bombay, to look after the religious education of the jamat and the propagation of the faith. Within a short time many learned missionaries were working under the organisation. Some famous missionaries of the 1920s were Chief Missionary Husaini Pirmohammed, pir Subzali Ramzanali, Ebrahim Jusab Verteji, Alidina Mamoo, Mohammed Muradali Juma, Alibhai Nanji, Jamal Virji, Manjibhai Lalji Nayani, Mohammed Abdullah, Abdul Husain Bachal, Khudabakhsh Talib, Hakamali Ishaqali, Jaferali Gokal, Haji Mohammed Fazal, Ghulam Husain (Gulu), Mohammed Jamal Babwani, Hamir Lakha, Alimohamed Daya, and many others.

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah started Ismaili dawat among the depressed class natives in Anand area of Gujrat, in the early 1920s. Missionaries Khudabakhsh Talib, Haji Mohammed Fazal, Alimohamed Daya, Mohammed Muradali Juma were dispatched to that area from the Recreation Club Institute, Bombay. More than three thousand converts were brought in the fold of Satpanth in a short time. That was the period when the Arya Samaj, the Anglo-Christian Mission, the Harijan Movement of Gandhi, the Khilafat Movement by Ali Brothers, Mohammedali and Shaukatali, were active throughout India. A large number of the new Ismailis reverted to their old faith within a few years, mainly because the jamat could not absorb them. The Mission activities in that area were withdrawn after a few years.

In 1940 the Recreation Club Institute was renamed as the Ismailia Association. Now it is known as the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (I.T.R.E.B.) since 1986.

DAI'S - MISSIONARIES

Islam is a missionary religion. It has come for the entire mankind. Other faiths were originally limited to their communities or areas but Islam is meant for the whole world and Allah has promised that ultimately the whole world will come in the fold of Islam. Allah has assured His messenger that:

“He it is who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause to prevail over all religions, however much the idolaters may be averse.”¹⁸⁸

A dai' is a missionary, a proselytiser, a travelling teacher-cum-propagator whose mission is to invite others to his Faith. An alwaiz is simply a preacher who delivers wa'z. All religions, faiths, cults and sects have a tendency and inclination towards dissemination of their faith, ideology and doctrines. All the Prophets were themselves missionaries who propagated the Word of God. Allah commanded,

“There should be among you a group of men who call (people) to virtue, and enjoin what is good and forbid evil; and those are they who shall be successful.”¹⁸⁹

Again, the Prophet is ordered to

“Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation and argue with them in the best manner.”¹⁹⁰

The messenger of Allah organized missionaries, known as du'at (*sing: dai'*) who were sent to various parts of the country. Ass'haab-e-Suffa were among the notables. They were men who were trained as missionaries for the spread of the Truth and learning. In the beginning, the Holy Prophet himself travelled through the towns and villages, near Mecca, and invited people to Islam. After the conquest of Mecca, in 8 A.H., he found more time for his mission work. He appointed du'at who were sent in groups of three or more persons, to various tribes. Some famous missionaries of that time were Hazrat Jaffar bin Abu Talib, Abu Zarr Ghaffari, Khalid bin Saeed, Adi bin Hatim, Abu Musa Ashari, Ma'az bin Jabal, Vahi el Kalabi, Abu Zaid Ansari and Ala' Hadharami.¹⁹¹

The most important department in religion is the Seegha-ay Tabligh, the Mission Department. Its function is to keep the faithful strong, to teach them religion, to convert, to propagate the faith and to defend it against the enemies. The head of this department is our Pir who is appointed by the Holy Imam from among his own family. The work and activities of the Ismaili *dawat* have never ceased, although sometimes it has slowed down. The jamat in India, before the arrival of Mowlana Imam Hasanali Shah, was inactive as far as religious knowledge was concerned. His propitious arrival rejuvenated the jamats spiritually and materially through his farmans and khanavadhan (blessing). Moreover, the preaching and guidance of Pir Aga Ali Shah enhanced the understanding of their faith and uplifted the spirit of the jamats.

On the 15th of April, 1900, Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had announced, in Jamnagar jamatkhana, that he had appointed Mukhi Jamal Meghji and Thawar Ladha as missionaries to preach in the jamats.¹⁹² Later, two more, Bhagat Damjibhai and Shariff Gangji had joined the team.

In 1905, in Zanzibar, the Holy Imam created the Ismaili Mission department and appointed eight volunteer missionaries: Bhagat Juma Ismail, Ghulamhusain Jaffer Ramji, Nasser Abdullah, Moloo Alarakhia, Abdullah Dhala, Hasham Visram, Fazal Mohammed Ibrahim and Meghji Merali. Later in that year, the Imam sent an erudite scholar, twenty-seven year old Sayyid Baba Shah, from Iran to Zanzibar, for the purpose of their training.

Knowledge and learning are the highest merits in Islam. The Holy Prophet said:

“Ink in the inkpot of a learned man is higher than the blood of a martyr”

“A learned man is higher than one thousand worshippers put together.”

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, on various occasions, had spoken about the missionaries as follows:

“The missionaries are appointed by me; they should be highly respected.”

“Missionaries are the ambassadors of our Faith.”

“Mukhi and kamaria are my hands but the missionaries are my eyes.”

“Missionaries have brightened our Faith.”

“We need more and more missionaries.”

“Missionaries should preach to the jamat whether the people listen to it or not, but they should carry on their duty.”

“Missionaries are responsible for strengthening the faith of the jamat.”

“Missionaries themselves should set an example. They should have quality and character.”

“Preaching is higher than worship because many lives are benefited.”

“The missionaries have devoted their lives to the service of their Imam and the Ismaili Faith. They deserve from my spiritual children respect but even more so their affectionate thoughts.”

Religiously the missionaries and the mukhis-kamerias are the most important personalities of the jamat. In the past, a learned and elderly person, who had missionary-like knowledge, was appointed as the mukhi. He used to preach regularly in the jamat. Beside the mukhi there were certain bhagats who were engaged in teaching to the jamat the knowledge of our sacred ginans and the grunthas.

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah informed us about the mission activity of pir Varas Ismail Gangji of Junagadh. The pir used to invite the bhagats, from all over India at Junagadh, to attend an annual workshop on ginans. He was frequently preaching in the jamat himself. The Holy Imam explained that they were the people who had collected the texts of the ginans and set the tunes and intonations. Once in a *mulaaqaat* to missionaries, in the early 1930s, the Holy Imam instructed them to follow the *raagas* of Junagadh when reciting ginans.

BHAGATS / TEACHERS

After the death of Pir Tajdin, the mission work (da'wat) was carried on by his nephew Sayyid Imam Shah son of Pir Hassan Kabirdin and his children for a century; and then there was a long period of inactivity. But the bhagats became more active.

Ever since the time of Pir Satgur Noor some devotees became more earnest in matters of religion and they became known as bhagats, devotees. For example: There was a bhagat Chott during the time of Pir Satgur Noor. There were two famous bhagats in the time of Pir Shams, known as Chandre Bhan and Soor Bhan.

Mukhi Shamdass and others were bhagats with Pir Sadaruddin. During the time of Pir Hasan Kabirdin there was bhagat Devarakh, who also served Pir Sadaruddin.

The above list of the bhagats is not exhaustive; there were hundreds of them in various jamats at all times. They were highly respected in the jamats. Actually every Satpanthi is a bhagat, who does bhagti, spiritual activity. They were the people who used to preach and teach the jamat according to their knowledge. The continuation of the spread of the ginanic knowledge has remained in practice ever since as a semi-organised function of the Satpanth because of the bhagats

AAB E-SAFA - HOLY WATER (NIA'Z - GHATPAAT)

Aab means water, safa means pure or purity. Aab e-Safa means the holy water which purifies the mind and thoughts. In all religions the use of the holy water for purification and blessings is very important. The Christians sign the Cross with the holy water on their forehead or chest blessed by the priest¹⁹³ The Jews and the Christians also partake of holy water from river Jordan. Someone may think that the ghatpaat ceremony, in our Tariqah, is a modified version of some Hindu ritual. It is not true. In fact the Prophet of Islam himself used to prepare the holy water.

Muslims drink the water from the well 'zamzam' located near the Kabah. The Holy Prophet used to give holy water to the believers. It is reported that the Prophet would put his fingers in a bowl of water to bless it.¹⁹⁴ A queue of Muslims would form at the door of the Prophet's house early morning, each holding a pot of water. He would come out and dip his fingers in each pot and bless it. They drank this sanctified water; they also sprinkled it in the corners of their houses.¹⁹⁵ In the same way the Ismailis get the holy water blessed by the Imam e-Zaman. We drink it but do not sprinke anywhere. The Holy Quran mentions niaz, aab e-safa, in these words:

"But the virtuous drink of a cup, tempered with camphor.
A spring wherefrom the servants of Allah drink, they make
it flow anywhere they like. They fulfil their vows, and fear
a day the evil of which is widespread."¹⁹⁶

The Quranic words "tempered with camphor" refer to our use of benzoin (lobaan) incense after washing the pots and plates. "They make it flow anywhere they like" refer to our ceremony of ghatpaat which can be performed anywhere we like. The 'spring' is our kumbh (bowl) wherefrom the servants of Allah drink it in small cups. It is so clear. The niaz and its ceremony are symbols of the sacred 'spring' in Heaven mentioned in the Holy Quran. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had said: "If you drink aab e-safa with understanding and belief, your heart and mind will be purified."¹⁹⁷ In 1945 at Nairobi, the Holy Imam blessed water for the Chandraat Punjebhais and said:

"Take this niaz all of you. This will purify you in this world
as well as in the next."¹⁹⁸

There are many references about aab e-safa in our sacred ginans and also in the Traditions of Prophet Mohammed. Bukhari and Abu Muslim have recorded that "Abu Jahaifah reported that they (some companions) were at Bat'ha with the Holy Prophet who was resting in a red leather tent. He woke up and performed wudzu; then Bilal brought out of the tent, the bowl of leftover water. The faithful rushed towards it to get some drops to rub on their faces."¹⁹⁹ In our ginans the holy water is described as:

- Noor (Light)
- Ami or Amrit (drink of the spirits)
- Paawal (purifier)
- Saar (essence)
- Kaluss (blessed nectar)
- Aab e-Safa (purifying water)
- Niaz (a holy thing for blessing)
- Aab e-Kauser (drink from the Kauser or Kauther- the sacred Pool in Paradise from which Mowla Ali distributes the nectar to his lovers)

A jamatkhana, being the House of the Noor of Ali, is the Paradise in which the symbolic Pool of Kauser is the bowl of the holy water.

AAB E-SHIFA

After the ceremony of the aab e-safa is over and the dua' of "uthapan ji" is said, the leftover holy water is the 'aab e-shifa', the health-giving water. Shifa means cure or health. Pir Aga Ali Shah had given this description. I was informed by many elderly persons who were lucky to have didaar of the Holy Shah-Pir Aga Ali Shah that he said that anyone who was suffering from some sickness, if he took the leftover of the aab e-safa, after the "dua Qayam karanji," would be blessed with health because that was the aab e-shifa.

HOLY SUKREET

Sukreet is a cooked sweet with holy water sprinkled over it. It is taken as a good omen and blessing. According to our Pir Sadaruddin sukreet is prepared with milk, sugar, butter, wheat flour, and then holy niaz is sprinkled over it to make it a consecrated food for blessing. In partaking of sweets in religious and social

ceremonies, it is considered to bring good luck and rejoicing, particularly in Islamic society. It is a tradition of the Holy Prophet. This tradition is also considered a sign of good luck in the East.

The Sanskrit word 'su' means good and 'kreet' means a physical action done by hand. It all means a good action, a virtue, a pious intention. There is a great philosophy in sukreet. It consists of five ingredients which are metaphorically the five aspects of a momin's character. The five ingredients are: milk, sugar, butter, wheat flour and holy water. The message in sukreet is meant to be:

- Pure, clean and humble like milk
- Sweet, loveable and helpful like sugar
- Soft, kind and polite like butter
- Helpful, supportive, energizer like flour
- Pure, pious and consecrated like holy water

Note: *Nothing should be added in the preparation of the sukreet over and above the ingredients prescribed by our Pirs Sukreet should be distributed in a small quantity as little as a small grape. If someone wants more he can get it..*

When a momin puts a little lump of sukreet in his mouth after he has taken the holy niaz he is reminded, metaphorically, to be like the ingredients of holy sukreet. With this understanding his thinking and character get affected positively. In short: Sukreet means good character, good behaviour, virtuous living and pious thinking.

Leftover sukreet may be distributed but must not be auctioned in naadi because it contains the holy niaz.

LAMP

There is a lamp on the right side of the table of the ghatpaat. It must be lit before the ceremony commences. It is the symbol of the Noor in the House of the Noor of Imamate, the jamatkhana. It is the symbol of the Lamp that Allah mentions in the Holy Quran.²⁰⁰ It is the symbol of the "Sirajum Munirah", illuminating Lamp (Mohammed), mentioned in the Holy Quran.²⁰¹

Symbolically it depicts a momin's presence in Paradise at the Pool of Kauser where Mowla Ali is distributing the holy water. Next to him is the Holy Prophet showering blessings upon each of the lucky ones. The Paradise is all bright with the Light of Ali and Nabi, the Noor of Allah. Symbolically a jamatkhana is Paradise on the earth in which the Noor of Ali and the Noor of Mohammed dwell perpetually. There is the Pool of Kauser, the Bowl of the ghatpaat from which the momineen drink niaz under the Light (Lamp) and then get the blessing of

Mohammed in the form of 'sukreet', consecrated food containing a secret message. Thus our Pirs had lit a lamp at the ghatpaat ceremony with a purpose and significance. In scores of our ginans we read the word joth or jiyot, meaning Light or Noor. Pir Satgur Noor had kindled it a thousand years ago in the guth jamat in India.

