

# ASPECTS OF IMAMAT AND THE DIDAR OF THE IMAM OF THE TIME

## THIRTY FIVE SHORT ESSENTIAL READINGS



Compiled by: [www.Simerg.com](http://www.Simerg.com)

**2011**

## Introduction

His Highness the Aga Khan, or Mawlana Hazar Imam as he is affectionately and respectfully addressed by his Ismaili followers, made a highly successful visit to East Africa during the month of July 2011. The visit included religious gatherings with his Ismailis followers. The Ismailis refer to these intimate meetings (or *mulaqats*) with their Imam as *didar* (lit. to have a glimpse of the Imam of the Time). Many of the public events and functions that took place were well covered by the official community and Imamat Websites, [www.theismaili.org](http://www.theismaili.org) and [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org). As usual, the independent blog <http://Ismailimail.wordpress.com> provided by far the most comprehensive links to numerous media reports, articles and photographs related to the visit.



*Simerg* sought to provide a totally different perspective of Mawlana Hazar Imam's visit with the emphasis being on what *didar* means and represents to an Ismaili. We published a total of 35 short excerpts in our seven-part series, and added five more in the form of "*post didar reflections*." We are now pleased to provide the entire series in PDF format for you to download and print if you wish.

We fervently hope that Mawlana Hazar Imam will, *inshallah*, visit other Jamats around the world in the near future. Hopefully, the material in this PDF file will remain as one of the sources of reference for our Ismaili readers worldwide, as well as non-Ismaili readers who wish to learn more about the faith. It must be noted that the readings are from diverse Shia and Shia Ismaili traditions, and as such represent a variety of views and interpretations on Imamat. There is no shortage of educational and inspiring material on the topic of Imamat and *didar*, and *Simerg* will continue to provide additional literature on the subject as and when future visits take place.

We express our deep gratitude to our readers for their constant support, encouragement, and good wishes for this Website's success and growth. Please visit us regularly.

Thank you.  
Abdulmalik Merchant  
Publisher-Editor  
[www.simerg.com](http://www.simerg.com)  
[simerg@aol.com](mailto:simerg@aol.com)  
September 17, 2011.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART I

### 1. The Imam – Proof of God



The Holy Qur'an: Chapter 2, Verse 256

The first ontological plan of the Divine Being is the plan of the essence - indescribable, inconceivable, beyond all intelligence, intuition, or thought; this is the plan of the Unknowable, of God in His vertiginous, unmanifested concealment. The other is the plan of Acts performed by the organs of God, the Imams, instruments capable of making known to the creatures what can be known of God; this is the plan of the manifest God; of the unknown aspiring to be known. It is also to support this sense that the Imam is described as being the “Proof of God” (*hujjat Allah*), the “Path of God” (*sirat Allah*), the “Threshold of God” (*bab Allah*), or described by such Qur’anic expressions as “the Supreme Sign” (*al-ayat al-kubra*, Qur’an 79:20), “the August Symbol” (*al-mathal al a’la*, Qur’an 16:60), “the Most Solid Handle” (*al-’urwat al-wuthqa*, Quran 2:256 and 31:22). One might wonder whether in this division between Essence and Organ there is a transposition, on the divine level, of the omnipresent division of all reality into *batin* and *zahir*. The esoteric, the hidden aspect not manifested by God would thus become His essence, eternally inaccessible; His Organs, that is His exoteric, His revealed aspect, would be the Imam in his ontological sense including His historical manifestations, that is, the imams of all ages. Thus knowledge of the reality of the Imam is the equivalent to knowledge of that which can be known of God. In the words of Imam al-Husayn b. ‘Aly:

“God created His servants so that they might know Him, for when they know Him they worship Him and thus free themselves from the worship of anything that is not Him.” Someone then asked: “What is the knowledge of God?” “It is, for the people of each age, knowledge of the imam to whom they owe obeisance.”

## 2. DAZZLED BY THE LIGHT: AL-SHIRAZI'S ACCOUNT OF A DIDAR (12th Century)



Mawlana Hazar Imam -  
the current 'bearer' of the  
Noor of Imamat

“I was taken near the place where from I saw the bright Light of the Prophethood. My eyes were dazzled by the Light. I shed tears of joy and felt as if I was looking at the face of the Prophet of Allah and of the Commander of the Faithful, Hazrat Ali. I prostrated myself before the one who is the fittest person to bow to. I wanted to say something, but I was awe-struck.

I tried to speak but my tongue refused to move. People asked me to say what I wished to say. I could say nothing. The Imam said, ‘Leave him. Let his fear and awe subside’. After this, I rose. I took the holy hand of the Imam [Mustansir-billah], placed it on my eyes and on my chest and then kissed it. I left the place with immense joy.”

## 3. UNITY ESSENTIAL FOR COMPANIONSHIP ON HIGH (20th century)



A portrait of the 48th  
Ismaili Imam.

“All men, rich and poor, must aid one another materially and personally. This fraternity is absolute, and it comprises men of all colours and all races: black, white, yellow, tawny; all are the sons of Adam in the flesh and all carry in them spark of the Divine Light. Everyone should strive his best to see that this spark be not extinguished but rather developed to that full Companionship-on-High.

“It is my hope that my spiritual children, the Ismailis, will, by example of their own higher enlightenment and co-operative movement amongst themselves set to the world an example of better fraternity and brotherhood which alone can free men from the fear and dangers of moral and mental discord which leads to disaster for all.”

#### 4. THE PRINCIPLE UNITY OF IMAMAT (20th century)



The Aga Khans, 46<sup>th</sup>  
to 49th Shia Ismaili  
Imams

To Ismailis who believe in the Holy Institution of Imamatus, the *Imam-e-Zaman*, or the Imam of the Age, is the manifest representation and the visible symbol of the Divine Institution they know as Imamatus. The sublime verities of religious experience, based on the holy scriptures, remain inscrutable and beyond human understanding unless visualised by symbolic representation. It is impossible for man to look back at a symbolism from a given symbol. But man can view the symbol in the light of, or in the background of, a symbolism. Viewed in this light each Imam presents to the world of his time that facet of the multi-faceted splendour the Ismailis call Imamatus. All Ismaili philosophers have emphasised the principle of the Unity of Imamatus under the superficial diversity exhibited by each Imam of the Time. It is in this sense that the Ismailis believe that Imam is the same irrespective of his own age or the time he lives in.

The proverbial valour and exemplary statesmanship of Imam Murtaza Ali, the encyclopaedic erudition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, the extraordinary intellectual brilliance of Imam al-Hakim bi Amrillah, the administrative ability of Imam Mustansir Billah (during the first half of his Khilafat), the political acumen of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah (he defied geography and created history), the organizing genius of the present Imam, Shah Karim al-Husayni, are only some of the more spectacular characteristics exhibited by the Imam of the Time in accordance with the exigencies of the situations facing him.

## 5. A SUPPLICATION BY PIR HASAN KABIRDIN (14th century)

### *Transliteration*

*Eji, Aash Karine Ya Ali hun tere dar ubhi,  
Kar jodine em mangu Ya Shah;  
Dejo didar tusi mahavar datar Shah,  
Hama tere charane lagu.*

### *Translation*

With hope I stand at Thy door,  
O Ali! And sincerely beg of Thee;  
Bless me with Thy Holy Didar, O Great Lord and Benefactor!  
At Thy Feet I fall to prostrate.



The mausoleum of Pir Hasan Kabirdin

---

*References (numbers below correspond to each of the above numbered excerpts):*

(1): Excerpt is from *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*, by Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, SUNY, 1994, page 45.

