PRIMUS

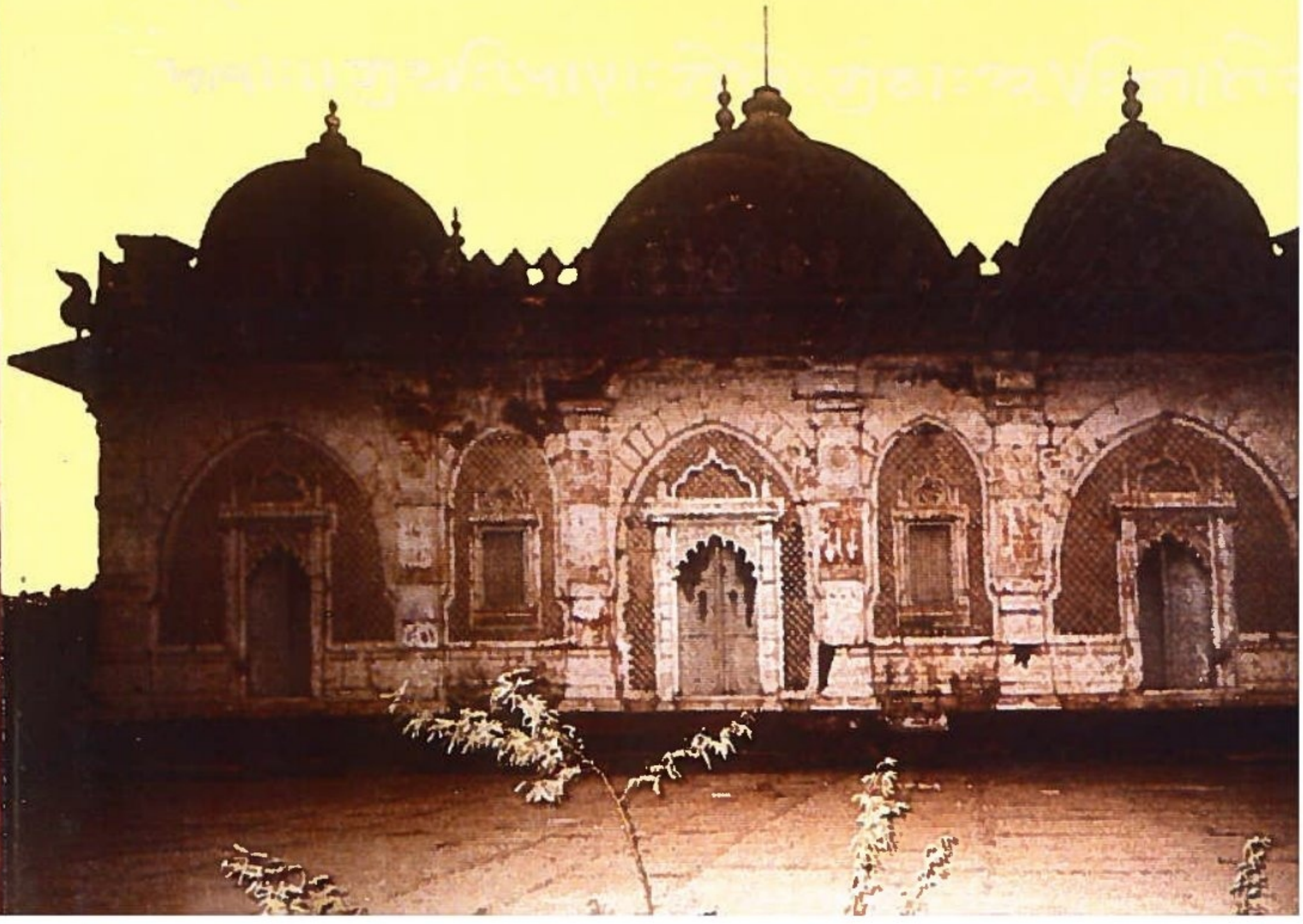
GINĀNS

TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Essays on Ismaili Hymns from South Asia
in Honour of Zawahir Moir

Revised Edition

Edited by
Tazim R. Kassam
Françoise Mallison



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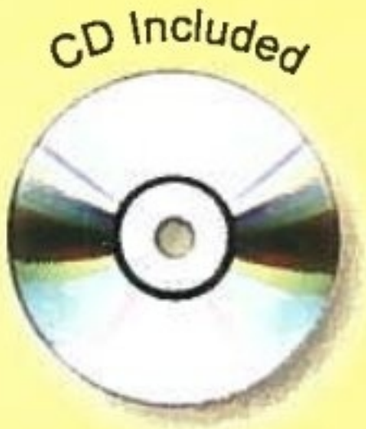
The Satpanth Ismaili Muslims of South Asia have a beautiful tradition of religious poetry called Gināns which they have sung for many centuries in daily rituals. This small Shi'a community has spread from India to other continents, but it has held fast to the practice of singing Gināns.

Composed in Indian languages and idiom, the Gināns illustrate how Muslims were influenced by the surrounding cultures and philosophies, and created new ways of expressing their beliefs and values. Although this living tradition of religious songs is central to Ismaili practice, only a handful of studies have dealt with the subject.

This collection of essays on the Gināns by academic scholars and community enthusiasts is written in honour of Zawahir Moir, one of the earliest scholars of the Gināns. She has dedicated her life to their study and spent many years preparing a catalogue of Ginān manuscripts housed at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.



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Foreword

hukam āvio jaṇ be taṇo,
ek thi kem javāy

The call had come for two:
How could one proceed alone?

PĪR SHAMS

As we move further into the new millennium we can start forming a retrospective overview of the twentieth century, and begin to see just what a major turning point it marked in the evolution of humanity. The extraordinarily rapid development of a variety of communication systems, the dissolution of historic hierarchies of status and authority, and the blurring of national and cultural boundaries across the continents are just some of the most prominent phenomena associated with the coming of what is indeed proving to be a New Age for us all, bringing with it an extraordinary expansion in our general consciousness.

Many areas have been profoundly affected by this unprecedented process of a rapid coming together on a global scale, perhaps none more so than those of religion, and of its paler academic sibling, the study of religions. The expansion in our general awareness of others makes it difficult for many to retain the kind of unquestioning faith in a single set of beliefs, as previously sanctioned by tradition. There is consequently a growing search for new interpretations which, it is felt, accord better with the ambiguities and complexities of the new millennium. One of the important tasks of the academic discipline of religious studies is to help provide such new understandings, a task which is particularly sensitive when it involves Western studies of Islam and other non-European religions which have, in the past, too often been affected, often unconsciously, by the insensitivities

which were so common a product of the European colonial domination of the East. Today we have at last come to see the necessity for real understanding, of allying the best parts of nineteenth-century scholarship, notably its careful rigorousness of method and alert critical sense, to an openness to other traditions which is based upon a conviction of the essential equality of each.

Never more important than it is now, this business of reaching mutual understandings is often quite painful, like all processes involving change in the way in which we understand the world, ourselves and others. But what makes it so rewarding is the realization of how much we need each other in order to produce real results—as is so appropriately indicated by the verse from a Ginān by Pīr Shams quoted above. In this undertaking two really are so often better than one.

All of which leads me to the scholar whom I first met thirty years ago as Zawahir Noorally in Karachi and whom I have known for over a quarter of a century since her marriage to Martin as Zawahir Moir in London. The passing of years has encouraged an ever greater regard for her unique combination of personal and professional qualities. Beneath a delightful self-deprecation, she possesses the extraordinary devotion to her subject characteristic of the best private scholars, which is both the envy and the shame of those of us who cannot avoid the compromises of professional academic employment. To the extraordinarily wide and deep knowledge of the Gināns she first gained through family inheritance, she has added a remarkably sustained programme of subsequent study, especially of the historical aspects of the Gināns and of their complex manuscript record, first in Karachi then in London. She has continued with this personal programme to develop with a wonderfully youthful willingness to explore new avenues and lines of inquiry, like her adventurous investigation a few years ago of the Imamshahi centre at Pirana and its literature. Even though at times she has had to face serious discouragement and adversity, in particular the serious ill health to which Martin has sadly been subject in recent years, her enthusiasm for the study of the Gināns has never been dimmed.

It is as a wonderful collaborator, though, that I chiefly think of Zawahir, especially those happy years in which we were working together on the anthology first published in 1992 as *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans.* Although we live fairly near each other in north London, we did a lot of our work by post, and I remember how wonderfully fast Zawahir was in respondng to suggestions and comments, which is always so exciting when one is at the start of a new project or in the thick of its successful implementation. But I must also here admit that although it was conceived in excitement, *Ismaili Hymns* was destined to have a very long

period of gestation before it was finally put into publishable form, thanks to the delays caused by my own variableness which must sometimes have been very trying to Zawahir, though she was far too nice to say so either very loudly or very often.

One benefit of the delay was that it prolonged the succession of those winter evenings in Martin and Zawahir's wonderfully embracing and hospitable attic flat in Hampstead, whose living room must, over the years, have been the scene of more Ginānic interchanges than any other home in London. All this time I was learning an enormous amount, as so many others have done, from Zawahir's persistent sharing of her vast knowledge of the Gināns. More than with most of the various books on which I have collaborated with others, my task in the case of *Ismaili Hymns* was, I have sometimes thought, basically rather like that of a stacker of supermarket shelves, simply systematizing the material so copiously stocked and so generously provided by my collaborator. It was a huge privilege to work with her and a huge regret that other responsibilities have hitherto prevented us from doing more together. It was a great pleasure to have helped get *Ismaili Hymns* out, and by doing so to have unlocked and made more widely available to others something of Zawahir's outstanding knowledge of the field.

She herself often expresses her anxiety that there is so much more to be done in the investigation of the Gināns, and that she has so little time in which to do it. The variety and scope of the studies contained in this volume are themselves a testimony to the remarkable growth of the field in recent years. Since this growth owes so much to Zawahir Moir's ability to succour others, to her encouragement of their efforts, and a consistent willingness to share knowledge without looking for personal returns or even due acknowledgement, it is a most fitting tribute that the book is dedicated to this very special scholar.

CHRISTOPHER SHACKLE

A Bio-bibliography of Zawahir Moir

*Wafi A. Momin**

A systematic and critical study of Ismailism has always been dependent on a small group of scholars who have utilized original Ismaili sources discovered since the 1930s. This is also true for a crucial phase in Ismaili history, designated as 'Satpanth Ismailism', spread over a long period of some seven centuries beginning with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Among the scholars who have contributed to our understanding of this significant period in Ismaili history, Zawahir Moir holds a distinguished place.

Born in Karachi in 1933, the young Zawahir Noorally, as she was known before marriage, grew up in a Khoja Ismaili family which sparked in her the love for the Ginān from an early age—a passion that never ceased to inspire her continuous research and study of Satpanth Ismailism. After completing her early education, she pursued a career in Islamic Studies and received her first Master's degree in Islamic history from Karachi University in 1958. By that time she had also acquired a sound knowledge of the Gujarati and Sindhi languages as well as of Khojkī—a script in which the bulk of the Satpanth Ismaili literature is preserved. She was later awarded a scholarship by H. H. Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, the present Imām of the Ismaili Muslims, to study in London, and thus became the first Ismaili from Pakistan to undertake studies on Islam abroad under such an award. For four years (1960–4), Zawahir spent her time in London pursuing a second M.A. at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Working mainly under the supervision of Peter Hardy and Malcolm Yapp, she finished her research on the modern period in Ismaili history focusing closely on the diplomatic, legal and religious issues that arose during

* I am grateful to Zawahir and Martin Moir for their cooperation in the preparation of this paper.

the imamate of the Aga Khan I, Hasan Ali Shah (d. 1881). After completing her studies, she returned to Pakistan and joined the Ismailia Association (now the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board) as its research associate for about fifteen years. In 1979 she left Pakistan and permanently settled in London, where a year later she married Martin Moir, then archivist and deputy director of the India Office Records who had earlier assisted her in finding and utilizing the rare material from the collection of the India Office during her studies in London. In 1982, Zawahir assumed the last of her academic positions, and joined the academic faculty of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London for three years.

Within the field of Ismaili studies, Zawahir's interests were much kindled by the foremost modern authority on Ismailism, Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), with whom she had been in constant correspondence since 1958. Later, she became a close friend of Ivanow after she met him during a visit to Iran in 1966. During her tenure in Pakistan, the Ismailia Association acquired a massive collection of Ismaili manuscripts, mostly in Khojkī, from the Ismaili communities in Punjab and Sind. This provided an ideal opportunity for the young scholar to study the Ginān literature in its most original form. In 1971, she prepared a catalogue of the entire collection which represented the largest known corpus of Satpanth Ismaili literature. This collection was subsequently transferred to the library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies and enriched by further acquisitions of such manuscripts from the Ismaili communities in South Asia and East Africa. Zawahir once again undertook the painstaking task of cataloguing the entire collection more systematically. Although the catalogues are still unpublished, they remain invaluable sources for scholars since no published catalogues of the collection are as yet available.

Zawahir holds various distinctions and recognitions and has been invited to a number of international conferences and symposiums. In the mid-sixties, she was invited by the Iranian Government to participate in an educational conference at Ramsar on the Caspian coast. She has also served on the administrative bodies of different Ismaili institutions in Pakistan and has regularly participated in the meetings of the Ismailia Associations. In April 1975, she participated in an international conference in Paris which brought together the worldwide Ismaili leaders and scholars under the supervision of the Aga Khan IV. The conference later bore fruit in the establishment of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in 1977. Since the early 1990s, Zawahir has collaborated closely with many scholars working in the field of South Asian literatures and cultures, most notably, Professor Christopher Shackle of SOAS (with whom she has published *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginān*s in 1992), and Françoise Mallison of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) in Paris. It was at the EPHE that she

presented a number of papers on various aspects of Satpanth Ismailism which also marked the beginning of a series of short published articles devoted primarily to the Ginān literature and Satpanth Ismaili history.

As a specialist of Indian Ismailism, Zawahir possesses a rare understanding not only of the Ginān literature but also of the various sources relating to the history of Satpanth Ismailism. In one of her short studies on 'Historical and Religious Debates'(see Select Bibliography below), she has meticulously analysed the debates and discussions pertaining to the religion and identity of the Indian Ismailis that were current during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These communal debates have found expression in a number of books, articles and pamphlets which remain our major source for Ismaili history in South Asia. In 1999, Zawahir undertook a comprehensive survey with Dominique-Sila Khan (currently associated with the Institute of Rajasthan Studies in Jaipur) of the Imāmshahi sect in Gujarat, an offshoot of the mainstream Nizari Ismailism in India during the sixteenth century. This survey brought to light several new findings especially with regard to its internal divisions since the pioneer work on the sect by W. Ivanow.[1] At present she is also editing with Professor Shackle a major Ginān of the Imāmshahis entitled *Satvaraṇī Vaḍī* attributed to Nur Muhammad Shah (d. 1533), the alleged founder of the sect. For some years Zawahir has also retained her interest in the old district archives of British India and has collaborated with her husband Martin, on many occasions during his fieldtrips to South Asia. Her interest resulted in a jointly edited work on John Stuart Mill and India.

It is certainly not possible in this limited space to record all the scholarly contributions of Zawahir Moir, from whom I have sought continuous inspiration in my own studies of South Asian Ismailism. However, suffice it to say that she stands out with that small group of scholars who have provided new horizons to our understanding of Satpanth Ismaili tradition, and I wish her continued productivity in her chosen fields of research.

Note

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Preface

The Ginān tradition of the Ismaili Muslims, who are also known as the Satpanthi or Khoja Ismailis in India and Pakistan, is a rich and remarkable poetic heritage that has remained unfamiliar to scholars of Bhakti, Sant and Indo-Muslim literature. Shia Ismailism persisted in its brilliant intellectual tradition as well as its missionary efforts long after its political and cultural ascendancy during the Fatimid empire in Egypt (909-1130 CE), and in spite of several internal schisms. In particular, the Nizari branch of Ismailism founded in 1094 CE in Alamut by the Ismaili dāʿī, Hasan-e Sabbah, who affirmed Nizar—the elder son of Imām al-Mustansir—as the Imām's rightful successor, inaugurated a new phase of the spread and renewal of Ismailism. The entry of Ismaili ideas into the Indian subcontinent in the form of Satpanth was spurred under the leadership of the Nizari Ismaili branch that, despite its changing fortunes, never ceased its efforts until the nineteenth century to teach and recruit followers to its interpretation of Shia Islam.

The Ginān tradition is recognized by the Satpanth Ismailis as their devotional, sacred texts, at one time the equivalent in guidance and authority for them, as indicated in their songs, to the Qur'ān and the Vedas. It encompasses a major corpus of hymns composed in the vernacular languages of India, including Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kacchi, and Siraiki. The word Ginān (*ginān*a) itself is derived from the Sanskrit *jñāna* and conveys the meaning of sacred, gnostic knowledge. For a long time, these sacred hymns were known only to the initiates of the Satpanth Khoja community. Some members called Guptis maintained their Hindu affiliations but inwardly observed Satpanth teachings and thus kept their Ismaili identity hidden (*gupta*). Gināns are sung just like the devotional Bhakti songs of the Sants of northern India, and their poetry and intensity render them one of the great mystical poetic literatures of the Indian subcontinent. Their form, style and content resembles that of medieval and pre-modern Bhakti poetry;

conversely, their unique characteristics find sympathy among several contemporary Hindu communities in Gujarat and Rajasthan. From this, one might infer a much wider affiliation to Satpanth Ismailism in medieval times than is indicated by the boundaries of the present Khoja community.

At first transmitted orally, the Gināns are believed to have been written down from the sixteenth century onwards in a corpus gathered by Pīr Dādu who died in 1593 CE, but the earliest extant manuscript dates from 1736 CE. The Ginān manuscript tradition uses a specially designed secret alphabet called Khojkī (*khojakī*) that was derived from a shorthand script in use by Lohāṇā merchants in Sindh and Kutch.

The Gināns left the restricted circles of the Khoja Ismaili community when, at the end of the nineteenth century, a major event interrupted the reticent ways of the Satpanthis, namely, the arrival of their Imām Hasan Ali Shah, the first Aga Khan, from Persia in 1846 CE to Bombay where he settled. Efforts to secure the recognition of the Aga Khan I by his followers, and to unite his scattered Indian community under English colonial power, made it necessary to collect, research and bring to the notice of the public judicial authorities relevant texts of the Gināns that established the Imām's authority This is when the Gināns' importance as literary testimony of a deep-rooted religious community began to be officially acknowledged. Academic interest in the Ginān tradition was stimulated in the middle of the twentieth century by the important and prolific writings of the Russian scholar Wladimir Ivanov on different branches of the Ismailis. Gradually, during the last five decades—but not as sufficiently as it deserves to be—the special nature of Satpanth literature and its place in the Indian subcontinent has emerged as a fascinating example of an Islamic religious movement expressing itself within a local Indian religious culture to guide seekers into the heart of divine revelation.

Given the unique nature of the Gināns, the increasing interest in them both among academic specialists and community members, and the research work that remains to be done on this relatively unexplored spiritual heritage, it seemed appropriate to organize a conference on Gināns. Thanks to the invitation extended by Mr A. Rahmatoullah, President of the Société d'Etudes Ismaéliennes (Paris, France), who offered participants generous hospitality at Fréjus on the Riviera, a Ginān Symposium was held on 6 and 7 April 2002 in France. It was co-sponsored by the research team 'Inde médiévale et moderne: textes et contextes' of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris) and by North Gujarat University (Patan, India). The small gathering that met on that memorable occasion was excited to discover from each other the continued vitality of the Gināns, the passionate demand within the community for more research on this tradition, and the keen historical and textual interests of sympathetic, open-minded academic scholars. The

meeting sealed the links of sympathy between the participating members of the Ismaili community and those from academic institutions, links which were facilitated by academics themselves of Ismaili origin, providing further proof of the captivating power of the Gināns.