Holy Pir Sadruddin has referred this lamp in his ginan:

Jirey vahala Joth jagadi ne Jumlo ji betha
(O dear! The Jamat has kindled the Lamp of Noor)

SETUP OF THE GHATPAAT

The utensils, the bowl, cups and the plates, are known as "ghatpaat na thaam". The mukhi of the jamat declares:

"Ghatpaat sthapna Allah mehriya"
(Meaning: Ghatpaat is being established,
may the mercy of Allah be upon you)

The congregation then stands up. Then the performer of the ceremony receives the bundle of ghatpaat and announces loudly:

"Dua' deo ghatpaat stha'pan ji, yaar Allah mehriya"
(Meaning: Let us pray for the setup of the ghatpaat;
may Allah's mercy be upon you O friends)

Note: *It is wrong to say: "Dua' deo aab e-safa stha'pan ji." Aab e-safa needs no prayer on sanctified by the Holy Imam. It is already pure and holy.*

The performer then places the bundle of the covered vessel on the paat (low table) in front of him and sits down on his knees and prays with folded hands while the jamat remains standing. After the recitation of the Sura tul Fatehaa (loudly) the cloth is removed and the pots are set up with each piece tempered with lobaan.. He/She should recite (silently) the Salwat all the time during the set up. Each piece of the ghatpaat crockery must be kept over the fumes of the loban or dhoop..

On the order of the mukhi the dua' starts. At the end of the dua' the kamera invites the jamat to partake the holy aab e-safa. After the jamat has partaken the holy niaz, a prayer is said to wind up the ceremony. But be sure that the main kumbh is not empty, some holy water must remain inside. Similarly all the cups in the plates must be full. Then a short prayer is announced:

“Dua’ deo ghatpaat uthapan ji, yaar Allah mehriya”

(Meaning: Let us pray for the winding up of the ceremony; may Allah’s mercy be upon you O friends).

The remaining aab e-shifa should be distributed and all the pots dried up with a white cloth then tied up in a white cover as usual. A prayer is said:

“Dua’ deo ghatpaat Qayam karan ji, yaar Allah mehriya”

(Meaning: Let us pray for the perpetuity of the ghatpaat ceremony; may Allah’s mercy be upon you O friends).

Here on earth the ceremony is symbolic but in Heaven it is Real and Eternal. It is very important and necessary to wipe dry the crockery of the ghatpaat with the clean cloth to prevent any drop of the holy water escaping into the sink to gutter while washing later. The cloth must be dried in the air before washing.

It is reported that the Holy Prophet used to gather some very close and senior companions privately for teaching them mysticism, especially in the dark of the night, about which Allah has mentioned in the Holy Quran, in these words:

“Thy Lord knows that thou keepest vigil nearly two-thirds of the night, or a half of it, or a third of it, and a party of those with thee; and God determines the night and the day.”²⁰²

The Prophet used to distribute among those companions some niaz to sanctify their thoughts. W. Ivanow explains:

“Communal drinking of consecrated water, or whatever it may be, or partaking of consecrated food, is a custom of immense antiquity amongst all races and nations, accepted as a symbol of bond between the members of an assembly, party, gang, etc. There is no ceremony of this kind prescribed in orthodox Islam, but various customs including such Eucharists are in use amongst Persian darwishes. It is the *piyala* which is offered at the initiation of the darwish into the tariqat. This institution is supposed to have been introduced by the Prophet himself, on the night of the Mi’raj, under the “blue cupola without door.” He offered it to the mystical *chihil tan* (“forty bodies”), symbols of Sufic fraternity, crushing a piece of raisin in a bowl of water. Thus it plainly symbolizes a religious bond of a confraternity.”²⁰³

Almost a thousand years ago in India, our Pir Satgur Noor had prescribed ‘ami’ (drink of the Spirits) in the ceremony of “*kaluss ghatt pooja*” which is ghatpaat.²⁰⁴

Then Pir Shams had laid more emphasis on ‘*paawal*’ (purifier) which is clearly found in his ginans. It is not clear, in our ginans, what were the details of the ceremony during that period but Pir Sadaruddin had reorganised the entire ceremony, in 21 parts of the prayer, of the ghatpaat. A small pill, called ‘*goli*’, made from the dust of a particular place directed by the Imam, was mixed in the water.²⁰⁵ In 1954, Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had abrogated this long prayer of 21 parts and ordered to distribute the holy water blessed by him.

Niaz and its ceremony are very significant and highly sacred. The holy aab e- safa is consecrated by the Imam personally, therefore, it is very important to give the ceremony our utmost respect and proper treatment. The ghatpaat ceremony is higher than the obligatory daily prayer, the holy dua’. The holy dua’ is our humble effort but the holy aab e-safa is granted by the Holy Master.

MANNERS OF SIPPING AAB E-SAFA

The manners of taking the holy niaz are important. Say ‘bismillah’ and lift a cup of niaz with your right hand and support it with your left hand then place the cup in the palm of your right hand, and say ‘farman’ and sip it slowly. The word farman means that “I am drinking this holy water according to the farman of the Holy Imam”. Return the cup with your right hand. Then take some ‘sukreet’ from the server in the palm of your right hand and gulp it. You are blessed with purification. You can take the holy sukreet in a slip of paper if you like. Never turn your back toward the ghatpaat after you have enjoyed a cup of it. Move to the side, left or right, and then turn. It is a gesture of respect.

The person who performs the sacred ceremony of the ghatpaat, must be physically clean, preferably has taken a bath before coming to the jamatkhana as explained in ginans.²⁰⁶

- His/her finger nails are trimmed.
- No one among the conductors of the ceremony, is suffering from cold or cough or skin disease or any other contagious disease. (*Actually such a person should not attend jamatkhana until he/she recovers fully*)
- All such persons must not wear black clothes, because it is utterly against our tradition. Black is a sign of bad luck and mourning. It was the colour of our enemies.
- They should not talk any worldly matter during the ceremony.
- The main performer should answer to each time ‘farman’ is said with “Pir-Shah” or “Ya Ali-Ya Mohammed”.
- All of them on duty should drink the holy aab e-safa after the jamat has taken it, one by one.

- All of them should remain on duty till the end of the ceremony. No one should leave before the conclusion of the ceremony because it is not respectful.
- One should avoid putting a finger in his/her ear or a nostril while on duty.

GHATPAAT NA GINAN

There are numerous sacred ginans to be recited on the occasion of the ghatpaat, while the jamat is sitting and the ghatpaat is being arranged; and then while the jamat is sipping the holy aab e-safa, in standing position.. These ginans are composed by our Pirs for this special occasion, therefore, we must follow the rule. No other ginan should be recited.

RULES OF THE GHATPAAT CEREMONY

1. The cloth to cover the utensils must be white always, symbol of purity and sacredness. It must be washed every time.
2. The kumbh (main bowl) represents the Hawz e Kauther, its Master is Mowla Ali, says the Holy Prophet. It must be highly respected.
3. The bottle of the holy niaz should not be emptied fully in the kumbh; only a spoonful of it is enough. The kumbh must not remain empty before the "Uthapan' dua".
4. The cups must be full all the time.
5. A white towel over the bundle has no significance. It is used for drying hands for cleanliness. No personal cloth such as a handkerchief should be used.
6. The kumbh is covered during the prayer and uncovered in the fifth part of our holy Dua' to pour the holy aab e-safa from the bottle and then remains open all the time.
7. After the Uthapan dua', leftover niaz should be distributed and the pots and plates should be dried up with a clean white cloth before assembling them in a bundle.
8. The cloth used for drying the pots and plates should be spread out to dry and should then washed.

BAITUL KHAYAL

Ismaili Tariqah is esoteric, intended only for the initiated. It is to engage in deep thinking; to search innerself, to meditate; to enter into remembrance of God. In our esoteric tariqah it is essential to search the reality of existence and its cause for tahe understanding of the Almighty. It is known as *baitul khayal*, indulgence in the practice of meditation and mystisim. It is a strict discipline under the guidance of the Imam of the time. This is a way to acquire the real understanding of Islam and its gnosis. Some intellectuals among the companions of the Holy Prophet asked him whether there was something more than the usual practice of Islam such as salat, zakat, fasting and hajj (the shariat). The Prophet showed them the way (tariqat) to think about the soul and the ultimate in solitude, during the night. Progress in this endeavor depends upon one's commitment and practice.

A clean and ethical life is the first requirement in the practice of *baitul khayal*. It is a hard discipline which requires stability of thoughts, perseverance, tolerance, patience and the love of the Supreme Lord.

Members of this spiritual society are instructed by the Holy Imam to refrain from taking tea before *bandgi* at 4 a.m.; instead a little black coffee is allowed if it is necessary to avoid slumber during the *bandgi*.²⁰⁷ He also instructed the jamat to establish five satada in a year in the baitul khayal. Mowlana Hazar Imam has reduced them to four. During these satada a strict vegetarian diet should be taken according to the holy farman.

It is not compulsory to indulge in *baitul khayal* practice. It depends upon one's own decision to take it seriously and to practice it. It is a hard discipline and a lifetime commitment. One must follow the holy farmans about this mandli.

NAADI or NAZR (OBLATION)

NAADI or Nandi is an Ismaili word for religious offering, oblation, popular among the Ismailis of India. The Ismailis of other countries call it 'nazr'. This word is used for anything offered to Allah, Rasool, and of course, to the Imam-e-Zaman, as 'nazr' or mehmani.

Nandi in Sanskrit means an offering to the Supreme Lord. Naadi is Arabic and is an adjective/noun (*ism-e-fa'il*) of the noun 'nidaa' or 'nadaa' which means voice, sound, a cry, a shouting, an announcement, etc. Literally naadi means a person who announces or speaks in a loud voice such as an auctioneer. To us it is an offering or a mehmani for the Holy Shah-Pir.

It is an offering in kind, food and livestock. The Holy Prophet used to receive various gifts from the faithful. Muslim families often sent food to him or invited him at home for blessing. They loved him more than they loved their own families. Those who understood the status of Mowla Ali, such as Suleman el-Faras, Abu Zar Ghaffari and Abul Fatah Qamber served both, the Holy Prophet and Mowla Ali. After the death of the Prophet the Shia continued to get the guidance and blessings of Mowla Ali, the Imam of the time. As the time passed the political situation had created many controversies and obstacles which compelled the lovers of Ali to meet secretly for their spiritual practices. This was the jamat of Batini Tariqah. The Imam e-Musta'uda Pir Hasan was helping the Imam e-Mustaqar Mowla Ali in Batini affairs of the jamat.

Nazr or vow is offered to God in thanksgiving or to evoke blessing for the fulfillment of prayer for success or relief. For example: A Muslim in trouble would pray for forgiveness of his sins and for the divine help in getting rid of the trouble. Along with such a prayer he takes a vow to pay a certain sum of money or give food or perform a certain act like fasting or completing the reading of the whole Quran for thanking the Lord.

According to Bukhari it is reported that the Holy Prophet said that by giving away 'sadaqah'²⁰⁸ pain and sorrow melt away. Hazrat Abdul-Muttalib had taken a vow to give one of his ten sons as a nazr to God if he had ten sons. He did have ten

sons and then to fulfill his vow he wrote the name of his ten sons on ten separate chits to draw the name of the one chosen by God. The name of his most beloved son Abdullah (the father of the Holy Prophet) was drawn up. This shocked him because he loved him the most. He wrote the name of Hazrat Abdullah on a chit and ten camels on another chit and prayed to God to spare his beloved son and accept ten camels which he would sacrifice and distribute as sadaqah. But the name of Abdullah appeared again. He increased the number of camels to twenty and prayed for God's acceptance. The name of Abdullah appeared again. He kept on increasing the number of camels from twenty to thirty, forty and so on until he wrote a hundred camels. This time the name of Abdullah did not appear but a hundred camels. At last God heard his prayer and spared his most beloved son. Hazrat Abdul-Muttalib jumped up in joy and slaughtered a hundred camels as an accepted token of his vow, nazr. Allah has specifically mentioned about nazr in the Holy Quran.²⁰⁹

Spending in love of God is an act of high merit. Apart from specific obligations, a Muslim is recommended to spend, out of sheer love of God, from his wealth.²¹⁰ If a person spends out of love of God he is repaid manifold.²¹¹ Food offering is prevalent in Islam since the time of the Prophet. Rizq in Arabic means anything edible, cooked or raw. The ultimate aim of a man's earning is to feed his family and himself. Food is the most important factor in life; therefore the word *rizq* is used for whatever earning a person is making for sustenance. Those are commended and praised who "spend out of *rizq* We have given them".²¹² Animals and birds, fruit and grain of all kinds and all drinks such as milk, water, beverage (which is not forbidden) comprise *rizq*. In many verses of the Holy Quran the words "MIMA RAZAQNAA HUM YUN FIQOON" are mentioned:

"O ye who believe give in charity of the good things that you earn and of what we have brought forth for you out of the earth and do not aim at giving what is bad in charity."²¹³

Today, among the Muslim ummah the Ismailis under their Holy Imam have been practicing Islam in its true form. They pay their religious dues sincerely out of their earning, after deduction of the government taxes. Our beloved Hazar Imam is our Spiritual Father and the Spiritual Mother. He is always present at our home spiritually. Therefore, an Ismaili family sets apart a portion of daily cooking, before anyone eats in the family, as a *mehmani* for the Holy Imam.

The Ismailis have a system in place for Bait-el-Maal. Whatever they give in the name of the Lord, is collected locally by the head of the Bait-el-Maal, known as Mukhi. Cooked food, raw food, beverages, cloth, furniture, etc, when collected as *oblation*, are auctioned and turned into cash which ultimately is spent according to the instructions from the Hazar Imam, on hospitals, dispensaries, libraries, schools, orphanages, widow houses, welfare societies, unemployed and destitute, graveyards, burial requirements, prayer houses, jamatkhanas, religious literature and publicity, religious teaching and propagation, rest houses and so on. The Holy

Prophet had organized the Central Treasury known as Bait-el-Maal and appointed receivers of the religious dues from the believers. In Medina, he had appointed Hazrat Omar, Obaida bin Jarrah in Nafram, Abdullah bin Rawah in Khaibar, Abu Musa Ashari in Yemen, Zi'as bin Labeed in Hadramout and Aban bin Sa'eed in Bahrain.²¹⁴

According to the Holy Quran²¹⁵ it was the responsibility of the Prophet (and after him Imam Mowla Ali) to collect, organize and distribute religious dues. The Prophet prohibited *sadaqah* to himself and his progeny, but he allowed gifts, and one-half of the *khums*, accepted on his behalf. A half of *khums* is *ushr*, one-tenth, known as *dasond*.