(2): *An Encounter with the Imam of the Time* (article on this Website). Also, *Al-Shirazi* by Mohamed Adra in *Ilm* Volume 10, Number 2, July 1986

(3): *The Face of Imamat* (article on this Website)

(4): *The Imam of the Socio-Economic Revolution* (article on this Website)

(5): Verse of *Ginan* by Pir Hasan Kabirdin, published in *Ilm Supplement*, Mawlana Hazar Imam and Begum Salimah's 1976 Pakistan Visit.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART II

### 1. THE DIDAR: LIFE'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE

*By Imam Mustansir-Billah, 15th Century*

In the following excerpt Imam Mustansir-Billah (32nd Ismaili Imam, post Alamut period) emphasizes the *Zaheri* and *Batini* aspects of the Imam's Didar. He recognizes and acknowledges the sacrificing spirit of the Jamat, in serving him and in observing religious duties including special prayers through the night:

“They (*the Jamat*) have given up their property, and even their lives. All of them have faithfully submitted their religious dues. Others have travelled long distances through arduous conditions by land and sea, braving storms and incurring great expense. Some attend religious assemblies to increase their knowledge while others, without any worldly motive, perform acts of charity to benefit the poor. Some have acted with noble actions in the cause of faith, including special devotions, worship and especially remembrance (*Zikr*), continually invoking the Lord throughout the night, never neglecting God for even a moment, and worshipping him out of passionate devotion.

“All believers are urged to come into the presence of the Imam and to see him with their own eyes. Thus, the esoteric (*batini*) vision, realized through pious works and the constant remembrance of God during the nightly vigil, as well as the exoteric (*zaheri*) vision, achieved by travelling to the Imam's residence and beholding the gateway of God's mercy, becomes the ultimate purpose of human life.

“Piety should be for the purpose of recognizing and beholding God, which is achieved through the recognition and vision of the Imam of one's time.”

In the last line, see the similarity with Imam Husayn's reply to the question, “What is the knowledge of God?” He said:

“It is, for the people of each age, knowledge of the imam to whom they owe obeisance.”

## 2. IMAM AL-MAHDI'S UNVEILING: A MOMENT OF GLORY AT SIJILMASA (10th century)



Sijilmasa in current day Morocco

Standing out in the heat of the desert, a group of conquering Berber tribesmen waited anxiously for their Imam to emerge from the city of Sijilmasa in North Africa. The year was 909 and they had successfully overthrown the Aghlabid rulers at Raqqada. Now was the moment they had longed for - they had come to retrieve their Imam from Sijilmasa, where he had been under arrest, and install him as their new Caliph. They dreamt and prayed that the world would finally achieve peace and justice under the rule of a divinely-guided descendant of the Prophet.

Until that moment, the Ismaili Imams had been in hiding for four generations, so few people could recognize them. In order to identify him at Sijilmasa, it was agreed that if someone rode out into the desert, the tribesmen would dismount from their horses. If that person did not respond by also dismounting, they would know it was their Imam.

To witness that moment of unveiling when Imam al-Mahdi rode out to meet his followers stands for me above all the other moments of glory, intrigue and devastation throughout Ismaili history. The image of a long-hidden Imam remaining atop his mount when all his awestruck followers dismounted is among the most powerful symbols of the authority of the Shi'a Imams. In that instant, over a century of hiding and persecution was cast aside, and a new era would begin for the Ismailis. For most, the Imam had long been an idea rather than a living person, but now he was real and right in front of them. He was present and living. And those followers at Sijilmasa fell at his feet in the most sincere devotion to their spiritual guide.

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUL

*(al Shirazi, 12th Century)*

“Look at the trouble your parents have taken from the days of your childhood in the growth of your bodies and in the improvement of your physical life on earth. But for the interest they took in you, you would not have been what you are. Your souls are thousand times more important than your bodies. The Imams are your spiritual parents. Avail yourselves of a few days of life which are at your disposal here and look after your spiritual elevation under the care of your spiritual parents.

“Once you miss this opportunity, you will repent forever. You will not be given a second chance to set things right.”

### 4. IMAMS ARE OUR SPIRITUAL PARENTS

*(20th century)*



“O Ali! I and you are parents of this community.” This is a well known *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). In this way, those who believe in the Imam of the Time become his spiritual children. The spiritual love is much deeper and stronger than the physical one because worldly love is temporal like the body while the spiritual relation is eternal. The Imam of the Time, as our spiritual parent, devotes everything for the betterment of his spiritual children. Indeed this becomes the mission of his life. As Prophet Muhammad has said: “I am sent for your worldly betterment and for salvation in the hereafter.”

So the spiritual parents express their love for their spiritual children by showering on them their blessings and mercy and by guiding them on the path of worldly and spiritual progress.

The present progress of the Ismaili Jamat is a living example of Mawlana Hazar Imam’s love, affection and care for his spiritual children. When he became our 49th Imam, he declared:

“My grandfather had worked for the betterment of his spiritual children till his last breath. I also devote my life for you.”

He also said:

“My love for my Jamat is a lot stronger than yours can ever be for me and I would like you to remember this.”

## 5. A SUPPLICATION BY PIR HASAN KABIRDIN (14th century)



*Translation*

O Exalted Islam Shah!  
Our Lord and Master of the Age,  
To you our hearts devoutly supplicate,  
O the Eternal King and Lord of our souls!  
Grace us by your visit to the Indian Sub-Continent  
O Ali! You are Eternal,  
You are the Lord of Eternity. You alone are the Knower of the End,  
Of the End that has no End.

*References below correspond to numbered excerpts above.*

- (1) Imam Mustansir bi'llah on the Importance of Zaheri and Batini Aspects of Didar (article on this Website)
- (2) The Unveiling at Sijilmasa (article by Aleem Karmali on this Website).
- (3) Spiritual Enlightenment Under the Imam's Guidance (article on this Website)
- (4) *Silver Jubilee: A Symbol of Love and Affection* By Alwaez Kamaluddin A. Muhammad, *Al-Misbah*, UK, July 1983, page 9.
- (5) A translation by Jehangir Merchant of *Ashaajee Jug pati jug naath Sri Islam Shah...*, first verse of Pir Hasan Kabirdin's composition known as *Anant Akhado*. Please also visit <http://salmanspiritual.com> for transliteration/translation of the complete Ginan by Noorallah Juma/Karim Maherali.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART III

### 1. ESSENCE OF IMAM IS CHANGELESS - AN ODE

*by Imam 'Abd al-Salam, 15th Century*

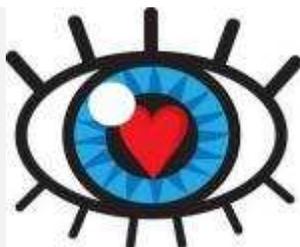


Image courtesy of roseannapiter.com.

There is an ode of the 33rd Ismaili Imam 'Abd al-Salam in which he says that the talisman (anything that has magical powers) that can open the treasure trove of spiritual meaning of the Holy Qur'an is the Imam. This ode is lucidly explained by Dr. Shafique Virani in his path breaking book *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages*.

In the ode the Imam observes that the true essence of the Imam cannot be recognized with earthly, fleshly eyes, for these can only see his physical form, perishing like all else with the passage of time. His true face is to be perceived with the eyes of the heart. He has thousands of physical habitations, but his true home is traceless; he has had a thousand names, but all of them refer to one reality.

The Imam continues by saying that today he is known as 'Abd al-Salam, but tomorrow the physical body will be gone and the name will change, yet the essence will remain in the next Imam of the lineage. Those who look at the Imam as they squint will consider him like any other human being, but as soon as the eyes of the heart perceive correctly, his true status is discovered. In form the Imams change, but in meaning and substance they are changeless. Human language cannot attain to the majesty of the Imams. The Imam is the most precious ingredient in the supreme elixir (miraculous substance) of eternal life-red sulphur. He is not simply a pearl, but the ocean that gives birth to pearls. The existence of the Imam, who leads humankind to a recognition of God, is the very pinnacle of creation.