Mr A. Rahmatoullah opened the conference with a letter from the late Professor Annemarie Schimmel who sent along her good wishes for our enterprise, and her regrets for being absent as she was occupied with festivities in Germany on the occasion of her eightieth birthday. Her letter also informed us of the sad and premature demise of her student of Ginān literature, Gulshan Khaki, who did her thesis on the *Dasa Avatāra* at Harvard under Prof. Schimmel's supervision. The symposium consisted of four parts. The following papers were read in the first part dealing with methods and context: 'The Advent of the Ginān Era' by Abualy Aziz from Vancouver (read in absentia), 'Approaches to the Study of Gināns' by Tazim R. Kassam, and 'A Database on Gināns and Related Materials' by Pyarali Jiwa. Papers in the second part focused on textual matters: 'The Popular Myth of the Submission of the Great Cobra, the Demon Kāliya, as Treated in the *Dasa Avatāra* and Other Gināns' by Françoise Mallison, and 'Gināns Not Attributed to Pirs' by Balvant Jani. Papers in the third part dealt with Gināns in history: 'The Entanglement of the Gināns in Khoja Governance' by Amrita Shodhan and 'Gināns, Sufism and Vedanta as Perceived by Sindhi Khojas in the Twentieth Century' by Michel Boivin. The fourth part considered musical aspects of the Gināns. Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Rupande Shah read a paper titled '"Gināns with Standardized Tunes Selected by Dr G. Hyder Alidina": Comments from the Point of View of Devotional and Art Music'. This was followed by the performance of Gināns by Laxami Hamarsy. The conference ended with a tour, organized by Mr Rahmatoullah, to landmarks of Ismaili history on the Riviera, such as the Allied Forces Landing Site where Prince Ali Khan was present in August 1944, and the former residence 'Yakimour' of His Highness Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan III in Cannes (see plate no. 2: At Le Cannet, in front of the 'Yakimour' Residence of His Highness Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan III).

Given the success of the Ginān Symposium, the editors decided it was important to publish the proceedings in order to advance and reinvigorate the field of Ginānic Studies. The volume would also solicit and include contributions from scholars who had been invited to the symposium but who were unable to attend and thus share in its fruitful exchanges. Among those whose absence was most deeply felt was Ms Zawahir Moir who was held back in London for family reasons. Many scholars owed her a debt of gratitude for sharing with them the wealth of her accumulated knowledge about Gināns, Khojkī manuscripts and the history of the Ismaili Pīrs. As Zawahir was nearing her seventieth birthday, it was felt that this occasion

provided an ideal opportunity to present to her this felicitation volume on Gināns. Hence, in addition to participants at the symposium and established scholars, new voices who have recently embarked upon research on the Gināns and who come from a diversity of perspective have also offered their original contributions to this volume. In the spirit of the first Ginān Symposium held in Fréjus, the contributions include both emic and etic views of Gināns. Insiders to the tradition with their own subjective and personal understandings of the Gināns as well as academic scholars (Ismailis and non-Ismailis) who are sympathetic to this wonderful tradition but who apply research and scholarly methods to it are represented in this volume. It is important to underscore, however, that individual authors, not the editors, are responsible for their interpretations.

A quick review of the papers included gives an idea of how the field of Ginānic Studies may be envisaged. As befits this felicitation volume, the preliminary part provides information about Ms Zawahir Moir's life and writings. Christopher Shackle, with whom she published the masterly work, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Gināns* pays tribute in his foreword to Zawahir's deep knowledge of this tradition. This is followed by a brief bio-bibliography by Wafi A Momin. The introductory essay by Tazim R. Kassam, 'Reframing Ginānic Studies: Thoughts on Multiple Positions and Heuristic Tropes' tackles methodological problems in the field of Ginānic Studies, and especially the historiographic trope of conversion; she also outlines a critical multi-dimensional perspective that opens up fresh ways to further Ginānic studies of which this volume is a modest attempt. Pyarali Jiwa's article, 'Creating a Database of Gināns and Related Materials' is a work in progress that describes his own efforts to develop an electronic database of his personal collection of Ginānic materials that would be of use as a research tool to scholars and lovers of Gināns alike: a multimedia CD-ROM that include Gujarati texts of the Gināns, various editions, English translations, and digital recordings.

As is so often the case with pre-modern vernacular literatures of India that originate as oral traditions and are transmitted orally, the problems raised by textual studies of Gināns such as how to establish the earliest version of a given Ginān or how to firmly establish its author and provenance are among the most difficult ones to solve. Ali S. Asani's 'A Brief Note on the *Būjh Nirañjan*' and Iqbal Surani's '*Kalām-i Maulā*: Notes on an Indian Ismaili Text' deal with such problems. It is worth noting especially that both examples, the *Būjh Nirañjan* and the *Kalām-i Maulā*, illustrate the reuse of Sufic elements in the Ginān tradition. In his article, Michel Boivin stresses the links between Sufism in Sindh and the Khoja Ismaili tradition at the beginning of the last century. Traditional Satpanth hagiography traces these links back as early as the thirteenth century when Ismaili Pīrs such as

Pīr Shams competed with their Sufi rivals. Indeed, the links between Sufism and Ismailism, both in terms of harmony and tension, are complex and merit detailed study, as noted by Zawahir Moir in her review of Asani's *Ecstacy and Enlightenment*.

Linked to textual problems are those concerning the translation and adaptation of Gināns. As an example of adaptation and reuse, Dominique-Sila Khan's article, 'Rewriting the Gināns: Revolution and Resistance among the Imāmshahi', shows how the Gināns became the instrument of Hindu fundamentalist religious politics among some of the Imāmshahis, a branch that split off from the Satpanth Ismailis in Gujarat, through the selective manipulation of Ginānic vocabulary. Conversely, similar manipulation of Ginānic vocabulary was also evident in official Khoja Ismaili publications of Ginān texts in Gujarati script which replaced Hindu terms with Islamic terms to establish firmly the community's Muslim identity.

Several contributions provide textual analysis of individual Gināns from a comparativist point of view. Urmila B. Jani's 'A Thematic Study of a Satpanthi Ginān and a Mahapanthi Bhajan' attempts to show that the text of the Mahapanthis (one of the Tantric sects of the Sant movement of Saurashtra) depends on a Ginān of the Satpanthis by juxtaposing the two texts of similar theme and inspiration but having different emphasis. Mohan Devraj's 'Some Gināns Common to Bārmatī Panthī and Satpanthī Traditions' compares the songs belonging to his own tradition, the Maheshwaris or Bar Matī Panthīs of Sindh and Kutch, with the texts of Gināns collected during the nineteenth century by Sacedina Nanjiani, and concludes that it is impossible to differentiate between the exact identities of the two movements in the past. The acceptance of Ginān texts among contemporary Hindu communities that are more or less aware of the similarity of their own lyrical religious tradition with that of the Gināns is a phenomena that is only recently coming to light, and this is a testimony to the fluidity and appeal of the Ginān tradition as such. Two more articles, 'The Myth of *Nāgadamana* in the *Dasa-avatāras* and Other Gināns' by Françoise Mallison, and 'Śrībuddha's Gracious Rescue of the Pāṇḍavas in *Buddhāvatār*' by Teena Purohit analyse how Hindu myths have been adapted to function within the Ginānic Satpanthi context.

As often happens, the exploration of marginal traditions may deepen or widen the knowledge of a movement that has long remained known only to its own initiates for reasons of geographic isolation and distance or as a result of belonging to a dissident group despite being right in the heart of Gujarat (as discussed by Dominique Sila-Khan). Notably, Balvant Jani's contribution, 'Gināns Attributed to Unknown Composers' brings to our attention a collection of songs also called Gināns that were composed at a comparatively recent date by members of the Saurashtrian community, but

that have not been incorporated into the official Ismaili Khoja Ginān corpus. The former Gināns are attributed not to the Ismaili Pīrs but to faithful and devoted followers, who may have been those in charge of the Jamāt Khānas (*mukhī* and *kāmaḍīā*) who often held a hereditary office. The texts of these non-attributed Gināns remain loyal to a central theme, namely, the advent of Naklaṅki avatār (the tenth avatār of Vishnu, Kalki) in the larger Ginānic corpus, although more recent official Ginān books do not favour Gināns that emphasize this theme.

A striking feature of the Ginān tradition is that, in the absence of other sources, scholars must often rely on its internal testimony to recover the history of the formation and spread of Satpanth Ismailism in the Indian subcontinent. This is a difficult challenge for historical research especially since the transmission of the oral and textual tradition, even in extant manuscript form, is uncertain and chaotic. Ironically, however, perhaps this very fluidity has played an important role in the formation of religious identities of those communities that affiliated themselves with Gināns in the past as argued in Samira Sheikh's article, 'Religious Traditions and Early Ismāʿīlī History in Western India: Some Historical Perspectives on Satpanthi Literature and the Gināns'. Shedding light on the wider reach and influence of Satpanth Ismaili ideas, her work complements and strengthens the anthropological case made by Dominique-Sila Khan.

Whereas one may speculate that in the pre-modern period, the transmission of the Gināns remained relatively stable, the modern era inaugurated great changes to the corpus, many of which were deliberate and irreversible (such as the wholesale burning of ancient Ginān manuscripts). The papers of Amrita Shodhan, 'The Entanglement of the Gināns in the Khoja Governance' and Michel Boivin, 'Gināns and the Management of the Religious Heritage of the Ismaili Khojas in Sindh', detail the political and social contexts that had far-reaching impact on the textual transmission of the Gināns. During the last two centuries under colonial rule and after independence, significant shifts took place in the self-perception of Khoja Ismaili identity under the guidance of the Aga Khans. As pointed out by Zawahir Moir, the importance of this period for any further study of the Gināns cannot be over-estimated, and the literature of this era remains to be excavated and mined to appreciate the Gināns in their current printed versions.

In addition to textual and historical analysis, the Ginān tradition is ripe for interpretation from a theological, philosophical and mystical perspective. Nagib Tajdin's article, 'The concept of "GOD beyond God" in the *Khaṭ Niriñjan* of Pīr Sadardin: A Personal Exegesis', offers a philosophical interpretation of a Ginān attributed to Pīr Sadruddin by drawing on

foundational concepts in the antecedent Perso-Arabic Ismaili tradition. In 'Ta'wīl and Ginānic Literature: Knowledge Discourse and Spiritual Experience', Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali elaborate on the esoteric and initiatory aspect of the Perso-Arabic tradition, in particular, the transformative power of the Pīr-murīd relationship, and how this paradigm is harmoniously recreated in the Indian context through the Gināns. The fortuitous culmination of this volume with this essay is a tribute to the timeless spiritual sensibility and depth of the Ginān tradition.

During the symposium of April 2002, the musical aspect of the Gināns was evoked by the presence of several Ginān reciters. Without listening to the recitation of Gināns, it is difficult to appreciate the lyrical quality of the texts. To give readers a small taste of their simple melodies and moving quality, thanks to the suggestion of Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, a CD recording of Gināns produced by Tazim R. Kassam accompanies this book.

As noted earlier, Gināns were first written down in Khojkī script. The Gujarati script replaced the Khojkī script in the twentieth century, and was used for the official canonical versions produced by the compiler Mukhi Lalji Devraj, and printed by the Khoja Sindhi Press in Bombay. Gujarati script is still in use among Khoja Ismaili communities in South Asia, however, editions of more commonly recited Gināns also exist in Arabo-Persian and Roman transliteration. As specialists in Khojkī have shown, transliteration from the Khojkī script is itself an inexact exercise. Given the variety of conventions in use, this volume does not impose a single transliteration system upon its authors, but leaves each one free to follow his or her own choice but to do so consistently.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr A. Rahmatoullah for generously hosting the 2002 Ginān Symposium and to Professor Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye for urging along this publication in many ways. Imperfections remain ours.

On the occasion of this second edition of *Ginans: Texts and Contexts*, we would like to announce the formation of the *Association for the Study of Ginans* in London on June 2007 by several contributors to this publication. The Association's aim is to promote scholarly research on Ginans by organizing international symposia and publishing their proceedings, as well as soliciting scholarly monographs and research on Satpanth Ismailism and the Ginans. The Association owes a special debt to several Ismaili benefactors who played an important role in circulating the first edition of this volume amongst lovers of Ginans in the Ismaili community.

London — Tazim R. Kassam
Les Montèzes — Françoise Mallison

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At Le Cannet in front of 'Yakimour'

Reframing Ginānic Studies: Thoughts on Multiple Positions and Heuristic Tropes*

Tazim R. Kassam

Introduction

In my remarks today, I would like to tackle one or two key issues in Ginānic Studies. The idea is not to undertake an exhaustive review of the literature but to revisit some fundamental questions, meta-questions, if you like, which have to do with methods of inquiry, unquestioned assumptions and critical problems, as well as questions having to do with the politics of representation both in academic scholarship and a religious community.

As a literary heritage, Gināns are a repository and reflection of over eight centuries of Shī'a Ismaili Muslim activity and creativity in the Indian subcontinent. Accordingly, they constitute a remarkable historical tradition and deserve careful attention. In my book, published over a decade ago, I argued that Gināns are a neglected tradition in Islamic and Ismaili Studies.[1] While some additional materials have been published since then, the strides made in new research on Ginānic materials confirm this still to be the case.[2] I think it is important to put forward some questions for the benefit of future reflection by other scholars. Has this tradition of inspired poetry, mythic narrative, community memory, and melodic performance been sufficiently studied? Why not? What are the social and political dimensions of working on such so-called 'syncretic' and 'vernacular' Muslim literatures? What has

* This paper is a revision of talks given at the first two International Conferences on Gināns held in Frejus, France, (2002) and Rajkot, India (2004) both of which brought together academic scholars and community experts with professional and personal interests in the Gināns.

been the reception of Ginān scholarship both within and outside the Ismaili community? Is there an irreconcilable tension between the critical treatment of religious sources by scholars, and the devotional attachment to it by adherents of the tradition?

We also need to think critically about the various methodologies and concepts that have been applied to the study of Gināns. What techniques and tropes have been used to study the Gināns to date? Have they led to critical appreciation or to conceptual confusion? Are there other, perhaps more fruitful ways of understanding this tradition? In what disciplinary contexts have Gināns been studied? How have various intellectual and political currents and tools of interpretation shaped and/or circumscribed the study of Gināns? What relations of power underlie the differential preference ascribed to existing scholarly works on Gināns? For instance, how has institutional power, gender bias, and the privilege of scholarly voice subordinated and/or marginalized individual expression, scholarship by women, and communal sentiments? How has this tradition been classified? Is it literature? Myth? Folklore? Oral tradition? Devotional song? Sacred scripture? Didactic sermon? Does it fit under Islamic, Indo-Muslim, Indic, Satpanth Ismaili, Bhakti or Gujarati literature? The mere category into which Gināns are put determines what the researcher will assume, what questions will be asked, and what method of study will be engaged.

There are two critical issues that I want to elaborate upon in this paper. The first pertains to the ethics of scholarship and critical engagement with a community's sacred traditions. The second pertains to the historiography of Ginān interpretation, specifically, the rhetorical narrative or heuristic trope of 'conversion'. It might be helpful to frame the critical issues that I want to address here in the context of Paul Ricoeur's thinking about texts.[3] Ricoeur was concerned with the spectrum of human experience, and used the term 'text' very broadly to encompass a wide variety of cultural productions including oral, written, visual, musical, and performative. His writings dealt with semiotics, language, cognition, psychoanalysis, religious myths and symbols, aesthetics, ethics and theories of literature and law, and he paid particular attention to the multiple location of viewpoints (positionality), and hence, the inescapable multiplicity of interpretation (hermeneutics).

In the context of understanding texts, Ricoeur offers a particularly helpful hermeneutic scheme. First, there is the *world that faces the text*, namely, the singer, listener and/or reader's world which obviously varies through historical time and place, and encompasses the interests, experiences, knowledge and situation of those who interact with the text. Second, there is the *world behind the text*, namely, the world in which the text was produced or out of which it emerged, in this case, the social, historical, cultural and political environment in which the Ismaili Muslim Pīrs worked, and the

principles and ethos from which the Gināns originated. Third, there is the *world in the text*, that is, the world that is created by the text itself during its ritual enactment, the narrative cosmos and poetic/melodic experience, as it were, that is evoked by the text and tied to communal memory, devotional feelings, and individual imagination. These worlds are not listed in any order of priority. Each world is significant, and possesses different kinds of relevance and meaning. The *world facing the text* has to learn to see the *world behind the text* and the *world in the text*. But to do so, it must first inspect the lens through which it sees. This is a precondition for all critical inquiry.

My presentation will be confined to the *world facing the text*. It has two parts. The first analyses the theoretical issues behind the deliberate choice to bring together academic scholars and Ismaili participants to look at, that is, *to face or turn toward, to attend to* the Ginān tradition. The second part analyses the historiographical framework or heuristic trope, namely, the narrative of 'conversion' that scholars (and, consequently, some participants within the Indian Ismaili tradition) have used to approach Gināns. The purpose of both parts is *to hold up a mirror* to the world facing the text, a world that has to be deconstructed to make it's outlook transparent.

Part A: Positionality: Multiple Positions, Multiple Views

As I mentioned earlier, an intentional and distinctive aspect of the *International Conference on Gināns* was to involve both academic scholars and Ismailis with knowledge of Gināns who shared the common goal of promoting Ginānic studies. This is an interesting and unusual combination because generally speaking, academics only talk to each other, and community members keep their appreciation for their religious tradition amongst themselves. In part, this has to do with the preservation of hierarchies of power in each sphere: subject specialists in academe and prophets and priests in religion. What I want to develop as an opening theme then is *the question of the multiple perspectives* of all those facing the text. For some time now, in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies, there has been considerable discussion about the relationship between academics and the religious groups being studied. The concept of *emic* and *etic*, or insider and outsider perspective, while somewhat dated, has been used (and subsequently problematized) in the social sciences and anthropology to describe these different approaches. Originally derived from linguistic terms (phonemic and phonetic), emic and etic refer to different descriptions of human behaviour. Emic descriptions of behaviour are based on accounts of native informants and tend to be more meaningful and familiar to the insider; etic descriptions arise from observation by onlookers and are

more recognizable to the outsider viewing the behavior. Thus, one might argue that because *Satpanth* is a term found within the Ginān tradition to describe itself, using the term *Satpanth* to describe the Ismaili tradition in South Asia would be emic, that is, natural to the insider perspective, whereas using the terms Post-Alamut, Post-Fatimid or Indian Nizārī would be etic, a foreign viewpoint located outside it. The coming together of academics and practitioners at this conference is thus an experiment to see if etic and emic may be transcended through a convergence of interests, and to examine, rather than dismiss or preempt, the friction and/or creativity that may result from such an engagement of different perspectives.

As already noted, insiders experience their traditions differently from outsiders. This seems like a self-evident truth. Yet, neither group understands very well how they differ. It is common to use the terms 'Self' and 'Other' to make a distinction between the two. As Judith Okely argues in reference to the position of anthropologists versus their subjects, this 'dogmatic segregation has the *contrary* consequence of constituting us (Self) as qualitatively *different* from the Other, depicting this qualitative difference in terms of *our* complexity and uniqueness, and *their* simplicity and generalisability.'[4] This applies equally to the self-concept of academic scholars of religions towards their Other, namely, the religious texts, rituals, and groups that they study. The tight link between knowledge and power that Michel Foucault so carefully examined and articulated in his works prompts the question, 'Who defines or has the right to define the meaning of a tradition or text or a group's identity?' Scholars of the positivist school, and enlightenment scholars who asserted a universal scientific-objectivist approach, often viewed the way that insiders understood their traditions as being unavoidably local, subjective and pious, and therefore, unreliable. They argued that the 'truth' about a tradition, its history and significance, could only be known 'objectively' (and exactly) from the outside by observers who had no vested interest in the particular tradition at hand. So, for instance, the reasoning was that Muslims, as insiders, would not be able to appreciate the Qur'ān as it exists today as a *historical* document conditioned by language, events and cultural context, because the vast majority of Muslims believe the Qur'ān to be God's literal and eternal word, and therefore, as being above human influence and historical change. Since academic scholars are not committed to such theological doctrines, the objectivists argue that they are thus able to look at the processes that resulted in the formation of the Qur'ān as the 'timeless' sacred book of Muslims in a more critical, objective and dispassionate manner. This claim has long been contested by deconstruction and post-modern philosophy, but many fields of scholarship cling to positivist models of knowledge. The main point here, however, is simply to illustrate the fact that there is often a gap,

a real and uncomfortable difference or rupture, between how academics, scholars, and outside observers view a tradition, and how that same tradition is received, used, and understood by practitioners and devotees themselves.

