

Introduction to Ismailism

BY DR. SHEIKH KHODR HAMAWI

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All religions are one in essence because they all have one aim which is the adherence to the sublime ideals and the imitation of God as much as human capacity permits.

FORWARD

by: Dr. Moustapha Ghaleb

For about twenty five years, I have known Sheikh Khodr Hamawi, the well known scholar and lawyer in Lebanon, who has devoted himself very actively to Ismaili research and who has been participating -in spite of his numerous personal occupations-in every intellectual, social and reform movement among our Jamat.

In all his activities and research, he was aiming to getting the real knowledge and truth of Monotheism, and embodying the results of his efforts in his writing, actions and daily life.

Man from the earliest times has felt the primary and urgent necessity for discovering incarnating and comprehending the truth and thus keeping at the highest level the ability of his mind to evolve and keep up with the ever changing needs and challenges of every time and place.

But if the true knowledge of Monotheism gives the researcher the spiritual sublime illuminations which uplift him to the stage of perfection, the scientific truth does not give him such understandings, but it plays decisive role in his material existence by being constantly face to face with the new developments in the world as a whole, because the immediate value of science is growing more and more in every aspect of life.

There is no reason for pessimism in that Because the essence of the intellectual brains, who got forward to build the structures of humanity on real concrete bases, in aiming to creation, initiation, and progress. They have

their sacred message in struggling against ignorance, fallacy, and wrong, for the sake of better explanation and comprehension, and for the sincerity in publishing and crystallizing the truth in spite of all the obstacles which may stand in their way, as the truth must be said always.

Spreading the clear truth, leads consequently to man's liberation from superstitions and legends, and guides him towards the absolute realism, as the real qualification of the right man of research, is to liberate himself from any prefixed idea, before starting his research about any subject. Then he has to turn to himself, and his conscience to compare between right and wrong, in order to deduce by himself the real picture at which is aiming. But due to the well known points of weakness in the human community, every scholar who aims at revealing the absolute truth, by his hard and sincere research, and at struggling against ignorance, fallacy, and wrong, becomes a target for intolerable suspicions, and was and is still often described as a (Zindiq) and an unfaithful. The Ismaili scholars da'is, and philosophers, were victims of such bad accusations, when they appeared on the world Islamic stage, to render their important role in the spiritual and political history of Islam, and stood firmly and obstinately to face superstitions and legends which were infiltrated to the structure of religions and sects, spoiling their real heavenly messages. They were exposed to the ignorance of some historians and writers, and their prejudice and jealousy, in a way that the slightest accusation directed at them was they were infidels.

We so not want to go further into details about this matter, which is very deep and complicated, as we have to confine ourselves within the limits imposed upon us on this occasion, in casting a brief glance at the Ismaili Doctrine.

The Ismaili Dawa:

More the Ismaili researches and studies were developed, and more did the appeal and demand for them grow, in spite of their serious and deep nature. This appearance agrees with the need of the developed contemporary man for getting more of the knowledge in the modern style, which is provided in this book.

In spite of the varieties of researches published till the present about Ismailism, the revelation of the reality of this Comprehensive Dawa which shook the Islamic world from end to end, remains still among the mysteries which are hard to solve or explain, and we hope that this book will shed enough light about such ambitious aspects, because the dweller in the house is best informed about its contents.

This leads us to say that the scientific and historical Ismaili heritage is not yet sufficiently studied, because the texts already presented to us, are still neither sound, nor organized, in spite of the present progress in the fields of science and knowledge. This is due to the prejudice or fanaticism, racial and religious, which overshadows it, and makes the real information about this subject, through its authoritative sources, quite necessary.

Any researcher, who tries to study the Ismaili Doctrine from its social and political aspects, can see clearly that the Ismailis during all the stages of their history, were always aiming at constructing an ideal society, according to philosophic and human principles which can provide comfort to the individual and make the structure of the human society stand on the bases of justice, inspired by the rules of the Qur'an, and the instructions of the great

Prophet, and his descendants, and pure Imams, as it is demonstrated in this study.

During the various centuries, the Ismaili scholars and philosophers, did much for the development of the Islamic thought, to make it more active more fertile, and more fitting to distribute science and knowledge in the whole world, and the Ismaili were always confined to the Islamic duties and they prevented all that God prevented. They depend in their beliefs on the origins and rules of the (Ja'fariat) sect, with whom they share many points and aims.

The most important point in which the Ismailis and the Ja'fari Shiites meet is the matter of Imamate, and the necessity for the existence of an Imam from the immediate descendants of Imam Ali Bin Abi Taleb. This conviction is considered as the base of the religious beliefs for both sects. It is the axis of the Ibadat or practicing of all the religious ceremonies and duties). Imamate is considered by both, as the continuation of the Nubuwat (Prophecy).

But Monotheism is the most important element in the Ismaili Doctrine. Ismailis believe that Al-Mighty God is distinguished from all Qualities and names. He is not a mind to be known by minds, nor is He a body to be perceived by senses. He created from Himself the whole Mind, or the first being and made him the cause of all other beings. Then He created -through the first being- the whole Soul who is the spring of sense and action in life, All human qualities come out of it.

The Ismaili Doctrine stands also on the basis of action, and knowledge, or the Zahir (apparent) and Batin (hidden). The Zahir is to practice all the studies of

the Islamic Religion, as it is stated in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet). The pillars of Religion according to the Ismailis are:

The prayer, the Purity, the Fasting, the Hajji, the Jihad, and the Wilayat.

The Wilayat, is the most important of all, because, if a faithful man obeys God, and admits the message of His prophet, and fulfils all his religious duties, but disobeys the Imam, or denies him, he commits the great sin, and his obedience will not be accepted, as God ordered his creatures to obey Him, the Prophet and Wali Al-Amr.

As for the real worship which is the knowledge of the Batin, it means the right interpretation, and the deep knowledge of the lower and the upper beings, and of Monotheism and the distinction in the spiritual world, and the real qualifications of Nubuwa (prophecy). Ismailis made out of that, a religious philosophy, according to which-by the Will of God- all beings in this Universe, were divided into two parts: The Zahir, and the Batin. Even the verses of the holy Qur'an have two explanations: Zahir and Batin. The Batin explanation is not known except by the Imams, the great Da'is and the Hujjat (limits).

Before ending this word, we request our talented scholar Sheikh Khodre Hamawi, to go on with his research, for this is amongst the best qualified for such a work, as he is a religious authority, a legislator by profession, and very well informed about the wants and needs of any human community being also a Doctor in economy. We believe intensely that his intellectual production in this field, will help a great deal other researcher, and all those

interested in Islamic Studies in general, to be more enlightened by his singular achievements.

May God help us all, and bless our efforts for the sake of real knowledge and right information.

Moustapha Ghaleb

PRELUDE

Words are unable to contain the Ismaili Faith, and history is unable to ignore it. As we try to write about this Faith, we aim, to reveal facts which had been for many centuries, a subject of wrong interpretations and even of persecution.

I do not pretend to be able to fulfill thoroughly such a serious mission, because it is difficult to coordinate history and philosophy, in dealing with such subjects, and it is more difficult to be confined within the tests, and still more difficult to go beyond them.

I shall try to write about a Faith which makes text available for the service of society, a Faith, which gave life, a special philosophy, proceeded from man and made him the main axis of every thing.

IKHWANN AL-SAFFA said:

Do you Man consider yourself a small thing, while the great universe is involved in you (1)

(MAN) who attempts to resemble God within the Human Capacity.

(MAN) Who even approaches the limits of divinity, by attaining the best and most perfect.

This whole Faith, decides that (all religions) are one in essence; because they all have one aim, which is the adherence to the sublime ideals, and the imitation of (GOD) in as much as human capacity permits) (2)

A Philosophy that unites between Platonism, and Aristotelianism, Pythagorasism and Epicureanism. From the very beginning the faith was monotheistic and intellectual, going for every with the truth. It was preserved by the IMAMS the representatives of God on Earth and the guidance to this creatures (3)

Philosophies, old and modern, meeting in the all embracing monotheistic (FAITH), which is their synthesis and common denominator, where all sects ideas, and beliefs meet in absolute liberalism, within a uniform line of thought and pliability that evolves in time and place according to the needs of society, which evolution is always going forward towards the best the most perfect, and the most beautiful.

A (FAITH) that legislates according to Inspiration, believes in Interpretation, and in the unity of God through the disclosure of truth (4), because a living religion is that which keeps restored in an evolving sense with ages (5). This (Shariah) is all law for dealings and worship and it is adaptable with time and place, according to the theory of interests and to the rule of variation laws, with the variation of circumstances (6).