Excerpt adapted from *Ismaili in the Middle Ages* by Shafique Virani

## 2. ISM'UL-AZAM

The concept of reality and knowledge together with its understanding of the meaning of human life upon earth is reflected in a general and diffused manner in a number of Ismaili ginans, including Pir Shams's composition *Brahm Prakash* where this element is exhibited in a more consistent and elaborate fashion than in other ginans. The ginan consists of 150 couplets and sung in a raga which seeks to evoke and contribute to its overall significance for the singer or listener. The ginan begins with an emphatic assertion of the divine properties of the word, the Name among the names, the *ism'ul-azam*, around which the ultimate focus and energies of a murid have to be centred for the progress of the individual self towards God. Here are few selected words of the ginans:

“True Word” (or *Ism'ul-Azam*) is my Guide,  
to which the world gives no recognition.... 1

Do meditate on the Word,  
and recite Pirshah as often as possible.... 2

And upon utterance of the Word, the light of love shall be kindled,  
and in the heart, great “Faith” will be generated.... 5

Where the Love flows so incessantly,  
the devotee drinks of it and becomes love-intoxicated.... 9

How shall I describe this Divine Ecstasy!  
Short of words am I to describe its Glory.... 11

No amount of literature read or listened to,  
Could help to attain this experience of happiness.... 12

For a murid who is seeking to embark on the path to higher levels of consciousness as described by Pir Shams, a number of disciplines have to be observed including purity of thoughts and action, fulfilling all religious obligations and an implicit faith and trust as well as obedience to the Imam of the Time.

---

*Brahm Prakash* abstract compiled from Dr. Aziz Esmail's “A Note on the Brahm Prakash,” *Ilm*, Volume 1, Number 2, October 1975 (pp 15-20). Translations are by Dr. Hassan E. Nathoo from the same issue (p. 21).

### 3. THE FAITH AND EXAMPLE OF QUHISTANI (13-14th centuries)



Siege of Alamut. A depiction by Shazia'Ayn and Aliya-Nur Babul, Vancouver

In the 13th century, Genghis Khan, the Mongol Emperor, issued a decree against the Ismailis which stated: “None of that people should be spared, not even the babe in its cradle.” Thousands of Ismailis, including their 27th Imam Rukn al-Din Khurshah, lost their lives in the most brutal form. Ismailis who escaped the Mongol onslaught were able to keep and maintain the basic infrastructure of the religious organization (*Dawa*) of the Ismaili community (*Jamat*). The Ismaili Poet Nizar Quhistani was one such person who, despite persecution and constant attack from his enemies, reacted with courage. He faced false charges and allegations to which he responded:

“It does not worry me if all the *Mullahs* of the world declared in their edicts that among the chosen and the common the drunken Nizari is worst of them all. I have no fear of being killed by them, nor the vexations (anxiety or distress) of burning flesh; I care not what wounds they inflict on me, because they are all hypocrites and liars.”

In his *Mathnawi* Nizar Quhistani championed the principle of direct hereditary descent of the Imam from the Prophet, often with the support of the following Qur'anic verse: “Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of Imran above all people - offspring, one of the other, and Allah knows and hear all things” (*Sura 3, Ayats 33-34*). Quhistani went on to explain: “We search for a union with the family of the Chosen (Prophet Muhammad). We search for the truth of son after son. We are totally obedient to his offspring, one of the other. There is no other thing we can add to this but itself. We endeavour in our faith so that we do not turn out to be faithless.”

---

Excerpt adapted from *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* by Shafique N. Virani, Hardcover - May 3, 2007

#### 4. THE IMAM - A COSMIC NECESSITY



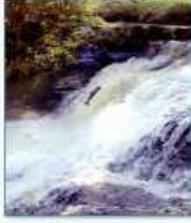
*“The People of my Family  
are like Noah’s Ark;  
Whoever boards the Ark is saved,  
Whoever stays away  
is carried off by the waves”....Hadith*

“The Imam-Proof existed before the creatures, he exists with them, and he will exist after them.” [1] The Imam, the Divine Guide, in both his cosmic, ontological aspect and his historical aspect, dominates and determines *the Imamite*\* “world vision.” Here, religious conscience perceives creation through the “filter” that the Imam is, in a dizzying vision that goes from a cosmogonic pre-existence to an eschatological super existence. Without the Imam, the universe would crumble, since he is the Proof, the Manifestation, and the Organ of God, and he is the Means by which human beings can attain, if not knowledge of God, at least what is knowable in God. Without the Perfect Man, without a Sacred Guide the world could only be engulfed in darkness. The Imam is the Threshold through which God and the creatures communicate. He is thus a cosmic necessity, the key and the center of the universal economy of the sacred: “The earth cannot be devoid of an imam; without him, it could not last an hour. [2] If there were only two men left in the world, one of them would be the imam.” [3] The universal Order is maintained through the presence of the divine Man: “It is because of us,” say the imams, “that the heavens and the earth are maintained”; it is because of the imams “that God keeps the sky from crashing into the earth, and the earth from shaking up its inhabitants.” [4] Without an Imam, there is no religion; without esotericism, exotericism loses its direction, its purpose, its goal, as well as its meaning.

---

The above excerpt including the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad cited at the top is from the chapter “Conclusions” (pp. 125-131) of “The Divine Guide in Early Shi’ism” by Mohamad Ali Amir-Moezzi, published by the State University of New York, 1994. For a review of the book click [Cambridge Journal Abstract](#). The book is available from SUNY Press, Amazon and other fine on-line stores. See also 1-4 references after last excerpt.

5. A SUPPLICATION BY PIR HASAN KABIRDIN  
(14th century)



"I am a fish of the briny deep.."

*Transliteration*

*Eji Ooncha re kot bahoo vech-na,  
Neeche vahe dariya;  
Hoon-re dariya vandi maachhli,  
Sa-yan taaran aav.  
Hoon-re darshan vina baavri,  
Balam ghare aav, Saajan ghare aav;  
Bando bhooli-yo taari bandagi,  
Sa-yan soorat bataav,  
Hoon-re darshan vina baavri*

*Translation*

So high the fort and climbing steep,  
And surging round its base the sea;  
I am a fish of the briny deep,  
Ah Love, haste Thou to succour me.  
Thy absence frets my heart's commotion,  
Beloved come home, my Love return;  
Forgive Thy slave his scant devotion,  
Show me Thy face, to Thee I turn.  
Thy absence frets my heart's commotion.

Full article: Please click [Imagery in Gnan, "Ooncha re Kot..."](#), Underscores Soul's Yearning for the Beloved

---

**Notes for "The Imam – A Cosmic Necessity":**

The following is a summary of notes 1-4 for the third excerpt, *The Imam – A Cosmic Necessity*. Further references are provided in *The Divine Guide...*, pp 228-229, in notes 672-675.

[1] *Al-hujja qabla l-khalq wa ma'a l-khalq wa ba'da l-khalq*, the words of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, al-Kulayni, *Usul*, "kitab al-hujja," vol 1, ch. 5, p251, num 4; etc.

[2] There are different versions of this sentence so ubiquitous in the teaching of the Imams, e.g. al-Saffar, *Basa'ir*, section 10, ch. 10-22, pp 484-89; etc.

[3] "*Law lam yaqba fi'l-'alam [al-ard] illa rajulan la-kana ahaduhuma l-imam [al-hujja]*"; the word of several Imams, *ibid*, section 10, ch. 11; etc.