At the same time, although we must acknowledge that there is no such thing as utterly disinterested scholarship or absolute, omniscient knowledge, and that every scholar sees through some point of view, carries certain often unconscious assumptions, and applies a particular disciplinary framework of understanding to the tradition, nevertheless, the techniques of study and investigation that trained scholars use are rigorous, carefully tested and continuously revised. They are not merely capricious and speculative, but generally grounded in research practices and intellectual standards of a discipline. Another way to put this issue is to ask the question, 'How does the work of scholars depend upon yet also reveal, reconstruct, and represent, and thus also impact, the religious group whose history and traditions are being studied?' This is both a practical and an ethical question. It is a practical question because much of the data for the scholar's study and analysis must come from the religious group itself, in this case for example, the manuscripts and printed texts of the Gināns, descriptions about their ritual uses in and outside the *jamāt khāna*, and audio recordings of their melodic performance. The scope and depth of the scholar's inquiry thus depends upon a community's cooperation and largess or, conversely, its resistance to sharing knowledge of and access to its traditions. It is important to examine the reasons in either case, that is, 'what factors and forces condition a community's openness or, conversely, secrecy about its religious customs and materials?'

The ethical dimension pertains to the fact that there is no such thing as disinterested study or engagement with a tradition. All inquiry, transmission and reproduction of knowledge is historically situated.[5] This pertains equally to academic scholars and religious practitioners alike, both of whom have a certain stake or self-serving interest, whether conscious or not, in their study and use of Gināns. In addition, their respective beliefs and interpretations of the Ginān tradition have consequences on its transmission, reception, and practice that must also be examined. Thus, there needs to be a lively debate amongst Ginān scholars, both insiders and outsiders, as to how to construe traditions that belong to a community, and an effort to balance the rights and obligations of interested actors on either side.[6] Practicing members of a community may feel marginalized and/or find objectionable the ways in which academic scholars, including scholars from their own community, have handled their religious texts and rituals, and they may argue that their religious heritage belongs solely to them to interpret. At the same time, they may have internal differences of interpretation to contend with. This plurality of perspectives is inevitable, and thus, one has to try to find methods

and approaches that are aware of the multiple *normative* (theological, hagiographic, devotional, etc.) as well as the multiple *non-normative* (historical, philological, analytical, etc.) views that exist not necessarily to attempt a synthesis, but at least to work towards mutual comprehension and honest exchange. This process entails its risks since relations of power are critical to this process; the inclusion of stakeholders—those who own the traditions from the point of view of their religious lives—in academic investigations marks a rebalancing of the voices of authority that claim to represent the Gināns.[7]

So the purpose of this effort is to see how these sometimes divergent and conflicting views can be brought into fertile tension, one that leads to a richer understanding of this religious tradition. Armin Geertz promotes an 'ethnohermeneutic' approach that 'pays attention to theories and models proposed by both scholars and native thinkers, while at the same time applying control measures against loyalist misperceptions and errors of hasty judgment on both sides of the issue. Ethnohermeneutics combines indigenous hermeneutics with our own.'[8] Such an effort offers advantages to both outsiders and insiders, as well as those in-between, namely, participant-observers such as myself and other Ismaili academic scholars of Gināns. Academics (as outsiders) can strive at least not to err on the side of what Charles Taylor describes as 'misrecognition', namely, the representation of a people or their history in such an alien or distorted way that they can barely *recognize* themselves in it. Taylor's thesis is 'that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.'[9]

Thus, it is important for academics to grasp the way that participants perceive themselves and their cultures, what might be called their self-understanding, which in itself may be multiple and complex. Then, only with this done, they may go on to analyse and theorize about a culture. Insiders, on the other hand, may profit from developing a *historical* and *analytical* understanding of themselves and their past, so as to appreciate how their traditions have evolved in place and time, and to accept the diversity of diachronic and synchronic interpretations of those traditions that exist within their community. A critical perspective shows that even the self-perception of a given religious community varies according to its needs, and its social and historical circumstances in different periods. The ability to recognize and understand how each generation has reappropriated an inherited tradition requires, at some level, that practitioners assume the

position of observer in relation to themselves. Both outsiders and insiders, therefore, benefit from occasionally being participant-observers to a tradition, and adopting a phenomenological stance by standing in and looking from another position or vantage point, in order to function as the tradition's interlocutors.

These preliminary methodological remarks arise from the need to develop an intellectual framework for accommodating plural perspectives, and for making room for the imperatives of scholarship on the one hand, and the voices of tradition on the other. The ancient Jain philosophy of *anekāntavāda* is relevant here. The concept itself, if I may translate it into my own words, is something like a theory of perspectival truths. That is to say, any form of human knowledge of reality is always imbedded in and representative of a particular perspective or viewpoint that is conditioned by its situation. Therefore, it is questionable for any given position to claim to have absolute truth; namely, to be omniscient. As such, human beings can only have access to partial truths. This concept is compelling for both its restraint and its methodological insight, and also provides sound justification for inter-disciplinarity. The principle of *anekantavada* (multiple truths) makes it clear that both scholars and believers must understand the limitations of their 'realizations' by becoming familiar with the forces that operate upon them, and the premises and interests from which they undertake their study and observation, thereby becoming transparent to how they *face the text*.

Part B: Heuristic Tropes: Conversion Narrative as *Mis*recognition

Let me turn now to the second issue in this critical reflection upon *the world that faces the text*. From time to time, it is important for scholars (and participants) to revisit the framework of analysis that they have used to understand a subject. This is what I would like to do here with the Gināns. I simply want to ask, have the discursive practices and discourses that we have been using to understand this tradition been effective or obstructive? Have they served us well? Have they been fair to and illuminated the tradition or have they distorted it and generated misconceptions both in scholarly and pietistic approaches to the Gināns?

It is important to bear in mind that nowadays followers often turn to academic studies of their own religious traditions to understand themselves. This is a mixed blessing because both the insights and defects of academic representations find their way into the communities themselves. As Ruth Behar notes, in his book *Works and Lives*,[10] Clifford Geertz grapples with how the anthropologist's 'observations of other people and places (are transfigured) into such persuasive rhetoric that afterward those people and

places are unimaginable except through the texts of their authors'.[11] At times, the voices of academic scholarship usurp or become more authoritative then those of the religious specialists within a tradition, specialists who themselves, given their role in the faithful transmission and reproduction of their traditions, are viewed as part of the "data" of academic study. It is, therefore, critically important to examine the discursive practices and conceptual frames that have been used to understand the Ginān̄s and Satpanth Ismailism because of their impact, positive and negative, on the community's self-understanding. In the case of Ginān̄s, these conceptual frameworks or tropes (that is, the underlying discourses that govern how historians have written about history or literary critics have written about literature, etc.) include: (a) conversion and islamization; (b) syncretism and indigenization; (c) sacred texts and scripture, and (d) authorship and authenticity. Given limits of time and space, I will confine my critical analysis to the first trope only.

The principal interpretive framework that observers *facing the text* have brought to the understanding of Ginān̄s and Satpanth Ismailism is the trope or historiographical discourse of 'conversion' and 'islamization', that is, the *discursive practice* of writing Satpanth history through the lens of 'conversion'. Although I myself have used this narrative framework to understand the Satpanth period, I am no longer satisfied with it for reasons I will elaborate on. Not only has this trope created more confusion and misrecognition than clarity and elucidation; but arguably, it has caused real damage to the appreciation and preservation of Ginān̄s. The confusion that this trope is responsible for has resulted in mishandling of the Ginān tradition including possibly the large-scale burning and destruction of Khojki manuscripts by the Ismailis themselves that occurred in the early 1900s, and, as many scholars at this conference know from first-hand experience, the continued blocked access to existing manuscripts of Ginān̄s collected and housed in the community's centralized library collections.

Simply stated, I wish to argue that 'conversion' is an inherently polemical and political paradigm in which to view the Ginān̄s (and, for that matter, many similar so-called 'vernacular' or regional Muslim literatures and traditions in the Indian subcontinent); and that the Ginān̄s have been trapped in a polemic rooted in the trope of 'conversion' that can be traced back to their first public scrutiny in the nineteenth century in colonial India. The historiographical discourse of 'conversion', and its sibling trope 'islamization', has resulted in the paradoxical view of the Ginān̄s as both purveyor and polluter of 'Islam' and/or 'Ismailism' both of which, as we know, are abstract terms representing a multiplicity of specific realities. Fortunately, I am not alone in this view that the historiographical narrative of 'conversion' to appreciate the spread of Islam is far from certain. In his

introduction to *India's Islamic Traditions: 711-1750*, Richard Eaton incisively critiques the understanding of the formation of Islamic sub-cultures in the Indian subcontinent in terms of a Protestant model of conversion, and argues that it does considerable violence to the creative religious identities encountered in real life.[12]

The conversion theory as a framework for understanding the Gināns was first put forward in 1866 CE by the British judge Sir Joseph Arnould in the Bombay High Court when he ruled on what came to be known famously as the Aga Khan Case. Western scholarly study of the Gināns began in the modern period of Ismailism marked by the move of Aga Khan Hasan Ali Shah (the forty-sixth Ismaili Imām and the first to receive the title of Aga Khan from the Shī'ī ruler Fateh Ali Shah) from Persia to India in 1845 CE. A small group from among the Khojah community in India, known as the Barbhais, challenged the first Aga Khan's right to control the religious dues and properties of the Khojah by arguing that they were Sunni Muslims and, therefore, that the Aga Khan had no authority over them as their spiritual head. As I have outlined in my book, *Songs of Wisdom & Circles of Dance*, 'The case hinged on one crucial question: What exactly was the religious identity of the Khojahs since their origin?'[13] Judge Arnould came to the conclusion that the Khojahs were 'a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindus in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shī'ah Imami Ismailis',[14] and thus ruled in favour of the Aga Khan.

The critical point here is that the evidence marshalled in support of this ruling in favour of the Aga Khan was the Gināns which the colonial court recognized to be the sacred texts of the Ismailis composed by Ismaili Pīrs or preachers sent from Persia by their Imāms to convert the 'Hindus'. Furthermore, two additional ideas were introduced in this testimony supporting the Aga Khan's claim, ideas that have had direct bearing on later interpretations of the Gināns. First, the idea that the Ismailis had practiced a form of religious concealment called *ṭaqīyya* for many centuries to protect themselves from persecution by the Sunnis who had branded the Ismailis as heretics and sanctioned their slaughter; and second, the idea that the Ismailis had a tradition of deliberately assuming or assimilating the religious ideas of those whom they desired to convert, in this case, the 'Hindus', and then gradually, after raising doubts about the latter's existing beliefs, leading them to their own belief system. To summarize, this original trope that subsequently shaped the historiography of Gināns, and the understanding of Satpanth Ismailism in India, was a tightly knit and complex discourse of conversion that involved religious concealment, strategic adaptation of existing religious customs and ideas, and gradual indoctrination.

The Russian scholar Wladimir Ivanow, to whom we owe so much for his original work on Ismaili texts, was one of the first scholars to write on the Ginān̄s (in English) in his monograph titled *Satpanth* published in 1948, several decades after the first Aga Khan court case. Further routinizing the trope of conversion to explain the spread of Ismailism in the Indian subcontinent, he elaborated his views on the Ginān̄s as representing a populist (and transitional) form of Ismailism that made concessions to local beliefs and practices resulting in a 'hodgepodge' or 'syncretism' of Ismailism, Sufism and Hinduism. While subsequent studies of the Ginān̄s have somewhat contested the idea of Ginān̄s as a haphazard mixture of religious ideas conveniently thrown together to facilitate conversion, they have not questioned the fundamental validity and value of 'conversion' as a heuristic trope which, I now suspect, lies at the root of the problem.

So what I am probing here is the concept of 'conversion' itself which, of course, has a history of usage in different religious traditions. While it has acquired various connotations, the most common understanding of conversion is highly charged and contentious. Some meanings of conversion are even contradictory. For instance, the same word is used to describe the *repudiation* and *disavowal* of one's existing faith or belief system for another versus the *transformation* or *transmutation* from one state or position into another. In both cases, 'change' is involved, but there is a subtle but important distinction between the first change that requires a wholesale *rejection* of one's existing state, and the second change that *evolves* out of it. In Old French and Middle English usage, 'conversion' means to turn around, in other words, to turn away from. Generally, when the term is used within the context of religious conversion, especially in Christianity, what is meant is closer to the Greek word *metanoia*, a term used in the New Testament to mean repentance, that is, a radical change of mind and heart that is accompanied by self-confessed regret regarding a prior state, and evidenced by a visible change of practice and conduct. It is this fundamental *turning away* from what is there, the rejection of it as totally flawed or wrong, that makes the trope of conversion problematic in understanding the Ginān̄s, and I would also add, understanding the history and methods of the Ismaili da'wa. Richard Eaton goes even further and suggests that the sharp repudiation suggested by 'conversion' is not an accurate reading of the rise of Islam in India.[15]

Before I go any further, let me emphasize what I am *not* saying. I am *not* saying that, historically, there was no change that took place, that the affiliations and religious practices of groups that came into contact with Ismaili Pīrs did not change over a long period of time. This would not make sense since the fact is that the Ismaili community in the Indian subcontinent has multiplied substantially since the first Ismaili Pīrs made their way from

Persia to India around the eleventh century. What I simply want to draw attention to are some of the theoretical *consequences* of using conversion as the framing concept or trope by which to approach Satpanth Ismailism and the Gināns. I want to explore how *facing the text* with conversion in mind influences our understanding of the *world from which it emerged* and the *worlds in the text.* To begin with, one result of facing the Satpanth Ismaili tradition with this perspective is that the Pīrs have been typically cast as 'missionaries' whose primary objective was conversion, and their compositions, namely the Gināns, have been typically viewed as conversion literature. That is, Gināns have been explained and approached as a tradition of religious songs that were composed primarily to convert 'Hindus to Ismailis' through a graded process that is meant to begin with 'Hinduism' at one end of the scale with the goal of reaching 'Ismailism' at the other end. This is based upon the theory that the Ismaili Pīrs who came from Persia deliberately accommodated and exploited 'Hindu' ideas and local languages to convert 'Hindus.'

Setting aside for the time being the problematic use of such generic, essentialist, and abstract terms 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' (or 'Ismaili'), let us assume that this was the case, namely, that the Ismaili Pīrs set out to India intentionally to convert. What are the ramifications? It would imply, first, that the Ismaili Pīrs made the *concession* (as Ivanow suggests) of assimilating 'Hindu' ideas, and thus perhaps willingly *deviated* from, or at the very least, *diluted* pre-existing 'Ismaili' norms or concepts, with the primary purpose of leading 'converts' back to 'true' Ismailism. This formulation is flawed both logically and morally. The logical flaw is the assumption that the *world created in the text*, namely, the Gināns would *inevitably* lead back to 'Ismailism'. As we know, the Satpanth tradition of Gināns is claimed not only by Ismaili Muslims, but by some other splinter groups formed in the last centuries who identify as 'Hindus'.[16] Second, the theory of assimilation and accommodation of 'Hindu' or Indic ideas for the sole purpose of conversion would have to render the Gināns irrelevant once the Pīrs had accomplished their task. That is to say, once the Gināns had served their purpose of making proper 'Ismailis' of 'Hindus', their in-between, liminal status would have to be resolved. In fact, given this logic, once the so-called 'Hindus' had been successfully converted to 'Ismailis', the Gināns might even become a problem, a liability as it were, because they would still be infused with 'Hindu' content. Hence, to hold the view that the value of the Gināns was only or even primarily to serve as a transition or bridge is ethically and intellectually indefensible because it repudiates the very meaning of this still living tradition for the Ismailis, particularly those with roots in the Indian subcontinent. To use Eaton's term, it does 'violence' to both its historical memory and continuing ritual performance. Nevertheless,

this latter idea has governed academic writings on the Ginān̄s and also, quite unfortunately, infected many quarters within the community itself, most especially leaders with key positions who can determine the currency, access and fate of this literature. This self-perception of being a 'converted' community is associated with another trend that has been uncritically described as the 'islamization' of the Ismailis since the time of the first Aga Khan. In other words, religious change and renewal is reduced to only one model, namely, that of 'conversion' or its opposite 'reversion'. I mentioned earlier that as a natural sibling to 'conversion', the concept of 'islamization' too stands on shaky ground because both assume an essentialist, static, pure, and predefined Islamic (or Ismaili) norm.[17]

Let me turn to the moral flaw in this now automatic and common explanation that the Ismaili (and other Muslim) Pīrs adopted local ideas for conversion. It is founded upon a prior premise, namely, that the institution of the Ismaili da'wa was a vehicle of conversion. Scholars both within and outside the Ismaili community have reiterated the idea put forward in the British High Court cases that the strategy of the Ismaili dā'īs or preachers, that is, the agents of the Ismaili da'wa, was to assume the position of those whom they wanted to convert. But in what light does this view put the Ismaili Pīrs and their handling of the so-called 'Hindu' concepts that they encountered? My question pertains to the complex of motives, strategies, and cumulative history of the da'wa, in some sense, the *world from which the text emerged*. I must emphasize that I am speaking at a theoretical level; I am trying to examine how the conceptual framework, the trope itself leads to certain problems, which are determinative of how we get into the sociological, the historical, the specific texts and their interpretation.

I would like to go one step further and suggest that the trope of conversion as applied to the Ismaili da'wa as such—not only in the Indian subcontinent, but going back to the beginning of Ismaili history—is both inadequate and misleading. Taylor's term 'misrecognition' may thus aptly be applied here to signal the distorted way in which the Ismaili da'wa and its dā'īs have often been presented. Orientalist scholars who originally framed the Ismaili da'wa in terms of conversion were conditioned by the sectarian, polemical and dogmatic model of Christianity. They also relied heavily on anti-Ismaili sources, and thus wittingly or not, cast the da'wa in an cynical light. The fantastic and false myth of the Assassins hinges on a notion ascribed to be at the heart of the da'wa, namely, the cunning strategy of expedience and manipulation, even exploitation of the local, to achieve its ends. It is what one might crudely describe as the 'bait and switch' method used in commercial advertising. The 'converts' were baited or attracted with familiar ideas that already existed in their own tradition, and then switched or tricked into accepting the beliefs that the dā'īs or Pīrs were preaching.

That is why I describe the logic of 'conversion' as morally flawed, because it casts aspersions on the da'wa by more or less suggesting that it devised a sophisticated strategy of entrapment to win converts to its cause (one that several writers see principally as being political). Because it demeans the work of the Pīrs, this trope must be deconstructed, its implications laid bare, and its application to the Gināns and other Ismaili literature challenged. It is more reflective of the limitations and prejudices of the scholars and writers who wrote about the Ismailis than it is a proper evocation of the Ismaili da'wa itself as a legitimate and long-standing institution of learning, teaching, and service.

So how can we reframe the Ismaili da'wa if we contest the notion that its central purpose was to serve as an instrument of conversion and recruitment to the Ismaili cause? At this point, allow me to attempt an exercise of what Armin Geertz describes as ethnohermeneutics. I suggest it might be helpful to return to what the term da'wa means and how it was used in the Qur'ān. This approach tries to recover a meaning that goes back to its roots. Obviously, it would have to be tested by philological analysis and historical evidence. The term da'wa is derived from the verb to invite. It draws inspiration from several Qur'ānic verses such as: 'Let there arise from you people who invite to all that is good, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; it is they that shall attain felicity' [3:104]. 'Invite to the way of thy Lord with wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and with beautiful preaching (*mu'izzah*) and reason with them in the best manner' [16.125]. This raises three questions: First, is there a distinction between invitation and conversion? Second, to whom is this invitation extended? Third, does it require a total rupture with the past?

It seems to me that the distinction between 'invitation' and 'conversion' is subtle but significant. Conversion has connotations of pressure and coercion. Invitation means that people can chose, on the basis of the reasons given, whether or not to accept the path that is recommended. The model for da'wa or invitation is the Prophet himself. His job was to convey what he had been taught about the nature of God, and the nature of what was good and what was harmful. But Muhammad is cautioned not to assume that his message would heartily be accepted: 'Give them good news and warning; but many will turn away so that they will not hear' [41.4]. Add to this the oft-quoted Qur'ānic verse that declares, 'Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands clearly distinct from error' [2.256]. In the final analysis, faith (as a verb) is not an attitude that can be imposed or extorted. The distinction made in the Qur'ān between the words muslim and mu'min underscores that faith (*īmān*) was understood to be deeper than verbal testimony. An inner stance of relating to God, it signified a personal conviction situated in the heart, and hence, ultimately God alone could be

its judge. The idea of invitation follows the same principle in the saying attributed to Muhammad that you can lead a horse to water but you cannot force it to drink.