Naadi is, therefore, not meant for the poor as many ignorant would think. It is for the Shah-Pir. Whatever an Ismaili momin gives to be auctioned as *naadi* is either a part of his zakat or a token of love of God and Prophet or a vow in some difficulty or a payment in thanksgiving or a gift to his beloved Hazar Imam or a gesture of sacrifice or an offering to invoke God's mercy and blessings. It depends on the intention of a person.

THAAR-SUFRO

Thaar-Sufro means cooked food offering to the Holy Imam. Thaar means a tray full of food, and sufro means food offering, a mehmani. Our Holy Prophet used to receive cooked food from devotees at home, or he was invited to visit a Muslim family. The Shia Muslims continued this practice after the Prophet out of love for their Imams. The Ismailis in India have been practicing this offering of Thaar-Sufro to the Shah-Pir.

When food is cooked in an Ismaili household, a portion of it is taken out, before anyone eats, as a mehmani for the Holy Imam. In the evening this offering is taken to the jamatkhana, the House of the Imam, for naadi. Sometime there is an offering of food on behalf of a ruhani (deceased).

AWWAL SUFRO

When the Thaar Sufro is displayed in the jamatkhana on an occasion of some celebration someone may wish to be the first person to offer food to the Holy Imam. A few persons may compete and the one who wins comes forward and gets the blessings from the mukhi. To win a chance of awwal sufro is a great honour. The companions of the Prophet had a tendency of trying to grab the first opportunity of serving their Master. It was an expression of their love for Allah and His prophet.

MEHMANI

Naadi is basically a form of mehmani to Hazar Imam. It is more important in remote parts of the world where the flow of liquid cash is restricted. The Ismailis of those lands give to the mukhi their religious dues in the form of grain, fruit and livestock which are then sent to the urban areas for sale. A lot of references are found in our sacred ginans which are the explanatory tafseer of the Holy Quran and the Hadith.

Our beloved Prophet used to receive varieties of personal gifts (mehmani) such as food, cloths, animals and even cash from the followers. There are two categories of mehmani: First, an unconditional gift of love. Second, an offering of mehmani on an occasion of personal meeting with the Prophet or the Imam. Allah commands:

“O ye who believe! When you hold conference with the messenger, offer an alms before your conference. That is better and purer for you...”²¹⁶

According to the Shia principle the Imam of the time is our Mowla just as the Holy Prophet was the Mowla of the momineen. Our system of naadi is the collection of the first category of mehmani. The second category becomes effective when the Holy Imam visits us or we go to see him. Both categories of a humble mehmani are a method of receiving the blessings of Hazar Imam. Allah says:

“And when those who believe in Our revelations come unto thee (O Prophet!), say: Peace be unto you!...”^(Khanavadhan)²¹⁷

KHADA-KHORAKI

It is understood that mehmani is an offering to Hazar Imam when a devotee goes to meet him; but if a momin prays for the Imam's visit to his house then it is *khada-khoraki*. There are numerous reports in the Traditions that the Holy Prophet used to visit households on invitation.

RUHANI DUA'

It is the food offering to the Lord on behalf of a deceased. The tray of food is placed before the mukhi or the kameran for its acceptance and blessings for the soul concerned. Then the tray goes for naadi. This tray is reserved for the soul of a

particular deceased. For example: The family, of late Mr. X, brought the tray in front of the mukhi or the kamera for the ruhani dua'. One or more members of his family and friends can make dua' on that particular tray for the spiritual benefit of the soul of Mr X., exclusively. No one in the jamat can use this tray for the use of some other deceased soul because the tray has come from his family on his behalf. No other person can claim it.

There is another way to give spiritual benefit to a deceased and that is to offer a mehmani, in the usual way, for the sawaab to the ruhani.

NOTE: As explained above naadi is food for the Holy Imam, therefore, it is sacred thus it should be presented to the Lord by keeping it in the prayer hall and not outside. In many jamatkhana ignorant persons have moved the naadi paats outside the prayer hall which is against the principle of our holy faith. . Any thing obtained from naadi is for the mureed of the Holy Imam; it should not be passed on to any non-mureed.

HOLY DIDAAR

Didaar means a glimpse of the beloved. A lover feels extremely happy when he gets a glance of his beloved murshid, guru, Imam of the time. It is an ardent wish of a devotee to see and meet his beloved. During the time of the Holy Prophet people used to travel long distances to visit the city of his residence to see him. Some ardent lovers asked the Prophet if they could see Allah. The Prophet explained to them that Allah could not be seen with the physical eyes because He is beyond material form but in the Hereafter servants of Allah will be able to see Him.

There are numerous reports in the Hadith about the didaar of Allah. Bukhari and Abu Muslim have reported from Jarir bin Abdullah: "We were sitting in the company of the Holy Prophet in open, at night, bright with full moon. The Holy Prophet pointed his finger towards the moon and said that as they were seeing that (moon) in the same way they would be able to see Allah in the Paradise"²¹⁸ Allah has told mankind that He has sent down His Noor.

"O mankind! Indeed has come to you (an undeniable) proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a manifest Light."²¹⁹

In this verse 'proof' is the Holy Quran and the clear Noor is Mowla Ali, the Imam of the time. Almost all the Shia interpreters unanimously agree on this. Abu Zar Ghaffari reports that the Prophet had said: "Ali is like the Kabah and to look at him is ibadat (worship)."²²⁰ According to Hazifah, the Prophet said: "Ali among the mankind is like Sura Ikhlās in the Quran."²²¹ The Noor that Ali was bearing has come down generation after generation (through nass) in his descendants till today and will continue till the end of the world. The Holy Prophet said that to look at the face of Ali was *ibadat*. In the same way to look at the face of Hazar Imam is *ibadat*. Every Imam is the holder of the Noor of Ali, therefore he is Ali from that perspective. To look at the holy face of the Hazar Imam is *ibadat*, an act of worship. A didaar of the Holy Imam purifies us, enhances our spiritual consciousness, improves faith and stability in our virtues and creates nearness between the Master and the loving mureed. As soon as the loving mureed looks at the holy face of the beloved Imam his eyes are filled with tears in extreme joy of

the love of the beloved Imam. This condition of ecstasy in the lover is uncontrollable. A glimpse of the Imam captivates the lover momentarily and makes him jubilant. This is the zahiri didaar, but our batini Tariqah leads us to desire for the ultimate, the batini didaar of the Supreme Being.

It is not only the ruhani benefits of the zahiri didaar but also the worldly advantages we receive as a respected community. Moreover, we come closer to each other in the jamat and many misunderstandings disappear and affection surfaces. Many a weak imani becomes firm and rededicated to his religious life. Our image on the whole is enhanced among the other communities and the government when our Mowla graces us with his holy visit. Most of the intellectuals of other communities take interest in our well organized activities and the guidance of our Holy Imam.

DURBAAR

In Persian, durbaar means the court of an Emperor. According to the Holy Quran the Imam of the time is the Supreme Sovereign on the earth.²²² We use the word durbaar when our Hazar Imam graciously calls a special gathering of the jamat to address a special message or to bestow the titles and other favours on the servants. He attends durbaar in his full regalia.

DAST BOSI

Dast bosi is kissing the hand of the Holy Imam. In the past when a mureed from India went to Iran to see the Imam he would also seek an opportunity to kiss the holy hand at the time of didaar. The Holy Prophet was gladly giving his hand to be kissed on many occasions.

Kissing hands of a dignitary is an act of high respect in Islamic society. But kissing the hand of the Prophet was an expression of love and fealty. It was a common practice of the companions of the Prophet to kiss his hand when they met him. It is reported in Abu Dawood that a deputation from the tribe of Beni Abdul Qais arrived in Medina. One of the members of the deputation was Zara' who reported that "when we arrived in Medina we saw the Prophet in a street. We jumped down hastily from our mounts and all of us kissed his hands and feet."²²³

All the way down from the time of our beloved Mowla Ali the Ismaili mureed kisses the holy hand of his Mowla with love and loyalty whenever he has a chance to meet him personally. Imams Mowlana Aga Hassanali Shah, Mowlana Aga Ali Shah and Mowlana Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah used to visit the jamats, especially for the ceremony of *dast bosi*, and all the members of the jamat would

kiss the holy hand individually. When Mowlana Imam Aga Hasanali Shah arrived in India the worldly condition of the jamat was extremely poor. Everyone could not afford a mehmani to get a chance to go close to the Holy One. The Imam allowed *dast bosi* so that everyone could come close to him for his blessings and for touching the holy body of the Imam by kissing the holy hand with his lips. This purifies the self of the mureed and improves his spirit.

Our Imams Ali Shah and Sultan Mohammed Shah had graciously carried on the practice for the spiritual benefit of the jamat. The ceremony of *dast bosi* takes place on the day of the enthronement of the Holy Imam. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah's enthronement day was Saturday. In Persian language it is called *shambah*. He used to visit the jamat on every Saturday during his stay in the city. He would sit in the Takhat (Throne) and would let his right or left hand be kissed by the mureeds one by one. The mureed would touch his forehead at the back of the holy hand and then kiss it. He received the blessing from the Imam with 'khanavadhan'. The mureed would bow and take three steps backward before turning away.

As the travel facilities increased the size of the jamats for the holy didaar increased too. The Imam started accepting the *dast bosi* en masse. If he returned after a year he would graciously accept the *dast bosi* of the entire jamat for the fifty-two weeks of the year.²²⁴ In 1933, the Holy Imam returned to Bombay after five years. On December 15th he visited the Darkhana and made the following holy Farman:

"I accept your *dast bosi* of all the shambahs passed away during my five years' absence from India. In the same way I, also, accept the *dast bosi* of all the spiritual children, men, women, adult and minors, of India. Khanavadhan."²²⁵

JURA

A juro (*pl:jura*) is something sweet or a piece of fruit distributed in a small quantity in a majlis or on a special happy occasion in the jamatkhana, as a blessing from the Holy Imam. The root of this word is Arabic *jurra'ah*, meaning: a morsel or a few drops, so that it is put straight away in the mouth. Therefore it is not our tradition to distribute large or big items as juro. Allah says:

“O children of Adam look to your adornment at every place of worship and eat and drink but be not prodigals.”²²⁶

In this verse clothing, eating and drinking are all in connection with “every place of worship”. The “every place of worship” is not reserved for a Muslim mosque because Allah has addressed all children of Adam. Eating or drinking at every place of worship is juro or holy water. All religious communities eat juro and drink holy water at their respective places of worship, according to their tradition. The words “be not prodigals” mean that they should not be the wasters, *i.e.* the juro and holy water must be respected and not wasted or thrown away carelessly.

In the above verse of the Holy Quran eating in the place of worship like jamatkhana, indicates that the juro be eaten there and there. It means that the juro must be small in size and easily eaten. In the past juro of ghoogri or daariya was popular because of its convenience. A few grains could be eaten straight away. A piece of sugarcoated almond, a dried fig, a date or a dried apricot are quite suitable for distribution as a juro.

The juro is distributed always on behalf of the Holy Imam. Anyone who contributes towards the cost of juro in full or in part will get the swaab of a *mehmani*, but the juro is always the Holy Imam's benediction.

GHOOGRI and DAARIYA

These grains of gram, black or white chick peas, are known as *chana* in Indian languages. It is one of the cheapest grains in the market and it is the most

nutritious of all grains, except wheat. A handful of ghoogri (boiled chana) or daariya (roasted chana) is a good energy booster. According to a reference in our sacred ginan, juro of ghoogri was popular in all religious gatherings without exception. It is one of our oldest traditions. The juro of ghoogri or daariya is an expression of equality of rich and poor in the jamat, particularly during a *satado*. A juro of daariya is distributed in the Rojo majlis.

In the Rojo majlis, on the seventh day of the lunar month, a juro of daariya with some pieces of stone sugar is distributed. Daariya is for the blessings in food, and sugar for happiness and blessings meaning: ‘barakat’ in sustenance. This rojo -- about four hours of fasting after sunrise -- was known as a *saum unnafl* (fasting for thanksgiving) during the time of the Holy Prophet.

It is only during the last century, especially after the Diamond Jubilee of our Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah in 1946, that some young mukhi-kamera introduced expensive items other than ghoogri or some simple inexpensive items, as juro to increase the attendance of the jamat.

A juro must be small and simple.

SADAQAH - CHARITY

Sadaqah is sacrifice of an animal for the meat to be distributed or some charity to invoke the pleasure of God in a difficulty, or to thank Him. It is also given away as a substitute for a sickness or affliction. Such a sacrifice may be in the shape of cash or clothes or food, cooked or raw, to be distributed among the beggars. Even fasting for a day or more, can be observed as a sadaqah. Allah says:

“And the likeness of those who spend their wealth in search of Allah’s pleasure, and for the strengthening of their souls,....”²²⁷

The Holy Prophet said: “Sadaqah cools down the wrath of Allah, and protects you from a despicable end.”²²⁸ Sadaqah increases prosperity. “Allah has blighted usury, and made almsgiving to prosper.”²²⁹

Whatever we offer in our jamatkhana is mehmani and not sadaqah or charity. Sadaqah is given outside of jamatkhana to the poor or to some charitable institutions or to take a vow as a substitute. There are many ways to give a sadaqah. For example:

1. Keep a fast.
2. Sacrifice a halal animal, depending upon the intensity of affliction, such as a chicken, a goat, a cow, etc.
3. Contribute cash.
4. Give some physical service as a volunteer, for a certain period.
5. Take a vow of spending certain time in certain numbers of tasbeehs as a substitute of sadaqah.

The Holy Prophet and his progeny do not accept sadaqah.

KHANA VADHAN

The Hindi word ‘Khanavadhan’ was derived from the Persian khana-abad (pronounced: *khono-obod*) which means ‘May all in the household, family and property, be safe, healthy and prosper.’

When Mowlana Imam Aga Shah Hasanali Shah and Pir Aga Ali Shah arrived in India, in 1842, the jamats were most fortunate to hear, first time, the blessing *khono-obod* directly from the mouth of the Holy Shah-Pir. They were addressing the jamat in Persian language which was immediately translated in Cutchhi language, by Kamaria Nazerali Haji Kadvani. The word *abad* was translated into Cutchhi as *vadhan*, meaning: increased, enhanced, and abundant. It is the most appropriate translation.

Kamaria Nazerali was succeeded by his son Haji, well-known as Kamaria Haji. He served the three Imams and died in 1916. After his death Mowlana Imam Aga Sultan Mohammed Shah started making farmans in Urdu. The Holy Imam graciously appointed Vazier Rahim Basaria for translation of the holy farmans from Urdu to Cutchhi or Gujrati.