[4] "*Bina qamat al-samawat wa l-ard*" / "*Bihum yumsiku 'llahu l-sama' an taqaa'ala l-ard...bihim yahfazu' llahu l-ard an tamida bi-ahliha*"; *Kamal al-din*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 383, num. 9; etc.

\* *Imamite* – The term is generally used for doctrines professed by early Shia Imams who were common to both the Ismaili and Twelver Shias, that is upto and including Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, and thereafter to the historical Imams of Twelver Shi'ism.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART IV

### 2. ONE WHO IS GOOD

*by Qadi Numan (10th Century)*



The Imam's Grace, Bounty and Mercy towards his Murids are recognized by a great Ismaili scholar and jurist, Qadi Numan, who served under four Fatimid Imams. He writes:

“Let us make a short survey of their favours on us. We were ignorant of everything and were spiritually dead. They brought us back to life and showed us the path of wisdom. We were blind, they gave us the eyes to see for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. We were groping in the dark, they showed us the light. We had lost the track, they showed us the way to salvation. We were lacking in knowledge, they gave us knowledge. We were falling in hell-fire, they picked us up and put us in the middle of righteous. In short, they have done us the favours which we cannot count. They have given us all that is good in this world and the world to come.”

### 3. THE NUR OF IMAMAT



The sun is extremely important for all life on earth. It gives us light, warmth and energy. The sun however is not the final source of life. It is Allah who gives life to all living things. It is God who has created the sun and the stars and everything that is in the universe. The Qur'an teaches that Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. Allah guides mankind towards

Him through His light. While Allah has created the physical light, He has also provided mankind another kind of light. Allah says in the Qur'an: "O Mankind! Truly there has come to you a proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear Light." (4:174).

What is this special light that Allah refers to, which guides and makes things clear? For Shia Muslims, this light is the Light of Imamat. The Shias refer to it as the *Nur* of Imamat. *Nur* means light. The *Nur* of Imamat is a spiritual light. This spiritual light is with the *Ahl al-bayt*, the Imams from the Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) family. This light was with the first Shia Imam, Hazrat Murtaza Ali (AS) and, for Shia Imami Ismailis, it is now with their present 49th Imam, Shah Karim al-Husayni, His Highness the Aga Khan IV. The Imam guides his *murids* (followers) with his *Nur*. The Imam's *Nur* is not like ordinary light. It is a different light altogether. It is a spiritual light. Physical light, such as sunlight, helps everyone see things in the physical world. The Imam's *Nur* guides his murids both in the spiritual and worldly aspects of their lives. Above all, the Imam's *Nur* leads his followers towards inner peace and happiness. Ever since the time of Hazrat Ali, the Ismaili Imams have guided their followers in succession, one after another. There have been forty nine Imams up to the present time, but the *Nur* of Imamat is one, and it remains the same.

The Imam holds his followers hands and leads them through both difficult and good times. He gives them guidance about how they should live in a particular time and place. Just as the water of a river continues to flow, the line of Imamat never stops. That is, the *Nur* of Imamat is there to stay eternally.

One of the goals of the murid of the Imam should be to strive to come closer to the spiritual light of the Imam. This, one can do by fulfilling one's material and spiritual responsibilities to the best of one's ability. Praying regularly, living by the ethics of Islam, following the Imam's guidance and thinking about Allah constantly can bring us closer and closer to the *Nur* of Imamat.

#### 4. OBEDIENCE TO THE IMAM OF THE TIME *By Imam Mustansir billah, 15th century*



“O, believers, O, pious ones! Now is the time when you should strengthen religion (*din*), by helping each other, by trying to gain knowledge, by advancing the religious cause, and striving to make your faith complete. Gain safety by obeying the Imam of the time, and become completely obedient to his orders. Do unhesitatingly what you are told by the blessed word of the Imam, - then you will attain (real) salvation. Follow the Imam of your time strictly, so that he may take you under his protection, helping you, granting you victory and relief. And obedience to the Imam, attention to his word, will bring about the healing of spiritual ailments and lead to soundness and clarity of the heart.”

\* \* \*

#### 5. SUPPLICATION FROM A PILGRIM *15th century*



Throughout history Ismaili pilgrims travelled far and wide to see the Imam of the Time. During the 15th century, one such Ismaili pilgrim tracked his way to Anjudan to see the 34th Imam Gharib Mirza, on behalf of the Jamats in Khurasan. The identity of the pilgrim is not very clear due to the poor quality of the manuscript but the ode to the Imam reads as follows:

“Greetings! O Emperor of the Realm of Faith and World; I come from Khurasan to behold your face. All I have is a soul imperfect, sins and transgressions galore. Despite such worthless

goods, I long for your grace, hoping that through me you may forgive the trespasses of your servants-one and all. As you are the sovereign and governor of all creation, this being testified to by the Quran itself, your proper name has been made manifest to all the faithful. You are Shah Gharib and Mustansir, the inheritor of Shah Salam!”

Several generations earlier, in an entreaty to the Fatimid Imam al-Mustansir, al-Mu’ayyad Shirazi typifies the impatience to behold the face of the Imam of one’s time and the urgency of this beyond any possible worldly consideration. He wrote:

“I swear, were you to crown me, and were you to grant me dominion over the world entire and say to me ‘Let our meeting be postponed but an hour’

I would reply:

“O my Mawla, let us meet instead! For your delay of but an hour has turned my hair gray.”

\* \* \*

#### REFERENCES:

(1) and (5) have been adapted from *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation*, a path breaking book by Shafique N. Virani, Hardcover – May 3, 2007. For author’s Website, please click » [Ismailis in the Middle Ages](#).

(2) Adapted from *Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam* by Qazi Noaman, translated by Prof. Jawad Muscati.

(3) Compiled from numerous sources including the *Ta’lim* curriculum published by Islamic Publications, London.

(4) Excerpt from *Pandiyat Jawan Mardi (Counsels of Chivalry)* by Imam Mustansir billah)

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART V

### 1. SUPPLICATION AND A TEST OF PATIENCE

*19th century*



A verse from a gnan had transformed the life of Ismailbhai Gangji. His fortunes kept on climbing both spiritually and materially. When the 46th Imam Shah Aga Hassanali Shah visited Ahmedabad, Ismailbhai very humbly presented himself in the service of the Jamat and the Imam. For the first three days of the visit, however, Ismailbhai sensed that the Imam did not appear to be pleased with the service he was rendering. These hours and days seemed like forever for Ismailbhai as he underwent untold suffering in his heart wondering why the Imam appeared to be displeased with him. He supplicated in his heart, “forgive me Imam-e-Zaman, and cast but one kindly look upon me!”

On the fourth day, the Imam summoned him for an audience. He stood meekly before his Mawla, gazing steadily at his holy face refulgent with Divine Light, while a myriad of feelings rose and sank in his heart. But this apprehension was soon to be over. “Ismail,” said the Imam graciously, “we confer upon you the title of Varas.” Ismailbhai (now Varas) was startled at the abruptness of this.

The Imam continued: “We lay upon you the responsibility of the organisation of the whole of Kathiawad.” The Imam added, “We have noticed in the past three days how patiently you can bear all things, and it is with this quality of patience and forbearance that we know you can take care of the Jamat. It is in virtue of this that we appoint you Varas for all Kathiawad.”

Varas Ismail then most humbly submitted: “Khudavind’s spiritual gift and bounty this day have been boundless. But the great onus that Khudavind places upon me is too heavy for an insignificant creature such as I am. I do not possess the merit to undertake such a great responsibility.”

Imam-e-Zaman rejoined in affectionate tones: “Varas, put your mind at rest on that score. We shall inspire you with the spirit that will carry you to a successful end in the cause of what is enjoined upon you. The inspiration will be ours, but the renown yours.”

“Amen!” said the Varas with not a word more.