And this way (Tariqah) is for a conduct in the order of religion that renders nights as gown for piety, and the day as means of subsistence. It has its Councils where the (MURID) (The adherent) gets his culture. As Al-Mighty God said in Qur'an If they tread the right path we shall give them to drink of water in abundance (Ch. 72. v16.) (7)

As for the truth (Haqiqat) it tries to mix the tangibles with the un-seen, and makes for every thing a symbol and an example (Mathal), apparent and mystic, text and meaning. (8)

It has also its councils, to exercise the contemplating, and illumination. This faith is an effort aiming to emplaning, the divine verse, which confirm the presence of an all embracing order thus leading to an understanding of the mystical meanings of the sacred books which give a sense to the apparent meanings.(9)

Another point is that this faith gives the matter of the sovereignty of Imam (Ali) after the transfer of the prophet (MOHAMMED) a great importance, as (Ali) is considered the (base) and the (regent) of the appeal (Dawa). Therefore the knowledge in the mystical meanings of Qur'an and other sacred books, were transferred to Imam (Ali) and to the following Imams descending from his wife (FATIMAH) the daughter of the Prophet.(10)

Every Imam possesses the knowledge which is the base of the Faith of Monotheism. This knowledge is transferred from one Imam to the other till the Day of Resurrection (11) as it is stated in Qur'an:

Seest thou not how Allah coineth a similitude a goodly saying as a goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches stretching into Heaven, Giving its fruits at every season, by permission of its Lord, Allah coineth the similitude for mankind in order that they may reflect (Chap 14, V24 25)

Beside that, the FAITH of MONOTHEISM is open for all mankind:

"The Human creatures are all the people of God. The most beloved by Him is the more useful to his folk". Thus said the HADITH by prophet Mohammed.(12)

The Qur'an also says: *O Ye Folk verily we have created you from male and female and made you races and tribes that you may know each other, the most honorable of you in the sight of God is the most pious of you* (Ch. 49 v. 13)

The Imam of the Time, according to the Faith of Monotheism is the patron of the whole Universe (Imam Al Zaman) and not a monopoly of the monotheists.

The great Sophi Sheikh Muhy-Ed-Dine Bin Arabic says in one of his poems (13) in Fossos Al Hikam (Ch 24 p. 289)

*Before now I used to ignore my friend If his religion was not close to mine
But now, my hear became receptive to every picture
It is a field of deers, and a convent for nuns.
A house for idols, and a Ka'aba for pilgrims
A slate for the Bible, and Mus-haf for Qur'an
I devote myself to the religion of Love.
Wherever it could be found.*

This resembles what Ikhwan As-Safaa said 3rd volume, P. 397 (14):

*One of the distinctive marks for the friends of god
is that they became a folk*

*for whom all places and periods
are equal under all circumstances
what so ever.
All the days became for them one feast
and one Friday ;
all the places became one mosque;
all the directions became "Qublah" aim
Wherever you turn, there is the face of God
All their movements became worship,
and their silence became obedience..*

From all that was previously stated it becomes clear that the Faith of monotheism is not restricted to any religion, which may pretend to have the monopoly of truth. All the religions are alternatives to one another. Any apparent difference among them is due to the difference of circumstance Al-Mighty God says in Glorious Koran(15).

Those who became Faithful and who follow Moses and the Sabaeans and Christians, all those who believe in God and the Last Day and who did right, there is no fear for them nor should they grieve (Ch 5, V.72)

He also said: *Say we believe in what was inspired to us, and inspired to you our God and yours is One We are all Moslems for Him (ch 29 v.46).*

Finally, it is an endeavor to reach a real understanding of Religion in general, and of Monotheism in particular, and to reveal an aspect of Monotheism which was hidden for long ages.

We have to present our thanks to those who tried to reveal these facts before now.

We have full hope that our generation will see a clear revelation and a bright light, to make itself fit to carry the message, for the coming generations.

The Author

CHAPTER 1

Comparative Study of Religions

With the revelation of the truth to prophet Mohammed a new era started in the human history of civilization.

Islam brought a new existential form which completed the preceding forms of the divine revelations.

Although Islam contains the same essence and basic principles as those other religions (16) yet we can clearly and perfectly point out the difference between these religions.

One should not suspect the fact that the aim of all religions is to preach the existence of One Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Transcendent God, who is the Creator of everything; and to show the way of salvation and Happiness. So we shall hereby study briefly these heavenly religions:

1) Judaism:

The Jews had gone astray when they claimed that they are the chosen people of God, hence they believed in a National God, who belongs only to Jews. As E. M. Burnes in his book Western Civilization points out, at the beginning Jews even acknowledged the existence of other Gods belonging to other nations, just as Yahweh was the God of Israel (17)

The Jewish theology deviated in a manner that they reached to reject the existence of any God save their special God (Yahweh) Not only did they

make themselves the chosen people of God, but they rejected the teachings of Moses, their prophet, as represented in the old Testament, and adopted a special interpretation of their teachings reprinted in the book the Talmud (18) This Talmud, includes two Hakhamite Jewish interpretations, Al-Mashna and Al-Jumara which, moreover, represent a grave deviation from the real teachings of Moses.

Thus after this deviation, Judaism could not meet with the teachings of Christianity and Islam and other heavenly religions. Because it became after these aspects of deviation and interpretation, some thing like a special religion made by its later followers.

Finally, Judaism applied in the world as a racial odd creed limited to a particular group, cannot be universal or human, and is no more a Religion (19)

2) Christianity:

In Christianity, with the doctrine of trinity, the notion of God became deeper and deeper and more humanistic than that of Judaism. The Christian theologians tried to make this obscure complicated and unintelligible doctrine of trinity, appear simple and understandable. They developed the idea of One in three and three in One. They argued that although there exist Father, Son and Holy Spirit, yet there are not three distinct individuals existing separately from each other they are different parts of a Unified One. Metaphorically, it can be represented as one whole which has different parts with different functions, yet all formulate one unified image which is called cell. Of course, in order that this metaphorical example come true, the reader should extend

his imagination until he is able to conceive a cell with different parts which have no special existence and no special function. As it is mentioned in the common prayer by the society for promoting Christian knowledge (pp.27 - 30) the Christians worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one person in the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, is all one. The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made nor created, but begotten, The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son: neither made nor begotten, but proceeding (20)

Thus we notice that Christianity meets with Islam in its belief in the existence of one eternal Unified God. Furthermore, Christianity teaches that it is necessary for everlasting salvation that one should rightly believe in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Perfect God and the Perfect Man. He is equal to the Father as touching his Manhead. Thus Christ, who ascended into heaven and is sitting on the right hand of the Father, shall come to judge the living and the dead.

3) Islam:

Islam declares the existence of God as a Universal, Almighty, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient and absolutely transcendent Being who could not even be defined or qualified. God, in Islam, became the only God who is the source and the Creator of everything (21) The existence of any other God as well as the notion of trinity and of a national God are absolutely rejected. Islam preached the doctrine of God as One Universal, Unified, Simple,

Quality less and an absolutely Transcendent Being who cannot be defined or understood by the human mind, although it is allowed to attempt (22)
God as such is beyond space and time, the Qualities we attribute to Him are within space and time. (23)

Terms trying to describe God are actually contradicting the very concept of God. And this is what Islam means when it emphasizes the fact that God is quality less. But since it is impossible to convey the notion of God to Man without using human vocabulary, Islam Permits such usage on condition that we keep in mind the fact that these are only for the convenience for understanding and can not be said to convey the true nature of God (24)

Beside the Heavenly Religions in their bases on revelation, there are old philosophic religions, with deep and basic traditions. Like Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Pharaohism and the Kaldianism and the Aramite belief in one God "El" with his representative Malky Sadek etc... All aiming at Monotheism and trying to confirm it through various symbols. This is not the appropriate place to explain that in detail.

After this brief comparative study of the main monotheistic religions; we move to discuss, in brief also, the main divisions of Islam as a preface to the study of Ismailism.

Chapter II

ISLAM AND ITS DIVISIONS

Islam which started with the revelation of the truth to prophet Muhammad, contains in its doctrine a new existential form. It is a new doctrine of life, a new way to live according to which millions of people called Muslims conform. Prophet Muhammad, during his life, was the spiritual leader of the new revealed religion and at the same time the secular leader of the new state created as the result of conversion of millions of people to Islam, formulating an Islamic state which by definition was a religious community. Muslims in the Islamic state were living spiritually according to what Prophet Muhammad ordered them to do, and socially solved their problems by seeking his advice and guidance over the controversial issues. Their way of life was simply based on brotherhood and equality. The prime virtue was the absolute obedience and submission to the word of God, which was the true meaning of Islam. The life of the prophet himself, spiritually and socially, gave a perfect example and exact archetype for Muslims to follow (25)

1) The Sunna:

After the death of prophet Muhammad, Muslims, having at once lost their spiritual and secular leader fell into chaos, confusion and division. The majority of Muslims claimed that the spiritual leadership of prophet Muhammad came to an end with his death and was not and could not be handed over to anyone. Therefore it was left to Muslims to choose his successor by the majority of votes. This group of Muslims came to be known as Sunnites. They declared that the authority of leader, chosen by the majority of people, extended only to secular matters. He had no spiritual

authority, because this kind of authority needed direct revelation from God (26).