Turning to the second question, what is the scope of this invitation? In the case of the Prophet, was it meant only for those who had not heard or accepted his message? Or, as a continual reminder of Qur'ānic teachings, did invitation to the way of God have equal relevance for those who had accepted the Prophet's message? It would seem logical that the Qur'ānic call to encourage others towards that which is good, and to discourage them from doing wrong through example and reasoning is relevant to both those who had heard and accepted and those who had not heard his message. In the case of those who accepted his message, the ideals of Islam were not achieved merely by the act of attesting to be a Muslim. Accepting Muhammad's message and declaring the Shahādah was not an end but a beginning of a process of striving to articulate the individual's relationship to God, society and creation. In other words, 'invitation' pertains equally to the need for continual reflection and elaboration of Qur'ānic teachings amongst Muslims themselves. In a similar vein, therefore, one might ask, did the Ismaili da'wa exist to engage only with those outside the Ismaili fold (which the conversion theory accentuates), or was it an organization whose primary and abiding function from its origin was to provide guidance to those who accepted the authority of the Shi'ite Imām? The point I am making here is that a much wider framework is required to understand the Ismaili da'wa as a long-standing tradition of teaching and learning, a view that is not captured by the trope of conversion and which, in many instances, is compromised by it.

Third, does invitation require a total disavowal of and rupture with the past? As I noted earlier, conversion often entails the rejection of previously held beliefs and loyalties. It involves turning away from, leaving behind or relinquishing existing affinities. Looking at the Prophet, were his teachings a total rupture with the past? Many scholars have noted that there is both continuity with and a departure from 'pre-Islamic' norms and ideals in the teachings of the Qur'ān.[18] Existing concepts that had value among the Arab tribes such as the ideal of generosity (*karīm*) were infused with new meanings. Honour was related to fear of God's power as opposed to manly self-sufficiency and arrogance. The Qur'ān shows an unusually generous stance towards pre-existing monotheistic faiths with the acceptance of other prophets of people of the book (*ahl al-kitāb*). Even more encompassing is the verse 'To every people we have given rites and acts of devotions which they must observe; so do not make them dispute with you over that matter; rather, invite them to your Lord, for lo! You are on the right path' [22.67]. Notwithstanding the many possible interpretations of this verse, it seems

clearly to proclaim that the divine presence that inspired the Prophet of Islam also inspired prophets, saints and seers of other peoples. If that is the case, then in the encounter of other peoples, an attitude of total rejection of and contempt for their religious paths would be uncalled for.

Thus, I would like to suggest that rather than understand the Ismaili da'wa and, by extension, the work of the dāᶜīs and Pīrs through the trope of conversion, we attempt to see it in the context of continually renewing intellectual and moral engagement with the essentials of faith over time. The Ismaili da'wa, somewhat parallel to legal traditions in Islam, is an institution headed by the Ismaili Imāmat that must provide pertinent spiritual guidance and moral teaching or *hidāyah*, intellectually appropriate and meaningful within each unique cultural and historical setting and encounter. Thus, its self-perception is that it is a continuation of the Prophet's invitation to the way of the good as articulated in the Qur'ān, and interpreted by the Shī'ite Imāms.

Since the venture of Islam, that is, the human struggle to turn towards divine mercy and to live by the ethics of the faith is never perfected at any specific time or place, and given the Ismaili understanding of the position of the Imām as the interpreter of faith in every age, the Ismaili da'wa is by nature an ongoing search both conditioned by and responsive to time and place. Hence, a narrative trope more authentic to 'reading' the Ismaili da'wa is the concept of *ta'līm* or teaching or instruction as opposed to conversion. Moreover, this teaching (delivered as an invitation) is not intended primarily for the purpose of attracting outsiders into the Ismaili fold; it is rather an integral activity of searching for the good and true within the Ismaili tradition through deliberate intellectual engagement with and openness to the wider world of ideas, what is traditionally known as '*ilm*. Since human knowledge of reality is continually evolving, the very expression of that understanding of faith from one time to another, from one place to another, occurs afresh while rooted in timeless ideals and principles expressed in the Qur'ān, and for that matter, other divinely inspired scriptures. Each of the expressions of faith and practice that emerges from the Ismaili da'wa thus has a certain integrity within its creative environment including the Gināns.

Theoretically, I would argue that the Pīr's embrace of so-called 'Hindu' concepts was not merely expedient and strategic; it was, rather, an act of creativity that formulated Ismaili ideals anew within a different cultural setting, and it was premised on a genuine appreciation of the richness of myths, symbols, and religious insights that existed within the Indic environment. In this respect, the da'wa takes seriously the Qur'ānic dictum that God left no people bereft of divine inspiration and guidance. This final point clearly has implications for how we understand concepts such as 'syncretism', 'islamization', and so on. As noted, the usual explanation of

Gināns is that the Pīrs 'used' Hindu concepts that resulted in a syncretic mixture of Hindu-Muslim ideas. Perhaps the Pīrs did not 'use' religious ideas from the Indian subcontinent, but discovered in them yet another way of expressing ethical ideals and spiritual striving without compromising the pivotal Ismaili allegiance to the living Shī'a Imām as interpreter and guide. Perhaps the Pīrs were open to the Indic worldview not to exploit it for conversion, but to create through their profound exploration and appreciation of its rich cultural and philosophical tradition, a new and vibrant religious language with which to forge a straight path (*sat panth*).

The question of 'syncretism' or 'islamization' is thus irrelevant because for the period and place in question, the Pīrs literally gave voice and melody to a tradition of devotion and teachings that made sense for centuries to those who were religiously and ethically inspired by it. The former terms belong to polemics, and to reified understandings of so-called 'Hinduism', 'Islam', and 'Ismailism'. They depend on the discursive practice of atomizing and classifying religious identities and characteristics as fixed, immutable and irreconcilable. From this perspective, a 'Muslim' who is thinking about the nature of God beyond attributes would not be able (or allowed) to dialogue with a 'Hindu' on the nature of *nirguṇa brahman* because language itself, Arabic or Sanskrit, Persian or Sindhi, would be held as incommensurate markers in the politics and boundaries of religious identity. Such discursive practices of claiming strict and rigid boundaries for the vast variety of religious traditions and identities ('Hindu' or 'Muslim') is not evident in pre-modern India. And as others have argued effectively, the practice of marking (and enforcing) religious boundaries in India with such strict rigidity (not to mention legal, social, and economic consequences) is largely a colonial legacy.

In fact, to draw this discussion full circle, what has pressed me to think about these issues is my observation that Ismailis steeped in the Gināns, particularly singers of the older generation, are not agitated or perturbed by the juxtapositions of Hari and Ali, or Ram and Raheman. For them, 'syncretism' and 'islamization' have little meaning, and represent etic terms. However, the depiction of Gināns, and other Islamic literatures in India, as an admixture of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' elements, and hence, a perversion of both, has caused disorientation, conflict, and misapprehensions about self-identity among the Ismailis. In writing about a people's history and traditions, the politics of knowledge inevitably comes into play for scholars and participants alike, implicating social hierarchies of power. Interpretation and representation thus calls for a careful examination of the imbalance between dominant and dominating forms of knowledge, presently controlled by academic or community institutions, and the knowledge traditions of the weak or voiceless that may be distorted, eclipsed or diminished by former.[19]

To conclude, in this paper I have attempted to argue that as part of *the world facing the text*, it is necessary that we reframe Ginānic studies in order to do justice to the Gināns, and to those for whom these devotional songs are a source of inspiration, direction, and expression of religious life. It is necessary for insiders and outsiders to this tradition to take into account the multiple positions and hermeneutical practices that exist in both domains. In particular, academic scholars including Ismaili scholars, who enjoy unequal powers of representation by virtue of their institutional and professional authority, must give careful consideration to the often muted voices of singers, devotees, and interpreters that exist within the tradition. I have also challenged the narrative trope of conversion that has acted as a confining heuristic through which the Gināns, and other Indo-Muslim traditions, have been viewed, and at times, cynically understood. My hope in attending to these theoretical matters is to liberate the Gināns for other discursive acts of critical appraisal and appreciation that would permit a fuller recognition of their undeniably unique poetic, philosophical, spiritual, musical, ritual and performative power and creativity within the rich cultural matrix of religious life in the Indian subcontinent.

Notes

1. Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāʿīlī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams*, McGill Studies in the History of Religions, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.
2. My own reasons for not publishing on Gināns are documented in Tazim R. Kassam, 'Balancing Acts: Negotiating the Ethics of Scholarship and Identity', in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabézon and Sheila Greeve Davaney, London: Routledge, 2004, Chapter 7, pp. 133-62.
3. Cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 87-90, 139-40, 65-166. Also see Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdes, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991; and Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, tr. David Pellauer and ed. Mark I. Wallace, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
4. Judith Okely and Helen Callaway, eds., *Anthropology and Autobiography*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 224.
5. For an elaboration of the concept of situated knowledge and its implication for power hierarchies, see especially Donna Haraway,'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Partial Perspective', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, Chapter 9, pp. 183-201.

6. For detailed discussions, see 'The Ethics of Practice', in Gavin Flood's *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*, New York & London: Cassel, 1999; Russell T. McCutheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, New York & London: Cassel, 1999; and Kirin Narayan, 'How Native is "Native" Anthropologist?', in *American Anthropology*, vol. 95, no. 3, 1993, pp. 671-86.
7. For a discussion of the effort of dialogic understanding in ethnographic work, see Luke E. Lassiter, 'From "Reading over the Shoulders of Natives" to "Reading alongside Natives", Literally: Toward a Collaborative and Reciprocal Ethnography', in *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 57, 2001, pp. 137-49.
8. Armin W. Geertz, 'As the Other Sees Us: On Reciprocity and Mutual Reflection in the Study of Native American Religions', in *Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion*, ed. James V. Spickard, J. Shawn Landres and Meredith B. McGuire, New York & London: New York University Press, 2002, p. 233.
9. Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and "the Politics of Recognition": An Essay by Charles Taylor*, With Commentary by Amy Gutmann, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 25. Edward Said's classic text on the manner in which the news 'covers' Islam vividly and concretely documents how misrecognition works in practice. Cf. Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
10. Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.
11. Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, p. 7.
12. Richard Eaton, ed., *India's Islamic Traditions: 711-1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 1-36.
13. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*, p. 30.
14. Asaf 'Ali Asghar Fyzee, *Case in the Muhammadan Law of India and Pakistan*, London: Clarendon Press, 1965, p. 545.
15. The Islamic traditions we see in the Indian environment 'seldom indicate deliberateness or intentionality of any sort, much less specific motives for "conversion" such as those just mentioned. Nothing in pre-colonial Indian sources suggest that there ever occurred among whole communities a conscious or drastic "turning-over" of religious identity. What the original evidence rather points to is a slow, almost glacial process of religious evolution that was so gradual in pace as to go largely unnoticed by either insider or outsider observers.' Eaton, *India Islamic Tradition*, p. 18.
16. For example, the cults associated with Ramdev in Rajasthan. Cf. Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan*, New Delhi: Manohar and Centre de Sciences Humaines, 1997.

17. Dominique Sila-Khan argues convincingly against the uncritical use of these monolithic terms in 'Who is Hindu, who is Muslim? A Brief Historical Survey', in *Crossing the Threshold: Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia*, London & New York: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004, pp. 8-29. For the impact of British colonial rule on boundary formation in South Asia, see Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law*, Calcutta: Samya, 2001.
18. For instance, see Toshiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*, Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964 and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.
19. See James Clifford's classic analysis of power/knowledge disparities in writing history and ethnography of non-Western cultures, 'On Orientalism' in James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: 20th Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 225-76.

A Brief Note on the *Būjh Nirañjan*

Ali S. Asani

Sometime in the 1970s, Zawahir Moir (Noorally), then a research associate at the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, located at the India Office Library in London a hitherto unexamined manuscript of the *Būjh Nirañjan,* a didactic poem in medieval Hindustani. Consisting of some 600 verses arranged in 34 parts, the *Būjh Nirañjan* ('Knowledge of the Attributeless One') is an important poem in the corpus of the Ginān (*ginān*a) literature of the Khoja Ismaili communities of South Asia. Each of the 34 parts comprises three or four quatrains, composed in the *caupāī* metre, followed by a couplet or *dohā*. Intended to guide novices on the mystical path, the *Būjh Nirañjan* describes the stages and states experienced by a soul that is on a quest 'to know' the Divine. The poem is replete with allusions to many concepts and ideas traditionally associated with Sufism, especially of the variety that espouses a *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence) philosophy.

The strong mystical and spiritual tenor of the work has made the *Būjh Nirañjan* a very popular Ginān within the community. Selections from it are sung almost daily before the early morning *dhikr/zikr* (meditation) session held in the *jamāᶜat khāna* (house of congregation). Since the early morning *dhikr* among the Ismailis is a silent one (*dhikr-i khāfī*), the recitation of the verses from a mystically oriented Ginān such as the *Būjh Nirañjan* assists considerably in establishing the appropriate mood before meditation commences. The impact that many of the verses of the *Būjh Nirañjan* have had on the members of the Ismaili community has been so great that the poem has been termed as one of the 'great classical Ginān̄s'.[1] In the Gujarati preface to a recent edition, the work is called an 'incomparable treasure' (*ajoḍ khajāno*), and the author of the preface expresses the hope that in the not too distant future 'the world will be able to see the splendour (*prakāś*) of this treasure which has remained hidden for eight hundred years [*sic*]'.[2]

Zawahir's discovery of the Būjh Nirañjan in an eighteenth century manuscript at the India Office was of great significance. Ginān literature has traditionally been considered to be a literary tradition exclusive to the Khoja Ismaili community of the Indian subcontinent. The various Gināns, or hymns, that comprise the literature are believed to have been composed by several Ismaili Pīrs (preacher-saints) who were instrumental in the establishment of the Nizari Ismaili tradition in the region. Now, for the first time, a Ginān manuscript had been discovered which, as we shall see later, seems to have originated in non-Ismaili circles.

The India Office manuscript immediately appears strange to anyone acquainted with the Ginān manuscript tradition because it begins with the invocation '*yā ghauṯ al-a'ẓam*'. The use of this epithet, commonly associated with the Sufi master ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī (d. 1166), implies that the scribe, if not the author himself, was affiliated to the Qādirī Sufi order. This, in itself, might not appear quite so extraordinary if the manuscript did not possess three other unusual characteristics. First, it is the only known Ginān manuscript from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that is written in the Perso-Arabic script rather than the Khojkī script which was traditionally used by the Khojas to record their literature. Second, the Ismaili tradition ascribed the authorship of the work to the fifteenth century Ismaili Pīr Ṣadr ad-Dīn, largely on the basis of a verse in the poem in which his name appears. And yet, this verse reads differently in the India Office manuscript. Instead of the name of the Ismaili Pīr, the verse in the manuscript refers to '*nabī*' (prophet), an epithet that in this context could only refer to the Prophet Muḥammad. Third, not only do the India Office manuscript and the traditional Ismaili version differ in the sequence in which some of the poems are arranged, but the manuscript includes an entire poem that does not occur in the Ismaili texts. The poem is the twelfth in the manuscript and is entitled in Persian: 'On the *sharīᶜat* of Muḥammad, the chosen, may peace and blessings of God be upon him'. It advocates a strict observance of the ritualistic, or exoteric, practices of Islam, such as the five pillars. The absence of this poem from the Ismaili version is not difficult to explain, for its precepts run counter to the esoteric interpretation of Islam traditionally favoured in Ismaili circles.

Clearly, Zawahir's discovery of the India Office manuscript raised questions about the generally accepted view within the Ismaili community that the *Būjh Nirañjan* was an Ismaili text because it was composed by an Ismaili author, namely Pīr Ṣadr ad-Dīn. The issue was then, as it is now, a sensitive one, especially as the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, whose employee Zawahir was at the time, was the official institution responsible for the preservation and transmission of religious literature. As such, it was inappropriate for the Association, or one of its employees, to raise questions

that appeared to undermine tradition. It is, therefore, not surprising that when the Association published a revised edition of the *Būjh Nirañjan* in February 1976, the issue of authorship and origin was not addressed at all. Rather, the emphasis of the new edition, presumably prepared by Zawahir, was limited to clarifying obscurities in the Ismaili versions of the composition through a careful comparison of their texts with that found in the India Office manuscript. The need for this revised edition was particularly compelling since many of the technical Arabic sufi terms used in the *Būjh Nirañjan* were hopelessly distorted in the existing Ismaili texts. Since this terminology also needed elucidation for those who were not familiar with the subtle nuances of the Sufi tradition, the text of the 1976 edition was accompanied by a commentary that was written by Zawahir. This commentary was in Gujarati and intended to provide Gujarati-speaking Ismailis a better understanding of the work so that they would know 'how to live a spiritual life'.[3]

Zawahir's discovery of the India Office manuscript, and her efforts in preparing a corrected edition of the *Būjh Nirañjan*, was of significance not only to the Ismaili community but to me personally as it influenced the trajectory of my scholarly development. When I visited London in the early 1980s in order to conduct my research on the Gināns as part of my doctoral work at Harvard, Zawahir introduced me to the *Būjh Nirañjan* and familiarized me with the India Office manuscript. Based on what I learnt about the poem from her, I decided to write my doctoral dissertation on this work and eventually produced a critical edition of the text that traced the history of the transmission of the *Būjh Nirañjan* from the Qādirī Sufi order into the Ismaili community.[4] Since many of the Ismaili texts I used to prepare the critical edition were written in the Khojkī script, my research inevitably led me to the study of this alphabet which is unique to the Khoja Ismaili communities. Again, Zawahir was instrumental in helping me read and decipher the intricacies of a script system that was no longer being taught. She also introduced me to the Khojkī manuscript tradition. My interest in Khojkī was later to expand to include a history of the development of the script and its relationship to the other alphabets of the subcontinent.[5] In subsequent years, my work on Khojkī developed in another direction—the preparation of a catalogue of Harvard's collection of Ismaili literature, much of it written in Khojkī.[6] Research on the *Būjh Nirañjan* also led me to an in-depth study of the various issues regarding the authorship of not only this text, but other Ginān texts as well and situate these in the larger context of medieval Indian devotional literatures, and notions of authorship and the authorizing role of communities.[7] Thus, many of the seeds of my scholarship on Ginān literature were planted by the pioneering work of Zawahir Moir and I shall always be grateful to her for her encouragement early in my career.

Notes

1. R. D. Shariff, 'Būjh Nirañjan,' *Rośanī* (Ismailia Association for the United States of America), vol. 3, Dec. 1980, p. 25.
2. Kasamali M. Jafar, 'Preface', *Būjh Nirañjan*, Karachi: Ismailia Association for Pakistan, 1976, n.p. (my translation from the Gujarati).
3. Zawahir Nooraly, 'Introduction', *Būjh Nirañjan,* Karachi: Ismailia Association for Pakistan, 1976, n.p.
4. 'The "*Būjh Nirañjan*": A Critical Edition of a Mystical Poem in Medieval Hindustani with Its Khojkī and Gujarati Recensions', Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1984. The dissertation was later published as a book, *The Būjh Nirañjan: An Ismaili Mystical Poem,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1991.
5. See 'The Khojkī Script: A Legacy of Ismaili Islam in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 107, no. 1, 1987, pp. 439-49.
6. See *The Harvard Collection of Ismaili Literature in Indic Languages: A Descriptive Catalog and Finding Aid*, Boston: G.K. Hall, 1992.
7. See 'The Ismaili *Ginān*s: Reflections on Authority and Authorship', in *Medieval Ismaili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 265-80.

Gināns and the Management of the Religious Heritage of the Ismaili Khojas in Sindh

Michel Boivin

Introduction

Since the work done by Vladimir Ivanow and V.N. Hooda,[1] the study of the Ginānic corpus has made important progress through a number of scientific studies (Asani, Kassam, Mallison, Shackle and Moir et al.). These religious songs were attributed to Ismaili Pīrs who operated in the Indian subcontinent. It is however not possible to know when these texts were fixed, nor to what extent the oral transmission modified the content through the centuries. Nevertheless, we know that the Gināns were revised in the twentieth century. The work of recension conducted by Zawahir Moir, first for the Ismailia Association of Pakistan, and second for the Institute of Ismaili Studies, made her think that the Gināns were mainly composed in Sindhi before being translated into other languages such as Gujarati.