Varas Ismail dedicated his time to bringing peace and harmony in the Jamat. He developed higher understanding of himself through special prayers. He became an example to others by his actions, manners and habits.

\* \* \*

## 2. THE BEATIFIC VISION OF THE IMAM

*Pir Sadardin, 14th century*

The Beatific vision is of two kinds: one a physical meeting with the Imam and the other a spiritual recognition of his essence, through which God is recognized. Speaking of the second of these, Pir Sadr al-Din, in his ginan *Sakhi maha pad kerī vat koek janere* writes:

Friend! None but a few know of the exalted station. Indeed, they alone recognize it who have found the true guide.

Friend! Within the heart, at the confluence of the three spiritual rivers, there is an imperishable light. There - a shimmering effulgence, pearls are showered.

Friend! I completely lost consciousness of my physical self when my meditation mounted the empyrean, bursting forth.

Friend! I beheld the place of the lofty throne, I saw the seven islands, the nine continents.

Friend! The religious scriptures and books cannot fathom this, for there is neither day there, nor night, neither sun, nor shade.

Friend! My Lord is not such that He can be spoken of. He is to be seen - for He is indescribable, and nameless.

Friend! How sweet is that Lord, indescribable, nameless. Says Pir Sadr al-Din, truly, with my own eyes, I have seen Him!”

### 3. THE BEST OF FATIMA'S PROGENY *by Pir Nasir Khusraw (11th Century)*



Run to the sanctuary of the safe house,  
which is surrounded by bliss and prosperity;

He brings souls out of their darkness  
and draws out fruit from their outer skin.

You see him as the rising sun of clarity  
and as the river of abundant bounty.

By his brilliant wisdom, hearts are cured,  
and by his copious mercy, they are revived.

He manifests himself in every age  
and creatures are not guided except by him.

His mission is established in the world  
exalted with sings clear and recognizable.

He certainly is Mustansir, the triumphant  
the one by whom everything became prosperous.

He is the best of Fatima's progeny  
the scion of Zahir and the grandson of Hakim.

He is God's mercy on his servants  
and the mine of provisions in the hereafter.

I have composed a poem about him  
like a necklace of pearls and gems strung together

\* \* \*

#### 4. THE SHIPS OF SALVATION

*By Shaykh Khudr (17th century),  
a contemporary of 40th Ismaili Imam, Mawlana Nizar*



The people of the House of Prophethood  
are the manifestations of light;

They are that which exists forever  
and in what has already elapsed;

They are the ships of salvation for those  
who come running to them with hope;

They are the rain abundant in moisture  
and their grace is the best of springs;

The essence of their souls is knowledge  
from a world beyond the intellects;

Indeed, it is their invitation which rescues  
souls from the pit of destruction.

\* \* \*

## 5. MUNAJAT (SUPPLICATION)

19<sup>th</sup> century



### Ya Ali Khuba Mijalas

Verse 1

*Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Khuba Mijalas Zinat Karake  
Farasha Bichhai Gali,  
Aan Baithe Hay Takht-Ke Upar  
Shah Karim Shah Vali*

*Refrain*

*Aaj Raj Mubarak Hove,  
Noor Ain Alikun Raj Mubarak Hove,  
Shah Aal-e Nabi Kun Raaj Mubarak Hove,  
Hove Hove Aaj Raj Mubarak Hove.*

*Explanation*

O Ali! In the fair assembly,  
gloriously adorned with carpets spread on the floor,  
Our Lord Shah Karim sits on the takht,  
our Lord Shah Karim our Guardian.

*Refrain*

Today blessed be your rule  
Oh the light of Ali's eye,  
Blessed be your rule  
Shah, the descendant of the Holy Prophet,  
Blessed be your rule today  
Blessed be your rule today.

**Verse 2**

*Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Didar Lenekun Aye Shah Teri,  
Hindi Jama-et Sari,  
Sijada Baja Kar Najaran Deve  
Jan Apniku Vari.... Aaj.*

*Explanation*

O Ali! To be blessed with didar  
your whole Indian jamat have assembled.  
They prostrate and they offer nazrana (homage)  
devoting their lives to you.

**Verse 3**

*Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Tera Nasiba Roje Awal-Se,  
Deta Haire Kamali,  
Shah Sultan Shah Ke Mukhamen Se Nikala,  
Shah Karim Shah Vali....Aaj*

*Explanation*

O Ali! Your fortune from the very first day (right from the beginning)  
has bestowed perfection upon you,  
Hazrat Imam Shah Sultan Muhammad Shah declared that  
Mawlana Shah Karim is the Lord and the Guardian.

**Verse 4**

*Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Shah Kahun To Tujakun Baja Hay,  
Bakhta Bulanda Peshani,  
Chhoti Umarmen Aali Marataba,  
Taluki Hay Nishani....Aaj*

*Explanation*

O Ali! To call you Lord is your due.  
Your fortune and greatness is evident on your forehead.  
Your exalted status at the young age  
is a sign of greatness.

**Verse 5**

*Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Takhta Ne Chhatra Tujakun Mubarak,  
Zaheraji-Ke Piyare,  
Abul Hasan Shah Karani So Teri  
Jannat Aap Sanvare....Aaj*

*Explanation*

O Ali! May your throne and canopy (exalted position) be blessed,  
the dear one of Fatimatuz Zahra.  
O Mawla Ali! All this is because of your glorious deeds.  
Paradise is embellished by your presence.

## Verse 6

### *Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Takht ne Chhatra sunake tere  
Falakase Barase Nooran,  
Moti Tabaka Hathunmen Lekar,  
Shah KunVadhav Huran....Aaj*

### *Explanation*

O Ali! At the news of your Takht Nashini (Takhta ne Chhatra)  
the heavens shower Light,  
with trays of pearls in their hands,  
the houris (chaste heavenly maidens) greet the Lord.

\*\*

## Verse 7

### *Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Maheman Khanemen Momankun Jab  
La-i 'Id Musal-le  
Shamsi Jo Salavat Pada Kar  
Marafat-Ki Khushiyali....Aaj*

### *Explanation*

In the guest-house when the celebration of your Takht Nashini takes place,  
the momins celebrate like 'Id.  
They recite the Shamsi prayer, the salwat,  
and they experience the ecstasy of spiritual enlightenment.

\*\*

## Verse 8

### *Transliteration*

*Ya Ali Teri Mubarak Badike Khatar,  
Sayyad Karte Munajat,  
Shah Najaf Tere Pushta Panah  
Tere Dushman Hove Fanah....Aaj*

### *Explanation*

O Ali! To offer greetings,  
the Sayyads make their humble supplication (munajat)  
O Ali, the Lord of Najaf, may your progeny be protected  
and your enemies be destroyed.