They later on, underwent many divisions of which four are the most predominant and are called (Al-Mazahebul Arba'h). They are: Hanafi, Shafi'y Maliki and Hanbali, Although the basic concepts are the same in all these four sects, yet they differ greatly from one another in their interpretation of the Glorious Kora'n (Holy book) and the Hadith Sharif (Holy Tradition) (27)

2) The Shi'a:

On the other side, stood a group of Muslims who declared that the spiritual leadership of Prophet Muhammad did not come to an end with his death and that a sensitive matter such as religious leadership can not be left to a majority of the people with diverse interests and mostly ignorant of the importance of the issue to decide upon, namely the choice of a successor to the prophet. They declared that the Prophet himself has actually chosen his vicar should be obeyed and followed; his authority, in both spiritual and secular matters, should be accepted the same way as the Prophet's authority was accepted. To prove this claim, this group, who later on came to be known as Shiite (which is an Arabic word meaning followers), appealed to the event of the Ghadeer Khumm. This event took place when Prophet Muhammad was coming back from his last pilgrimage to Mecca before his death (which is known as Hajjat-al-Wida or farewell pilgrimage). On his way back to Medina, the prophet stood at Ghadeer Khumm, after reciting the following verses of Glorious Kora`n:

O Messenger! Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, or if thou do it not, thou will not have conveyed His message (Ch. 5, v 66)

He took the hand of Ali, his cousin and his son-in - law, and addressed the people and said, he who accepts me as his master, will accept Ali as his master too. To this he added, *I will leave you two things: the book of God and my descendants. He who accepts them and follows them truly will never go astray.* This event was even accepted by many sunni writers and historians; even Ahmad bin Hanbal (28) the leader of the Hanbaly sect of Sunna, mentioned it in his book Al-Musnad Al-Kabir. Shiite argued that at this place the Prophet has actually declared Ali as his successor in both religious and temporal matters (29) But Sunnites either completely denied that such an event took place or those of them who accepted it said that from this event we can never jump to the conclusion that the prophet assigned Ali as his successor, because spiritual leadership needs direct divine revelation and such revelation was ended with the prophet's death. To this Shiites answered that although the direct divine inspiration was ended by the prophet's death, yet the divine power, guidance, knowledge and the light were transferred from prophet Muhammad to Imam Ali and his descendants. Hence, this is the true successor of the prophet and possesses both kinds of authorities (30)

3) The theology of Sunna and Shi'a:

This argument between Sunna and Shi'a has never been settled and still goes on. They went in two different ways. Each one developing a complicated theology in accordance with its own basic ideas.

Sunnites in their (Azaan, did not mention the name of Imam Ali, Shiite, on the other hand, added it to the Azaan as a Third item after God and Muhammad.

In the basic islamic tenets (Usul Ed-Din) Sunnites came to accept only three pillars: Unity of God (Tauhid), the Prophecy (Noubouat) and the day of judgement (Ma'ad), while Shiite added to these three two more pillars. Thus they came to believe in five pillars which are : Unity of God (Tauhid), the Prophecy (Noubouat), the day of Judgement (Ma'ad), Imamate and Justice of God (Adl) (31) The reason, why Shiite added Imamate to the tenets of Islam has already been discussed. But about the concept of Justice (Adl) nothing has been said. Sunnites objected that there is no need for the concept of justice to be added to the tenets of Islam (Usul Ed-Din). Why, they argued, should we take only the concept of Justice and not mercifulness of God or His perfection... etc. Therefore, we cannot take one attribute of God and make it represent the whole nature of God because God is not made of one attribute, but of many.

Against this argument it could be said that it is not wrong to take the concept of justice (Adl) and place it among the tenets of Islam.

Moreover, the concept of justice should be treated differently because justice here means that God created everything in its best form and placed it in its best place. Therefore, without the notion of Justice the idea that the universe is perfectly harmonious and governed with universal wisdom and truth in an orderly way, will be without any basis. If God had not been just (Aadel) then the whole universe would have been in a state of chaos and confusion,

Moreover, if God had not been just, then the whole notion of the day of judgment, and hence reward and punishment, would have been absolutely meaningless.

And if it had not been for the justice of God, He would have never sent Imams to guide every generation to salvation and happiness as the prophet did to his generation. Therefore, we can see that the concept of Justice of God (Adl) is so important that without it the other pillars, save the Unity (Tawhid), would have been without foundation, Thus the other three pillars, Prophecy, Day of Judgment and Imamate, need justice as their background and justification. (32)

Now we shall discuss the major trends of Shiite development and its subdivisions.

Chapter III

SHI'A AND ITS SUB-DIVISIONS

The central feature of Shiism is the concept of Imamate. Imam, for Shiite, is the true successor of prophet Muhammad, whose authority extends to spiritual as well as the secular matters. Although the direct divine inspiration came to an end with the death of the prophet, yet the Divine knowledge, power, truth and wisdom were transferred from him Imam Ali and after him to his descendants from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. Therefore, the knowledge of the Imam is a Divine knowledge. The Nomination of Imam to the position of Imamate is the direct act of divine Will and no temporal or spiritual power can interfere with this will. Imam is chosen to this position by Divine inspiration, and no one, not even the Prophet or previous Imam, can chose a person as his successor to Imamate by his own personal will or desire. The commandments of Imam should be accepted and followed in the same way as the words of prophet Muhammad were accepted and followed. The Obedience to Imam is the only way to salvation and happiness. Without obeying the Imam a Shiite can never expect any kind of salvation. Imam is the only path to happiness. Furthermore, Imam, for Shiite, is the central point of the universe. He is the only connecting link between God and man. The World can never exist without the Imam. Thus the line of the Imam should continue till the day of judgment.(33)

All those Muslims who regardless of their later differences, accepted Imam Ali as the true successor of prophet Muhammad, and believed that his authority extended over the spiritual realm as well as over temporal matters were called Shiites.

But we must keep in mind the difference between the function of the Imam as a temporal leader and as a spiritual guide. As a temporal leader, the Imam may or may not assume this position. But as a spiritual guide, he is appointed by a Divine Will. For example, Imam Ali, as a spiritual leader, was appointed by the prophet, and hence was the first Imam. But as a Caliph, he came after Othman, as the third Orthodox Caliph.

Imam Ali was martyred in the mosque of Kufa, after being, for four years, the Caliph and the Imam of the Muslims. After him his son, Imam Hassan, succeeded to the position of Caliphate. He was Caliph for less than one year because he abdicated his temporal leadership to Mu'awiah. But the Imamate was transferred from Imam Ali directly to imam Hussein, the second son of Imam Ali from Fatima, the daughter of prophet Muhammad. (34)

Imam Hussein rebelled against Yazid, son of Mu'awiyah, and was martyred in the tragic event of Karbela. Then his son Ali Zayn al-A'bedin succeeded him to the position of Imamate.

After the death of Imam Ali Zayn al-A'bedin a worth mentioning division appeared among the Shiite. A group of Shiite claimed the title of Imamate to his son Zayd rather than to his appointed and accepted successor Mohammed al-Baquir. They were called Zaydis and are now the predominant sect in the Yemen.

But the majority of Shiite followed Imam Muhammad al-Baaquir and then his son Imam Jafar al-Sadik (35)

Imam Jafar al-Sadik, however, was he first Imam who introduced philosophy into Islamic thinking, the outcome of which was a great movement in the Islamic World. This new movement which added a great deal to Islamic thought was based mainly on the allegorical interpretation of the Glorious Koran. This is not surprising if we remember that Imam Jafar was himself the most learned man at that time. He was called the (father of alchemy) (36) and the founders of the main Sunni schools of interpretation were among his students. Furthermore, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq laid the foundation of the secret Ismaili Dawa. He announced the death of his successor, Imam Ismaili, in order to avoid the Abbasides pressures and their plans to get rid of him. In fact, Imam Ismaili went into concealment and worked secretly. This act of Imam Jafar was misunderstood by some of his followers who believed that Imam Ismaili died and hence his brother Musa al-Kazem, was he true Imam. This group became known as Isna Ashris (Twelvers), because they accepted the first six Imams and five of the descendants of Musa al-Kazem. The Twelfth Imam, however, disappeared in Sammaria in northern Iraq, and will appear again when the world would be full of misery and in justice. His appearance is a sign of the coming of the day of judgment and the end of this world. The rest of Imam Jafar`s followers understood and accepted their Imam`s plan, and hence accepted the Imamate of his son and true successor, Imam Ismaili and his descendants. They became known as Ismailis (37)

All the followers of Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq agreed upon the fact that Imam Jafar appointed his eldest son, Ismaili, as his successor to the position of Imamate, But the Isna Ashris claim that Imam Ja'far, later on (withdrew) this appointment from Ismaili, and appointed his second son, Musa al-Kazem, to that position. The Ismailis, on the other hand, said that this is not possible. Because, first of all, the Imam is infallible and hence he acts by a divine will.

Furthermore, the transfer of Imamate proceeds from father to son, not from brother to brother, Hence, if Imam Ismaili had died during his father's lifetime, the Imamate would have been transferred to his son Imam Muhammad Iben Ismaili as it actually had.