The Ismailis are the only lucky jamat in the Muslim ummah who get the blessings directly from the manifest Noor of Allah, the Holy Imam. Allah Commanded the Holy Prophet:

“And when those who believe in Our revelations come unto thee say: Peace be unto you.”²³⁰

The words ‘Peace be unto you’ in the verse meant for blessing and not merely a greeting which is commonly used among Muslims (as-salaamu alaykum). These are the words of blessings from Allah and His prophet. This is what we call ‘*khanavadhan*’. Ever since the physical absence of Prophet Mohammed the followers of the true Imam have been lucky to get the divine blessings from the Noor of Allah all the time from Mowla Ali till today. Therefore, only the Holy Imam or his appointed mukhis and kamerias can bestow this word of blessing.

It is interesting to note that the jamat in India was extremely poor and backward before the arrival of the Imam. His holy presence and frequent bestowal of his blessings, *khanavadhan*, improved the conditions all around. Allah said:

“(O Mohammed!) Take alms of their wealth, wherewith thou mayst purify them and mayst make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, Knower.”²³¹

The jamat in India had received purification and progressed steadily because of the Imam's *khanavadhan*. Only the Imam of the time can accept alms and give blessing. According to our Tariqah no one has authority to receive offerings on behalf of Allah except the Imam of the time.

It is reported in Bukhari and Abu Muslim that whenever anyone brought zakaat the Holy Prophet used to bless him, saying: “Mercy of Allah be upon you.”²³² This was *khanavadhan* from the Prophet and Allah.

We are lucky to receive *khanavadhan* of the Imam of the time through the mukhi or the kamaria. It is due to this blessing that the jamats have been growing in worldly and spiritual prosperity all round. Alhamdulillah, the Ismaili jamat is fortunate and the most organized and progressive community in the Muslim ummah.

CHHANTA

In our Tariqah chhanta is the sprinkling of the consecrated water on the face of a person who requests it for blessing, purification and pardon. The Holy Prophet used to administer chhanta also on the chest and the shoulders of a person for blessing and purification.²³³ Once Ja'bir, a companion, was sick; the Prophet went to see him and demanded some water. He made wudzu (ablution) and then sprinkled the remaining water over the sick Ja'bir.²³⁴

According to the hadith scholar Nisa'i, Ta'luq bin Ali reported: “We took a deputation to the Holy Prophet and asked him about an abandoned old church in our village which was not in use because all had embraced Islam. He suggested to change the church into a mosque. Then he demanded some water and made wudzu. He then threw the water from his mouth in to the bowl full of water. He instructed us to take that water to sprinkle over the site after demolishing the church and then build a mosque. We asked him what to do if the water dried up in the way as our village was far away. He allowed us to add more water, periodically, until we reached home.”²³⁵ The sprinkling of the water which was touched or gargled from his mouth, was a common practice, reports Anas bin Ma'lik²³⁶

A woman brought her son to the Prophet and said that he was a dumb. The Prophet asked for some water and then washed his hands and put some of it in his mouth, gargled and threw this in to a bowl. He told the woman to sprinkle it over him and give some to drink. Next year she brought her child back and informed him that the child was speaking.²³⁷

Every month all of us take a chhanta in the night of chandraat (new moon) for any error in our dasand. There are also some special chhanta administered in the night of the Lailatul Qadr. A chhanta is sprinkled straight on the face of the person who requests it, not in the right eye and then in the left eye as some leaders do. All five fingers must be dipped into the bowl of the consecrated water and then sprinkled while uttering the word 'farman'.

SUKHA MANTA

(MINNET)

Sukha manta means a vow, a promise to God to do something or to offer something in exchange for the fulfilment of a desire or alleviation of pain and suffering. Pain and suffering are a part of human life on earth and evil influence is spread all over the world. Human life is full of miseries and problems, some are created by man himself and some are beyond his control. In such circumstances man becomes disheartened and dejected. Faith can help him. When a difficult situation persists, he prays and makes a vow to fulfil a certain promise. In most of the cases it is successful. Read the story of Hazrat Abdul-Muttalib's vow in the chapter Naadi. Islam and more so the Ismaili Faith, allows such vows about which Allah has mentioned:

“...they fulfil their vow, and fear a day the evil of which is widespread.”²³⁸

A vow must be fulfilled even it is long forgotten but suddenly reappears in memory. According to Bukhari and Abu Muslim, Abdullah bin Omar said that his father asked the Holy Prophet if he could fulfil his vow taken before embracing Islam; and the Prophet said: “Fulfil thy vow.”²³⁹

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah warned us not to take a vow which was difficult or impracticable. He said that if someone takes a vow which later seems unmanageable, then he should go to the mukhi in the jamatkhana, and seek pardon.²⁴⁰

NAZR

It is another name for minnet, a vow. Nazr, as a nazrana, also means a free gift, an offering. If it is a vow then it must be fulfilled as sukha manta.

CHAND RAAT

Chand raat is the night of the new moon — the night of blessing. According to the Muslim calendar the lunar month starts at 6 p.m. on the new moon, therefore, it is a propitious occasion. We celebrate this occasion as a thanksgiving service which is according to our Holy Imam, an important event which would bring us peace and happiness. On sighting the new moon the Holy Prophet used to pray: “O Allah, show us this new moon for our happiness, for our faith, for peace and for Islam. O moon, my Lord is Allah and thy Lord is (also) Allah.”²⁴¹

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah said: “Attend a *jagran* (in the night of the new moon) and make a majlis of your faith.”²⁴² There are many majalis in our Tariqah; some of them are explained in the following pages.

Our jamat in India followed the lunar calendar for the religious activities. It has been our tradition to offer our *dasond* on the night of chand-raat and take a *chhanto* for any unintentional mistake. This *chhanto* has no other purpose. Some persons take a *chhanto* for a *ruhani* in this majlis which is not appropriate because the *ruhani* died and all his duties came to an end. A *mehmani* on behalf of the *ruhani* is the most appropriate gesture.

SHUKARWARI BEEJ

It occurs twice a year when the new moon appears on Friday. That Friday is the fasting day for us. This is known as *Shukarwari Beej*. It is an obligatory fast as a mark of thanking the Lord for our Pir Hasan Kabirdin who bequeathed all the *swaab* of his service and worship of God, to the jamat till the end of the world.²⁴³ The Pir himself started this fast and the jamat followed. In those days the fast lasted for thirty-six hours, starting after the morning prayer on Thursday through evening of Friday.²⁴⁴ During this period the *mureed* could not eat or drink anything except holy water and *sukreet*. The period of thirty-six hours of fasting was reduced by Pir Aga Ali Shah to twelve hours, starting in the morning of Friday after partaking of the *aab e-safa*, and ending in the evening with *aab e-safa*.

Our Mowlana Hazar Imam had sent a Holy Farman, in 1964, to the jamats to keep up the tradition of the *Shukarwari Beej*. Some charity is necessary on that day.²⁴⁵ In the event of the physical presence of our Hazar Imam in a town, the jamat of that place is exempted from keeping this fast because it is our day of rejoicing.

MAJLIS

Majlis means a special gathering for a religious service. A majlis (*plu.*Majaalis) may be arranged for a happy occasion or for the spiritual benefit (*swaab*) of a deceased.

The Holy Prophet used to hold a majlis regularly to explain religious questions. Such majaalis were open to all, but many were unaware of the etiquette of such a gathering, and often caused embarrassment to others as well as to the Prophet himself. Allah commanded:

“O believers, when you are asked to make room in a majlis, make room. Allah will give you ample. And when it is said “move up higher” go up higher; Allah will exalt those who believe among you and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. Allah knows what you do.”²⁴⁶

Actually such majaalis are a kind of religious classes to educate the members of the jamat, who are mostly occupied in the affairs of life and cannot find time to read and think seriously about their spiritual matters. To improve the common man’s religious understanding such majaalis are, therefore, very important and necessary. Since the advent of Islam *khutbah* (sermon) and *wa’z* (preaching) are obligatory in every sect of Islam.

In Shia Islam the concept of majlis is very strong and is devotional. A majlis is incomplete without preaching. It is reported by Abdullah bin Abbas that during the time of the Holy Prophet, preaching was delivered twice and sometimes thrice a week in simple language. He further said that the Prophet used to repeat his words three times if he thought that the matter was important, so that the listeners could understand well and remember.²⁴⁷

In our sacred ginans, majlis is referred to as *jagan or jagran*; literally it means to keep awake. A jagran was held during the night for which sleep and rest had to be sacrificed. Here is one of hundreds of references in our sacred ginan:

“O dear brother,
Seek for the Light of Thy Lord in human form (Imam);
Serve Him. And sacrifice thy sleep.”²⁴⁸

This verse indicates the importance of *bandgi*, from midnight until dawn. Most of the majaalis are held during the night time so that there would be no interference

in one’s worldly duties. There were various groups of Muslims in Medina, and outside, where they listened to religious discourses and learnt the Holy Quran. The most serious group was that of the As’haab’e Suffah who had dedicated their lives to the cause of Allah.²⁴⁹

In India, the majlis of Chandraat was established, in 1894, by Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah. Afterward many majaalis came into existence. Within three decades there were more than ten majaalis in a month in the Greater Bombay area. Before the Diamond Jubilee of the Holy Imam (1946) there were these majaalis running in full swing:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Chand Raat | 7. Masalawala Punjebhai |
| 2. Saatmi Raat | 8. Walkeshwar Punjebhai |
| 3. Paanch Baar Saal | 9. Walkeshwar Punjebheno (Ladies) |
| 4. Shaniwaria Punjebhai | 10. Students (boys) |
| 5. Aatwaria Punjebhai | 11. Students (girls) |
| 6. Buddharia Punjebhai | 12. Baitul Khayal |

Majaalis 4 through 7 were the weekly majaalis and all others were monthly. The weekly majaalis were held in different jamatkhana; No. 8 and 9 were held in the Darkhana only, the rest in all jamatkhana. In almost every majlis at least a half hour was reserved for preaching. In fact these majaalis were established for the sake of preaching to get the knowledge of the Ismaili faith.

CHAND RAAT MAJLIS

This majlis is held in the night of the new moon. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had established this majlis on the 4th day of February, 1894 in Bombay, and addressed the Punjebhais (members of the majlis) meeting at Hasanabad. He said:

“I am making this farman for the \$alvation of the haqiqati jamat. It is quite good that you have decided to establish a weekly majlis on Sunday. But it is better that all the Punjebhais of the Greater Bombay should meet in a majlis once a month on the chand raat. All of you should come to jamatkhana with one motive and that is: the worship of God; so that He may forgive your sins and purify you and enter you in the Paradise.

“First of all, you all should be united. Do not speak ill of anybody or any other faith. Do not cast an evil eye on anyone. Keep away from other’s property.

"All members of this majlis should pay a membership fee -- anything from one paisa to eight paisas -- not less than a paisa and not more than eight paisas; yet poor and rich are all equal (in our faith). I have appointed a committee of six persons who will take care of the fund collected.

"When a member leaves this mortal world for the Hereafter, arrange a majlis in jamatkhana for his soul, and distribute some juro. Be careful not to make any distinction between the poor and the rich by making a simple juro for the poor and expensive for the rich. All are equal. Spend for the juro from the fund. All should pray for the soul of the deceased so that God may forgive his sins and enter him into Paradise. And you, too, will receive blessing. I will be more than happy to see that no one of my mureeds leaves this world as a sinner. Inshallah.

"Come to jamatkhana for prayer in congregation and say *Salwaat* repeatedly. Inshallah! you will become stronger day by day, your enemies will disappear, your sins will be pardoned and you will enter the Paradise afterward and get the light. Inshallah."²⁵⁰

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had sent the following Holy Message, via Cable, to the Executive Council for Africa, Zanzibar.

Cannes, 25th March, 1954

To the President, members and the Jamat.

As the Chaand Raat majlis is observed once a month, it is very important for my beloved spiritual children to attend this majlis in large numbers.

It is the day of New Moon and this will bring happiness and spiritual peace, therefore, all should be encouraged to register their names for membership in this majlis.

AGA KHAN

LADIES MAJLIS

On a fervent request from the Muslim women, the Holy Prophet had fixed one day for a special majlis of women only for the purpose of preaching.²⁵¹ Likewise, we have special majlis for the women of our jamat, established by our Holy Imam almost a hundred years ago. This monthly majlis is known as Punjebheno Majlis.

ROZA (ROJO) MAJLIS

This is also known as Satimi Raat Majlis, because this majlis is held on the seventh of the lunar month. On this day members of the majlis keep a brief fast as a *nafl* (thanksgiving), and break it with holy water and prayer, after one and a quarter *pohor* (about 4 hours) after sunrise. It is reported in Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi, that once Omm Hani (a cousin sister of the Prophet) was sitting next to the Prophet on the right side and Sayyidah Fatimah was on his left side. A maid brought some soup for him. After having some portion of it he passed it over to Omm Hani who sipped a little but suddenly exclaimed that she was fasting. He asked her whether the fasting was a vow. She said that it was but only for thanking Allah. He explained that it was quite all right to break such a fast at will. Allah knew the intention.²⁵² To take a vow of fasting was common among the Muslim women of that time, but they were forbidden to keep such a fast without the consent of their husbands.²⁵³

This fasting starts in the morning after the prayer, and lasts for three to four hours. A short service is held in jamatkhana for swaab and barakat. A short explanatory sermon is also delivered. At the end of the ceremony a tasbeeh of zikr is recited and prayer is said. The believers break their fast by sipping the holy water and eating juro of sweet rice and daariya with a few pieces of stone sugar as a good omen and barakat.

As explained above, fasting on the seventh day of every month is not obligatory. It is in exchange of a vow taken voluntarily or just for the pleasure of Allah.

PANCH-BAAR SAAL MAJLIS

In every society there are people who are generous, enthusiastic and compassionate by nature. During the time of our Holy Prophet there were various persons who wanted to do something more than their duty or obligation. Out of sheer love of Allah and the Prophet they served him in various ways. Hazrat Abdullah bin Masoud accompanied the Prophet whenever he went travelling and looked after his sleeping arrangements such as preparing the bed, supplying water

for wudzu and bath, keeping ready his *miswaak* (tooth brush made of a twig). Ibn Masoud was also the keeper of his master's shoes. Hazrat Bilal was a personal valet all his life. Hazrat Anas bin Ma'lik served the Prophet as his orderly for ten years. Hazrat Abdullah bin Saad, Hazrat Sharjeel bin Hasan Kindy, Hazrat Zaid bin Thabit and Ubbi bin Kaab had served as the Prophet's clerks and secretaries.