The present work will try to analyse the place that the Khojas of the Sindhi area[2] gave to the Gināns in the phase of identity construction which lasted most of the twentieth century. Three phases can be distinguished. The first one, before Partition, is based on the 'Sufi culture of Sindh'. The second phase, which lasted from Partition, when Pakistan was created up, until the1980's, could be framed as a phase of islamization. The third one began with the introduction of globalization by H. H. Prince Shāh Karīm, the fourth Aga Khan, the spiritual guide of the Ismailis since 1957.

This identity quest among the Sindhi Khojas was done by establishing links with other religious traditions of the area, especially with Sufism and *Vedānta*. It will be important to give answers to some questions: Why had Hāshim Lālū, at the beginning of the twentieth century, thought that Sufism and the Gināns were the components of the same religious idiom, that was

also used by Kabīr and Guru Nānak? Why, following this first period, had Ghulam ᶜAlī Allana kept on trying to prove that the Ginānic corpus was a part of Sufi literature? Finally, since the Ismailis have followed a cultural globalization under the leadership of their Imām Prince Shāh Karīm, one has to note the discarding of the Ginān̄s as a normative source. At the same time, the technical lexicon of the Ginānic corpus was revisited another time.

Ginān̄s as a Link between Hinduism and Sufism in the Pre-partition Period

The Sindhi Context at the Turning Point of the Twentieth Century

The British very quickly noted that religion in Sindh was coined by toleration and intensive exchange between Hinduism and Islam. The Hindus worshipped Muslim saints and sometimes, the reverse happened. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Richard Burton wrote that Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh, the first Aga Khan, had Hindu followers who venerated him as if they belonged to the same 'caste'. If it is obvious that Sindhi culture was based on a devotional religion performed in the sanctuaries, mystical poetry was also a crucial element. This trend lasted after Partition and in India. The so-called 'Hindu Sufism'—this expression is used by the Sindhi Hindus who published Sufi poetry in Sindhi—is the result of this literature which is still unknown outside the Sindhi-speaking area. This mystical poetry reached its peak in Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif's work (d. 1754), the famous author of the *Shāh-jo risālo*. The first exegeses of this long poem were published at the end of the nineteenth century by Hindu scholars.

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, the 'confessionalization' of the nationalist fight made progress in Sindh following the rest of the Indian subcontinent. However, Karachi was still a cosmopolitan city and the population's main occupation was business. In the interior of the province, sporadic riots had broken out in the north, in Lāṛkāna in 1928 and Sukkhur in 1930.[3] The main reason for these events was the activism of Hindu organizations like the *Ārya Samāj* and the *Hindu Mahāsabhā*. The first wanted to re-convert Muslims to Hinduism through the new ritual of *śuddhi*. On the other side, it is noteworthy that the confessionalization of the discourses was not limited to the divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. Among the Hindu community, some 'sub-identities' were being crystallized. This evolution is obvious through the publications which were produced around the First World War. The more active factions were the Ārya Samājī and the Sikh. Even among the Sikhs, the gap became wider between the Akālī and others. The rivalry between the Hindu sects caused litigations mainly due to the ownership of sacred spaces. A pamphlet even asked the Dalits to fight for their rights.

Coming back to the Hindus and the Muslims, the antagonism between the two communities was also due to the fact that an important part of the Hindu activity—mainly in rural context—was usury. In 1896, a British civil servant claimed that 42 per cent of the arable land were owned by Hindus or mortgaged to Hindus.[4] Later on, in 1936, the agricultural commission of Sindh had claimed that 87 per cent of the Muslim families were in debt with Hindu usurers. Progressively, the spread of the nationalist discourse of the Muslim League was reinforced by the feeling that the Muslims, being in a majority in Sindh, should be freed from their debts in a country under Muslim dominance. Despite this slow evolution, the 'confessionalization' of politics had not yet caused a break between the Hindus and the Muslims. In October 1936, Shāh Nawāz Bhutto, Ghulām Ḥusayn Hidayatullāh and some Hindu leaders like Hotchand Rewachand and Dingumāl created the Sindh Unified Party (*Sindh Ittehad Party*) which was to go on to win the provincial elections.[5]

Identity Quest through Literary Production Among the Khojas in Sindh

At the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Khojas were a small community coming from Hindu castes whose members converted to Ismaili Shiite Islam at different periods. Although these castes were of different status, including Dalits, the Khoja community was dominated by merchant groups, coming partly from Lohāṇā converts. In Karachi, the Khojas were divided between Sindhi, Kachhi, Kathiawari and Panjabi. Some Khojas were very wealthy but most of them belonged to the middle classes or low middle classes. In any case, knowing they formed a small community, this prosperity allowed the leaders of the community to play somewhat of an important role.

The question of the relations between Sindhi Sufism and the Ginān̄s was expressed by Sindhi Khoja scholars as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. It is interesting to note that recently, Mumtaz ᶜAlī Tajddin claimed that the Ginān̄s attributed to Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn had influenced Shāh ᶜAbd al-Karīm's mystical poetry, the grandfather or great-grandfather of Shāh Lāṭif.[6] Furthermore, Alī Asani devoted a work to the process by which the Khojas had 'appropriated' a Sufi text.[7] Finally, according to the *Pandiyāt-i javānmardī*, a Persian Ismaili text from the sixteenth century, it is obvious that the Ismailis, even if they adopted some technical terms from Sufism, re-employed them and, when they used them, this was only to reinforce the worship of the living Imām .[8]

When the confessional identities were in a phase of crystallization in Sindh, the Khojas began to question their own identity.[9] An unknown part

of this process is the publications of different scholars mainly, but not all, belonging to the community.[10] It is important to note that two among the forerunners of this renaissance were neither Khoja, nor Ismaili. The first is Mirzā Kalīch Beg (1859–1929). This prolific author has broadly contributed to the renaissance of Sindhi literature as a whole. In 1922, he published a book in Sindhi that was an introduction to Ismailism. In the preface, he confessed to have written it with the help of a Khoja, Itmādī Hāshim Lālū, then *kamṛiā* of the *jamāᶜat* in Hyderabad. It will be necessary to come back to this man, who was himself a major contributor to the renaissance. While he was resident in Bombay, Mirzā Kalīch Beg went to meet the first Aga Khan, Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh, and his sons ᶜAlī Shāh, Akbar Shāh and Jangī Shāh. One might conjecture that this was the origin of his interest for Ismailism.

Another author who published books on Ismailism was Muḥammad Sādiq Musāfir. Born in 1879 in Ṭanḍo Bāgo, a small town of deltaic Sindh located near the Ismaili *dargāh* of Shāh Ṭurrel, this Shīdī was not an Ismaili though he published several translations of Ismaili works from Persian to Sindhi. The most important publications were works of Khākī Khorāsānī, Nāṣir-e Khusraw and the famous *Risāla dar ḥaqīqat-e dīn* composed by Shihab al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī, the half-brother of the third Aga Khan, Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh. Musāfir also translated the *Kalām-e Mowlā* from Urdu to Sindhi.[11]

More than fifty books on Ismailism were published in Sindhi in the first half of the twentieth century. The authors were mainly *wāᶜiẓīn* (preachers), for example, Hāshim Lālū, Hamir Lakha, Muḥammad Hāshim, ᶜAbd al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bachal, Sulṭān ᶜAlī Ramẓān ᶜAlī and Sherᶜalī ᶜAlīdīnā. These books were published from 1917 onwards, and almost half were republished in the 1950s. Several volumes were translations in Sindhi of Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh's Farmāns. Maḥbub ᶜAlī Khoja had translated the Imām's memoirs, first published in English in 1954, only four years later in 1959, two years after his death. In 1957, he had published a Sindhi translation of the chapter devoted to the Imām's religious philosophy.

The spread of religious literature in Sindhi was not unique to the Ismaili community of India. Bombay was, and remained up to Partition, the religious and intellectual center of the Ismaili community. Most of the books were published in Gujarati, more rarely Sindhi or Urdu. This evolution was due to several factors. On the one hand, the Khojas had to face the desertion: the conversion of Khojas to Ithna Ashari Shiism had not yet stopped. On the other hand, it was urgent to answer the attacks published by the Ārya Samāj who claimed that the Khojas were Hindus.[12] In Panjab, for instance, many Khojas were re-converted to Ārya Samājī Hinduism.

In Sindh, conversions to Ithnā ᶜAsharī Shiism was the main challenge. A man called Karim Goolamali created a 'Society of Reformers'.[13] He published several pamphlets in English in which he accused Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh, the third Aga Khan, to claim divinity for himself and to have invented a new religion based on money. Hamir Lakha, a Sindhi Ismaili Khoja, brought some answers through several pamphlets published in Hyderabad. He demonstrated that the roots of the Khoja doctrine was Shiism, noting at the same time the specificity of the 'Aga Khani Maẓhāb'. In 1923, Abd al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad Bachal—who was himself a Sindhi Ismaili Khoja—published at the request of the Ismailia Association of Hyderabad a book entitled *Tuhfah al-islām*. This book of 163 pages—large in comparison with the other publications which were most of the time pamphlets—based its theory exclusively on the Qur'ān and the Sunna for demonstrating that (1) the Imām was Muḥammad's successor, was entrusted with a divine mission that was the continuation of prophecy; and (2) Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh was the legitimate successor to the Shii Imāmate.

*The Ginān*s *and the Legacy of the* Vedānta

An Ismaili Sindhi Khoja who played a leading role in these debates was Khwajah Muḥammad Hāshim Lāl Muḥammad alias Hāshim Lālū (1880-1961). He published several books in Hyderabad after the First World War. Some titles are precious for they reveal the strategy used by the author, as for instance *Ilahī nūr yā Iśvārī jot*, meaning that the concept of divine light, *Ilahī nūr* for the Muslims, and *Iśvārī jot* for the Hindus, is the same in Islam and in Hinduism.[14] His most important work is a book published in 1917 with the title: *Ḥaq mawjūd. Taṣawūf yā vedānta*, or *The Final Truth of Life. Sufism and Vedānta*. In the pre-Partition cultural context in Sindh, this theory was widespread. Hindus and Muslims were convinced that Sufi culture in Sindh was the core of Sindhi identity.

In 1924, Jethmal Parsram Gulraj (1885-1948) published a book where he asserted: 'In fact, there is hardly a country in the whole of Asia, including India, in which the mystic thought of two great civilizations, the Indian and the Arabic-Iranian, is seen in so beautiful a union as in Sind.'[15] Furthermore, he argued that the two sources of Sufism in Sindh were first, the Arabo-Persian Mysticism, and second the *Vedānta*.[16] For these authors, what is the *Vedānta*? They claimed that, according to Śaṅkara, *Brahman* is omniscient and omnipotent. No reality can exist outside him and all the rest is an illusion (*māyā*). For them, this doctrine of the *Advaita* is similar to the Sufi doctrine of the *Waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Hāshim Lālū postulated that Ismailism is a form of Sufism. He tried to give evidence that Hinduism and Sufism had similar practises and concepts.

The crucial point in his demonstration lay in the equivalence between the Muslim practise of meditation, called *yād ilahī*, and the Hindu *samaraṇ*.[17] As we shall see, Lālū's theory would be the Sindhi Khoja vulgate and after Partition, later authors like Qāsim Jaᶜfar and Ghulām ᶜAlī Allana would re-employ this theory of the Sufi origin of Ismailism while reducing the Hindu connections of the Khoja religion.

Another point to note is that the references used by Hāshim Lālū are eclectic. Among the Ginān's authors, the most frequent quotations are from Pīr Taj al-Dīn (1), Pīr Imām Shāh (4), Pīr Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn (4), Pīr Shams (5), Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn (9) and Sayyid Muḥammad Shāh (11). There is also a *farmān* by Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh. The references to Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif are frequent while there are a few quotations from Kabīr and Guru Nānak. In his first book *Ḥaq mawjūd*, the argument was that the essence of religion was the mystical path. Mystics of the great religions used the same words for the description of the path. However, Hāshim Lālū used the fundamental concepts of Sufism, and this method constrained him to instrumentalize the Ginān as the other mentioned authors. For instance, let us see how he proceeded with Sayyid Muḥammad Shāh, the most quoted author of Ginān, who gives the description of the four steps of the Sufi quest: (1) *nasūt/sharīᶜa*, (2) *malakūt/ṭarīqa*, (3) *jirūt/ḥaqīqa*, and (4) *lāhūt/ mariᶜfa*.[18] It is while using the same method that Hāshim Lālū explained the concepts of *fanāᶜfī shaykh* and *fanāᶜfī Allāh*. In the same vein, Lālū quotes an abstract from Pīr Shams for the explanation of the concept of *ᶜishq*. There are many other examples. Consequently, Ismailism is de facto ranked with Sufism and the Ismaili Pīrs are introduced as Sufi.

The treatise Hāshim Lālū published after nine years with the title *Ilahī nūr yā Iśvārī jot* is more concise and more technical. Here, the Qur'ānic references are mainly dominant but the goal is still to demonstrate that the Islamic concepts are equivalent to the concepts of the Hindu *Sanātan*. The use of the expression *Sanātan* (eternal religion) is interesting. In the nineteenth century, the Sanātanīs were Brahmins who saw themselves as the protectors of Hindu orthodoxy, thanks to their knowledge and their way of life. It is, nevertheless, difficult to know what were Lālū's intentions: was it to convert Hindus to Ismailism? Or to convince the Guptīs to openly proclaim their belonging to the Ismaili religion? Unfortunately, the information is too scant to provide the answers.

Hāshim Lālū's demonstration focused on the concept of the divinity's manifestations on Earth. God was to be known through several intercessors, the Payghāmbar and the Maẓhar. These terms from Arabo-Persian origin are for him more or less equivalent to the 'Sanskrit' (he used the word) *avatāra*. He asserted that Vishnu is a Maẓhar like the Imām. Lālū enumerated the ten *avatāra* acknowledged by the Hindus. He specified that the tenth,

called Naklaṅkī, is ᶜAlī, the one who has to save humanity. For the Ithnā ᶜAsharī Shiites, he is called the Mahdī.[19] Among the Muslims, he quoted twelve Maẓhars who are Imāms: (1) ᶜAlī, (2) Ḥusayn, (3) Jaᶜfar al-Ṣādiq, (4) Ismāᶜīl, (5) Muḥammad al-Mahdī, (6) Nizār, (7) Hādī, (8) Islām Shāh, (9) Mustanṣir bi'llāh, (10) Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh, (11) ᶜAlī Shāh, and (12) Sultān Muḥammad Shāh.[20] All the religions come from the same unique God but the message provided by his different mediators was adapted to a specific time and a place. Consequently, Muslims and Hindus belong to the same fraternity (*hindū musalmān barādarān*) and every religion is compatible with the others through the use of an equivalent technical lexicon.

The equivalences Lālū found between Hinduism and Islam are significant: he took the fundamentals of Ismailism and looked for associations in the Hindu lexicon. For instance, he gives: Allāh/ Brahman, Rasūl/ Brahmā, Imām/Vishnu, *sharīᶜa/kriyā karma, ṭarīqa/surti śabar, ḥaqīqa/yug mārg, ᶜishq/bhagti, ᶜāshiq/bhagat, maᶜashūq/bhagūnat*.[21] Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of the sources, it is not possible to know more on the Hindu notions which are quoted by Lālū. The most interesting point, nevertheless, is that Lālū associated the Imām to Vishnu: as we shall see, this is comparable to the credo taught in the Gināns, in particular the *Dasa Avatāra*. Lālū gave a final explanation when he said that for those who saw him as their spiritual leader (*hādī*), Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh is the Mahdī.[22] In both cases, he succeeded into showing the coalescence of a concept that looks to be equivalent in Hinduism and Shiism. According to him, it is this concept which gives evidence that Ismailism is superior to both Shiism and Hinduism: the saviour—namely the Aga Khan who is in the same time Mahdī/Naklaṅkī —is present here and now. Thus it is not necessary to worship the Hindu divinities, nor to follow the precepts of a Sufi master, knowing that the Mahdī/Naklaṅkī is here for the salvation and the mundane benefit of his followers. This postulate must convince the Ismailis that their religion is the best one, so that they do not need to look for solace and guidance somewhere else.

Finally, even if Lālū looked for legitimation in the Qur'ānic references, he is in the line of what was the Khoja credo for many decades, or perhaps centuries. This credo is expressed in the Ginān called *Dasa Avatāra*, the Tenth Avatar, which was up to the 1950s among the most important prayers of the Khojas. But it is true that even in this Ginān, the argument can be understood as a Qur'ānic one: Muḥammad's message is the complement and the completion of other religions. The living Imām is the completion of Hinduism, knowing the last manifestation of Vishnu, which is not yet manifested on earth for the Hindus. He is also the completion of Muḥammad, because as Imām, his mission is to interpret his message. However, it is surprising that the Ismailia Association of Hyderabad decided to re-published

both the books in 1955 and 1956, after the creation of Pakistan. While it is true that these publications were 'for Ismailis only', the agitation against religious communities which were not seen as 'authentic Muslims' by the fundamentalists, especially the Ahmadis, had already begun. Is it possible to conclude that the Sufi culture of Sindh was still prevalent at the time?

Ginān̄s and Sufism in the Post-partition Period

The Partial Discarding of the Hindu Legacy

It is not necessary to turn back to the conditions in which Pakistan was created in 1947. Let us only note that islamization of socio-religious life quickly became prevalent. For the Khojas, partition announced a new step in the theological reflection accomplished by the Sindhi intellectuals. Some of them had asked Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh to replace the Hindu concepts in the Ginān̄s by Islamic references. Though Lālū's books were re-published in the 1950s, one has to note a clear trend to discard the homological interpretation of Sufism and *Vedānta*. In Sindh, authors had found homologies between Sufism and the Khoja religion long before Partition. For instance, ᶜAbd al-Rasūl Sulaymān had compared Shams Tabrīzī's *Dīwān* with the Ginān̄s. For him, the relation between the Imām and the momin was of the same kind as the relation between the Pīr and the *murīd*.[23] At the end of the nineteenth century, the third Aga Khan, Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh did an important reform by taking for himself the title of Pīr of the Khojas.[24] Before, this function was exercised by a family member, usually the Imām's heir. While claiming to be the Pīr, the Aga Khan tried to bring Ismailism closer to Sufism, and also to put an end to the Ismaili Sayyid's claim to share the Imāmate's charisma.

Ginān̄s and the Writing of History

Sixteen years after the publication of the acclaimed book *Nūr al-Mubīn*, published in Gujarati by Chunara, Sherᶜalī ᶜAlīdīnā published in 1952 a book in Sindhi on the history of the Imāmate. For the first time, a Khoja put forward that the Imām took their religious authority from the Prophet of Islam's charisma. More than ten pages were devoted to the Prophet Muḥammad. The book was divided in two equal parts. The first one was devoted to the biography, while in the second one, modestly called 'supplement' (*samīmo*), the author went back to the most significant aspects in the life of the important protagonists.

For the Prophet Muḥammad, the biographical narrative was prevalent in the first part, with around ten pages. ᶜAlīdīnā described his infancy, then

his wedding with Bībī Khadīja. The other parts of the biography were divided according three periods: the predication of the truth, the Prophet in Medina and the victory of Islam. The following paragraph was devoted to the designation of ᶜAlī as successor. The last part was an enumeration of the qualities to show the 'Prophet's greatness' (*nabī ṣaḥeb jo shān*).[25] In the second part of the book, the author turned back to some peculiar aspects of the Prophet's life: his wives and his children, the exodus and life in Medina. Here, the narration was reinforced by Qur'ānic quotations given in Arabic and translated into Sindhi.

The book then followed the chronology of the Imāmate in Near-East, the Imāmate in Africa, Iran and India. A broad place was given to Imām ᶜAlī. As for the Prophet, the author related his infancy, his wedding, and the three most important battles he had had to fight. A genealogical tree showed that the Prophet and ᶜAlī were ᶜAbd al-Muṭālib's grandsons.[26] It is during the African period of the Imāmate that the author put the first spread of Ismailism in India. According to him, the Imām Shāh Mustanṣir bi'llāh II would have sent in the Indian subcontinent Pīr Nūr al-Dīn Shāh, better known as Satgur Nūr, who was, according to Khoja tradition, the first missionary to preach there.