Ismailis, follow Muhammad the son of Imam Ismaili and his descendants up to the present day (38). They too underwent some sub-divisions. The first noteworthy one came after he death of Imam al-Hakim Bi Amr Allah. A group of Ismailis deified Imam Al-Hakem and claimed that he did not die, and that one day he will reappear to terminate the world and bring the Divine justice back. This group is called Druzes (39)and it lives in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine (40) But the majority of Ismailis followed the son of Imam Al-Hakem, Al-Zaher, and his descendants up to Imam Mustanser Billah, Here a Major division took place in Ismailism. The reason behind it being that after the death of Imam Mustanser, the commander of the troops deposed Imam Nizar, the rightful successor of Imam Mustanser and placed him by his brother Al-Musta'li (41) But Imam Nizar escaped from the prison by the help of his followers in Cairo, and specially Hassan Bin Sabbah (42) his Da'i in Iran, and went to Syria and then to Iran. Those Ismailis who followed al-musta'li became know first as Musta'lians, and nowadays as Buhra, and are mainly living in Yemen, India and East Africa. Those who followed Imam Nizar up to present Imam, H. R. H. Karim Agha Khan, were known as Ismaili Nizari or Ismailis or Agahakhanis (Khoja).

Part II

Doctrines of Ismailism

Ismailism is one of the major sects of Shiites. The common characteristics of Shiism mentioned in (part 1) apply to them as well as any other sect of Shiites.

Ismailism paid more attention to philosophy of religion starting from the theory of one unified unity of the universe, the unity of religions, aiming at a united humanity.

This theory discusses potentiality and actuality and is defined in four items:

- 1- Existence in power
- 2_ Existence in action
- 3- Knowledge of truth.
- 4- Implementation by action.

Chapter 1

Potentiality and Actuality

In natural sciences, every theory, to be proved true, needs practical application or experimentation, while in spiritual philosophy, the faith, in order to become effective, needs to be implemented in action. This rule is to be applied in the Ismaili philosophy of Monotheism according to the following procedure.

Ismaili faith took it upon itself to demonstrate the fact of existence (43) It states that every existence, to be real (44) must be:

First Existence in power, or the potentiality of "Being"

Second: Existence in action, or the activity of "Being"

Ismailis also aim at demonstrating the relationship between the potential divine power known as the self-divine, and the actual power known as the "aspects of divinity" (45)

Knowing these facts- existence in power existence in action, and the relationship between them-makes for the growth of a mental faith, which needs a practical application in stage of spiritual culture and conduct, through which the faithful adherent passes and by which he gets characterized, symbolizing the potential power, and the actual power, and imitating them in executing their learning, and calling to have faith in them.

This knowledge is a "trust" which he should keep, and not give away except to those who deserve getting to such a stage of faith.(46)

Once he fulfils this trust, he attains the understanding of real monotheism, the faith in the unity of existence, and its implementation by action.

To make these spiritual rules more clear and comprehensible, we demonstrate the following material facts:

In geometry (47) A Point was existing in power since the ever, it is the potentiality but it never became effective before it was stretched in a line an action which then leads to the formation of dimensions In arithmetic (48) zero was also existing in power thus it was the (potentiality) But it had no value by itself, during the stage of existence because if we added it, or multiplied it till infinity, it would never increase. When it was promoted to the stage of actual existence in the figure of (one) then it became an actual power, because it is also the base of all natural science (49a).

Electricity also existed in power (in nature) before it was discovered or known to us. It was only a (potentiality) existing in the atmosphere, and indicating its presence by vague signs, far from being explained through the centuries.

But when its properties were actually known, it was transferred to the stage of existence in action, by formulation and mechanization,
And what actual power it give now...!!!

The Atom, the greatest achievement that the human mind realized in our present time. By the help and will God, it passed these two stages:

- 1- Existence in power.
- 2- Existence in action.

In its first stage, it was merely a "potentiality" (49b) unknown, unadapted, was wasted in the large universe.

In its second stage, when man knew and applied the electron, the great power was proved existing in action and gave the mostwonderful results that human beings discovered till our present time.

Just in the same manner must the faith of a man be translated into action by his conduct and work.

Chapter II

Existence in Power

In Ismailism the whole universe was seen as a unified interrelated entity starting with God the creator, who is the absolute, perfection (50), and purity, and ending with matter which is the highest level of divisibility, and imperfection. In between, the whole universal phenomena were arranged in such an order that the more perfect (51) and the more universal they are the higher, the position they reach towards God. The more imperfect and less universal they are lower the position they occupy towards matter is the last degree of passivity it lacks universality and perfection. But it is important to note that matter for Ismailis, especially during the Fatimid period, was completely immaterial thing. Its material properties are illusion of the senses and have no existence outside the senses, e.g. color has no material existence in itself and is only the product of sight.

Therefore, all properties of matter are ideas existing in the mind, and each one of these material properties, taken by itself, cannot be anything but idea; none of them can formulate a material body by self solidity which cannot exist without hardness. color, softeners (52)... etc, which make the matter as it is, not one of these properties existing outside the mind and inside the matter itself. This immaterial idea of matter is very important in Ismaili cosmogony.

As mentioned above, at the top of this interdependent universe is the idea of God. God, for Ismailis, is one absolutely transcendent, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient (53) incomprehensible and quality less Being. He is

one absolutely transcendent because he has no equal or companion. He is omnipotent because he is the creator of everything, and nothing could come into existence without His will. He omnipresent because He is beyond space and time. No space can ever bound him and no space can ever exist outside him. If such space existed, God would be bounded by space out of which he would have no existence. Therefore, he is every where and no place is empty of him. He is omniscient because he is the cause of everything, and since he exists beyond time, there is no past, present, or future for him. Everything is in the state of the present with regard to him (54). Hence, his knowledge does not change, increase or decrease. Because change by definition requires time and can happen only in time. But God cannot be within time, since he created time: and had he been within time His essence would have been changed by time, since everything that is within time must change by time and must have a beginning, middle, and an end.

But such an idea is contradictory to the definition of God. God, by definition, cannot have any beginning, middle, or end. In other words, he is by definition eternal, i.e. he is beyond time. To be outside time means that no change can ever happen to Him, hence his knowledge must be absolute and constant, because he is the cause of everything, and everything is in the state of present for him. Moreover, his knowledge cannot change, increase or decrease by time. Therefore, what seems to us as past or future is only present to Him. Thus his unchangeable knowledge must be the absolute knowledge (55).

God is incomprehensible because mind comprehends that which it experiences. In order to experience something it must come through the sense. Although by our imagination we arrive at some knowledge which is not experienced directly by our sense like e.g. an imaginary thing as a flying

horse or a scientific law such as the law of gravity which by itself is not object of sense experience, yet if we think carefully we notice that the basis for all these is nothing but sense experience. We could never imagine a flying horse had we not seen a horse and a flying bird. Newton would have never discovered the law of gravity had he not experience the sight of a falling object. But since God cannot be experienced by our sense. because we have never come across an object which we could identify as an omnipotent, omnipresent God, he cannot be comprehended by the mind. Many Sophists (56) have talked about direct experience of or direct spiritual contact with God, but should not confuse such an experience with the idea of comprehension of God. Because, to comprehend God is to know His essence, His nature, His qualities and capacities, and to formulate a knowledge communicable to others. whole the direct experience is just a spiritual union which witnesses no understanding of nay of the above - mentioned facts. He who undergoes such kind of experience is not able to communicate anything of his experience. Thus he has not comprehended God although he might have a direct experience or contact with him.

The idea that God is quality less or without any attributes is very delicate and confusing. This is mainly because of our use of language. We cannot describe anything to anyone with out giving it some qualities like white or black, big or small, tall or short, wealthy or poor and so on and so forth. The reason behind this is that the mind cannot understand anything without any quality which it has not experienced before. You cannot experience or even imagine a man -if we can call such a being a man -who has no color, no shape or size and no special existence neither being alive nor dead nor being beautiful nor ugly nor anything in between, Hence, the notion that God is quality less comes to be very confusing and unintelligible especially when the Koran

itself lends many attributes to God like mercifulness, perfection... etc (57)
But Ismailism stood vehemently against giving any kind of attribute to God.

This was based onto reasons. First because any king of definition or attribute we give to God must be and will be base upon our experience of the material world and, hence, cannot be and should not be applied to God. For example, the idea that God is just, is an idea derived purely from our worldly experience. We have experienced the idea of justice and compared it with an unjust act which was done to us. We find the notion of justice to be noble and great, thus we refer it to God, and to support it we bring some philosophical arguments that God must be just because if he were not, so and so would happen; or because of so and so he could not be anything but just. If we take any of the other attributes applied to God and examine them carefully we find that the ground for all these attributes is our own experience of this material world. This will result in referring to God human attributes and qualities, thus creating an anthropomorphic idea of God which is absolutely contradictory to the Islamic monotheistic concept of Him.

Secondly, when we attribute to God any kind of qualities we will be making some value judgement, i.e., putting some standards outside God according to which we judge God's nature and behaviour. To make such a standard, we must make a comparison. To make comparisons, we have to comprehend the nature of things we are comparing, and see what they are and what are their functions. This cannot be applied to God, because first we cannot compare God with any thing and, secondly, we are not capable of understanding God's nature.