After the demise of the Prophet the faithful continued to render such devoted services to the Imam Mowla Murtuza Ali. Abu Zar Ghaffari, Malik Oshter, Abul Fatah Qamber, Salman el-Farsi and Ammar bin Yasser were among the notables. Ever since that time the ardent believers have been unceasingly rendering their devoted services to the House of the Imam. Paanch Baar Saal mandli is a group of momineen who have rendered such devoted voluntary service (symbolically) for five to twelve years. Allah mentions:

“Lo! Those who believed and left their homes and strove with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah, and those who took them in and helped them; these are protecting friends one of another.”²⁵⁴

In this holy verse “friends one of another” means the ‘Punjabhais’—members of a mandli or majlis in our Tariqah.

This majlis is observed on the ninth night of the lunar month, thus it is also called as the “Naomi ni majlis”. Those who have given a token service to the Holy Imam for five or twelve years become the members of this monthly majlis which is celebrated as a mark of gratitude for being accepted.

Participating in majlis is an act of love and devotion to the Imam of the time. A mureed may want to perform some physical service for his beloved Imam either in his household or outside. Some devoted Ismaili mureeds used to travel to the place of Imam's station and served as volunteers for sometime before returning to their native town. When our Mowlana Imam Aga Shah Hasanali Shah had settled in India, an ardent mureed offered his voluntary service. The Holy Imam explained to him that there were more than enough servants in his service. The mureed offered to pay an amount equivalent to the salary of a servant for a year as a substitute of his service. Appreciating his sentiment the Imam gladly accepted his loving offer. This is how it started. Later, more mureeds came forward to offer that kind of token service for five years or seven years or twelve years. When the members increased in numbers they started a gathering to express their thankfulness for being accepted, hence a majlis came into being. They pray together and eat blessed juro and thank the Lord.

BAITUL KHAYAL MAJLIS

It is a monthly majlis, on the first Sunday after the chandraat which is held in the evening, before the obligatory prayer the Dua'. The members of the Baitul Khayal attend it devotedly and pray together for the betterment of their spiritual lives. This majlis was started on the command of the Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah.

STUDENTS' MAJLIS

A students' majlis was established in 1937 on the farman of the Holy Imam, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for the training of the young children. This majlis was held separately, not with the guth-jamat, under the supervision of the Religious Section of our Education Department. Later, the Ismailia Association and then Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board took over its control.

LAILATUL QADR (THE NIGHT OF POWER)

“Lo! We revealed It on the Night of Power.
Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is!
The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
The angels and the Spirit descend therein by the permission
of their Lord, with all decrees.
(That Night is) Peace until the rising of the dawn.”

(HQ. 97: 1-5)

It is the twenty-third night of the holy month of Ramazan. The revelation of the Holy Quran had started in this night. Worship in this night is better than all the worship made in a thousand months put together. In our Tariqah the worshippers are supposed to pray throughout the night.

The world is passing through its tenth and last period of the cycles during its many stages of existence. The Holy Prophet has said that he was the Nabi e-Aakhiruz Zaman i.e. the Prophet of the last period of the existence of the earth. This period, though going through the greatest scientific and material progress of all times, is the period of comparative darkness as far as the spiritual side is concerned. As the night falls, the darkness is lighter. Then slowly the darkness deepens and with the approaching dawn the darkness again decreases slowly until it vanishes away. The world is passing through a spiritually dark period – hence the night.

With all His mercy Allah empowered Prophet Mohammed with His Spirit (Noor) and authority. His Noor and authority will last for ever till the end of this world – hence rising of the dawn. This comparative small period is better (because of the presence of the Noor and His authority in the Holy Prophet followed by the Holy Imams) than a thousand stages of various periods that the earth, or the universe, has gone through before.

We celebrate this night with a great enthusiasm and devotion. Most of us spend the whole night in zikr, the remembrance of Allah. In the evening all men, women and children attend jamatkhana. After the two obligatory prayers, chhanta and aab e-safa ceremonies take place and juro is distributed. After a break of one hour the

jamat assembles again. Young children, nursing mothers and aged people may not attend this all-night majlis. The rest of the jamat sits for the length of the night in zikr and prayer. Appropriate sermons are delivered, and the holy farmans and sacred ginans are recited until mid-night.

There are sixteen chhantas in this night. Most of us ask for all these sixteen chhantas because this opportunity comes only once a year. There is no compulsion for these chhantas; it depends on one's choice. Anybody can request one or more of these sixteen chhantas. The explanation of these chhantas is given below.

At midnight the jamat stands humbly before the Lord for a tasbeeh and prayer. Then the jamat joins for zikr in harmony with one voice but in low tone. Wa'z, sermons, are also arranged at appropriate times during the night. After the usual meditation of one hour, between four and five a.m., the usual practice of the morning prayer and aab e-safa is observed before the jamat is dispersed.²⁵⁵

16 CHHANTAS

As explained earlier, a chhanto is requested for forgiveness and for purification, in the jamatkhana. The mukhi or the kameeria or any person(s) authorized by them may administer a chhanto on the face of the person. A religious person, being conscious about his actions, seeks divine forgiveness for his unintentional sins in the night of Laila tul Qadr. A sin is a violation of the divine law, committed intentionally or unintentionally. Such a chance to seek forgiveness comes only once a year when a mureed can request a chhanto in the Night of Power to get purification.

We have read above that the chhanta ceremony was introduced by the Holy Prophet himself. I had learnt from the elders, in my young age, that before the arrival of Mowlana Imam Aga Shah Hasanali Shah there was no celebration of the Laila tul Qadr among the Jamats of India. Pir Aga Ali Shah had instructed the jamat in India to observe it on the twenty third night of the month of Ramazan.

There are sixteen chhantas available to the worshipper, who can choose one or more or all to be administered to him in one ceremony. It is his choice. These are:

1. TAUBAH nu chhanto
Taubah means repentance with a promise of “no repeats”. But man is a weak creature. He breaks his promise frequently. This chhanto is for this infringement of the taubah and for reviving his promise to refrain from the sin.
2. TRANN (three) WAQT DUA' NI BHOOL/CHOOK nu chhanto

Every mureed must say his/her obligatory Dua' three times a day without fail. A person may forget his duty or miss it out of negligence. This chhanto may grant him a pardon.

3. DASOND NI BHOOL/CHOOK nu chhanto

Dasond like Dua' is obligatory, as both are the foundation of the faith, (iman) and therefore, must be followed diligently. Any human error may cause some sort of irregularity in paying dasond. This chhanto is necessary even though there is such a chhanto in the monthly majlis of Chand raat.

4. GOONAH NI BHOOL / CHOOK nu chhanto

Human weakness is evident in man's mistakes and sins. The Holy Prophet said: "Verily, man has a combination of mistake and forgetfulness." And he further said that when sins of people would increase the calamities would increase too.²⁵⁶ A person cannot remember all his sins, therefore in Islam we are told to say always the 'istighfar' (astagh firullahi rabbi wa tu bo alayh). The Prophet said: "I swear by God that I ask pardon of God, and repent before Him more than seventy times daily." In another report he said: "O men! Repent and turn to God, for verily I repent before Him a hundred times a day."²⁵⁷ We, therefore, take the advantage of this opportunity to get a chhanto for our sins.

5. GIRBHAVASS nu chhanto

Every human being had given a promise while he was in the mother's womb, to be a good servant of God. Pir Sadaruddin said:
"Fulfil your promise made in the womb."²⁵⁸

Here the seeker of a pardon should ask for the forgiveness for any infringement of the promise made in his mother's womb.

6. QABR MA PUCHHANA nu chhanto

Islam warns us that we will be questioned about our deeds in the grave after death. This chhanto is taken to seek for divine help to prepare for that event.

7. QABR NI BHEED nu chhanto

The Holy Prophet has informed us that the wicked will feel the pressure in the grave as a punishment. The grave will squeeze him. This chhanto is taken for the mercy of the Almighty to be saved from this punishment through good deeds we performed during our lifetime. It is reported that the Prophet used to pray for protection from the punishment in the grave (azaabil qabr).²⁵⁹

8. CHAAR JUG nu chhanto

We have evolved through 8.4 million lives in the four yoogs. (The life span differed according to the stage of avolution. For example: Bacteria and

insects live a short life. There are hundred of species that live only a few years.) Through this chhanto we seek forgiveness for any transgression of the divine law we had committed during that period, and which may still be pending. The length of the four yoogs is 4,320,000 years.

9. CHHADIDAR nu chhanto

Chhadi means a stick, a sign of authority. Chhadidar is a person who has been given some sort of authority such as a mukhi, a kamaria, a councillor or any person who holds a post in the jamat, appointed by the Holy Imam. This is the chhanto for him/her because they will have to face extra accountability. Any sin or mistake committed during his/her service is forgiven through the jamat.

10. GUPT GOONAH nu chhanto

Gupt means secret. Gupt goonah means an act of fornication, promiscuity, adultery, or any sin or crime he has committed secretly. It is better to beg for a pardon here in this life than to be questioned after death.

11. PAHLI MANZIL nu chhanto

Manzil means: station, destination etc. Here it means, metaphorically, the first station of a dead body is the graveyard. The body is washed and prepared for the last journey. The soul is trembling in anticipation of what lies ahead. This chhanto is a prayer for mercy for him and spiritual help in the form of mercy.

12. BIJI MANZIL nu chhanto

The second station is the grave. This is the final destination of the dead body. The soul is afraid of the consequences of the questioning in the grave for accountability for one's deeds. This chhanto is a prayer of the jamat for mercy on him

13. BAWAN GHATI nu chhanto

According to our sacred ginans the human soul has to pass through fifty-two ghaties. A ghati is a narrow and dangerous pass in the mountains; here it refers to the rigorous striving on the path of righteousness. Allah mentions about the ghati: "But he strove not unto (crossing over) the Ascent steep."²⁶⁰

And the Prophet said: "Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."²⁶¹ Thus, a ghati is a check point where a soul will be detained for a particular sin. For example: Our Holy Pir Sadaruddin mentions, in the book of Bawan Ghati, about the first ghati which is the check point for those who had not performed their holy Dua' three times a day regularly, no matter how much he did in other fields of the faith, he will be detained at this ghati and punished for the sin.

This chhanto is to get forgiveness for the past mistakes and for the granting of strength to strive to do better in the future.

14. OGNIS (19) TOL nu chhanto

A tol (or tollah in Hindi) means an assemblage, a group. On the Day of Judgement there will be twenty groups of the souls of mankind who will be gathered together for accountability. One of them will consist of those who had succeeded the test and declared successful.

The other nineteen groups will face the punishment for a particular sin. For example: There will be a group of traders who had, during their life on earth, cheated their customers by weighing less than the normal weight and took more than their usual right. At more than ten places Allah has warned us about the dishonesty in weights and measurement.²⁶² This chhanto is requested for the forgiveness of the past mistakes which also make the sinner conscious about the future.

15. PULSIRAT nu chhanto

There is a bridge over Hell which leads to the Paradise. The virtuous will pass over it easily but the wicked will fall into the fire. The chhanto is requested for the forgiveness of those sins which might cause tumbling over the bridge and for the strength to improve in the future.

16. ROSHNAI nu chhanto

This is the chhanto of light. To seek forgiveness from those acts which may cause obstruction on the path of achieving a gift of light.

MAHADIN nu chhanto

There is another chhanto outside of this group of sixteen chhantas known as the MAHADIN nu chhanto. Mahadin is the Day of Judgement. This chhanto is performed near the end of the life or after death, by the mukhi of the jamat. It is not meant for the performance on the night of the Laila tul Qadr. Only when the Beloved Khudavind Hazar Imam visits a jamat the elderly mureeds may request such a chhanto with the mubarak hand of the Holy Imam.

ZIKR ALLAH

Zikr Allah means remembrance of Allah. Allah says: "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."²⁶³ Zikr gives peace of mind and keeps a person in touch with God. If you remember Him, He remembers you.²⁶⁴ This keeps man away from evil and negative forces and enhances the purity of mind and action.

Sufis and mystics find solace in zikr which enhances love of the Beloved Lord. There is no restriction of time for zikr. As a matter of fact a lover of God remembers Him all the time, day and night, so that even if he is working at his worldly affairs his heart remains busy in the presence of the Lord.

Dast ba kaar, dil ba yaar.

Hand in work, mind with the sweetheart.

(A Persian saying)

There are two categories of zikr:

1. Zikre' jali, remembering God loudly; like reciting the Holy Quran, singing our sacred ginans etc.
2. Zikre' khafi, remembering Him in the heart and thoughts, as in our Baitul Khayal, without the use of the tongue.

In the "Night of Power" we make extra efforts to indulge in zikr by performing special tasbeehs.

FASTING

Fasting is common in every religion although it is observed in different ways. It purifies the mind and body and improves health and brain power. Today medical science considers it a cure for many mental and physical ailments. In Islam fasting is enjoined upon the believers in the month of Ramazan, the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed and took twenty-three years to complete.

The Arabic word for fasting is *saum* which means abstaining from food, drink and carnal desires. According to the Holy Quran even abstinence from speaking is a kind of fast. The mother of the Holy Prophet Jesus (Issa) was ordered not to speak on a specific day:

“Say, I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak today to any mortal.”²⁶⁵

In four aya't the Holy Quran mentions fasting. The highlights are:

“Fasting is prescribed for you.....that you may ward off evil.

“...sick and travellers can shift fasting to other days of their choice.

“But it is better to fast if you can.

“Those who find it hard to keep fast may feed a man in need, as a ransom.

“These are the relaxations for your comfort...because Allah does not desire hardship for you. He desires for you ease.