The Qur'ānic quotations are relatively rare. They are sometimes inaccurate and always curtailed. For instance, an abstract of the third verse of *Surah* V is given as verse 4. The quotations chosen by him are obvious: they have to convince the Khojas that Islam is the best religion. Here again, the sources used by ᶜAlīdīnā are eclectic although they are more focused on the Qur'ān than Lālū's work. The description of Karbala is illustrated by a quotation from Shāh Lāṭif.[27] Many *farmāns* are also quoted knowing that the second part of the book is mainly devoted to the Imām of the time. They have to give evidence that the then Imām, Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh was modern, and his modernity was obvious when he serves the great causes of Islam.

In the book published by ᶜAlīdīnā, which is however devoted to history, the Ginān*s* are no longer a source of knowledge. The Pīrs of the Khojas are quoted, but only for the historical action they performed, namely the conversion of Hindu castes to Ismailism. The Ginān*s* are no longer utilized to legitimate different facts, and a variety of concepts. There are two new perspectives in Sherᶜalī ᶜAlīdīnā's work: first is the discarding of a mythological discourse by the eradication of non reliable sources in the historical field, and second the priority given to the Islamic legitimacy of Ismailism. Consequently, the Ginān*s* are de facto reduced to their liturgical function as well as to the expression of religious emotion which continues to be a fundamental element of the Khoja identity.

The Ginān̄s as an Expression of Sindhi Sufism

In the post-Partition phase, the theory of the genealogical link between Sufism and Ismailism was broadly expressed in the community press published at Karachi. A book published by Ghulām^{c}alī Allana in 1984 can be seen as the best example of this trend. The title states that the book is a translation of Ginān̄s into English but the translation is preceded by a one hundred pages introduction. It is noteworthy that Allana was one of the most prominent Khojas in the politics of Pakistan. He was mayor of Karachi, member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, and finally president of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations Organisation. He published more than thirty books, with two major topics, the history of the Muslims in South Asia, and literature of South Asia. Himself a poet, he translated poetry from Urdu and Sindhi. Several books are translation from Sindhi to English, including the famous *Shāh-jo risālo* of Shāh Lāṭif from which he translated abstracts in English in 1980.

The fundamental difference is that Allana does not mention at all the Hindu legacy of the Ginān̄s. His method is based on two points: the Ginān̄s take root in the universal principles of Islam, and Ismailism is a Sufi *ṭarīqah*. It is interesting to note that he is one of the first to use the term *ṭarīqah* to coin the Ismaili community. It is now the official word, used for instance in the last constitution of 1986. Allana points out that the first Ginān̄s were composed in Sindhi, especially Pīr Satgur Nūr and Pīr Saḍr al-Dīn's ones. Many abstracts of Ginān̄s in Sindhi are quoted in his introduction. The author is however cautious: he does not pretend that the Ismaili Pīrs were Sufi although Ismailism comes from the same tradition. There is an exception : La^{c}l Shahbāz Qalandar.[28] Giving evidence in quoting Sunni authors, he says that Shahbāz was Pīr Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn's son; what he means is he was an Ismaili, and states he was 'a practising Sufi Ismaili'.[29] While Hāshim Lālū had quoted two verses in Persian attributed to La^{c}l Shahbāz Qalandar without mentioning he was Ismaili,[30] Allana does not use Shahbāz for his demonstration perhaps because the Qalandar's poetry is sometimes excessive, when, for instance, he claims Hallāj's heritage.

Allana does not discard for all that the problem of the 'Hinduness' of the Ginān̄s. He divides them in two categories: the first with those which were composed for the conversion of Hindus to Islam, and the second with those which were addressed to the new Muslims. The link between the Khoja religion and Sufism gives evidence of its Islamic rooting. As a matter of fact, Allana tries to demonstrate that the Ginān̄s took their inspiration in the quintessence of Islam. First of all is the *kalimah* (*shahādah*). While quoting several abstracts, he shows that the Ginān̄s point out its role as a fundamental of Islam. The *kalimah* is the main fundamental of Islam to the extent that it

expresses its credo, namely the unity of God, which is designated by Allana with the word *waḥadiniyat*.[31] This choice is interesting. Allana does not use the word *tawḥīd*, the most commonly used term for expressing monotheism in Islamic context. It is possible to see Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh's influence, since he made what he called 'monorealism' one of the fundamentals of Islam. The Imām had elaborated this concept from the Sufi concept of *waḥdat-e wujūd*.[32]

Despite these specifics, Allana uses the same method as Lālū: he instrumentalizes the Ginān*s*. He begins by expounding the articles of the Islamic faith, in its mystical version, then corroborates the correspondence of these principles with Ismailism while quoting extracts from the Ginān*s*. On the *shahādah*, Allana asserts that numerous Ginān*s* enjoin the Khojas to keep a strong faith in this truth of the unity of God. One more time, Allana illustrates his discourse with extracts of Ginān*s* by Satgur Nūr, Sayyid Imām Shāh or Sayyid Nar Muḥammad. Some Sufi authors like Jāmī or Sanāʾī are also quoted. After pointing out that the references to the Qur'ān are numerous in the Ginān*s*, Allana draws a parallel between the *tawḥīd* as it was expressed in the Qur'ān and some of Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn's verses. In the same way, he clarifies the problem of the prohibition of alcohol while quoting Nar Muḥammad's Ginān*s*.

After establishing the Qur'ānic origin of the Ginān*s*, Allana has to give evidence that Ismailism is a Sufi *ṭarīqah*. The best evidence is the *ẓikr*, the meditation which was named *yād ilahī* or *samaraṇ* by Hāshim Lālū. The use of this Arabic originated term is probably recent. Here the demonstration is based on the quotations of three different elements: Qur'ānic injunctions, Persian Sufi quotations and extracts of Ginān*s*. The finality of this method which is based on resemblances is to prove that these three sources belong to a unique tradition. Allana ends his introduction in weaving many similarities, semantic as well as semiological, between Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif. Both the poets used the same metaphors, for instance, the woman seated near the spinning wheel represents the believer in meditation who is waiting for seeing the Beloved. Moreover, their poetry is sung in the same *rāga*.[33] Thus, he roots the Ginān*s* in Sindhi culture, obviously the Sufi culture of Sindh, which rests on another Islamic source, as for instance the Shiite tradition.

In his partial translation of *Shāh-jo risālo*, Ghulamali Allana makes no reference to the Ginān*s*. However, he put much emphasis on the debt that Shāh has to the yogis and *saṃnyāsī*. He claims that some of Shāh's *bayt* are reminiscent of Vedāntic mysticism, although he re-balances that by asserting that many of his *bayt* also contain *ayat* from the Qur'ān.[34] Finally, the prevalent idea on which Allana concludes is that many parts of the *Shāh-jo risālo* are close to Buddhist mysticism, especially *Sur Ḥusaynī*.[35]

The Ginān̄s as a Source of Sindhi Sufism

Another Sindhi intellectual is Ghulām ᶜAlī Allana. In his first publications, he used the *nisba* Khwajah. Born in the Sindh delta, he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sindh. A specialist in Sindhi literature, Khwajah Allana put forward a different thesis in the small book he published on the Sindhi literature. The Ginān̄s, he argued, are the origin of Sufism expressed in Sindhi language. Allana does not deny that the Ismaili Pīrs, particularly Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn, have been influenced by Persian Sufis like Rūmī, but he stresses that their genius comes from the fact that they succeeded in adapting Sufi poetry in the forms of Sindhi literature. For Khwajah Allana, Pīrs composed Ginān̄s by borrowing the *bhajan* of Hindu literature.[36] Allana gives many examples as evidence that the Ginān̄s are the origin of Sindhi Sufi literature. He was also convinced that Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn was a Sindhi by birth.

It is necessary to add that other Sindhi scholars, who are neither Ismaili nor Khoja, disagree with Khwajah Allana's view on the origin of Sufism in Sindh. They think that the examples cited by him are composed in a modern Sindhi language. It is true, for instance, for a verse that he attributed to Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn.[37]Annemarie Schimmel is herself cautious although she puts forward the hypothesis that the Ginān̄s were maybe the first evidence of Sindhi literature.[38] Most of other specialists are not so sympathetic to this idea. They rather stress the fact that 'Ginān̄s are often a hotchpotch of Hindi, Sindhi and Gujarati, and have no claim to poetical excellence".[39]

However, this attempt made by Khwajah Allana to 'Khojafy' Sindhi Sufism is meaningful. It wishes both to reinforce the place of the Sindhi Khojas in regard to the process of identity quest among the South Asian Ismailis, and to reinforce the place of Ismailis in Sindhi culture. After the Partition, it is well known that many Ismaili Khojas migrated from India to Karachi and Hyderabad (Sindh). In the 1960s, they numbered half of the total community and it is important to note that they were Kathiawari, meaning Gujarati speaking. In the field of Sindhi culture, the Khojas were too weak—in terms of number—to play a role. It is true that no Khoja was known as a great poet in the history of Sindhi literature.

Ginān̄s and Normative Sources in the Time of Globalization

Harmonising the Religious Tradition

Following the conference held in Paris by Imām Shāh Karīm Aga Khan IV in 1975, it was decided to harmonise the religious teaching among the Ismailis. The first challenge was the place of the Satpanth, the Aga Khani Khoja tradition, within the contemporary Ismaili tradition. As a matter of fact, many rituals were of Hindu origin, like the *ghaṭ pāṭ*, and they were not

practised by other Ismaili traditions, even if the Khojas were still predominant in numbers. The Ismailis who were Arabic-speaking (Syria, Yemen) or Persian-speaking (Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan) did not observe them. The second decision was to elaborate the nature of normative Islam and its place in the Ismaili tradition.

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, the Khoja tradition was re-constructed several times. In the first instance, it was the history that was to be investigated for revision. The *Nūr al-Mubīn* written by Chunara for Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh's first jubilee (1936) was declared null and void. This book in Gujarati was broadly based on narratives of the miracles accomplished by the Ismaili Imāms, as they were described in the Gināns. Amateur historians of the community were asked to write a new official history for the Ismailia Association of Pakistan. The new book, with the title *Tā'rīkh a'imā ismāʿīlīyyah*, was published in Urdu in four volumes from 1978 to 1983 in Karachi. The publication was based more on a historicist perspective than a hagiographical one. The writing of history was, nevertheless, based on the Imāms' biographies.

In the context of globalization, a first step was necessary before harmonising the religious traditions: the confirmation of a universal constitution, that means a constitution which could be used by all Ismailis. On 13 December 1986, Prince Shāh Karīm promulgated the first universal Ismaili constitution. For the first time, the Aga Khan initiated a regulation of the communities settled all over the world who recognized his authority as the living Imām. The constitution had to deal with two needs: to promulgate a news administrative re-organization due to the new migrations of the Khojas in Europe and North America, and to reinforce the Islamic identity of the community. The twenty articles were mainly devoted to the responsibilities of the new institutions. The Ismailis were settled in fifty-seven countries. The preamble, with nine elements, was totally devoted to the reassertion of the Islamic roots of Ismailism.

The *shahādah* was followed by the principle of the unity of God (*tawḥīd*), and of the ultimate prophetic mission of Muḥammad expressed in the Qur'ān. In the second part, the Shiite specificity of the Ismailis was stressed. The Imām was in charge of the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and of the teaching (*taʿlīm*) of the divine message, and he has to guide the murīd. The community was coined as a *ṭarīqah* and the *murīd* had to take an oath, the *bayah*. The Imām was the sole authority in the field of religion and community (*jamāʿat*). One must note that the only normative source mentioned was the Qur'ān. For the first time, the Imām's authority was only based on the Qur'ān, and this fact gave evidence that he was superior to the other normative sources.

In 1993, the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), through its editorial wing 'Islamic Publications', published new series of religious education books. They were first written in English, then translated in seven languages: Arabic, French, Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese, Tajik and Urdu. The publication in Urdu translation was achieved in 1997. The main stress was put on Allāh and his Prophet Muḥammad. Rituals and celebrations received minimal attention and the Indian heritage had disappeared from the publications made in London, even if some supplements were published by local Ismaili institutions for transmission of the Ginānic legacy. In the case of Pakistan, these new IIS series of publication were to replace a previous publication produced in Urdu by the Ismailia Association in Karachi. Though undated, the latter were produced before the politics of islamization enhanced by Ziya al-Ḥaqq's regime in the 1980s. The Indian heritage was stressed, and every ritual was described and explained. The contents were as follows: (1) the Qur'ān (10 p.), (2) the Ḥadīth (10 p.), (3) the Farmāns of the Imām (18 p.), (4) the Ginānṣ (16 p.), (5) the history of the two last Imām (7 p.), (6) the religious celebrations (38 p.), (7) the rituals (35 p.). As one can see, Ginānṣ were still used as a normative source even if they were only ranked fourth.

The Pakistanization of the Ginānic Legacy

In the remarkable work she published with Christopher Shackle, Zawahir Moir notes that 19 per cent of the total vocabulary used in the Ismaili Ginānṣ is Arabo-Persian.[40] It is not necessary here to review this lexicon which is composed by technical terms as well as by names of persons. The aim is only to draw themes for identifying the types of referents which were introduced. Different indications show the Ginānṣ were 'islamized' through the insertion of an Arabo-Persian lexicon, obviously when Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh went to settle in South Asia. As early as 1850, Ginānic literature in Sindhi language is seen as Persianized in comparison with Sindhi literature as a whole.[41]

The publication of the Ginānic corpus in Urdu transliteration does not add changes to the vocabulary. The language used is mainly Gujarati, which is transcribed into Urdu script. This was done because the new generations were not able to read Gujarati, and in some cases, not even to speak it. Urdu is now the communal language of the Pakistani Khojas. In any case, the study of the Arabo-Persian lexicon is fruitful. It seems more productive to analyse it in relation to the number of occurrences rather than the thematic method. The most frequently used terms are: *Śāh* (19), *ᶜAlī* (11), *momin* (10), *nūr* (7), *Pīr* (6), *dīdār* (6), *Qāyam* (3), *dunyā* (3), *Mawlā* (3). Without extrapolating, it is possible to make some comments. The most frequent

term is *Śāh* (Shāh). It has to be noted that this term is polysemical because it can mean God, the Imām, the Pīr or another guide. The second term is *ᶜAlī*. Other Shiite Imāms who are shared with the Ithnā ᶜAsharī Shiites have disappeared from the lexicon. It is obvious for Ḥusayn. ᶜAlī, on the other hand, is omnipresent.

But ᶜAlī here is not the historical figure, the brave knight: it is rather a hypostatic ᶜAlī, who could be understood as the sum of all the Imāms, finally the principle of Imāmat, which is also known as the *nūr*. In fact, ᶜAlī is used more often than *nūr*, and this gives evidence of the personification of this principle. Moreover, it is useful to remember that ᶜAlī is the Mahdī for the Ismailis. The *momin* is the one who has faith (*imān*). Among the Khojas, he is the believer par excellence. He is the virtuous believer like the *javānmard* in Persian Ismailism. The Persian word never appears in the Gināns, although Imām Mustanṣir bi'llāh II's treatise is considered like a Pīr in the tradition. It is possible that previously, the word Pīr was more frequently used.

Knowing that since the end of the nineteenth century, the Imām is the Pīr, it is possible to think that they are equivalent. It is also noteworthy that the word Imām does not occur. This is probably due to the fact that it has only recently come into use. On the other hand, in the Gināns, the Imām was a kind of *deus ex machina*, living in a very far country. Finally, the real mediator for the Khojas was the Pīr. In many cases, the authority which is superior to that of the Pīr was coined by words such as Shāh, Sulṭān or Mawlā, by which, consequently, it was not possible to distinguish the Imām from the divinity. The use of the word throne (*takht*) is to put this in the same register. The last three terms are also the reflection of the iranisation of the Gināns, but it does not mean that a new interpretation occurred at the same time. A similar concept can be expounded in Persian or Sindhi. It is, however, important to stress the congruency between Sufism and Persian Ismailism. The *dīdār*, as a word and a concept, is an example.

Among Sufi-related terms, one can note different words which refer to devotion (*ᶜishq*, *piyār*) or to eschatology (*fanā*, *payghāmbar*, *jannat*). The Prophet appears nominally only once, and another time with the word *Nabī*. God is mentionned thrice as Allāh (2) and Khudā (1), and there are also two substantives built on the radical R.H.M. (*raḥmān, raḥmat*), with the meaning of mercifulness. There is only one mention of the Persian New Year (*navroz*, from Persian *nawrūz*) and of the word service (*khidmat*), although it was a key of the reform initiated by Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh. Four Ismaili Imāms are named: Shāh Niẓār (1), Abū'l Ḥasan Shāh (1), Ḥasan (ᶜAlī) Shāh (2), and Shāh Khalīl Allāh (1). The last three lived in the contemporary period.

The terms from the Hindu lexicon are less numerous but they have not disappeared. In this register, one can find *Alakh* (3), *avatār* (2), *jug* (3), *Naklaṅkī* (1) and *nirvān* (1). It is rather difficult to explain the survival of

terms related to the hereafter (*Alakh* and *nirvān̄*). The cyclical conception of South Asian Ismailism appears through the use of three words. The term *jug* makes reference to the cycle of destruction in which we are presently (*kal jug*). The concept of *avatār*—a name given to the incarnations of Vishnu —was broadly discussed in the community press published in the Indian languages as the equivalent of the concept of *Maẓhar*, meaning 'manifestation' in Arabic. Last but not least, Naklaṅkī is the Hindu word to designate the saviour, the Mahdī of the Muslims.

Institutionalizing the Management of the Ginānic corpus

If the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Boards (ITREB) are more or less autonomous for the management of the official corpus of Ginān̄s, the research on the Ginān̄s is totaly under the control of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), created in London in 1977 by the Imām Shāh Karīm Aga Khan IV. The IIS was initially created for the promotion and the study of Islam, as well as for the better understanding of its relation with the other faiths, beliefs and practises. The IIS is divided into several departments. Most of them are devoted to what could be called communal objectives, such as teacher training and producing religious education materials. Two departments are devoted to research: the department of Qur'ānic Studies, and the department of Academic Research and Publications.

The IIS is the owner of the most important collection of Ismaili manuscripts. As numerous books devoted to the Satpanth were added, since the 1980s these collections have been under the custody of a specific librarian. Unfortunately the access to the manuscripts is made difficult for scholars. Although Zawahir Moir prepared a catalogue of some of the manuscripts in the IIS collection, it was not published and is not accessible.[42] The second collection is in the Houghton Library of Harvard University. ᶜAlī Asani published the catalogue,[43] and the third is held by a Canadian organization called 'Heritage Society' owned by Ismailis. The catalogue is online but for a few years it has been restricted to Ismailis (*ismaili.net*).

Most of the manuscripts at the IIS were collected by the Ismailia Association for Pakistan in the 1960s in Karachi. Harvard's collection was collected by Gulshan Khakee for the Ph.D. she defended in Harvard in 1972. She got them mainly from Kachh.[44] The majority of Ginān manuscripts had been copied in the nineteenth century. Before the creation of the Ismailia Associations which took control of the printing and distribution of Ginān̄s in the beginning of the twentieth century, the manuscripts were copied by individuals who were not specialists but amateurs. Unfortunately, the manuscripts give only a little information in relation to who asked for them. It seems that there was no organized patronage. The copies were

commissioned by a local community or a patron. The Ginān manuscripts at the India Office Library show that the copy was ordered by a merchant of Karachi for the community of Zanzibar.

As to the publications of the IIS, it is interesting to note that publications on the Ginān̄s are very rare. The most important books on the topic were published without its help (Moir, Kassam, et al.). Up to 2002, all the books published by the IIS were devoted to the history and the doctrine of classical Ismailism, namely, the Arabo-Persian period. However, some graduate theses were done using manuscripts held by the IIS. The year 2002 inaugurates a new phase in the study of the Ginān̄s. Two books were published by the Institute of Ismaili Studies. However, ᶜAlī Asani's volume is mainly composed of re-published articles. The second book by Aziz Esmail is an English translation of Ginān̄s. This new orientation of the IIS is significant. While the role played by the Ginān̄s as normative source is being reduced, on the one hand, at the same time they are now being given an official place in the historical and cultural patrimony of modern Ismailism. But this new status is ambivalent: does it mean that the Ginān̄s are now on the way of becoming a legacy of the past? Are they on the way of folklore or, better, of 'museumization'?