Here a caution is necessary. What we are doing is showing that human terms and vocabulary cannot rightly be applied to God. Human languages deal with the material world and material beings living within time, while God is immaterial and immortal and eternal. But since there is no other way to convey to man the idea of God and that he is just and perfect... etc, except by using human language, such a use is allowed in Islam. Glorious Koran is full of such expressions as God is merciful, perfect, just and so on. Even Ismailis, who attacked the notion of applying human language to God, could not do otherwise themselves. They used freely the terms such as God's direct will; or God's knowledge, or God's direct will; or God's knowledge, or God's volition and so on. Such terms were permitted in Ismailism, but at the same time the fact that they are not true indicators of God's nature was emphasized strongly. These terms are used just for the sake of better understanding. Man was permitted to apply his imperfect and limited language which was the product of his experience with a material world, to the perfect, immaterial and eternal God on the condition that he bears in mind the fact that such terms do not express the true nature of God and in actuality cannot be applied to Him.

A conclusion of what we have said so far is that Ismaili cosmogony started with a belief in one transcendent being whose nature is beyond the comprehension of material means (59).

Chapter III

Existence in Action

God, because of some reasons known to himself only through his act of volition created the universe by ordering it (universe) to be (59). Thus the second element in the hierarchy of Ismaili cosmogony is the word (Amr) , which means decree or order. (Amr) flows out of God through his act of volition and embodies the whole universe. If He decree a thing, He said unto it only: Be! and it is (60).

Next to (Amr) comes (Aql-il-Kulli) or universal mind. It represents the order and harmony of the universe. It is the laws or rational principles governing the universe preventing disharmony and chaos. Thus the universe is a cosmos, a beautiful well-ordered whole.

The third element next to (Aql-il-Kulli) is (Nafsi-il-Kulli), or universal soul, it is the principle of life or motion. All life and movement have their sources in this element. It contains the germs of the seeds of life. It is related to the world as the human soul is related to the body (61)

The differences between the human mind and (Aql-il-Kulli) universal reason, and between the human soul and (Nafsil-Kulliah), universal soul, is that the mind or intellect of man in general, i.e. the sum total of man's intellects is a fraction of (Aql-il-Kulli) And the human soul in general, is fraction of the universal soul or (Nafsil-Kulliah).

This hierarchy can be shown in this way:

God (who is an inexplicable being).

Amr (which means order or decree or will and embodies what whole universe).

Aql-il-Kulli (which is the universal reason).

Nafsil-kulliah (which is the universal soul or principles of Motion).

After (Nafsil-kulli) come several other elements mainly related to Ismaili cosmology but are out of the scope of this pamphlet.

It is important to note that, as I mentioned above, Ismailis look upon the universe as one unified entity. There are no special or time differences among different parts of elements of Ismaili cosmogony. They are not different entities existing and functioning separately from each other. They are interrelated parts with no separate spatial and time existence, which formulate a connected, well-ordered world or rational cosmos, well-ordered world or rational cosmos, and they are complimentary to each other.

Chapter IV

Knowledge of Truth

In this cosmogony there is a logical order constituting a hierarchy in which the more universal and the more perfect elements subordinate or dominate the less perfect or less universal ones. Hence, (Amr) or primal volition of God is superior to all things below it and dominates them all. It contains within itself the whole universe and universal phenomena. The second one, (Aql-il-Kulli) is less perfect and less universal than (Amr) so it is subordinated to it, but at the same time it is more perfect and more universal than everything below it, and thus is superior to all of them and dominates them, the same being true of the rest.

The same hierarchy was applied to spiritual realms of religious aspects (Amr) (63) or prime volition was identified with the institution of Imamate. It contains the whole universal truth. This divine truth or (Haqiqat) is revealed to prophets to convey to their people to the extent that they are capable of understanding it. The act of converging the divine truth (Haqiqat) is called (Da'wat) The Imam is called (Shahibad-Dawat). The prophet is called by the name of (natiq (speaking) who is at the top of this hierarchy, accompanied by the Imam who is called (Samit) (silent); because he does not act so long as the prophet exists.

The Imam was called (Samit) because he was not functioning. But after the death of the prophet, he would continue the revelation of the divine truth (Haqiqat) to the people. Hence he was equated to the (Aql-il-Kulli) Therefore, the Imamate must continue as the cosmic principle for the revelation of the truth. There is no difference between Imams, because they

contain in themselves the same divine truth, and they reveal it in accordance with the comprehension of their contemporaries. Imam is the guardian of (Haqiqat) hence he is the only way to salvation and acquiring of happiness. He is man's real spiritual leader (64)

Imam himself does not reveal the Divine truth to the people. He teaches it to Hujjat and Da'i and they in their turn preach it to the people. Thus spiritual hierarchy will follow Imam, respectively, by Hujjat Da'i and Mustajib.(65)

Chapter V

Implementation of Faith by Action

The real aim of religion, is the good action in being useful to others, and not only in repeating prayers (66)

Such good action (67) (Amal) is acari by the prophet Muhammad in his Hadith (Holy tradition):

"He whose prayer does not prevent him from bad and evil, his prayer becomes a penalty on him".

It was also reported that the prophet asked once a group of travelers:

"Whom did you find to be the most pious amongst you?"

"They said: "Fulan" (so and so)."

"He said In what way ?"

They said He did not cease praying day and night.

He said "How was he fed?"

They said: "O Prophet, each one of us offered him food"

Then the prophet said: "Each one of you is better than him."

In the Holy Koran many verses urge for good deeds and action in order to fulfill faith and Islam.

"Who so desire the power (should know that) all power belong the to Allah, unto Him good words ascend, and the pious deed so the exalt (ch.35 v. 10) and say Act; Allah will behold your actions and his messengers too and the believers" (ch. 9, v. 105).

"And give glad tidings unto those who believe and do good works:"(ch.2,v.25)

"And for all there will be ranks from what they do, that He may pay FOR their deeds: and they will not be wronged."(ch.46 v. 19)

Mowlana Hazer Imam explained in Faraman el Mubarak for Jamat of Karachi 7 September 1960

Islam means not only faith but is also means works. It means creating the world in which you can practice your faith to the best of your ability. In short, all the religious articles of faith and rites are means and not ends in themselves, because the end is the good deed, they good word, and the progress and elevation of human society and of the individual within that society.

That is why, these means can be varied and adapted to the time and place and to the needs of man and society according to the possibility of realizing the human ends by them.

In our life as believers, we practice the conduct in Four stages:

- 1) Shari'at the law.
- 2) Tariquat the way.
- 3) Hakikat (68) the truth
- 4) Marrifat- the knowledge.

We go through the Shari'at in two dimensions:

- 1) Islam- the Surrender.
- 2) Imam the Faith.

We go through the Tariquat in three dimensions:

- 1) The obedience- Alta'at
- 2) The revelation - Altabligh.
- 3) The covenant- Albay'at -Mithak.

We go through the Hakikat in two dimensions:

- 1) The trust- Amanat.
- 2) The monotheism -Tawhid (69)

We can find all these dimensions in the Du'a which the Ismailis recite all over the world every day (70)

The Du'a has deeper and more profound meaning than that of the verbal one. Mowlana Hazer Imam explained in Faraman Mubarak for Jamaat Lashkar 11-12-1966:

When you learn your Du'a you must not only know it by heart, but you must also learn what it means. So that if I ask what is the meaning of (Fateha) you should be able to tell me. It is therefore important that you should learn the meaning of Du'a and only know it by heart. I give you my warmest blessings Khanavadan, Khanavadan...

A careful examination of this profound and allegorical meaning shows the implementation by action in the four stages which contain the seven

dimensions of the religion (a) the Shari'at, (b) the Tariquat, (c) the Hakikat, (d) The Marrifat.

(A) The Shariat The First stage:

We practise the Shariat in two dimensions:

(1) Islam. (2) Imam.

(1) The first dimension is that of Islam (71)

Islam (divine law) which is symbolized in the opening (Al-Fatiha) of the essence of Qura'n (Ummil-Kitab).

*In the name of Allah, the most companionate the most merciful.
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the most compassionate, the most merciful, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, Thee alone we worship and Thee alone we seek for help. Guide us to the up-right, path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy grace, not those cursed ones, nor of those who have gone astray.*

(Ch 1, v. 1-7)

God as such is beyond time and space. The qualities of mercy and compassion are within space and time Rahman (compassionate) and Rahim (Merciful) are only use for material aspects. Thus God who is beyond tempo-space location is brought within space and time by these attributes.

(2) The second dimensions that of Imam (72)

Koran gives qualities to Al-Rahman as it says:

"Al Raham (the compassionate) sits on the throne" (Ch20, v.5)

and in another place it says:

"We only sent you as a mercy (Rahma) for the World."(ch21, v.107)

"Say (o Muhammad): That if the Compassionate one has a son I am first among the worshippers."(ch 43, v 81)

Therefore, this indicates that al-Rahman (the compassionate) is a symbol to Imam, and al-Rahim (Merciful) is a symbol to the message of prophet Muhammad. Besides, there are more verses of the Holy Koran which refer to this symbolism such as:

"The day when we shall summon all men with their Imam" (Ch17, v.17)

The opening (al-Fatiha). more over, is a transitional state between two stages, Islam (Surrender and Imam (Faith) and the latter is higher in position for God says in the Holy Koran:

They think they have done you a favor, that they have embraced Islam. Say: Deem not your Islam a favor unto me; nay, but Allah doth confer a favor on you, in as much as He hath led you to the faith, if ye are sincere. (ch.49 v.17)

Then it is clear that not every Muslim is necessarily a Mu'men (has faith). With this Imam (faith) (73) however, we pass Shari'ah (Divine law) into Tariqa (the Way) as the Holy Koran says:

If they keep to the Way we shall give them to drink of water in abundance (Ch 73, v 16)

One thing to be noticed here is that when we ask God to show us the right way this does not mean that we are out of that way, and we are asking God to guide us to it. On the contrary, we ask God to keep us on this Path, which is shown to us already by the Imam in knowing and obeying God's commandments and those of his messenger and Imam al-Zaman.