“It is His wish that you keep fast.”²⁶⁶

It is evident that the main purpose of fasting is abstinence from evil. Many a human being indulges in certain bad habits which fasting breaks up and acts as a deterrent. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had made the following farman in Bombay:

“In this month of Ramazan pray more. Every minute in each hour remember God. Do not forget Him. If you have forgotten and have become careless then know that I am now drawing your attention. Pray.”²⁶⁷

“A true momin does not abstain only from food in this month of Ramazan but also observes abstinence from evil throughout the year, all 360 days, and keeps himself clean of sins through prayer.”²⁶⁸

THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

The birth of a human or animal is a wonderful phenomenon of Nature. A child comes into existence from nowhere. A child is born and slowly gradually grows to manhood. He is now capable to transfer his sperm to a woman who would produce another human being. At an appropriate age Nature creates certain conditions in the body to make the seed. It is like a seed produces fruit and the fruit, in turn, produces the seed. There is a deep mystery in the marvel of creation. The seed grows in the womb according to a preplanned procedure. The Holy Quran explains:

“Verily We created man from a product of wet earth;
Then placed him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging;
Then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We
the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump
bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and then
produced it as another creation. So blessed be Allah,
the Best of Creators!”²⁶⁹

What a wonderful description of the creation of a human being from nothingness into being! It is enough evidence for those who reflect to understand the vastness of Allah's Power.

A birth of a baby is one of the most propitious occasions in a family. The new comer is an addition to the family. Among many religious communities certain ceremonies are observed to make the occasion spiritually auspicious.

In Islam the arrival of a baby is considered as a gift of God and a good omen. An elderly person prays thanking Allah for the blessing. It is reported that the Muslims used to take their babies to the Holy Prophet for blessing and to get a name for the baby.²⁷⁰

The Prophet had suggested to remove the hair of the baby - boy or girl - on the seventh day and give a name.²⁷¹ Ismailis are lucky that they have their Hazar Imam, the successor and the direct descendant of Mowla Ali and the Holy Prophet of Islam among them, to bless and give a name to the baby. They are lucky to receive the benefits and blessings of the time of the Prophet from Hazar Imam.

CHHATTI

Chhatti means: the first feeding of the baby after birth. But commonly it is taken as the sixth day of the birth when the baby and the mother take a bath for purification. To celebrate the joyous occasion of the birth of a boy, the family makes a small feast for the relatives or distributes some sweets and some charity is made. This celebration is known as '*aquiquah*' in Islam.²⁷² We offer a mehmani for blessing to the Holy Imam on this occasion.

Between the sixth and the thirteenth day the mother brings the baby to the mukhi in jamatkhana to register its birth and name, and for making the bai'at of the Holy Imam and getting chhanta for both of them for blessing and purification. This ceremony is known as chhatti and bai'at registration.

KHATNA

Khatna means circumcision, the removal of the foreskin of the male baby. This, according to the Holy Bible, dates back to the time of the Holy Prophet Abraham:

“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep,
between Me and you and thy seed after thee;
Every man child among you shall be circumcised.”²⁷³

The Arabs have been observing this commandment ever since the time of Prophet Abraham. The Prophet Mohammed was born circumcised. There were seventeen Prophets who were born circumcised. They were Prophets Adam, Shiss (Seth), Saam, Idris, Noah, Lot, Moses, Shoaib, Hanzalah, Zakariya, Hood, Yusuf, Suleman, Saleh, Yahya, Jesus and Mohammed.²⁷⁴ According to a report, Prophet Abraham was ordered to be circumcised when he was eighty years old; and according to the Torah he was ordered to circumcise himself.²⁷⁵

Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah^{*} had made a general farman about khatna. He said that it should be performed when the baby boy was very young and that it should be done by a qualified doctor. He also said that circumcision would improve the boy's health and his future.²⁷⁶

NAMING THE BABY

The Muslims of Medina used to bring their newly born babies to the Holy Prophet to get his benedictions and a name for the boy or girl. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah allowed mureeds to get a name for a newly born but recommended a selection for a name for a boy from the genealogy of the Holy Imams.²⁷⁷

We are lucky that our Hazar Imam has graciously allowed this practice to be continued. During his every visit to his jamats, scores of applications are made for the purpose of getting a name for a baby.

MARRIAGE

(NIKAH)

Nikah means a marriage contract, a covenant between a couple wishing to be wedded.²⁷⁸ Besides the worship (*ibadat*) of God there are some restrictive ordinances (*hu'du'd*) in Islam. In the Holy Quran the expression *hu'du'd-Allah* (limits of God) is used with regards to various subjects such as marriage, divorce, treatment of women and the laws of inheritance. Marriage, in Islam, is very important because it is a pillar of society. The Holy Quran,²⁷⁹ and the Holy Prophet have laid great emphasis upon living in a married state.²⁸⁰ The Prophet said that marriage is half of iman (faith)²⁸¹; it means that his faith is not complete if a person does not live in a state of marriage. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had made it quite clear that it is forbidden (*haram*) for a couple to live without nikah.²⁸²

The most important thing in marriage is the mutual consent of the husband and wife in the presence of witnesses. The second important thing is the *mahr*, the nuptial gift or a dowry.²⁸³ After the mutual consent and fixing of the *mahr* and signing of the contract in the presence of witnesses, the *khatib* (mukhi) makes the announcement and prayers are said for the couple. The announcement is called the *khutba* in Arabic.

Marriage between a Muslim and an unbeliever is prohibited in the Holy Quran:

“And do not marry idolatresse^s until they believe, and certainly, a believing maid is better than an idolatress even though she may please you; and give not your daughters in marriage to idolaters until they believe, and certainly, a believing slave is better than an idolater, even though he may please you. These invite unto the Fire, and Allah invites unto the Garden and unto forgiveness by His grace, and makes clear His revelation to mankind that they may be mindful.”²⁸⁴

But a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim woman from Ahlul-Kita'b:

"This day are all the good things allowed to you. The food of those who have been given the Book, is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And so are the chaste women of the believers and chaste women of those who have been given the Book before you, are lawful for you, when you give them their marriage gifts and live with them in honour, not in fornication, nor taking them as secret concubines. Whoever denies faith, his work is vain and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter."²⁸⁵

Muslim women are not allowed to marry the non-believing men. The Jewish law, too, forbids marriage with non-Jews under any circumstances.²⁸⁶ Similarly, the Christians follow the Jews, according to their Bible.²⁸⁷ Obviously, when a man and his wife have different faiths, the matrimonial harmony is disturbed. Moreover, their children will suffer in confusion, mentally and spiritually.

Today, a few selfish persons fall in love and get married without realising the future of their offspring. Physical attraction and superficial 'love' evaporate gradually after marriage and problems surface -- the problems in the unequal wedlock that can be avoided with prudence. Islam allows marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim who embraces Islam before marriage.

BETROTHAL

According to the Islamic tradition the engagement before marriage is necessary. It is an announcement of the intention to marry. The period between the engagement and the marriage allows the parties to make preparations. Moreover, it stops further proposals for the girl and the boy. This happy occasion should be as simple as possible. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had discouraged "pomp and show" on celebration of engagement.

WEDDING FEAST

The Holy Prophet had said that the family of the bridegroom (and not that of the bride) should arrange a wedding feast (*walimah*) after the nikah ceremony,²⁸⁸ to celebrate the happy occasion.

COMMON LAW MARRIAGE

In some western countries it has become lawful, under the Human Rights Charter, to live as a married couple without social or religious marriage. Islam does not allow such a condition. Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had made it haram for the couples who do not marry according to the Islamic rite.²⁸⁹ (See also footnote No. 266) Allah has made it clear not to indulge in fornication.

KHORO

Khoro means lap of mother, a place of comfort and affection for the baby. A married woman whose lap is empty (without a baby) seeks spiritual help through prayer besides medical assistance. God has created man to multiply. Prophet Abraham felt the pinch of childlessness in his old age. He prayed to God to make him fruitful.²⁹⁰ The Holy Quran mentions about Prophet Zacharias' prayer for a child.

"My Lord! Bestow upon me of Thy bounty goodly offspring.
Lo! Thou art the Hearer of prayer."²⁹¹

Many a time our Prophet Mohammed was requested to pray for a certain person to get a goodly son. The Ismailis are fortunate that they have the successor and direct descendant of the Holy Prophet and Mowla Ali among them to give blessing for their cherished desires. "Khoro bharavo" is the ceremony for the special blessing to be fruitful. The Holy Imam places a fruit in the corner of a stole or a handkerchief of a married woman and gives blessing to get a child.

DEATH

Death is inevitable. It is the end of the life on earth. Allah has mentioned:

“Everyone that is thereon will pass away; there remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory.”²⁹²

“Every soul must taste of death, and We try you with evil and with good, for ordeal. And unto Us ye will be returned.”²⁹³

There are hundreds of references in our sacred ginans about this natural phenomenon. For example:

“Oogamiya sohi din aathamkiya
Phooliya sohi karma-ay;
Chuniya mandir dhali paday
Janamiya sohi marr jay. Haray mann bhamra tu lobhiyo
(Pir Sadaruddin)

“The rising sun will set,
Blooming flowers will fade;
What is built will fall,
One who is born will die.”²⁹⁴

ACCOUNTABILITY

Man has been gifted with intelligence and freewill. And he has been given the knowledge of right and wrong; therefore, he will be questioned about his actions. Islam has warned us about the Day of Judgement. There is no escape.

If a man understands this Law of Action, also, known as the Law of Karma, then he knows what to do and what not to do for his safety. The Holy Quran informs us that we are responsible for all our troubles and problems:

“Whatever of misfortune striketh you, it is what your right hands have earned. And He forgiveth much.”²⁹⁵

Allah does not harass any one. He is the most Merciful, the most Forgiving:

“If thou couldst see how the angels receive those who disbelieve, smiting their faces and their backs and (saying): Taste the punishment of burning! “This is for that which your own hands have sent before (to the Judgement), and (know) that Allah is not a tyrant to His slaves.”²⁹⁶

There are hundreds of verses in the Holy Quran and the Hadith and in our sacred ginans and in the holy farmans of our Holy Imams that we are responsible for our actions and that we have to face the accountability:

“And the earth shineth with the light of her Lord, and the Book is set up, and the Prophets and the witnesses are brought, and it is judged between them with truth, and they are not wronged.”

“And each soul is paid in full for what it did. And He is best aware of what they do.”²⁹⁷

MUAFI NAMA- Asking Forgiveness

The most Merciful and Compassionate Allah has graciously given us chances to repent and beg for forgiveness. Allah says:

“Say: O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Who forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”²⁹⁸

The Prophet of Allah said: “One who repents his sins, Allah forgives him.”²⁹⁹ In our Tariqah a dying person requests the jamat to pray for his forgiveness. It is our tradition that a member of the jamat who is seriously ill, requests the mukhi to announce in the jamat on his/her behalf to forgive him/her for any transgression.

It is reported that the Prophet fell ill after he returned from his last hajj. After two months the sickness became serious. One day he ordered Bilal to announce in the streets of Medina that anyone who had a debt on him should come forward and collect it. One man came to him and demanded that the Prophet owed him something. “What was it”? He replied that on a certain day the Prophet knocked

him with a staff at the back and he wanted 'revenge.' The companions became angry but the Prophet calmed them all. He asked for a stick and gave it to the plaintiff. He requested the Prophet to lift up his shirt as he had been without a shirt at the time the Prophet had struck him. The Prophet lifted up his shirt up to the shoulders. The person threw the stick on the ground and kissed the exposed "Seal of Prophecy" under the holy neck near the right shoulder. The pretender came forward and begged for forgiveness. He said that he made that drama just for the sake of kissing the "Seal of Prophecy."³⁰⁰ There are various reports about the size of the seal but the commonly accepted report is that it was the size of a pigeon's egg.

Taking the example of the Holy Prophet we announce a "Muafi Nama", on behalf of a dying person or even after his death, in the jamatkhana that so and so pleads "for forgiveness from all those who were hurt or suffered from my actions, committed knowingly or unknowingly." Almost all the members of the jamat reply loudly "forgiven". In this way some burden of the sins is lessened.

GHUSL MAYYAT- Bathing of the Corpse

Mayyat means a corpse, a dead body. The *mayyat* is thoroughly washed according to the Shia Islamic tradition which is explained in a *ginan*³⁰¹ The *mayyat* of a female is washed and prepared by female attendants only. We have a "ghusl committee" for men and for women in the jamat who look after the arrangements of giving a bath to the dead body. According to the tradition in Islam the body is covered with a sheet held by two persons and the person who gives the bath works with his/her hands under the sheet without looking at the body. The Prophet has warned Muslims not to disclose any abnormality in the dead body and not to look at the nakedness of it. Then the body is wrapped in the *kafan*, a shroud for the *mayyat* which is pure white. Those who are engaged in the "ghusl-e-mayyat" should take a bath themselves after that.

RELIGIOUS RITES FOR THE MAYYAT

After the ghusl the deceased is given a *chhanto* by the mukhi on behalf of the Holy Imam and on behalf of the close family members. The deceased is also given a few drops of holy water in his mouth. The Prophet personally had given the holy water in the mouth of a dead person.

Abdullah ibn Ubbay was a well-known hypocrite. He had obliged the Holy Prophet by covering the naked corpse of Hazrat Hamzah, in the battle of Uhud. Later, the Prophet told him: "O Ibn Ubbay you have obliged me by covering the nakedness of my uncle (Hamzah) at Uhud, I will one day return your obligation,

Inshallah." After sometime ibn Ubbay fell seriously sick. The Prophet told his people to keep him informed about his condition. When Abdullah died they did not inform the Prophet because of his hypocritical character and took his body for burial. Someone reported to the Prophet about this. He immediately started to the graveyard. When he arrived near it he shouted: "wait". He saw the body of Abdullah lying in the grave and asked them to bring it out. He sat on the ground and took the corpse in his lap. He prayed for him and took his own saliva in his hand and poured it into the mouth of the dead Abdullah ibn Ubbay.³⁰²

The saliva of the Holy Prophet was like the holy water. When Imam³⁰³ Hasan was born the Prophet put his tongue into the mouth of the child who started sucking it. This was repeated when Imam Husain was born.

We pour holy water into the mouth of the deceased before his burial with a prayer for his forgiveness. When the bier (*janazah*) is ready the congregation stands for the *namaz e-mayyat* and the *fateha*.

FUNERAL

After the recitation of the *fateha* the bier is carried to the graveyard for burial, with loud cries of "La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammedan Rasool Allah" all the way. The Prophet has said that each person should walk behind the bier at least forty steps. If the place of burial is far away then the bier can be taken in a hearse, but at least the bier must be carried for forty steps on the shoulders as a mark of respect.