\* \* \*

*For an excellent introduction and glossary of key terms please click: [Literary Reading: The Munajat - Ya Ali Khuba Mijalas](#)*

---

#### REFERENCES:

1. Excerpts from [Varas Ismail Gangji: The Turning Point](#) (on this Website)
2. Adapted from *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* by Shafique N. Virani, Hardcover – May 3, 2007. Also click » [Ismailis in the Middle Ages](#).
- 3 and 4 are from *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poems*, ed. Faquir M. Hunzai and Kutub Kassam, pub. I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997. For a PDF catalogue of IIS publications please click [IIS publications](#).
5. For complete explanation click [Literary Reading: The Munajat – Ya Ali Khuba Mijalas](#) (on this Website).

~~~~~

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART VI

### 1. THE IMAM, MANIFEST IN THE WORLD

*by Fida'i Khurasani*



He is always present  
a witness with his followers;  
but who has seen his beauty  
except the blessed?

He who is the cupbearer of  
the fount of paradise

is aware altogether of  
the hearts of his followers

He is the Imam of the time  
the guide and comforter  
the protector of his followers  
whether young or old

Like the sun in the sky  
he is manifest in the world  
but the blind bat cannot see  
his luminous face

\* \* \*

## 2. LOVE FOR THE IMAM

By Qadi Noman (10th century)

ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَيِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَعْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً  
نُّزِّلَتْ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

“Say (O Muhammad): No reward do I ask (for my favours) except your love for my kith and kin” Holy Qur’an

*“He who loves us will be with us on the Day of Judgement”* - Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq

It is related from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq that a group of Shias visited him one day. One in the group addressed the Imam and spoke of a man who was with them.

“O Son of the Messenger of God: this man has love for you.” On hearing these words, the Imam looked at the person and said: “The best kind of love is the love for the sake of God and His Messenger. There is no gain in any other kind of love.”

The Imam then continued:

“Once the *Ansars* came to Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (sas) and said, ‘O Messenger of God! We were on the wrong path and Allah guided us through you. We were destitute and we prospered by your blessings. For this reason, you may ask of anything you desire from our belongings and we shall give it to you.’ At this, the following verse was revealed by Allah, ‘Say (O Muhammad): No reward do I ask (for my favours) except your love for my kith and kin’.”

Moved to tears, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq then raised his hands and exclaimed: “Praise be to God, Who has exalted us above all.”

It is said that a group of people came from Khorassan to pay their homage to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir. Seeing both the feet of one of the visitors severely wounded he inquired about the nature of the injury. The man replied: “O the Son of the Messenger of God! My feet have become sore with blisters because of the long distance I travelled on foot. I swear by God that nothing but the love for *Ahl al-Bayt* has brought me all the way here.”

The Imam said: “He who loves us will be with us on the Day of Judgement. Religion is nothing but love! God says. ‘Say (O Muhammad): if you love God follow me. God will love you’.” (Holy Qur’an 3:31)

Imam al-Baqir is also reported to have said, “At the time of death, when one is breathing his last, it is only the love of Ali that will be most beneficial to him.”

### **3. DEVOTION - HIS NAME IS JAWHAR** ***By Mansoor Ladha (“I Wish I’d Been There”)***



[Following the conquest of Egypt] I would see Jawhar establish the new capital, pacify the provinces...and introduce new religious observances in conformity with the Shia Ismaili faith. This would include a call to prayers containing the Shiite invitation to “come to the best prayer.” Now that all had been done, no further time would be spent. There was nothing left to do but to invite Imam al-Muizz to Egypt.

In 973, the Imam leaves the *Maghreb* on his way to Egypt with his sons and relatives with him, along with coffins of his ancestors. One of his stops is Alexandria, where the Imam resolves to dedicate his life in the exercise of good works. He departs after spending three days in Alexandria, and on June 6, 973, he reaches a place known as Mina. Jawhar is there to receive him. I see him go forth to meet his master and I witness him drawing near the Imam, dismounting from his horse and kissing the ground before the Imam in a show of loyalty, humility and submission to the *Amirul Muminin*. This is affection and love for the Imam I see at the highest and deepest level. It is a profound experience and a joy to behold, which I would report.

The Imam would then cross the Nile on the Rawdah bridge, bypass Fustat, and proceed straight to Cairo and take possession of the palace or fort that Jawhar had constructed for the Imam. Then I would see him present the Imam, al-Muizz, with the best breed of 150 horses gilded with saddles and bridles of gold and diamonds as well as camels and ponies, saddled with boxes filled with all rare items in Egypt.

Then the Imam Muizz in a remarkable gesture of magnanimity and forgiveness would announce the release of about 1000 of his prisoners and present robes and *Khalat* to all his nobles and officers. Would Jawhar be forgotten in the sight of the Imam? No. I would be exuberant to see my beloved Imam's immense love for someone responsible for conquering Egypt some four years earlier. Jawhar would be honoured as he is presented with a golden *Khalat* and a turban. Imam Muizz then would tie a sword on Jawhar's waist and present him with 20 horses with golden saddles, 50 thousand dinars and 200,000 dirhams. With this *Darbar*, Egypt and Cairo enter a new era that would last almost two centuries and constitute one of the most brilliant periods in Ismaili history and Islamic Civilization.

#### 4. THE IMAM'S MERCIFUL GLANCE

By Khalil Andani



There is a very powerful and profound significance to notion of the Imam glancing upon or making eye contact with his *murids* in the *didar*. The glance of the Imam which he grants to his *murids* is called *nazar* (in Arabic/Persian) and *najar* (in the Ginans). The word *nazar* can mean 'gazing', 'glancing', 'looking', 'seeing' or 'reflecting'. The word *nazar* appears in the famous *hadith* where the Prophet says:

*al-nazar ila wajhi 'Ali 'ibada* [1]

Translation

Gazing upon the face of 'Ali is worship

If the murid's glance or *nazar* upon the face of Mawlana Hazar Imam - the 'Ali of the age - is equal to *ibada* (worship), then one can only imagine the benefit and blessings that the Imam's glance or *nazar* upon the face of the *murid* can bring! Many of us desire or seek the Imam to look at our face when he is amidst us. This is not really a selfish thought - but actually a form of prayer which is rooted in the Holy Ginans.

For example, the pirs in many Ginans beseech the Imam to cast his glance upon them. Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din [2] makes the following plea to the Imam:

*ejj charann te apna bhetadjo  
sunno maaraa nar haree re ya ali  
nazar karo moraa shaam  
akheeyu(n) amee bharee re ya ali*

Translation

O our Lord! Embrace us at your feet. O my mumins, listen  
for He is indeed the Master, the Lord Oh Ali.  
O our Lord! Look (*nazar*) at us for Your eyes are filled  
with the water of mercy, Oh Ali.

The glance which the Imam grants to the murid is an act of mercy, grace and compassion. This glance has the power to forgive all of our sins, polish our souls and transform our vices into virtues and our bad deeds into good deeds. In this regard, the great Islamic philosopher Nasir al-Din Tusi wrote the following:

“The devotees, devoid of all scruples or doubt, but with total confidence and sincere trust, must believe that a single merciful (*rahmat*) glance (*nazar*) or sign of acceptance given by the Imam to the supplication and imploration of the creatures from first to last can remit their sins and pardon their faults, transmuting their iniquities into deeds of merit.” [3]

---

REFERENCES:

[1] *Justice and Remembrance*, Reza Shah-Kazemi, pp. 62

[2] Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din, *Saahebe farmaan lakhee mokalyaa*, Verse 4

[3] *The Paradise of Submission*, Nasir al-Din Tusi, tr. S.J. Badakchani, p. 94

\* \* \*

## 5. SUPPLICATION: THE INTENTION OF THE HEART

*13th - 20th centuries*



The following short story from Rumi's *Mathnawi* about a shepherd and verses from *Kalam-e Mawla* and a *ginan* illustrate the point that Mawlana Hazar Imam has himself made that "Man will ultimately be judged by what he is in his heart" and "Man will be judged by his faith in Allah."

"When Prophet Musa (as) heard a shepherd praying to God: "O God, show me where Thou art, that I may become Thy servant. I will clean Thy shoes and comb Thy hair, and sew Thy clothes, and fetch Thee milk," he rebuked him, saying, 'O foolish one, though your father was a Musalman, you have become an infidel. God is a Spirit, and needs not such gross ministrations as, in your ignorance, you suppose'. Then a voice from heaven was heard, saying, 'O Musa, I regard not the words that are spoken, but the heart that offers them. I do not require fine words, but a burning heart. Men's ways of showing devotion to Me are various, but so long as the supplications are genuine, they are accepted."

Hazrat Ali says in his *Kalam*:

*Khuda to niyat ne dil dekhe, na dekhe surat aur libas; Atlas pahene to kiya huva, aur kiya huva jo pahene karbas.*

Translation:

God sees the intention and the heart, and not the feature or the clothes. What does it matter if one wore satin or, for that matter, rich (gold or silver embroidered) clothes.

Similarly, Pir Sadardin in his Ginan *Eji shaamku aava(n)taa jo kahe* explains:

*Eji Pir Sadardin boliyaa,  
koi man aapnnu samjaave;  
kapaddaa dhove so kyaa huvaa,  
dil dhove so paave*

*Explanation:*

Pir Sadardin says and enlightens your mind (heart).  
Of what good is it to clean your clothes (be ostentatious).  
It is only through the purity of the inner being (heart)  
that one attains (salvation and the timeless rewards).

\* \* \*

*Date Essential Readings (VI) posted: July 12, 2011*

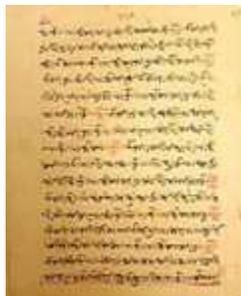
---

REFERENCES:

1. *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poems*, ed. Faquir M. Hunzai and Kutub Kassam, pub. I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997. Note: The poem appears under the title “Recognition of the Imam” in the Anthology. For a PDF catalogue of IIS publications please click [IIS publications](#).
2. Excerpts from [Imams Muhammad al-Baqir and Ja’far as-Sadiq on Love for the Imam](#) (on this Website).
3. See [His Name is Jawhar](#) by Mansoor Ladha in this Website’s series [I Wish I’d Been There](#).
4. Excerpts from Khalil Andani’s article “*The Merciful Glance*.” The complete article will be published on this Website at a later date.
5. Excerpt includes material from *Zahir and Batin* by Shaukatali H. Dharsee, *Ilm*, Volume 8, Number 4, March 1984, page 26.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS: PART VII

### 1. DIVINE LIGHT



According to the ginnans the Imam is the source of Guidance for mankind. He shows them the right path, saves the people from ignorance and acts as a Divine Light in the darkness. In *Satveni Moti* by Syed Nar Muhammad Shah, it is said:

*Murshid diwa hai joog-ma, jo aan dikhave ser-re;  
e baatt bahot rariyamani, jiya(n) chorasi nahi(n) fer-re.*

Translation:

In this world the Master is the Light who enlightens the Spiritual Path;  
the Way is most wonderful on which there is no failure.

Pir Sadr al-Din emphasizes the same idea in the following verse:

*Nish andhari Gur chand-roora huwa;  
Jot ahe Gur deevo, ho jire bhai.*

Translation:

In the dark night of ignorance, the Master spreads the Light of Guidance like a moon;  
Indeed, O brother! The Master is the Bright Lamp.

The parable of the Holy Tree (*kachajaratin tayyibatin*) set forth in the Qur'an is expressed in Syed Ahmed Shah's *Si Harfi* as follows:

*Ohang Nirinjan ek vraksh kita,  
Inko dali do-al dita;  
Ek Noor Muhammad Mustafa,*

*Duja Noor Ali Murtaza;  
Mai Fatima unke bhere,  
Hasan Husayn is Noor mahe khele.*

Translation:

God created a Tree  
and gave it two branches:  
one was the Light (Noor) of Muhammad the Chosen  
and the other was Ali the Favourite;  
Bibi Fatima was with the two  
and Hasan and Husayn mingled in this Light.

\* \* \*

## **2. IMAM'S COSMIC PRESENCE**



The absolute necessity for the presence of the Imam on this earth is related by Pir Sadr al-Din in the *Ginan Girbah Vali*:

*Purush shan matra pag dharani na dharante,  
Sansaar, chandra, suraj na dhrashtante,  
Kuchh na dhrashtante,  
Bhom kar, megh, dharti na aakaash bhave.*

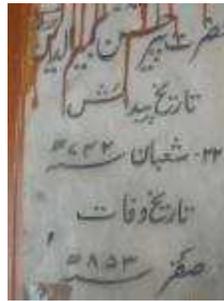
Translation:

If the Imam did not have his feet on this earth for even a moment,  
then the world, moon, sun would vanish  
and nothing would exist,  
neither the heaven nor the earth.

This notion of the cosmic necessity of an Imam is also attributed to a famous tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. *See readings I and III in this series, links below.*

\* \* \*

### 3. SEEK OUT THE MAZHAR



The Imam is referred as the *Mazhar-e-Dhat-e-Allah*, and this is explained by Ismaili Pirs as follows:

Pir Sadr al-Din says:

*Noor Khalifa is joog mahe(n) aviya,  
Ta(n)ki amar Jot likhani-ji.*

Translation:

O brother! The Vicegerent of God has come in this world  
and his Light has been made eternal.

And his revered son, Pir Hasan Kabirdin, notes:

*Qudrat apni zahir kidhi,  
Pragatiya deen ka Imam.*

Translation:

God revealed His nature  
and with it manifested the Imam of the Faith.

Both these verses refer to the Imam as the Proof (*hujjat*) of God.

Since Imam is manifest in the world it is necessary that he should be sought out, and here Pir Hassan Shah declares:

*Pir Hassan Shah Ginan sunaya,  
Jene dhoondiya tene Shah paya.*

Translation:

Pir Hassan Shah says in the Ginan:  
'He who seeks will find the Imam.'

\* \* \*

#### 4. KNOWLEDGE OF EVERYTHING



Being a Proof (*hujjat*) of God, everything (all knowledge) has been vouchsafed in the Imam of the Time. The Qur'anic declaration "And We have vested the Knowledge of everything in the Manifest Imam" (Holy Qur'an, 36:12) is reiterated in Pir Hasan Kabirdin's monumental composition, *Anant Akhado*, where he says:

*Aashaji, Patal tani je, soodhaj jane,  
Sohi Dhani ya(n) aaya-ji;  
Prathavi-na jene bandhaj bandhiya,  
Sohi Nar avine betha.*

Translation:

He who knows what is hidden in the depth of the earth,  
That (same) Master has come to you;  
He who has the control of the world  
has come amidst you.

\* \* \*

## 5. OBEDIENCE AND SALVATION



The cardinal principle of obedience is laid down in the Qur'anic verse (4:59), as well as emphasised by Pir Sadr al-Din in the *Buj Nirranjan*:

*Eji karo jo Gur farmave,  
Ta thi darshan Piya ka paave.*

Translation:

Do whatever the Master commands,  
so that you could be blessed with the vision of your Beloved.

And by Syed Imam Shah in the following verse:

*Eji Partak Patra-ne parkhi-ne,  
Preme poojo ne pai,  
Chaoud bhavan-no e dhani  
Parghat chhe joog ma(n)he.*

Translation:

Recognise and obey him who is the Bearer of Divine Light.  
Love and submit yourself to him  
who is manifest on this earth  
and who is the Sovereign of seven heavens and seven worlds.

It is because of the obedience to the Imam that one may achieve salvation. One who obeys devotedly succeeds in reaching the Divine, and the one who turns away from the Imam goes astray. Pir Sadr al-Din explains this in the following verse:

*Hazar Jomo chhe jiwo no datar  
Tene tamey sahi kari man jo nar ne naar;  
E Nur dekhi bhulshe je;  
Ghor andhari ma(n) pursey te*

Translation:

The Imam is the Giver of salvation to the souls  