Having got the connection and after realizing Imam (faith), we can say: I prostrate before Thee and I rely upon thee, from Thee is my strength, and Thou art my protection O Maintainer of all beings....

Our submission (74) to the Imam Al-Zaman and his orders is fundamentally based on the reality of our faith which is born out of our knowledge of and obedience to divine laws.

O God, bless Muhammad, whom you have chosen and Ali whom you love, and the Holy Imams and the living proof of our faith our present Imam. Now we can move to the second stage (Al-Tariqat), the path of conduct to reach God and get salvation.

(B) Tariqah the second stage (75)

We practise the Tariqat (the Way) in three dimensions:

1- Obedience (Ta'at) 2 Revelation (Tabligh). 3-Covenant (Bay'at)

1- The obedience is the third dimension (76)

Obedience to God's commandments and to those of His messenger and Imam al-Zaman, is a major characteristic, as the Holy Koran says:

"O ye who believe: obey God and obey the apostle and (obey) those who hold authority amongst you" (ch 59, v17)

"And we have vested (the knowledge and authority of) everything in the manifest Imam" (ch 36.v. 12)

These verse bring us closer still to our objective, namely, the reality of Imamate. They command us to obey Hazer Imam in who this knowledge and authority have been vested, and with His spiritual guidance we shall enter into the abode of peace and happiness. Verity, these verses are a proof of ever-living Imamate whose obedience is explicit for our spiritual upliftment. With this obedience to Imam al-Zaman's commandments, furthermore, we are eligible to enter Dar al-Salam.

"O God, Thou art the peace and from Thee is the peace and on Thee (rests) all peace. O Lord, give us a life of peace and usher us into the abode of peace blessed Thou art the most high, O Lord of Majesty and reverence."

(2) The forth dimension is that of Tabligh (Revelation) (77) this is stated in the following verse of the Koran:

"O Apostle, deliver to the people what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you would not do so then you have not delivered His message and Allah will protect you from the people" (Ch 5, v. 67)

With this delivery of the essence of revelation Islam has been completed and perfected (78) This delivery however, took place during the farewell pilgrimage (Hajjat-al-Wida) of Prophet Muhammad to Mecca In 632 A.D. when the above mentioned verse of the Holy Koran were revealed to him during the pilgrimage, the prophet at once collected all his people at a central

place, called Ghadeer Khumm, and standing on a raised platform, took Ali ibn Abi Talib by his hand and declared:

"Ali is the master of those who consider me as their master."

And further he declared:

"I am leaving behind me two things: the Book of God and my descendants. They are tied with a long rope and can not be separated till the Day of Judgement. Verily, if you cling to them you will never go astray." (Sahih Muslim, vol II p. 230 and Musnad Alkabir by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal the founder of Hanbali Sunni Sect.)

Turning to Ali, the Prophet said:

"O Ali, you are my brother, my successor, my representative and father of the Imams from my descendants."

When this task was completed, the voice came from the Almighty saying:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, and completed my favours on you and have chosen Islam as a religion for you." (Ch 5, v.3)

Thus, Islam will not have been completed except by the Imamah which is the necessary continuation of the vocation (Da'wat) of Muhammad.

After the recognition of the essence of revelation we can say our Tasbih:

"There is no deity except Allah, the Ever living, the Eternal. There is no deity except Allah, the Ultimate truth, the Evident.... There is no hero except Aly and there is no sword (might) except (His sword) Zulfiqar."

Moreover, after the above tasbih, it should be evident that Ali and his successors are the Ever living ultimate truth and that they are the ultimate reality and the Lords of the Day of Judgment and, therefore, on the other hand Ali means the Imam of the Age who is directly appointed to the throne of Imams, and Zulfiqar means the Imamate which is the supreme power. That is Hazrat Ali and his descendants are the living Imams and the Imam's power is the supreme power Hence, no matter how much difficulties and hardship we may face, the final victory and triumph is with us.

(3) The Fifth Dimension : The Allegiance (Bay'at) (79)

The Convent is stated in the following verse of the Holy Koran:

"Those who swear allegiance to thee, to God they do so, the handof God is over their hands. He who violates his oath, causes harm to his soul, and he who honours his convent with God, God will grant him a great reward." (ch 48. v.10)

Just as devotion to the Imams is linked with the devotion to God which under no circumstances can be given up, the fulfillment of the terms of our convent with them is also a sort of devotion from which we can not break away to the slightest extent. If a Mo'men Believer) is devoted to God but disobeys His Prophet, his devotion will not be taken into account and he will be punished for disobeying the Prophet. Furthermore, if one is devoted to god and his

Prophet but disobeys the Imam of his time, he practically disobeys God who will not recognize his devotion to Him and His Prophet in view of his denial and disobedience to the Imam of his time. However, he who fulfils his pledge to God, His Prophet, and the Imam of this time entitles himself to be included in the group about whom God says:

"God will grant him a great reward".(ch48, v, 10)

After this allegiance (Bay't) we can ask God to forgive us the sins we committed and to help us keep the covenant we made with him by His grace.
(80)

(C) The third stage is the **Hakikat** (the Truth)

We practise this stage in two dimensions:

- (1) the Amanat (the trust).
- (2) the Tawhid (the Monotheism).

(1) The sixth dimension is that of Amanat (the trust).

This dimension started in the following verse of the Holy Koran:

"O Ye who believe Do not betray God and the Apostle and do not betray your trusts whilst you know it". (ch 8, v.27)

When we keep our covenant with God, the Prophet and the Imams, we are ready to keep the trust (81) given to us and move into the stage of trust

(Amanat). Moreover, there are many verse in the Holy Kora'n which urge us to keep the trusts and fulfil the terms of our contracts,

"O Momins fulfil the terms of your contracts" (Ch. 5. v. 1) and Secure are those Momins who pay back the trust, fulfil their vows and are particular about their prayers. They are the persons, who will inherit Firdaus in which they will have permanent abode (ch 23, v 8, 9, 10, 11) These verses make it crystal clear to us that the fulfilment of pledges and the return of the Amanat carry the Momins to the Jannat (82) Jannatul Ma'rifat (Paradise of knowledge). This paradise is the unveiling of the truth that takes place in Beital Khayal)Council of Meditation and Illumination). Hence, we ask God to help us in Keeping our covenant with Him, by His sight (Didar) through Imam al-Zaman.

Having the terms of our convent with God fulfilled and our trusts kept well, we are in a position to speak directly with Imam al-Zaman, for the Koran says:

"And it was not to any mortal Allah should speak to him unless by revelation or from behind a veil, or He send the a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave He is exalted, wise" (ch 42, v. 51)

(2) The seventh dimension is that of Tawhid (Monotheism) (83)

Now we move into the last dimension with the following Sources of al-Tawhid (Unity of God or Monotheism).

Say He, Allah, is unique. Allah is the most reliable (the Absolute), He did not beget, Nor was He begotten, and none is like Him (ch 112, v. 1, 2.3.4). For Ismailis, the real Tawhid (Unity of God) (84) would be by removing the accidental from the essence. God is beyond names descriptions and languages. I do not say he is aged (old) or eternal (time and space), because the old and the eternal are created, and God created them. This is a divine reality which can not be understood through deduction and can not be perceived with any of the sensed, and it has no known confined place the existence of which would make other places missed, thus making God impotent, I do not say He has a soul, thus comparing Him with the created who may be completed or incomplete, perfect or imperfect. he has no body or silhouette, or image and no essence or complement He is above all names, descriptions and all other things.

But god has shown us his veil behind which he abides to be worshipped (obeyed) as being present and visible in every age and time.

And no man would obtain that Allah speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil or (by) sending a messenger to reveal what he will by His leave He is exalted and wise.
(ch 42 v 51)

Furthermore, the Holy Koran explains how God spoke to Moses the prophet, *And when he reached it, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed field, from the tree O Moses Lo! I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds (ch 28, v. 30).*

In other verses, moreover, the Holy Koran described this tree as:

"Sees thou not how Allah sets a proverb:- A goodly saying, as a goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven giving its fruit at every season by permission of its Lord. Allah sets a proverb for men in order that they may reflect". (ch 14, v. 24-25).

And in another verse it says:

"Verily, God has chosen Adam and Noah and Abraham's descendants and Imran's descendants above the people of the world, one after another in the lineage and God hears and knows".(ch.3, vs. 33, 34)

The descendants of Imran are the Holy tree from Mortaza Ali ibn Abi Talib, who are above the people of the world .