The Prophet used to stand up out of respect each time a *janazah* passed by. It is reported that once he was in his house in a conference when a bier of a Jew passed by; he stood up and remained standing until the procession had passed. A companion informed him that that was the bier of a Jew. He replied that he stood for the respect of a human being.³⁰⁴

BURIAL

During the burial ceremony the body is lowered in the grave from the direction of the feet, head first and then placed on the floor of the grave. The grave is then filled with the soil and water is sprinkled to settle down the soil and sand. A brief prayer of '*fateha*' is said and then the mourners depart.

A service of '*fateha*' can be performed even in the absence of a funeral. The Prophet had led such a service for the soul of the Christian king of Abyssinia who had died earlier in his country.³⁰⁵ To this effect we pray for the deceased in absentia, which is known as the ceremony of *samar*.

BHATTI

Bhatti means food served to the members and relatives of the bereaved family. The members are in mourning, most of them are weeping and crying, particularly the women and children. In such a tense situation cooking of food is forgotten. Sometime the neighbours provide food to the children. It was a custom during the time of the Prophet that the family friends and relatives brought food for the family after the burial and persuaded them to eat by joining with them. The Prophet said: "Provide food to the family of a deceased because the family is in mourning and has no heart to cook."³⁰⁶ People in those days were living at great distances. Bereaved relatives would come after a day or two to express their condolence to the family of the deceased. On the third day of *ziyarah* they all would get together for prayer and a lunch (bhatti) would be served to indicate that normal activities may be resumed.

Until 1940 such a practice was observed by the bereaved family in the jamats of India and Africa. A lunch of lentil and rice (*daal khawo*) was served by the family of the deceased for the guests on the day of *ziyarah*. However, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah ordered the jamat to perform the ceremony of *ziyarah* on the same day the deceased was buried and bhatti should be restricted to the members of the family.

Subsequently in 1946 Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah added a clause in our Holy Constitution for Africa, that bhatti be allowed only for the nearest relatives and the family of the deceased. In 1951 the Holy Imam once again made a farman in India and said that the *ziyarah* ceremony should be performed the same day that the burial took place and the *bhatti* should not be served. He also ordered the Council to announce in the jamat for one year against the bhatti service.³⁰⁷

SAMAR

Samar or thamar in Arabic means fruit, ultimate result, outcome of some activity, some food packets taken in the luggage while travelling. It is a form of offering by the family and the relatives of the deceased for the sake of his spiritual benefit (sawaab) in the journey to Hereafter. It is an obligation on the part of the family.

This service is performed in the jamatkhana after the burial. Later, this service can also be performed in absentia, that is, the relatives and friends may perform samar ceremony wherever they live. There is a beautiful reference in a ginan by Pir Shams about samar:

O hawker (of the way to Hereafter) be careful,
Five robbers are following you;

Take with you essential food, samar (for the journey),
Make a good profit while you are here on business,
The Lord will examine your accounts.³⁰⁸

Explanation: The hawker (a human being) has come here in this world to sell goods (virtues and worship) but five robbers: kaam (promiscuity), krodh (uncontrollable anger), lobh (greed), moh (temptation) and maddh (ego),³⁰⁹ are following him to rob him. He requires sufficient food on the way to avoid break journey. Moreover, he has to show his Lord a good profit. In this ginan the word "samar" means food which is ibadat and virtuous deeds.

ZIYARAH

Ziyarah or ziyarat in Arabic means to meet or to visit or to see someone eminent. Here it refers "to meet together" to mark the end of mourning by performing special prayer. The day for performing *ziyarah* was set as the third day after the burial. After the *ziyarah* service the grief-stricken family resumes normal activities of life, which were disrupted suddenly at the time of the death. On the day of the death of a person the family falls under utter grief. It is the duty of the close relatives to prepare food for the family.³¹⁰ Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah ordered the jamats to perform the ceremony of *ziyarah* on the same day that the burial took place.³¹¹

Death is a normal and natural phenomenon. To grieve is human nature but Islam teaches us to exercise restraint. Remembrance of Allah restores patience and peace; and gives restraint and fortitude in grief. "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."³¹² Some charity, on behalf of the deceased is encouraged in Islam.

Generally among the Muslims ziyarat (visitation) is performed at a shrine of some saint and among the Shia Ithnasheri at their Imams' burial places. In our Tariqah there is no custom of this nature.

DASMO and CHALISMO

According to our tradition the family of the deceased continues to send ruhani dua', a tray of foodstuff, to the jamatkhana for ten days and prays for the benefit of the soul. This is known as dasmo.

It is a Shia tradition to continue prayer for the deceased for forty days. Many families bypass the observance of forty days of mourning and ruhani dua', on the pretext of chandraat or some happy day. Well! It is all right to stop mourning but the ruhani dua' should be continued till the last day, the fortieth day, out of respect for the deceased.

RUHANI DUA'

It is a prayer on behalf of the deceased in the jamatkhana at the hand of the mukhi or the kameria. The family brings food in a tray on behalf of the deceased as an offering to the Lord, for the spiritual benefit of his soul no matter how long ago the deceased had died. "A prayer", writes a Muslim scholar, "for forgiveness of the deceased is addressed to God. Different forms of this prayer are reported as having been offered by the Holy Prophet, and it seems that prayer in any form is permissible."³¹³ A special prayer was held by the Prophet in Medina when he got the news of the death of the king of Abyssinia.³¹⁴ Obviously the news must have reached Medina after a long time because of the poor communication in those days. The king was a friend of Islam.

One can also make a charity on behalf of the deceased. Saad bin Obaidah asked the Holy Prophet if it would benefit his deceased mother who had died while he was away from home, if he gave charity on her behalf and the Prophet replied in the affirmative.³¹⁵

FESTIVALS

In every society and nation there are religious or social festivities. These are the moments of joy and celebration. Festivals have a link with history and culture. On these happy occasions one should participate with conscience and understanding, and explain to the children the significance of the event. We celebrate the following festivals on an annual basis:

NAO'ROZ

Nao'roz means a new day, here it means the first day of the Persian New Year. Nao'roz falls on the twenty-first day of March when the sun completes its annual cycle of the zodiac and starts afresh about noon at the equator. Many a person offers a prayer at that time wherever he is; but the jamat assembles in the evening as usual. Large numbers of Ismailis attend jamatkhana for this special occasion of Eid e Nao'roz. Read more in my booklet NAO'ROZ.

"Nao'roz is the festival of a great significance and has an age-old history among different people. Among the Ismailis Nao'roz has been a very important religious festival for the last nine hundred years since the Alamut period. The festival has also a social significance. This is the day when special thanks are offered to the Almighty Creator. This is to mark the beginning of the New Year and to invoke His mercy for blessing and abundance."³¹⁶

Our Holy Hazar Imam Shah Karim had very kindly graced the occasion of Nao'roz with the jamat of Rangoon on the twenty-first day of March, 1960 and blessed them with the following holy farman:

"On this day of Nao'roz I say to each and everyone of you Eid Mubarak. I pray that in this New Year your worldly and your spiritual happiness should progress tenfold and that be the case every year. And I want you at the beginning of this New Year to try to think, a little ahead, in your future. Each Nao'roz say to yourself: "Have we done our work?" If you have, then I will be very happy indeed. Khanavadhan, khanavadhan, khanavadhan."

ROZI ON NAO'ROZ

Rozi means sustenance. On Nao'roz day we pray for the blessing and barakat in our food and other essentials. We are most fortunate people on the face of the earth that we receive this brakat from the Holy Imam of the time. He sends us the holy water and the blessed rozi which are distributed in the jamat in the evening. Each member of the jamat gets this blessed rozi (a few seeds of wheat in a small plastic bag) on behalf of Hazar Imam.³¹⁷

The small packet of rozi should be kept in the bin containing wheat flour or rice for the year until the new rozi is received on the next Nao'roz. The rozi of the past year should be added in some cooking.

EID

Eid means a happy occasion, a day of rejoicing. There are two occasions of Eid. One is the Eidul Fitr and the second is Eidul Azha.

Eidul Fitr is celebrated on the first day of the month of Shawwal, after the fasting in the previous month of Ramazan is over. This is the day of the "feast of thanksgiving". Some charity is advisable. Allah has enjoined upon the believers to fast during the month of Ramazan and at the end of the task we rejoice thanking Allah that we successfully carried on the wish of the Lord. This is the Eidul Fitr.

The second Eid, the Eidul Azha is celebrated on the tenth day of the month of Zil Hijjah i.e. the feast of sacrifice, after the ceremonies of hajj are completed. "The slaughter of animals for food for the poor which is one of the ceremonies of the Muslim pilgrimage is not a propitiatory sacrifice, but is in commemoration of the sacrifice of the Holy Prophet Abraham which marked the end of human sacrifices for the Semitic race, and which made it clear that the only sacrifice which God requires of man is the surrender of his will and purpose—i.e. Al-Islam."³¹⁸

On both these occasions we perform a special prayer, the Eid Namaz and a brief *khutba*, followed by refreshments. All greet each other in the Islamic way.

EID e-GHADIR

Every Shia Muslim, particularly Ismaili, must know the history of this day. It was the eighteenth day of the month of Zil Hijjah, 10 A.H. (15th day of March, 632 C.E.) when the Prophet of Islam, with his companions and about 120,000 Muslim men and women, were returning from Mecca after performing the most significant occasion of hajj. It was the last hajj of the Prophet. He died after about two

months. They arrived at a place known as Ghadir e-Khomm, a junction between the routes to Medina and Hadramut. When the Prophet arrived there he received the following message from Allah:

"O Messenger! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then (it will be as if) you have not delivered His Message (at all); and surely God will protect you (from the mischief) of men; Verily, God guides not an infidel people."³¹⁹

Immediately the Prophet gathered all of them and delivered the message. Then he declared:

"TO WHOMSOEVER I AM THE MOWLA, ALI IS HIS MOWLA."

The entire crowd one by one came forward and greeted Ali and offered his/her allegiance. Hazrat Omar was the first person to greet and give his allegiance to Ali as his Mowla. This was the first Imamate Day after the advent of Islam. We have been celebrating this auspicious event with great enthusiasm.³²⁰

SHAB-BAY BARA'IT

The fifteenth night of the month of Shaban was celebrated by the Holy Prophet. He used to visit the cemetery during this night to pray for the souls of the dead.

Bibi Ayisha the wife of the Holy Prophet has reported that one night she woke up and found that his bed was empty. She came out of the room in search of him but she was utterly surprised to find him praying in the cemetery, known as el-Baquie, outside Medina. He told her that "in that night Allah pays special attention to this world. He forgives all except a murderer and a vindictive and fulfils the desire of His servants and particularly increases the *rizq*, sustenance."³²¹

Muslims distribute bread and sweet to the poor and beggars on behalf of their deceased relatives. In our jamatkhana bread and sweet was coming from almost all households. This night is commonly known as the "Chapatti Eid" i.e. Eid of bread; also known as the Eid of the dead.

Note: *The celebration of this event was discontinued a few decades ago, in Africa.*

IMAMATE DAY

Our beloved Dhani Salaamat Daataar Holy Imam Shah Karim al-Husaini ascended the Holy Throne of Imamate on the eleventh day of July 1957. This is the most auspicious day of celebration for Ismailis all over the world. The present forty-ninth era of the Holy Imamate is one of the most prominent and important in our history. Ismailis firmly believe that the Noor of Imamate is everpresent without any interruption. Allah says:

“O mankind! Indeed has come to you (an undeniable) proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a manifest Light.”³²²

The proof is the Holy Quran received through the Prophet Mohammed and the manifest Light is Mowla Ali, the Imam. The Noor of Allah is perpetual and indestructible. It is the physical body of the Imam that is replaced. Therefore, every time when a Holy Imam ascends the Throne of Imamate we celebrate that day year after year and express our gratitude, pay our homage and rededicate our fealty.

BIRTHDAY OF MOWLA ALI

Mowla Murtaza Ali was the first manifest Imam. We celebrate his holy birthday with great joy and love. Murtaza Ali was born, inside the Kabah, on Friday the thirteenth day of Rajab, thirty years after the birth of the Holy Prophet who was born on Monday. Ali's father was Hazrat Abu Talib and his mother was Fatima bint Asad.

Mohammed Mustafa was the manifestation of Allah's mercy and Ali was the manifestation of Allah's power. He was our First Imamim-Mobeen. He was the holder of the Noor (Light) of Imamate which is held in his progeny, generation after generation, and will continue till the end of the world. The Holy Prophet said about Ali:

“I am the city of Knowledge, Ali is its gate.”
“I am from Ali and Ali is from me.”
“My blood is Ali's blood; my flesh is Ali's flesh.”
“Ali is the Self of me.”
“Ali and I are from one Noor.”
“Truth follows Ali.”
“Love of Ali is iman; grudge against Ali is kufr and disunity.”
“To look at the face of Ali is ibadat.”
“I am the receiver of the Revelation, Ali is the Interpreter.”

“Ali is the Mowla (Master) of the momineen, as I am the Mowla of momineen.”

There are hundreds of such magnificent sayings about Ali by the Holy Prophet which are easily found in various books in many languages. The celebration of Mowla Ali's birthday is as important as that of our Hazar Imam.

BIRTHDAY OF HAZAR IMAM

The birthday of our Holy Hazar Imam on the thirteenth day of December is another day of festivity and *baraka*. The physical body of the Imam is the most pious, pure and holy because it holds the Noor. Allah has informed us that the Holy Ahlul Bait are pure and clean:

“Verily, God intendeth but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness O ye the People of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification.”³²³

Thus, we celebrate the birth of the physical body of our Hazar Imam. We respect him and love him utmost because we are guided by the Noor of Allah through him.

History: *The jamats of India and Africa used to celebrate the birthday of Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah on the 25th of the month of Shawwal. The jamat remained unaware of the birth of Prince Aly S. Khan for nearly six years. It was only between 1918 and 1920 that the Holy Imam sent a photo of the Prince, then perhaps six year old, holding the string round the neck of a ram, to his mother Lady Ali Shah in Bombay. A great excitement spread all over the jamats. The birth of Prince Aly S. Khan (13th of June, 1911) was another occasion for the jamat to celebrate and rejoice. His birthday was celebrated on the 13th of June every year.*

Another wave of happiness engulfed the jamats when we received the news of the birth of Prince Karim on the 13th of December 1936. We had three occasions to celebrate on different dates. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah ordered the jamat to celebrate the three birthdays as the Joint Birthdays on the 13th of June every year. This arrangement was automatically stopped when Prince Karim became our Holy Hazar Imam on the 11th of July 1957.