Ginān̄s and the Episteme of the Khojas in the Contemporary Period

The Place of Ginān̄s in the Pothī

The study of manuscripts collections of the Khojas shows that Ginān̄s were established as the first normative source at a relatively recent period. All these manuscripts are written in Khojkī, a secret script used by the Khojas. In fact, the Ginān̄s in manuscript form are not isolated even though the collections are most of the time known as 'Ginān collections'. A first look at the catalogues show that this conception is erroneous.

Although the Ginān̄s are an important part of the Khojki manuscript collection, around half of it, there are other writings referring to practises and beliefs which have more or less disappeared from the official publications of the Ismailis. Some elements of the episteme were partially incorporated in the new orthodoxy coined by the Aga Khans, others remain like residues, especially in rural areas, knowing they were never incorporated into the official publications, which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, sanctioned the appearance of the new canon only based on the Ginān̄s. It is difficult to name these deleted elements because of their diversity. The use of the expression 'occult' knowledge will be sufficient.

In his book on the construction of Sikh identity, Harjot Oberoi includes this knowledge in a chapter entitled 'An Enchanted Universe'.[45] The author stresses the fact that it is a real challenge to re-construct the frames of knowledge whose existence was not official and not organized. It may be the reason why this field is broadly ignored by modern research although the British officers devoted many pages to it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On Sindh, Richard Burton wrote many pages on the topic but for the Khojas one must turn to the manuscript collections because these texts were very rarely published at the time. In relation to the Sindhi context, these sources can be complemented by some manuscripts or published works owned by the India Office Library or the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

It is obvious that there is a link between the eradication of these informal types of knowledge and the establishment of the Ginān̄s as the normative source. It is also noteworthy that the consecration of the Ginān̄s was helped by the use of printing. Before, the manuscripts collections show very clearly that Ginān̄s were only one element among others inside the *pothī*. The *pothī* was the fundamental element of the Khoja episteme. What is a *pothī*? According to Richard Burton, it is a prayer book for private devotions.[46] They are only used by the literate Hindus. They are copied by their owners or, most of the time, transmitted from father to son. These volumes are very respected, and silk is used to cover them for protection. Usually, they are not shown to foreigners. It is interesting to compare their contents with other *pothī*, the Khoja ones, and also those owned by other Sindhi communities.

A table below shows that the Khoja knowledge was a part of an episteme which was prevalent in Sindh, and probably in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. The elements of the Khoja *pothī* are similar, though they are not set in the same place. They are: (1) prayers, (2) Sindhi poetry, (3) abstracts from sacred writings, (4) folk narratives, and (5) divination treatises. These different categories allow us to highlight a first feature of the Khoja episteme. The most surprising point is indeed that the contents of the *pothī* are, according to the categories we use for analysing, eclectic. Classical religious texts like the *Bhāgavata* or the *Sukhmaṇi* may be followed by folk narratives (*qiṣṣo*), poetry (*kāfī*) and treatises of magic. This content questions the usual divide between the 'great tradition' and the 'lesser tradition', and also the opposition between popular religion and scholarly religion.

For the believers, the *pothī* form a unity, and the transition from an abstract of the story of Arjun, the legend of ᶜUmar and Mār'uī, and the consultation of a *Fāl nāmo* (book of divination) occurs without break. The reason is that every element, every component of the *pothī* answer to different

necessities of the day-to-day life. These needs arise at different times of the day, month, year and life-cycle. The flexibility of the *pothī* allows every group, and inside it every individual to build his or her own vision of the world, which was adapted to his own situation. Inside the Sindhi episteme, the Lohāṇās have got their own episteme, and the Khojas their own, but among these communities, different praxis could coexist.

SINDHI *POTHĪ* AND THEIR CONTENTS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY[47]

	Burton's description	*SOAS Manuscripts*	*IIS Manuscripts*
1.	Prayers and addresses to Śrī Gaṇeś and Śrī Gopāl Hari	Kāfī	*Pānd* and *kīrtan* of Tulsī Dās[48]
2.	Abstracts from *Bhāgavata*[49]	Story of Arjun, 5th guru of the Sikhs	Ginān̄s
3.	*Sukhmaṇi* of Nānak Shāh[50]	*Qiṣṣo* of Purān Bhagat	*Bayt* of Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif
4.	Sindhi poetry (*madāḥ, panjrā, munājāt)*	*Fāl nāmo*	Prayers
5.	Fāl nāmo	*Qiṣṣo* of ᶜUmar and Mār'uī	*Fāl nāmo*

It is now necessary to turn back to the Khojas for studying the historical evolution of their *pothī*. Unfortunately, it is, however, impossible to establish a typology of the contents because there are too many variations according to their localisation. On the contrary, the chronological perspective clearly shows that from the middle of the nineteenth century, a new element appears: different types of literature related to the *Ahl-i bayt* or writings attributed to the Shiite Imāms. The Khojas knowledge appears to be atomized and this may be due to the lack of authority for this informal learning. As a matter of fact, there is no indication that a particular figure had authority in this field. Consequently, it seems likely that this knowledge was decentralized and local. Lastly, the sacred writings of Hinduism are rare in the *pothī* but there are different texts of mystical Hindu poetry attributed to Kabīr, Tulsī Dās and others.

The Ginān̄s are the element of the Khoja tradition to which many recent studies were devoted. However, no global approach has been taken even if the book published by Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle partially follows this objective. It is obvious in particular with the classification they propose for the Ginān̄s. The point which is the most surprising in the Ginān corpus is its diversity. This means not only diversity of the themes, but

diversity of the versions of the same Ginān. We are led to think that broad scope was given in the transmission of these sacred texts: every scribe or Bhagat who learned them by heart used this latitude for adapting the text to a familiar context at a local or regional level.

This point is particularly obvious in the work done by Gulshan Khakee for her Ph.D. that she defended at Harvard University in 1972. Gulshan Khakee studied the same Ginān *Dasa Avatāra* in two different versions: the first was the Ismaili Khoja version she had found in Karachi, and the second was the Imāmshāhī's version that she had found in Burhanpur (Khandesh). The first manuscript was the oldest, dated 1715 and the other was dated 1815.

About the latter, Gulshan Khakee writes: 'In appearance, the work looks much more Hindu than Islamic. The myths are almost all Hindu.'[51] The differences between the two manuscripts is so strong that except for the central motif, which is far from being prevalent, namely, the theme of the tenth *avatār* of Vishnu embodied in ᶜAlī and the Imāms, the two Ginān̄s are incomparable: they seem to be two different texts although they have the same title. This suggests that these two texts were constantly re-written—so that they could keep their intelligibility for the people to whom they were addressed. The Bhagat possessed without doubt a broad capacity and freedom to improvise, to add new literary motives on a central theme, either narratives from Hindu mythology or narratives from local folklore, to adjust them to a specific community.

Pieces of Vernacular Literature

The table shows that different types of vernacular literature were included in the *pothī*. All the types of Sindhi poetry can be found. The authors are not always mentioned, and when they are, famous ones are included with unknown ones. A manuscript without date, but probably recent, has thirty verses from the *Shāh-jo risālo*.[52] Among the types of literature, the *pothī* include *bayt*, which are two elements with two hemistisches of various numbers, following a specific rhythm. In popular poetry in Sindhi, the *bayt* are often composed with three hemistiches. One manuscript shows that the scribe has copied the verses shortly after the poet's death. It is noteworthy that long after the first edition of the *Shāh-jo risālo* was published in 1866, the Khojas were still copying selections of the work, as shown by a manuscript copied in the 1930s. Other *bayt* were composed by unknown poets. Some of them were probably Khojas, when they are devoted to Ismaili saints like Sayyid Muḥammad Shāh.

According to Annemarie Schimmel, the *kāfī* is the most typical element of Sindhi literature.[53] This category is the most important in the *pothī*. Only

two authors are mentioned, Gush Muḥammad and, surprisingly, Pīr ᶜAlī Shāh, Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh's son who was Imām for a short time from 1882 to 1885. The title of Pīr shows here he was the future Imām. Other literary forms like the *madhā* (*madāḥ*) are anthems of praises addressed to God and the Prophet. Another interesting type of literature is the *qiṣṣo*, the folk narrative in prose or in verse. This is the only piece of vernacular literature to have been printed in Karachi in 1881. The *qiṣṣo* turned to a mystical meaning when Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif incorporated it into his *Shāh-jo Risālo*. Since then, authors have used it for symbolising the mystical quest.

Last, there is a narrative in the *pothī* which looks to be specific to the Khojas: it is called *Satī Mā-jo rozo* (The saint Mother's fast). Up until recently, this narrative was recited for special occasions, especially when a disaster occurred like an earthquake. As it is shown by its name, the Khojas had to fast in the memory of the saint Mother (*Satī Mā*) who, following Amīr Pīr's advice,[54] kept fast for having a son. It is not known when the narrative was re-named *Mawlā jo rozo* (The Lord's fast, namely the Imām ᶜAlī) and though a *majlis* still occurs, the narrative is not recited anymore.

Writings Attributed to the Ahl-i Bayt

The writings attributed to the *Ahl-i Bayt* can be divided into two categories: the invocation writings and the divination writings. The last one cannot really be seen as a Shiite type of literature. From the middle of the nineteenth century, some pieces of the Shiite literature are nevertheless recurrent in the *pothī*. In most of the cases, these writings – which are always in Sindhi —are attributed to the Shiite Imāms. The most important category is that of the *marṣiyo*. In the classical Shiite literature, the *marṣiyo* are funeral elegies relating Imām Ḥusayn's martyrdom. Before turning to the specificity of the Khoja *marṣiyo*, it is necessary to note the spread of this Shiite literature in Sindh.

Usually, since the number of the *marṣiyo* in the *pothī* increased from the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars state that this phenomena was due to Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh's coming to Sindh. There are however, two points to highlight. On the one hand, Burton wrote as early as 1847 that the Khojas were specialists of *marṣiyo*. Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh settled in Sindh in 1843, and it is difficult to think that if the *marṣiyo* were unknown before, the Khojas were already specialists four years later. On the other hand, one knows that this Shiite literature was in vogue in Sindh since the Talpurs, Shiite Baluchis, ruled the country (1783). As a matter of fact, the *marṣiyo* in the Sindhi literature are much older, as one can see with their existence in a thirteenth century manuscript.[55] Moreover, Ḥusayn's martyrdom as a literary motif was introduced in Sindhi literature by Shāh

ᶜAbd al–Lāṭif. He devoted to it a complete chapter in his *Shāh-jo risālo*.[56] It is, nevertheless, under the Talpurs that the *marṣiyo* became a literary type, especially with Ṣabīt ᶜAlī Shāh's work (1740-1810).

In the *pothī*, the *marṣiyo* are devoted to the three first Imāms, and also to members of the Imām's family, or even to their companions. A manuscript dated 1853 contains twenty verses of Ṣabīt ᶜAlī Shāh.[57] Another one dated in the 1870s contains different *marṣiyo* devoted to different members of Imām Ḥusayn's family: Imām Zayn al-ᶜAbidīn (Ḥusayn's son and successor as Imām), Qāsim (Ḥasan's son and Ḥusayn's nephew, engaged with Sakīna), ᶜAlī Akbar (Ḥusayn's son), ᶜAlī Asghar (Ḥusayn's grandson, the previous one's son), Sherbānu (Ḥusayn's wife), ᶜAbbas (Hasan' son and Ḥusayn's nephew), and Sakīna (Ḥusayn's daughter).[58] Information is lacking for understanding the development of the *marṣiyo* among the Khojas. It is, however, possible to propose an hypothesis.

During my investigation, I found no evidence of an ancestor's cult among the Khojas. This fact is surprising because the Khojas are all the descendants of Hindu converts, and it is well known that the ancestor's cult is, in Hinduism, a fundamental ritual for all the sects and castes.[59] Consequently, it is possible that Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh, who was himself a direct descendant of Imām Ḥusayn, knowing the Sindhi fascination for the Shiite pathos, convinced the Khojas to give up their ancestors' cult to perform the cult of their spiritual ancestors, Imām Ḥusayn and his family members who perished at Karbala. It could also explained why Burton spoke about them as specialists of *marṣiyo*, while he never spoke like that of other communities, not even the Ithnā ᶜAsharī.

The writings attributed to the *Ahl-i bayt* are not restricted to the *marṣiyo*. There are also *noho* in the *pothī*. Most of these writings are in Sindhi, but one can find some in other north Indian languages, as for instance Hindustani, which is devoted to Imām Shāh Khalīlallāh, Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh's father, who was assassinated in Yazd (Persia) in 1817.[60] Another Shiite category is the *majalas* (Arabic *majlis*). In the *pothī*, they are devoted to the Prophet, or to the Imām, or to Fāṭima. Lastly, several *pothī* contain a short prayer in Persian known as *Nad-e ᶜAlī*. A manuscript dated 1890 from Kera, in Kachh, is ornamented by ᶜAlī's sabre, Ẕulfīqār, which is surrounded by *Nad-e ᶜAlī*. This short invocation is nowadays very popular among the Sindhi Khojas.

Among the other Islamic religious writings, the most numerous are the *bayāno* and the *risālo*. They are attributed to Imām Ḥusayn and above all Imām Jaᶜfar Ṣādiq. One can also find *nūr nāmo* and *galio*. The *galio* are religious instructions attributed to the Prophet and the Imāms. A manuscript named *Fatḥ nāmo*, meaning the 'Book of the Conquest', describes what are the hero's deeds on the battlefield in relation with Imām ᶜAlī. Other treatises attributed to the *Ahl-i Bayt* are devoted to soteriological questions or miracles.

The majority of writings attributed of the *Ahl-i Bayt* are nevertheless the *Fāl nāmo* and the *Khāb nāmo*. The *Fāl nāmo* or divination books are the most numerous. They are attributed to the Imām ᶜAlī and above all Imām Jaᶜfar Ṣādiq or to Pīrs like Pīr Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn or Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn. Others are anonymous like the *Fāl nāmo* of the birds and the angels or the one of the day and the night. The *Khāb nāmo* or the Books of the Dreams are, when the author is mentioned, always attributed to Imām Jaᶜfar Ṣādiq. All these writings have today totally disappeared from the Khoja episteme. They were never published.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the publication of polemical books shows that confessionalism is at work in Sindh. This literature testifies that there were debates among the Hindus which opposed Ārya Samājī and Akālī, and also among Muslims. For the Khojas, the question was to decide whether they were Ithna ashari Shiites or not. Because the Ginān*s* were at the core of the Khoja religious heritage, they quickly became a crucial stake in the process of identity construction. In this period of doubt, Hāshim Lālū's aims were twofold. He had to prove that Ismailism was a Sufi *ṭarīqa* but simultaneously, he proved that Sindhi Sufism came from the same origin as the *Vedānta*. The comparisons he made with Shāh Lāṭif's *Shāh-jo risālo* and the Ginān*s* allowed him to root Khoja identity in the Sindhi culture, at a time when a unique identity was still shared by Hindus and Muslims, often coined as 'Sufi culture of Sindh'. After the Partition, the Sindhi Khojas stressed the resemblance of the themes developed in the Ginān*s* and Shāh Lāṭif's *risālo*. This period was distinguished by the vanishing of references to Sindhi Hinduism—known as *Vedānta*, even if some scattered references still appear in the last Ginānic corpus published by the Ismailia Association in Karachi.

From the 1980s, during the period of globalization, the main feature is the withdrawal of the Ginān*s* as a normative source. This discarding is due to the elaboration of a new tradition emphasized by the present Imām Shāh Karīm Aga Khan IV: to encompass all the Ismaili traditions with all their differences, and to build upon a normative Islam. It is, however, important to note that the Ginān*s* still play a prevalent liturgical role among the Khojas, and it would be relevant to study their function in the field of performance and emotion. These performances are obviously a key for understanding the process of communal cohesiveness. During this period, the technical lexicon of the Ginān*s* was made more Sufistic. Sindhi Sufism did not play a role in this evolution; in the last edition of the Ginānic corpus, the Sufi lexicon was slightly amplified and was used for harmonizing the Khoja

tradition with Islamic references, and also to reinforce the position of the present Imām. The place of the Gināns in the elaboration of the modern Ismaili tradition raises many other questions when one has an opportunity to look at the manuscripts collections owned by the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

Indeed, it is very important not to isolate the Gināns from the different contextual levels in which they are contained. The Gināns were an element among other materials in the *pothī*, which are today located at different institutions, chiefly in the library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. The study of their contents shows heterogeneity: different types of prayers and evocations addressed to different persons, the Imāms' genealogies, pieces of vernacular literature and above all writings attributed to the *Ahl-i Bayt*. The most interesting element is the quantity of divination books, most of the time attributed to the Imām Jaᶜfar Ṣādiq. Consequently, only a global study of the *pothī* could allow one to draw a fuller picture of the Khoja episteme. Two points are nevertheless to be noted. On the one hand, this heritage is shared by the Khojas with other communities like the Hindus. On the other hand, the fact that the collections are mainly subsequent to Imām Ḥasan ᶜAlī Shāh's arrival in South Asia does not allow one to know how old was this episteme.

Finally, this brief study claims that the management and the transmission of the Khoja religious heritage is not limited to the Gināns. The question is not only to know if they express a spirituality which is close to Sufism, or if they are an authentic piece of Hindu originated spirituality. The Gināns convey a thematic, lexical and religious system which were proper to the Khojas, but which harmoniously fit into a regional episteme. The religious thinking expressed in the Gināns was born from the context of intensive exchanges between different communities. For reasons which were proper to them, the Ismaili Pīrs and their followers had elaborated an autonomous religious thinking. Today, the globalization of the Ismaili tradition instituted by the present Imām Shāh Karīm Aga Khan IV has forced regional traditions to shape themselves according to a normative Islam.

Notes

1. Hooda, 'Specimen of Satpanth Literature'.
2. By Sindhi area, I mean Sindhi-speaking area: Sindh proper, and the other areas where a Sindhi dialect is spoken such as Kachh (Gujarat), Lasbella (Baluchistan), and so on.
3. Khuhro, 'Hindu-Muslim Relations in Sind', pp. 73-6.
4. Thakur, *Sindhi Culture*, p. 40.
5. The result was: 18 seats for the Sindh Ittehad Party, 11 fo the Sindh Hindū Mahāsabhā, a Hindu confessional party, 8 for the Congress, 4 for the Sindh

Muslim Jamāᶜāt, a Muslim confessional party, 9 for the independant Muslims, 3 for the Sindh Azad Party, 2 for the independent Hindus, 1 for the Workingmen. One can note that the Muslim League is absent.

6. It is noteworthy that in the Sindhi literature, Shāh ᶜAbd al-Lāṭif's work, better known as Shāh Lāṭif or Shāh, is the ultimate reference in the field of Sufism (Shāh Abd al-Lāṭif, *Shāh jo risālo*). The best study of his work was published by Annemarie Schimmel (Schimmel, *Pain and Grace*).
7. This question was studied with full details by ᶜAlī S. Asani (Asani, *The Būjh Nirañjan*). But the Ginān chosen by the author was an exception in the Ginānic corpus.
8. Boivin, 'A Persian Treatise . . .", pp. 124-5.
9. It is true that several court cases in the nineteenth century tried to clarify the links between the Khojas and the Aga Khan. The question of the real religious identity was never raised till the Hājī Bībī Case in 1905. See Boivin, 'Hiérophanie et Sotériologie . . .', pp. 289-91.
10. I'd like to thank Sherᶜalī ᶜAlīdīnā for the generous help he gave to me, by granting me access to valuable texts which were used in my research.
11. On this very popular text among the Khojas, see Iqbal Surani, *Explication des vertus de la Connaissance dans le Kalâm-i Maulâ, un texte ismaélien fondamental,* Paris: Librairie d' Amérique et d' Orient, Jean Maisonneuve sucesseur, 2003.
12. This literature deserves to be studied after the pioneer work published by Zawahir Moir (Moir, 'Debates amongst Indian Ismailis'), without including the Sindhi production.
13. Goolamali, *An Appeal to Mr. Ali Salomon Khan.*
14. Lālū, *Islām ain sanātan.*
15. Parsram, *Sind and its Sufis*, p. 83.
16. Idem, p. 105.
17. Lālū, *Ḥaq mawjūd,* p. 41.
18. Idem, pp. 67-8.
19. Lālū, *Islām ain sanātan*, p. 5.
20. Idem, p. 6.
21. Idem, pp. 11-12.
22. Idem, p. 12.
23. Sulaymān, *Chirāgh-i mariᶜfat.*
24. Boivin, *La rénovation du Shiisme ismaélien . . .*, pp. 194-5.
25. ᶜAlīdīnā, *Tārīkh imāmat*, p. 8.
26. Idem, p.12.
27. Idem, p. 247.
28. On this enigmatic saint, see Boivin, 'Reflections on Laᶜl Shāhbaz . . .'.
29. Allana, *Ginâns of Ismaili Pīrs . . .*, p. 36.
30. Lālū, *Ḥaq mawjūd*, p. 121 and 149.
31. Allana, *Ginâns of Ismaili Pīrs . . .*, p.73.
32. Boivin, *La rénovation du Shiisme ismaélien . . .*, pp. 149-56.
33. Allana, *Ginâns of Ismaili Pīrs . . .*, pp. 91-2.