(D) The fourth stage is al-Ufran (the real knowledge)

We can understand this stage if we accept the spirit of the following verse of the Holy Koran in its entirety (85)

Allah is the light of the heavens and earth, His Light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as though it were a glittering star; it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, the oil of which should well-nigh give light through no fire touched it light upon light, Allah guides to His light whom He pleases and Allah strikes our parables for men and Allah all things doth know (ch 24, v. 35).

Concerning this verse, our late Imam, Sultan Muhammad Shah, wrote in his memoirs (p. 172)," *this verse of Koran so long as it is understood in a purely*

non-physical sense, has given assistance and understanding to myself and other Muslims. I must, however, warn all who read it not allow their material critical outlook to break in with literal, verbal explanations of something that is symbolic and allegorical". (86)

However, this stage of love and happiness, ie Jannat al-Ma'arifa (paradise of knowledge). As the joys of human love surpass all the riches an power may bring a man, so does that greater spiritual love and enlightenment, the fruit of a direct vision of reality which is God's gift and grace, surpass all that the finest and truest human love can offer. For that gift we must ever pray. These prayers can be prayers by action and prayers by acquiring knowledge. Prayers by action, enabled us to go through the seven dimensions already explained.

Prayers by acquiring knowledge are realised by the following seven precepts.

1- UNITY OF THE UNIVERSE:

The whole universe, including God, is one interrelated entity.

God's existence is the Existence in Power which is rendered complete by the Existence in Action (the human existence), and by the establishment of the link between these two tapes of existence, because the establishment of this link is the true Monotheistic knowledge.

This was explained very clearly by the Prophet in his Heavenly Tradition: "*I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known; I created creatures; I made them know me; Through them I am known*".

2- THE GREATNESS OF MAN:

The Ismaili doctrine holds that life began with human existence, and this made man the axis of everything. This is emphasized in the following sayings by Ikhwan As-Safa, already cited:

"Do you Man, think that you are a small thing, while in you is involved the Great Universe".

They also say *"Man approaches the limits of Divinity by attaining the best and most perfect".*

3- THE HUMAN BROTHERHOOD:

The faith of Ismailism is open for all man kind, and piety is considered in terms of what one can do for the help of others.

Prophet Muhammad says: *"All human creatures are the folks of God. The most beloved to him are the most useful to his folks".*

And Imam Ja'far Assadek also says:

The faithful is brother to the faithful, because the father of both is the light (the Imam) and their mother is Mercy (the Prophet).

4- EVOLUTION OF RELIGION:

According to the principle of Research, the Ismaili Doctrine aims at making the text flexible, to serve Human Society at all times and places. It does not impose the same application of the text at all times just as it was applied

when it was first established nor does it put material limits to the mind confining it within specific names and dates.
This is the real tolerance and evolution.

5- THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS:

Religious doctrines and Philosophies, old and modern have in the Ismaili faith their common denominator, because within the scope of this faith, there is room for all sects beliefs and ideas.

All religions are one in essence, because all of them have one aim which is the adherence to the sublime ideals and the imitation of God as much as human capacity permits. (Ikwan As Safa).

6-THE EXEMPLARY CONDUCT:

Ismailism requires that teaching be done by setting the good example in striving towards the better and more perfect. It requires Ismailis to speak the truth safeguard the interests of fellow men, abstain from causing or wishing them harm and overcome their own individuality in favor of the society as a whole.

7-HUMAN LOVE:

Prophet Muhammad said:

No man is a true believer unless he desires for others what he desires for himself.

It is absolute love, love without any reward or return, a love in which faith is completed, and where eternal happiness is Paradise as wide as the Heavens and Earth.

This Paradise is Jannatul Ma'rifa and Mahabbat (knowledge and love and Didar)

C-EPILOGUE

Through these stages, dimensions and precepts, through Islam, Tariquat and Imam; through Tawhid and Hakikat, through knowledge (Ma'rifa) and Beit-el-Khayal through the Ideal of Allah, man can attain this direct vision and experience which no words can explain but which for him are absolute certainties.

Say: This is my way, I call (people) to Allah with sure knowledge, I and who so ever followed the me are no the right path, and Glory be to Allah (c -12-v. 108).

The words mentioned in this verse are the way of Hazer Imam, the light of his time who guides us our to darkness into the light and teaches us the real meaning of religion.

Hazer Imam Karim Shah said in Firaman Mobarak for Jama'at in Karachi, 7 September 1960.

Islam means not only faith but it means works. It means creating he world in which you practise your faith to the best of your ability.

APPENDIX

THE ISMAILI MISSION

In the Age of Scientific Achievements

The landing of Man on the Moon realized the practical relation between Earth and Heaven, a step, which has its spiritual far reaching consequences, more than the material ones. And must prove the authenticity and truth of the Ismaili Doctrines Completely on the theory of the Unity of the Universe and not only on the Unity of the world.

We present this article, just to explain all these deep and many sided subjects, inspired by the wealthy Treasure of Knowledge, which the Ismaili faith provides.

Duel between Science and Religion:

The Middle ages in Human History, were called The Dark Ages, because of the lack of knowledge, which is the real obscurity in the life of man. This lack of knowledge caused the long severe duel between science and Religion with all the atrocities committed in its various stages, and led to the division of the Universe, mainly to a material division between Earth and Heaven.

To those who are still living in that mental darkness, man's landing on the Moon was a disagreeable surprise.

The same lack of knowledge led to the rise of material barriers between almighty God, the "Creator", and mankind, his "Creatures".

Thus, during these long and dark Ages, man was living on "Earth" encircled by Unknowns.

All that was beyond this small planet on which the lives, was supposed by him to be an Unknown with no ambition to know it on his part. He was supposed to know "God" but only through the obscurity in which he was living, and from beyond the barrier imposed on him.

Under such a severe strain and stress imposed in the name of Religion, Science pushed its way forward, but on a parallel track carrying independently the torch of knowledge cherished by mankind, and succeeding none the less in realizing many important material achievements.

These achievements had repercussions which caused mankind to suffer the two world wars, with all their atrocities being a clear demonstration of such suffering.

Another result of this ignorance were the waves of Atheism which rose to fill the vacancy caused by the absence of a right and effective spiritual ideology. In other words, Man has reached the moon but he is still failing to solve his problems on Earth.

Why did that happen?

The answer is, that Science is not the only source of Knowledge which mankind needs in order to live in peace and comfort, but Religion also is required.

The combination of Science and Religion, means the amalgamation of material and Spiritual Possibilities, which lead to the real Happiness of Mankind.

The Monotheistic Mission

Here Comes the role of the Ismaili Mission which we are responsible to render if we are really faithful adherents of it.

It is the treasure which we have, and which the world needs so badly. It is the only framework within which combine Science and Religion, It amalgamates philosophy and religious doctrines, matter and spirit. It was born in the old ages to be fitting for the Modern times.

It built the first real bridges between Earth and heaven, through the principle of the Unity of the Universe and gave man the procedure to cross the distance between Earth and moon, and land safely on that other planet, far and high in the heavens

It also laid the solid basis of authentic relationship between Al-Mighty God, the Creator and Man his Creature in a form which showed the Creature as the real symbol of the Power and Wisdom of the Creator.

It is this creature Man who reached the moon realized all the miracles of scientific achievement.

He is not a slave, or by-Product in this Universe. If he had been so, he could never have realized what he has already done.

He is the image of the "Creator" in whom Might and Initiative are reflected just in order to draw the complete circle of knowledge, which is the other- and most important-bridge, between God and Humanity.

This bridge, the Ismaili Doctrine of Imamat had already built many centuries ago.

And when Humanity as a whole attains the goal of real Spiritual Knowledge, then it can understand the real and true conception Imamat Unity of the Universe, and all Ismaili doctrines.

FOOTNOTES:

(1) *IKHWANN AL-SAFAA messages 1928 - Egypt is vol. message 10 P 309*

(2) *IKHWANN AL-SAFAA messages 1928- Egypt 3d vol message 42.*

(3) *Nahj Al Balaga by imam Ali (Egypt -1930, page 273 explanation by Ch. M.Abdah).*

(4) *The Ismailia sect by Dr. Mohammed Kamel Hessein (Egypt 1959 ch. 6. p. 130)*

(5) *Unstable personalities in Islam, by Dr. Abdul Rahman Badawi introduction, p. 3.*