so have true faith in him, O men and women!  
He who turns away from His Light knowingly,  
will find himself in total darkness.

*Date Essential Readings (VII) posted: July 16, 2011*

*Date updated: July 31, 2011*

---

REFERENCES:

Excerpts [1] to [5] are from article [Literary Reading: Imamate in Ismaili Ginanic Literature](#) (published on this Website)

## POST DIDAR REFLECTIONS

### Aspects of Imamat in Ismaili Qasidas

#### 1. NASIR KHUSRAW, 12TH CENTURY

*Rachael Kohn:* Well Khusraw himself was something of a religious seeker. He seems to have even read about other religions as well as philosophy. What faction or what tradition of Islam did he align himself with?

*Alice Hunsberger:* He was very well educated and did look at lots of different religions. At some point in his life, he had a spiritual awakening, and in one place he tells it as a dream, and in another it's a more journey – like kind of story. He finally found the truth and the peace in faith that he was seeking in the Ismaili faith, that is a branch of the Shi'ites. He believes that what God sent down is the external, and that the internal meaning is what needs to be brought out and that needs an Imam, an interpreter....*interview link provided below.*

#### UNDER HAZRAT ALI'S PROTECTION

The springtime of a friend of 'Ali  
is always full of the efflorescence of 'Ali;

None deserves eminence and praise among  
the people except he who befriends 'Ali.

The heart of every Shi'i is protected  
from Satan in the fortress of 'Ali;

As 'Ali is from the Prophet's family  
the true Shi'i belongs to the family of 'Ali.

'Ali's cave is of knowledge, not stone  
for stone does not befit the glory of 'Ali;

The clouds of ta'wil do not shed their droplets  
except on the trees and seed-fields of 'Ali.

Husayn and Hasan, the Prophet's reminders  
were none other than the reminders of 'Ali;

Truly no one can be saved from the fire  
unless he comes under the protection of Ali.

\* \* \*

## 2. EVERLASTING GUIDANCE

*by Nizar Quhistani*

“Salvation is to be found in the Imam of the Time. I found the essence of faith in obedience to the command of his representative. I have given up everything except that contained in the Qura'nic verse ‘offspring, one of the other’. Ever since I found the Imamate, permanently in human form, I have known no other guide than the living, everlasting Imam, for in his command, I have found peace in both the worlds.”

The necessity of a living Imam in every age according to the changing needs and circumstances of people is echoed in the following lines:

“My lover appears in different forms, because for each period there comes a new guidance; one after the other, there follows another Qaim Imam Ali.”

\* \* \*

## 3. TWO POEMS ON IMAM AL-MU'IZZ

*by al-Andalusi, 10th century*

*About the composer, al-Andalusi:* As was customary with most ruling Muslim dynasties, the Fatimids maintained a staff of a few professional poets, who performed important roles in the court rituals and public ceremonials. The most famous of the court poets was Muhammad ibn Hani al-Andalusi, who entered the service of the Fatimids in 958 during the reign of Imam al-Mu'izz after fleeing Muslim Spain, where his verses in support of *batini* (Ismaili) philosophy incurred the hostility of the Umayyad rulers. He served Imam al-Mu'izz in Mansuriya and then accompanied him on his journey to Egypt. But he was killed on the way by an enemy. Imam Mu'izz was saddened by this incident, and remarked that Ibn Hani was one of the greatest poets to have served him. Ibn Hani left behind a *Diwan* of 246 pages in which most of the poems are in praise of Imam Mu'izz and the Fatimid Dynasty. His extreme love for the Imam is shown in the following compositions.

## **i. THE GLORY OF OUR TIME**

O Mu'izz li-Din Allah!  
The outstanding glory  
and greatness of our time  
is surely due to you

By you is the universe  
honoured and allotted  
its provisions, epochs  
and respites of time

When the turbid depths  
were purified for you  
the waters became sweet  
and mouths became fragrant.

Your qualities are beyond  
the tongue's description  
beyond what the truthful  
and the garrulous say

God has bestowed on you  
the book and His grace  
but alas, my verses  
are not worthy of you!

\*\*

## **ii. THE IMAM OF THE RIGHTEOUS**

Command what you will  
not what the fates ordain  
for you are the one  
the overpowering one

You are the one, the heir  
to Muhammad's legacy

and your helpers are like  
those who supported him

You are the one of whom  
glad tidings were given  
by learned men in their  
books and traditions

You are the one, Imam  
of the righteous, by whom  
tyranny and disbelief  
are wholly subdued

You are the one, Imam  
whose love and affection  
salvation is foreseen  
and our burdens removed

You are the one on whose  
intercession we depend  
when tomorrow brings forth  
the Day of Resurrection

\*\*\*

#### **4. THE SWORD OF 'ALI** *by Nasir Khusraw, 12th century*

The Qur'an and the pure  
sword of Haydar - these are  
the two foundations of  
the faith of Muhammad.

For he, 'Ali, stood with  
his sword Dhu'l-faqar\*,  
drawn in every battle on the  
right hand of Muhammad.

Ali's rank in the faith  
was like Aaron to Moses,  
for he was both the peer  
and companion of Muhammad.

On the Day of Resurrection  
Aaron and Moses will kiss  
the mantle of 'Ali and  
the sleeve of Muhammad.

Muhammad's religion was  
like a dense forest;  
'Ali was the lion in  
the forest of Muhammad.

---

*Footnote:*

\*The sword of the first Shia Imam, Hazrat 'Ali. The name is also commonly transliterated as *Dhu al-Fiqar*, *Dhulfiqar*, *Zulfiqar* etc. The scimitar is one of the oldest and best known symbols of Islam, and is particularly important to the Shī'a, Alevis and Sufis. By most accounts, Muhammad presented *Zulfiqar* to a young 'Alī at the Battle of Uhud. During the battle, 'Alī struck one of the fiercest adversaries, breaking both his helmet and his shield. Seeing this, Muhammad was reported to have said "*La fata illa Ali, la saif illa Zulfiqar*" ("There is no hero but 'Ali and no sword except Zukfiqar"). Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulfiqar>

\*\*\*

## 5. AL-MUSTANSIR'S BLESSED FACE

*by Mu'ayyad al-Din Shirazi, 12th century*

Peace be upon Muhammad, the chosen,  
the one who intercedes in the hereafter.

Peace be upon Ali, the beloved,  
and those descended from him, the radiant stars.

Peace be upon you, O Sovereign Lord  
of Cairo, and all their gain abides with you.

I sacrifice my soul to Mustansir,  
who is supported by the legions of heaven.

I bear witness that it is your blessed face  
which illumines the faces of your followers.

You are the custodian of the fountain of life,  
and may the fountain of your enemies perish!

*Date 'Imamat in Ismaili Qasidas' posted: Sunday July 31, 2011.*

~~~~~

#### REFERENCES:

1. For Ms. Kohn's complete interview with Dr. Hunsberger, please click [Voices: Alice Hunsberger on Nasir Khusraw - Poet of Substance](#) (on this Website). Poem from *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poems*, ed. Faquir M. Hunzai and Kutub Kassam, pub. I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), 1997.
2. Adapted from *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* by Shafique N. Virani, Hardcover - May 3, 2007). See » [Ismailis in Middle Ages](#).
- 3, 4 and 5. Poetry source: *Shimmering Light: An Anthology of Ismaili Poems*, ed. Faquir M. Hunzai and Kutub Kassam, pub. I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1997. Article on *Andalusi* compiled from *Shimmering Lights and Muhammad ibn Hani al-Andalusi, a famous court poet during the Fatimid era* by Mahmoud Darwish. To download the latest catalogue of IIS publications, please click [IIS 2010 Catalogue](#).

~~~ END ~~~

## ASPECTS OF IMAMAT AND THE DIDAR OF THE IMAM OF THE TIME

2011: Compilations by [www.simerg.com](http://www.simerg.com)

*Published on the auspicious occasion of Mawlana Hazar Imam's visit to Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya during the month of July 2011. Click the above link to read the material on the Website.*