MAULID

Maulid is the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed which falls on the twelfth day of the month of Rabi el Awwal. Muslims all over the world celebrate it with great devotion in various ways and styles varying country to country. The places of celebration and the mosques are decorated with lights and buntings and in many ways. We celebrate it with special prayers, speeches and the distribution of sweets.

Our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Mohammed Mustapha (durood on him and his progeny) has brought us to Islam for which we all Muslims without exception are indebted to him. We express our gratitude by reciting durood, the salwaat, on him and on his holy Progeny:

Allahumma salli `ala Mohammedin wa Aal'e Mohammed

He is so exalted that even God and His angels also bestow *durood* on him all the time.³²⁴

“Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet.
O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him
with a worthy salutation.”

ME'RAJ

Me'raj is the event of the ascension of the Prophet of Islam to the highest point in the Heavens.³²⁵ This glorious event occurred in the night of twenty-seventh of the month of Rajab, nineteen months before the Hijra from Mecca. Mohammed Rasool Allah experienced the journey to the Heaven in his meditation. Most of the Muslims believe that he was physically taken to the vicinity of the Throne of Allah on the back of a horse called al-Burraq.

“According to Abdu'l-Haqq, there are some divines who have regarded this miraculous event as a mere vision but, he adds, the majority hold it to be a literal journey.”³²⁶ It is a great religious event in the Muslim ummah worldwide. We celebrate it with devotion and religious zeal.

MARTYRDOM OF IMAM ALI AND IMAM HUSAIN

Most of the relatives and soldiers of Mowlana Imam Hasanali Shah were Shia Ithnasheries who had come with him from Iran. Some of the Khoja Ismailis who had more inclination towards the Ithnasheri faith made friends with them. In certain area of our jamat the celebration of the first ten days of Muharram started, for instance in Bombay, in Cutchh at Kera, in Kathiawar at Mahuwa and in Zanzibar. The story of the events of those ten days was read in the jamatkhanas after the normal services were over in a sad atmosphere. On the tenth day came the climax of the Qissah, the story.

Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah had sent Missionary Mohammed Abdullah to Zanzibar in early 1930s to teach the jamats of Africa the significance of the perpetuity of the Imamate and therefore it was not proper to read the Qissah and mourn the martyrdom of Imam Husain that occurred a thousand years ago. The missionary had a great success. The jamats in Africa abandoned the practice. After a long delay the Qissah was stopped permanently also in India.

The martyrdom of Mowla Ali was celebrated on the twenty-first of the month of Ramazan. It was through the efforts of the missionaries that their preachings infused the real understanding of the Ismaili faith in the jamat and the two inappropriate mourning events were discarded in Africa in the early 30s and in India in the 40s of the last century.

THE JUBILEES

Never in human history was anyone weighed against gold and diamonds except our Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah who enjoyed the longest Imamate since Mowla Ali. The Silver Jubilee (in 1910) of his Imamate was not celebrated because his son Prince Mehdi had died in infancy. The Golden Jubilee was celebrated twice; first in Bombay, India, on the 19th of January, 1936 and then at Nairobi, Kenya on the 1st of March, 1937. He was weighed in solid gold on both occasions.

Similarly the Diamond Jubilees were celebrated in Bombay on the 10th of March, 1946 and in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika on the 10th of August, 1946. He was weighed in diamonds at both places.

Once again, we were proud to celebrate his Platinum Jubilees at Cairo, Egypt in 1953 and at Karachi, Pakistan in 1954. On these occasions he was not actually weighed against platinum because of his ill health; however, the ceremonies were conducted symbolically.

On all these occasions he had kindly accepted the humble gifts of the funds from his loving mureeds but he returned these to be used for the benefit of the jamats. In India the value of the gold was used for education in various ways. In Africa the Jubilee Insurance Company was established to promote the Ismailis in commerce. Similarly, in Africa the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust was established to improve the economy of the Ismailis in various sectors. In India the funds were used in various projects. The Platinum Jubilee funds were spent to create the housing facilities through the Housing Societies in Africa and Pakistan.

SOME SPECIFIED TASBEEHS

1. YA ALLAH
2. YA ALI
3. YA MOHAMMED
4. YA WAHHAAB
5. YA KAREEM
6. YA RAHEEM
7. YA REHMAN
8. YA WADOOD
9. YA MUSEER
10. YA GAFFAAR
11. YA HAYI
12. YA QAYOOM
13. YA RAOOF
14. YA PIR SHAH
15. Allah humma salle' ala' Mohammedan wa Aal'e Mohammed

Each tasbeeh may be recited 33 or 40 or 101 beads

APPENDIX – I (Pir Pandiyat -e- Jawanmardi)

Our thirty-second Holy Imam Mowlana Mustansir Billah-II, has mentioned about the Pir, in his book the PANDIYAT -e- JAWANMARDI, in Persian:

“And the momin should follow the Pir of the time and be loyal to him.” (p.39)

“The Pir is he whom the Imam has appointed. He is the best in Creation. And through him you will acquire the recognition of the Imam.” (p.42)

“Under the Pir, teachers and learned dais work for the Faith and proselytise people to the Faith.” (p.44)

“The Pir teaches and explains the mysteries of the batin.” (p.44)

Imam is Khalifa-tullah and the Pir is Khalifatur Rasoolullah. In our Arabic period the Imam was known as Imam e-Mustaqaar and the Pir as Imam e-Musta'uda or Hujjatul Imam.

“I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my son Aly Salomone Khan, to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers.”

(Will of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah
London. 25 May 1055)

APPENDIX – II (Ismaili Tariqah Part-I)

The contents of the Ismaili Tariqah Part-I, contained the following main headings:

1. Islam in a nutshell
2. Faith of the Ismailis
3. Usoolat e-Deen

Allah – Angels – Holy Scriptures – Adl – Nabooowwat – Panjtan Paak –
Imamate - Piratan – Ma'ad – etc.

4. Furooat e-Deen

Kalimah – Bai'at – Sala' (Dua') – Zaka' (Dasond) – Saum – Jihad –
Hajj – etc.

There are 376 references spread on 240 pages in the book. It is suggested that the Part-I should be studied before going through the Part-II for thorough understanding of the fundamental principles of our holy faith and its ceremonies and the traditions.

APPENDIX – III (Samar)

This ceremony has been explained in the page 126. Samar is observed for the deceased who had earlier died and buried elsewhere. According to our Tradition, laid down by our Holy Imams and the Holy Pirs, this ceremony has some rules. This ceremony would not take place on the happy occasion of the Imam Day, the Naoroz Day, the Birthday of our Holy Imam, the Birthday of Mowla Ali, the Birthday of the Holy Prophet, the Eid Days, the Lailatul Qadr, the Birthday of a member of the Noorani family (though we do not celebrate in the jamat) as a mark of respect to the Holy Imam, the night of Chandraat, the Friday night and some special Happy occasion such as the presence of the Holy Imam in the jamat, the day of the Holy Didaar.

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NOTES

- 1 I have a copy in my possession.
- 2 K.I.M., vol. I, p.85
- 3 See Appendix-II
- 4 Memoirs of Aga Khan, p.187
- 5 H.Q. ch.33 v.33
- 6 K.I.M. vol-I, p.85
- 7 Read about Pir in the Ismaili Tariqah-I
- 8 Sirtun Nabi. vol-iii, p.338
- 9 I have named the group as 'Satpanthi' (the followers of the True Path), for distinction.
- 10 H.Q. ch.73 v.20
- 11 Ibid. ch.49 v.14
- 12 Sirtun Nabi, vol-iv, p.885
- 13 H.Q. ch.5 v.41
- 14 Al-Farooq, p.60
- 15 Read more in Ismaili Tariqah Part-I
- 16 A Brief History of Ismaili Satpanth jamat, p.13
- 17 H.Q. ch.9 v.103
- 18 Ismaili Tariqah Part One
- 19 H.Q. ch.42 v.23
- 20 Holy Torah, Deuteronomy 14:25
- 21 Read my book A Brief History of Ismaili Satpanth Jamat.
- 22 Pir Sadaruddin, Ginan No.189 v.10
- 23 See chapter Dast Bosi in this book.
- 24 Holy Farmans, Zanzibar First Visit, p.112. (Khojki)
- 25 Holy Quran, ch.19 v.30-32
- 26 I have heard this story from many elderly persons such as Sayyid Mushtaqaali Didarali who died at the age of over ninety, in 1945, in Bombay.
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- 44 Bukhari ch.7 v.1
- 45 K.I.M., vol-I, p.270
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- 49 Mishkat, No.671
- 50 H.Q. 2:58
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- 61 49 Lughate' Farsi, p.166
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- 64 Mishka't, No.635
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- 66 Ibid. 1011, 1022
- 67 Ibid. 1295
- 68 Ibid. 421
- 69 Siratun Nabi, vol-II, p.22
- 70 Ibid. p.20
- 71 Mishka't, No.648
- 72 Ibid. No.1010
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- 75 Read my article on Black Clothes.
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- 84 See CHHANTA.
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- 100 Bukhari, ch.77 v.74, 78-81
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- 102 Pir Sadardin, Ginan No.90 v.2
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- 104 K.I.M., vol-I, p.32
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- 111 Mishkat, No.987
- 112 H.Q. ch.24 v.30
- 113 H.Q. ch.24 v.31
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- 118 H.Q.ch.42 v.25
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- 120 Mishkat, No.2207
- 121 H.Q. ch.4 v.106
- 122 Ibid ch.51 v.18
- 123 H.Q. ch.4 v.64
- 124 Pir Sadaruddin, Ginan No.111 v.1
- 125 H.Q. ch.14 v.31
- 126 H.Q. ch.33 v.56
- 127 H.Q. ch.37 v.130
- 128 Meaning: Recompense; spiritual beheit; a reward from Allah. See H.Q. ch.3 v.195
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- 145 Mishkat, No.1411
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- 167 Ibid. vol-I, p.85
- 168 Ibid. vol-I, p.234
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 205 Pir Hasan Kabirdin, Ginan No.15 v.45
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 207 Baitul Khayal Farman at Mombasa on the 8th Nov.1905
 208 Another form of nazr or minnet.
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 210 Ibid. ch.22 v.37
 211 Ibid. ch.22 v.245
 212 Ibid. ch.2 v.3
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 218 Mishkat, No.5381
 219 H.Q. ch.4 v.175
 220 Arjahul Matalib, p.480
 221 Ibid, p.481
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 227 H.Q. ch.2 v.265
 228 Mishkat, No.1803
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- 231 H.Q. ch.9 v.103
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 250 K.I.M. v-I, p.66
 251 Sirtun Nabi, v-ii,p.228
 252 Mishkat, No.1967
 253 Ibid, No.1921
 254 H.Q. ch 8 v.72
 255 Read my booklet "Laila tul Qadr".
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 257 Dictionary of Islam, under Istighfar
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 261 Ibid. see footnote p. 1858 (trn. by Mir Ahmed Ali)
 262 Ibid. ch.6 v.152 and ch.7 v.85
 263 Ibid. ch.13 v.28
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 272 Ibid.
 273 H.B. Genesis,17, v.10-13
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 275 Ibid.
 276 K.I.M. vol.-ii, p.380
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 278 H.Q. ch.4 v.21
 279 Ibid. ch.24 v.32,33 and ch.25 v.54
 280 Bukhari, ch.67 No.1
 281 Mishkat. No.2946
 282 K.I.M. vol-ii, p.242
 283 H.Q. ch.4 v.4
 284 H.Q.ch.2 v.221
 285 Ibid. ch.5 v.5
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 287 Ibid. II Chor.. ch.6 v.14
 288 Bukhari. ch 34 No.1,67

- 289 KIM. Vol-ii, p.242
- 290 H.B. Denesis, ch.15 v.2,3, and H.Q. ch.37, v.100,101
- 291 H.Q. ch.3 v.38
- 292 H.Q. ch.55 v 26,27
- 293 Ibid. ch.21 v.35
- 294 Sayyid Mohammed Shah, ginan No.1 v.1
- 295 H.Q. ch.42 v.30
- 296 Ibid. ch.8 v.50,51
- 297 Ibid. ch.39 v.69,70
- 298 H.Q. ch.39 v.53
- 299 Mishkaat, No.2207
- 300 "Khatimu'n Nubuawah, the Seal of Prophesy was a mole of an unusual size on the Prophet's back, which is said to have been the divine, which according to the predictions of the Scriptures, marked Muhammad as the Seal of the Prphets, Khatimu'n Nubuawah." Dictionary of Islam, p.567
- 301 Pir Sadaruddin, ginan No.56
- 302 Mishkat, No.1545
- 303 303 He was Imam e Nustaudah or Pir
- 304 Ibid. No.1550
- 305 Sirtun Nabi. Vol-I, p.572
- 306 Mishkat, No.1635
- 307 K.I.M.. vol-ii, p.481
- 308 Pir Shams, ginan No.1 v.1
- 309 Respectively, sexual discrepancies, extreme anger, greed, temptation and ego.
- 310 Mishkat, No.1635
- 311 K.I.M. vol-ii, p.481
- 312 H.Q. ch.15 v.28
- 313 The Religion of Islam, p.446
- 314 Bukhari. ch.23 No.4
- 315 Ibid. ch.35 No.15
- 316 My book Nao'roz', p.22

- 317 The bag of the rozi should be kept in the container of some grain like rice or wheatflour and be kept for the year. On the Nao'roz day when you get new rozi the old one should be consumed in food.
- 318 The Glorious Quran, footnote, p.214
- 319 H.Q. ch.5 v.67
- 320 See my book "Wakiya e' Ghadir, in Gujrat,
- 321 Mishkaat, Nos.1214,1217,1221
- 322 H.Q. ch.4 v.175
- 323 H.Q. ch.33 v.33
- 324 Ibid. ch.33 v.56
- 325 Ibid. ch.17 v.1
- 326 Dictionary of Islam, under Mi'raj.

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