- (6) *AL-MAJALLA, the Ottoman Magazine of Justice (ch. 1, p. 6) 1886 Istanbul.*
- (7) *Glorious Koran.*
- (8) *Rahat AL-AKL- by Hamid Al Din Al Karamani, Beirut 1967, (part 6. Ch 14, p. 549).*
- (9) *Al Majaliss Al Mustanserya -From series of Fatimd's Manuscripts, Egypt - published by Dar Al Fikr Al Arabi (ch 33-p 138).*
- (10) *From a speech (1935), by H. H. Aga Khan III*
- (11) *From a manuscript in my private library collected by Hassan al-Mu'addal*
- (12) *Hadith Sharif, Damascus 1938 by Ja'afary -Sahih Al Bukhary.*
- (13) *Fessoss Al Hikam -Beirut 1946, Dar Al Kitab Al Arabi, ch, 24, p. 289.*
- (14) *IKWANN AL-SAFA', 1928 messages vol 3, p. 297*
- (15) *Glorious Koran.*
- (16) *Ikhwan Al-Saffa, Egypt 1928 3rd vol., message 42 p. 373.*
- (17) *Western Civilization, by E.M. Burnes*
- (18) *Teaching Talmud.*
- (19) *M. Menuhim, Decadence of Judaism in our times*
- (20) *The "Common Prayer" by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge (p. 27-30)*
- (21) *Glorious Kor'an*
- (22) *Taiiat Amer Al Basri-A manuscrip in my private library (ch.3)*
- (23) *Kanz Al-Walad, by Ibrahim Al-Hamedi (ch.3) Edited by Dr. M. Ghaleb, published by German Institute.*
- (24) *Al Majales Al Mouayediah by Al Moa'yed Fi Ddin Hibat Allah Al Shirazi From series of Fatimid's Manuscripts, Egypt - Published by Dar Al Fikr Al Arabi part 5, ch, 67, p. 29*
- (25) *Ahmad Amin, Cairo 1964 Doha al-Islam, VI: p,5 16*

- (26) *Ibd. Ahmad Amin -Doha -al-islam 1964-v 3, p. 1-10*
- (27) *Dr. Kamel-al-Shibi al-Fikr-al-Shii-Baghdad 1966 p. 13-19.*
- (28) *Ahmad bin Hanbel Al Musnad Al-Khabir Hadith Sharif from Hadith Al Bara, Ibn Azeb, Damascus 1958, by Jaa'fary.*
- (29) *Ibd.-Al Moayed Fi Ddin-part I ch 6 p 75.*
- (30) *Al Kazi Al Na'man -Daa'im Al Islam p.4 -20, Cairo 1963 Dar Al Maa'rif Dr. Assef Fayzy.*
- (31) *Ibd. Kazi Al Na'man p. 2. v. 142*
- (32) *Al Na'aman Ibin Mohammad (Kazi Kozat -chief of Justice) Ta'wil Al Daa'em -Dar al maaref in Egypt M. H. Azami p. 47 208.*
- (33) *Ibd. Daa'em Al Islam ? Kazi Naa'man p. 20-28*
- (34) *Ibd Ta'ewil Al Daa'em Kazi Naa'man Ibn Mohammad, p. 47-72*
- (35) *History of the Fatimid's state -by Dr. H.I. Hassin 1964 Egypt Al Nada p.1 -33*
- (36) *Imam Al Sadik. by Dr. M. Y. Hashimi Sirian, Iraquian institution 1959, p. 26 -35*
- (37) *Ibd. Ahmad Amin -Doha -I-Islam v.3, p. 208 -226*
- (38) *Ibd.-The Fatimide state -Dr. H. Ibrahim Cairo 1964. p.30-32*
- (39) *The race of Drooze by the prime Judge Amin Talca, p. 31 -62*
- (40) *The Druzes are a tightly organized independent religious sect an offshoot from Ismailis since the eleventh century. Their founder Hamza advanced the claim that Al Hakem, the sixth Fatimid Caliph was the final incarnation of God, that Hamza became the last Imam after the Deification of Al- Hakim. Their beliefs including the unity of God, the trans migration of Souls and final perfection, are drawn from various philosophies and religious particularly from Islam by interpretation holding the Imamatus of the Universal Mind or Al-Akl Al-Kulli. Their philosophic Theories and Tradition are identical with those of the Ismailis.*

- (The unitarian Druzes by Abdallah Najjar)*
- (41) *Ibd.-Fatimide state 1964 p. 170 -176*
- (42) *Jannat Al-Amal -1935- Persian Magazine, Published by occasion of Golden Jubilee of Agakan III*
- (43) *Ibd, Ikhwan -Al-Safa, 1928, v.3. p.300*
(
- (44) *Ibd, Fakhr-UL-UL-Din Al-Razi, v. 1, p.44-Tahran 1966, Lion Library.*
- (45) *Prof: Paul Cranes: Jabir Ibn Hayan and Ismailism- 1930 Berlin P. 63 - 91*
- (46) *Ibd. Prof Paul Carnes P. 69-91*
- (47) *Ibd. : Ikhwan al-Safa, v. 1, message 2. p. 49 -72*
- (48) *Ibd. Ikhwan Al-Safa, 1928 v. 1, message 1, p. 33 49*
- (49a) *Al-Razi,v. 1,ch. 13, p. 91-96.*
- (49b) *Ibd. Ikhwan Al-Safa,v. *, No 2, p. 63*
- (50) *Ibd. Paul Craws, 1930 p. 69 -91*
- (51) *Al- Tawhid Fil-Imam, by Kazi Noman.*
- (52) *Ibd Al-Razi, v2. p. 265.*
- (53) *Kitabul Kashf of Jaa'fa B. Mansour Atyaman, edited by Prof Stothman, published for the Islamic Research Association Oxford Press 1952 p. 40.*
- (54) *Kashf Al-Hakack, from a manuscript in my private library, collection by al-Amir Al-Sayed Jamal -Edin Abdollah - Al- Tanokhy, (1417-1479)*
- (55) *Pearls of the faith (Islam's Rosary) by Sir Edwin Arnold, 1961, Ashraf publication -Labore.*
- (56) *Sophism is an ascetic Islamic Mysticism originating in the 8th century and developing especially in persia into a system of elaborate Symbolism of which the goal is communion with the deity through contemplation and ecstasy.*

It should be noted here that Sophism is some what different from the ancient Greek Sophism which was a prominent philosophy about the middle of the 5th century B.C.

(57) *Ibd. : Al-Razi,v.1, ch.10, p.128-131.*

(58) *The messaga of Islam, by Yusuf Ali, London 1939, p.39.*

(59) *Holy Bible,the Gospel According to Saint John, ch,1.*

(60) *Holy Koran,ch.2, v.118, ch.3, v. 47,59, ch. 6, v.73.*

(61) *Ibd. : Al-Majales Al-Moayedia,v.2,p:211, 213, 222, 226, 243.*

(62) *Tafsir Al-Koran Al-Karim, by Al-Cheikh Al-Akhbar Muhyi- Al- Din Ibn Arabi, 1968, Dar el-Yakza el-Arabia, Vol.1, p.7-14.*

(63) *Dr. Sami Makarem in his thesis for D.H. 1964,Michigan University, it is not published.*

(64) *Kitabul-Rushd Wal-Hidayat, edited by Dr. M. Kamil Hussein, collected 1948, by the Ismaili Society, published E. J. Brill, Holland, vol. 1, p. 200.*

(65) *Ibd.: Prof. Strothmann, Kitabu'l Kashf, 1952, p. 117-121.*

(66) *The ismaili Religious knowledge, published by Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Africa.*

(67) *Ibd the Ismaili Religious knowledge, text book 7, p. 23, published by Shi'a Ismailia Association for Africa, Platinum Printer Ltd.*

(68) *Diwan Khaky Khorasam: edited by Pof. W. Ivanov, No. . 451, m.p./891-35/ American University, chapter III,p. 7-50.*

(69) *Madinatul-Assrar, edited by Prof. W. Ivanov, published in part II of the Memoirs of Assio-Bengal Society 1922, p.1-76.*

(70)*Ibd. The Ismaili Religious knowledge, publishd by Shi'a Imami Ismailia Association for Africa.*

(71) *The Memoirs of Aga Khan III, London 1954, Ch VIII, p. 169.*

(72) *Ibd. Da'A Mu'l - Islam of Qazi Noa'mun's edited by A Fayzi Cairo 1951, v. 1, p. 3-14*

- (73) *Daaem Al-islam, of Qadi- Nu'aman*, edited by Dr Assef Fayzi Cairo 1951, v. 1. p.3-14
- (74) *Kitab Al-Himma Fi Adbi Atba el-aemma of Qazi Noaman's translated into English by Prof. Jawad Museati and Khan Bahadar*, published by the Ismailia Association for Africa 1966, p. 64
- (75) *Ibd. Madinatul Assrar*, edited by W. Ivanow, 1922, p. 1-76.
- (76) *Ibd. Kitab -al-Himma*, Mombasa 1966, p. 46.
- (77) *Ibd. RAHAT AL-AKL of Al-Karamani*, Beirut 1967 XIV ch 7, p. 558
- (78) *Ibd. Kitab Ul Himma*, 1966.
- (79) *Ibd. Kitabul Kashf of Ja'far B. Mansuril Yaman* edited by Prof R. Strothman, Oxford Press 1952, p. 17-26-123-139
- (80) *Ibd. Kitabul Himma*, 1966.
- (81) *Kitabul Kashf* 1952, Oxford p. 2,4.
- (82) *Ibd. Diwan Al Mu'ayed* edited by Dr. M. Kamal Hussein p. 120- 123
- (83) *Ibd. Kitabul Himma*, Mombassa, 1966 p. 25
- (84) *Ibd. Al- Tawhid -by Quadi al Na'man Ch I p. 4-50 Manuscript.*
- (85) *Ibd. Memoirs of Aga Khan III*, London 1954 p. 169 -175.
- (86) *Ibd. The Memoirs of the Agha Khan III* London, 1954 p. 172