34. Allana, *Selections from the Risalo . . .*, p. 27.
35. Idem, p. 35.
36. Allana, *Sindhi Literature,* p. 14.
37. Idem, p. 13.
38. Schimmel, *Sindhi Literature.*When I met her in Karachi, I asked her about the basis of this assertion. She simply confessed that she had borrowed it from Khwajah Allana. Personal communication, October 1997, Karachi.
39. Ajwani,*History of Sindhi Literature*, p. 56.
40. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns . . .*, p. 43.
41. Billimoria, *Bibliography of the Publications . . .*, p. 78.
42. Moir, *A Catalogue of the Khojki MSS*. It surveyed around a quarter of the total collection.
43. Asani, *Harvard Collection.*
44. Gulshan Khakee (d. 2002) was the first to hold a Ph.D. on the Ginān *Dasa avatāra*, with Annemarie Schimmel as supervisor.
45. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, pp. 139-203.
46. Burton, *The Races That Inhabit the Indus*, p. 335.
47. Richard Burton gives the list of what is usually found in *pothī* (Burton, idem, pp. 336-7). The second element comes from a *pothī* owned by the library of School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. The last one comes from the masnuscripts collection of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London (Noorally, *Catalogue of the Khojkî Manuscripts*, p. 30). The elements are given in the original place they have in the *pothī*. It is worth noting that there are drawings of Purān Bhagat, Arjun and Udero Lāl, in the SOAS manuscript, in a naïve style.
48. Tulsī Dās (1532-1623?) is the author of the *Rāmcaritmānas*, a re-creation in Hindi of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the most popular religious book in northern India.
49. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, one of the most popular of the Hindu sacred writings. It relates the achievements of Krishna.
50. A part of the *Ādi Granth* attributed to Guru Arjun, not to Nānak Shāh.
51. Khakee, 'The Dasa Avatāra', p. 41.
52. Noorally, *Catalogue of the Khojkî Manuscripts,* p. 30.
53. See her small volume on Sindhi literature (Schimmel, *Sindhi Literature,* p. 16). She repeats to a large extent the typology given by Richard Burton who states that the *kāfī* is much appreciated by the people (Burton, *The Races That Inhabit the Indus*, p. 79).
54. On Amīr Pīr, a recently 'invented' saint, see Boivin, 'Hiérophanie et sotériologie'.
55. Baloch, *Sindhi Script*, pp. 88-9.
56. Ghulam Rasul Baloch begins his anthology of Sindhi *marṣiyo* with an abstract of this chapter (Baloch, *Sindhi marṣiya,* pp. 29-34).
57. Moir, *A Catalogue of the Khojkî MSS*, p. 129.
58. Asani, *Harvard Collection,* p. 164
59. For the ancestors' cult (*piṇḍo*) in Sindh, see Burton, *The Races That Inhabit the Indus,* pp. 349-58.
60. Asani, *Harvard Copllection*, p. 113.

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Some Gināns Common to Bārmatī Panthī and Satpanthī Traditions

Mohan Devraj Thontya and Françoise Mallison

The Bārmatī Panthīs—who often prefer to be called Maheshwaris (*Maheśvarī*s) because of their devotion to God Śiv—today form a Hindu sect affiliated to the vast movement of Santism specific to Saurashtra and Kutch. They belong to the Meghwar Dalit caste of Kutch and Lower Sindh. As will become evident in this paper, it is clear that the Bārmatī Panthīs once formed one of the many branches of Nizari Ismailism previously called Satpanth. These branches were founded by local Pīrs, in this case, Mataṅgdev. Eventually, they separated from the Satpanthīs and reaffiliated themselves with popular Tantric currents of Hinduism.

The Bārmatī Panthīs worship their founder saint and his descendants as incarnations of God. They are Mātaṅgdev, Luraṅgdev, Mātaïdev and Māmaïdev, whose four *samādhī*s called *cārdhām*s or *gaddi*s are the main pilgrimage places of the *sampradāy.*[1] The *samādhī*s are located in Sindh. Mātaṅgdev's is located at Seṇī Thar near Ali Bandar; Luraṅg's at Ṭharaï Ḍhaṇḍh; Mātaï's at Bhādrā Ḍhaṇḍh in the Division of Badin, deltaïc Indus; and Māmaï's is at a different location at Makalī, a royal necropolis near Thatta. The first three are situated on the bank of the Fuleli, formerly the eastern branch of the Indus which emptied itself into the Rann of Kutch. A predominantly Ismaili area, historically speaking, on it lies the sanctuary of Pīr Tāj-al-dīn also the place where Pīr Dādu and his two slaughtered brothers had been staying.[2]

The pioneering work of Dominique-Sila Khan[3] has made us aware of a devotional literature among some local *panths* of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Sindh, which is similar to the Gināns of the Satpanth Ismailis which contain Nizari concepts. These *panths* should therefore be recognized as offshoots of Nizari Ismailism. This major discovery which challenges the belief that

Gināns belong exclusively to the Ismaili Khoja community was only possible thanks to a comparative study of texts found among the Satpanthī and other surrounding traditions.[4]

Notably, the Bārmatī Panthīs also call their devotional texts *Gināns*, or more precisely, '*Mamaïdeva jo ginãna*'. Indeed, a comparison of similar Gināns found in both traditions strengthens the hypothesis of a previous affiliation of the Bārmatī Panthīs to the Satpanthīs during the long period of fluctuating boundaries between Nizari Ismailism and Hinduism from the eleventh century to the eighteenth century.

Quite a few Bārmatī Panthī Gināns depict the life events of Mātaṅgdev who is sometimes worshipped as an avatār of Śiv and sometimes of Alī or/ and Nikalaṅk. The story of Mātaṅg, avatār of Alī / Nikalaṅk, is also told in a Satpanthī collection of Gināns recorded from oral sources in Kutch by Sacedina Nanjiani in his *Khojā Vṛttānta* in 1892. We shall examine one Ginān pertaining to Alī–Mātaṅga in each tradition.

The Bārmatī Panthī Version

The Gināns of the Bārmatī Panthī tradition are attributed to Māmaïdev (fourteenth century?). There are allegedly one thousand of Māmaïdev Gināns covering diverse topics: history and social status of the Meghwars, the creation of the universe, the prophecy of the time to come (*Āgama vāṇī*), and historical events connected with the founder-saints.

The Bārmatī Panthī belief is that the Gināns, originally composed by Māmaïdev, were orally transmitted to his sons who taught these Gināns to their own sons and followers who ultimately put them down in writing. Over time, those who possessed original copies of the Gināns started to preserve them by recopying the Gināns from the original texts. In the past, the Mātaṅgs, priests of the Bārmatī Panthīs and descendants of the lineage of the founder saint, were reluctant to part with even a single copy and would not give them to any other Mātaṅgs except their own sons. Whatever the reasons might be, the practice confined the Gināns only to the homes of Mātaṅgs and of a number of Maheshwari Meghwars who traditionally preserved the hand-written copies of Gināns at their homes. The prevailing belief was that Gināns as scriptures were most sacred, and that if secret lines of Gināns were uttered during marriage or in corresponding rituals, they had miraculous powers. Being themselves unable to decipher the hidden meaning of the secret lines of the Gināns, the Mātaṅgs were convinced of the idea that the scripture of Māmaïdev should neither be tried to be deciphered in order to understand its meaning nor be given to anybody. These beliefs led to such extreme protectiveness that the manuscripts came to lay under heaps of dust and remained illegible particularly among those

who were already quite illiterate and busy striving for their livelihood. This situation led to chaos and confusion of the literary form of the Gināns, and at the same time, the interest and the learning process among Mātaṅgs and Meghwars came to a halt. The Gināns and the Panth became '*gupta*' (hidden). Yet, despite such confusing circumstances, the Mātaṅgs continued to sing the appropriate Gināns on corresponding religious occasions, and always received due respect from the Maheshwari Meghwars.[5]

The Māmaïdev Ginān given here is *Alī Bhaḍajī cāla* (The Desire of Ali the Brave). It is taken from a copy in Gujarati script made on a copy-book by Mr Gaba Bhanji Lalan (who was born in Kutch and died in Karachi in 1995), a direct descendant of Lalan, the youngest son of Māmaïdev. He may have copied his collection from a copy of Mātaṅg Muraj Dossani Lalan, from the village of Jarua, Anjar in Kutch. Other copies of this text may be found in collections owned by Mātaṅgs of Karachi, Sindh, Kutch and Gujarat, with many variants in spelling and wording. Meanwhile, the text below is a faithful transliteration of the manuscript we have been able to consult. Keeping in mind the uncertainty of transmission and the esoteric character of the text, the following translation is no more than an approximate rendering.

Transliteration: *Atha Alī Bhaḍajī cala lakhaī che*

– Ālamotha gaḍha Ālī bhaṇe, kamaṇa porakha mujā bhākhatra pāre.
Paca vīsa ne trapana gāma, teme koka porakha sāda suṇāve.

– Tava uṭheo Āsapāra Paḍeo, to gora hu bhākhatra pāru.
Paca vīsa trapana gāma, teme sarave sāda suṇāvyu.

– Uṭha satagora kara jata, jāvo Jabhu dīpa. Ugamaṇī jāīne gamaṇa kīdhī.
Agīā sīma sata sojata. Thāna besīne dāna desu rā raka seja vasu.

– Be benīyā nuṃ vera hato, te paṇa meḷa karasu.
Ao Ālī ne kamaḍa rūpa racata, Deva koka nākho ejāṇa.

– Gujara khaḍha ne Maḍhaḍo gāma, ucarato Damarū nāma Mātaṅga Deva jo.
Megā damara ne masakata chatrara, turī Hasa Veda Rājā.

– Dekha Monārā Mulatānajā, je jo cheḍo āe Jabhu dīpa.
Mulatāna ae Mīre jo ṭhama. […]

– No avatāra prabhu āge rameo, dasamuṃ karama ganī āo Mātaṅga Dhaṇī Megavāreje gare.
Apanagora, Aṭhanagora ne Vadhana gora, Veāsagora, Karajuga kai sākha me chūṭo.

– Karama kare to koeḍā. Tuja sudhara ne tuja Sata Gora, tuja gora leo sāra.. […][6]

– Teja vācā dane Bhāṇavatī kejī pare, Bhaṇavatī dane Bhīke,
Ke Baḍa rājīo dhara, Vamaṇa thaine vaca pare kara dasama ao […].

Translation: *The Desire of Alī the Brave*

– From the fort of Alamut, Alī proclaims: 'Which person will fulfil my wish?'
In some one hundred[7] and fifty three villages, [only] a few men can spread the message.

– Then Āspār Paṇḍiyo rose: 'I will fulfil your desire, O Master.
In these some one hundred and fifty three villages, everywhere I will spread your message.'

– 'Be ready Satgur! Make it true, go to the continent of India.' Going towards the East, he started his journey.
The way ahead seemed clear. 'Seated on a throne, I will give gifts and rule the wealthy and the poor alike.

– I will bring together (reconcile) the two enemy sisters.'[8]
Alī came, and which manifestation did he take? O Lord, give any hint!

– In the land of Gujarat, in the village of Maṇḍro, there Mātaṅg Dev's name will be proclaimed Damru.
Meghā is his divine boon, on his head, the canopy, his guard is Has Ved Rājā.[9]

– See! The Minarets of Multan, which is on the corner of the continent of India.
Multan is the home of Mīrs.[10]

– The Lord took nine incarnations in the past, as the tenth Lord Mātaṅg came to the houses of Meghwars with a great *karma*.
There are masters of Upaniṣads, masters of Atharva Ved, of Veds, like Guru Vyās, but who has witnessed the end of the Kaliyug?

– The *karma* offers the solution. You are true, you are the true master, give us protection, O Master.
.....

– It was he who fulfils the promise given to Bhāṇvatī, Bhāṇvatī gave to Bhike. *(?)*

[With] King Baḍ[11] *(?)* becoming Vāman, He kept his promise and came [again] as the tenth avatār.

The Satpanthī Version

The Satpanthī/Nizari Ismaili version of the same text is given in Nanjiani's *Khojā Vṛttānta*, in a chapter entitled '*Mātaṅganuṃ kavita*' (Verse on Mātaṅg).[12] The circumstances of the recording of Satpanthī historical literature by Sacedina Nanjiani should be noted. A Khoja defector, Nanjiani was Assistant Revenue Commissioner in Kutch from 1874 until 1892. He wanted to prove with the help of the samples of oral literature that he collected there during some twenty years that these pieces were in fact complex texts, partly pertaining to Hinduism. Whatever his position, we are thankful to him for preserving this historical material, the source of which is now lost.[13] Nanjiani reproduced faithfully the more or less chaotic oral form of the texts which offer the same difficulties of orthography, coherence and interpretation as we have seen for the preceding Bārmatī Panthī sample. Commenting on the poem, Nanjiani himself remarks: "It is impossible at places to understand the meaning of this *kavita.*"[14]

Transliteration: *Mātaṅganuṃ kavita*

Alamutagaḍha Ālī bhaṇe, koko muñjā bhākhatra pāḷaśe, pacavīsá gāma sostrapana etarememṃ sada sambhaḷāve, taba uthyo Nūrasatagura neṇavāya, Deva tārā bhākhatra pāḷaśuṃ. Jema Hajarata-Alī kahe tema karaśuṃ, ugamaṇa jaï gamana karaśuṃ. Āgaḷa sīma nahiṃ sujanta, do neṇa bhera rodana kīā. Agaḷa che Pālaṇade mayā, be beṃnaḍīno hato te melāpata karaśuṃ, Amanagura, Aṭhanagura, Vadanagura, Vyāsagura, kaḷajuga kaï sākha phuṭo, karana to kare koyaḍā. Amoe Ālī, amoe Iśvara, amoe rūpa āgaḷa dharante; Maḍhadvīpa, Jaṃbukhaṇḍa, Ḍamara Mātaṅga nāma ucarante, thāna beṭho dana deśe, rāya raṇka doya sījavaśe. Dekha munārā Mulatānajā, Mulatāna aye Murendhuṃ ṭhāma. Suṇe na Subhrama nava avatāra daśa avatāra āge ramyo. Daśamo Meghavāreṃ je ghare, Mahesarī Mātaṅga āyo Deva.

Translation: *Verse on Mātaṅg*

From the fort of Alamut Alī says: 'Only few people will obey my word. At a distance of one hundred fifty three[15] villages my call will be heard.' Then Nūr Satgur rose, eyes in tears: 'O Lord! I will keep your word. I will follow

what Hazrat Alī says. Toward the East I will make my journey.' Ahead the way is unclear, tears roll from both his eyes. Ahead Mother Pālaṇ De[16] is living. 'I will bring together (reconcile) the two enemy sisters.' There are masters of [Upaniṣads],[17] masters of Atharva Ved, of Ved, gurus like Vyās, but who is the witness of the broken Kaliyug? Actions[18] give the solution. It is I, Ali, it is I, God, I have already taken many incarnations. At Maḍhadvīp (Maṇḍro), in the continent of India, it is the name of Mātaṅg, Ḍamar, which will be proclaimed. Seated on the throne he will give alms, he will rule over both rich and poor. See the minarets of Multan, Multan is the home of Mīrs. Listen to God, nine avatārs [came and went], the tenth avatār has come. The tenth, Mahesarī Mātaṅg Dev, came to the homes of Meghwars.

Both versions of this Ginān are in a mixture of Kacchi and Gujarati languages with a predominance of Kacchi. Is there likely to be a common author? The Bārmatī Panthīs assert that Māmaïdev is the author of all their Gināns. There is no oral signature line (*bhaṇitā*) in the last verse of the poem in the Satpanthī version attributing it to an Ismaili Pīr. However, the mention of '*Mahesarī Mātaṅga*' in the last line reminds one of the *bhaṇitā* of Māmaïdev (often '*Māhesri / Māiserīyā*'). Thus, it is tempting to attribute both versions to Māmaïdev.

The content of the Ginān (in both versions) is Nizari: Alī, the king of Alamut, requests his followers to accept to be sent as *dāʿī* to the East, that is, India. The one who responds is Nūr Satgur, the great first Ismaili Pīr who came to India. Of course, Alī and Nūr Satgur are not contemporary, but Alī might be an eponymous appellation of the Imām of the time. Nūr Satgur who in the Bārmatī Panthī version bears the name of Āspār Paṇḍiyo,[19] accepts the Imām's command. However, according to the Bārmatī Panthī hagiography as recorded in both versions of the Gināns, Satgur Nūr will have to meet Alī again at Maṇḍro village in Saurashtra. Alī will appear there in the form of his tenth avatār, as Mātaṅgdev/Ḍamru whose mission is to preach to the Meghwars.[20] The Ginān introduces the concept of *Dasa avatāra*, a concept that is familiar to the Satpanth tradition as well as the Bārmatī Panthī tradition, but in the latter case, Alī/Naklaṅki takes on the form of Mātaṅgdev.

To conclude, we would like to give two more texts, one Bārmatī Panthī and one Satpanthī, different in their form but both concerning the life story of Alī linking Alamut, Mecca and Gujarat. The Bārmatī Panthī Ginān is taken from an unpublished manuscript as was the case with the previous Ginān, and has no signature.

Transliteration: *Ālī bhaḍa jī vagata (sura sindhoḍo)*

– Āla khaṇḍha te Ālī jāeo, sadho juga jo vīyā,
Jotasīeṃ jā jotaja joeā, ta Ālī āe Ālamota gaḍha jo rā (1)

– Ālī jīyāṃ huṃto kuṃvāro, Gura Pegambara jo teṃyāja vāro,
Taḍa te ubho vañcāya pāre, ghara Nabhīyeṃ je guṇa ucāre. (2)

– Andha gopa khuvo nirārambha khāṭa, Nabhī porī besāḍeo pāṭa,
Bārasa terasa ne paḍava bīja, etarā pora Ālī bhogaveā. (3)

– Punama taṇu gareo ḍiṃ, Tālabha taṇu vagareo sīṃha,
Ālī kesara jaleo kane, raḍa vaḍadho mokaleo … (4)

– Cetara māse gata samaṇe se sāmbharo, āyā kaṭaka vembhara taṇā,
Māre kaṭaka pīche kheḍa, Ālī jo dhaḍa āvyo aṇata apāra. (5)

– Vaisākha māse bhībhī Phātamā peṇase, gambhīra dhunaka hava dharase,
Rava dīvo ne corī Giranāra, tenī dhamara maṅgara dese sagaḍo soṃsāra (6)

Vela

– Pāṭa Pegambara keo, ka Bhaḍa Māhāvīra Ālī Śera te thaï ne avatareo.
Eḷo Kāyama Deva te keo, ka Ālī āe Ālamota gaḍha jo rā re bhāïo.

Translation: *Narration of Ali the Brave* (tune: *Sindhuḍo* [warsong])

1. Alī was born in the land of Alamut. He, who is the son of the whole world!
The astrologers saw in his horoscope that he was the king of the fortress of Alamut.

2. When Alī was a young prince, it was the time of the Prophet, the Master.
Standing on a high place (*?*), he fulfils the promise and proclaims the merits of the house of the Prophet.

3. The earth, like a well, was hidden in the darkness. The sky (*?*) was infinite, the Prophet properly set the *Pāṭ* (low table used for rituals).[21] The twelfth, the thirteenth, the first and the second day,[22] as many days as that spent Alī.

4. When it was the day of the full moon, a lion roared at the [place of] Ṭālib.[23]

Alī caught in his ears [the voice of] the lion which was sent with a fierce roar.

5. O people! Listen carefully, the army came in the month of Caitra, full of destruction.
The army attacks and pushes from behind, the army of Alī strikes, numberless and incomparable.

6. In the month of Vaiśākh, Lady Fātima will marry (*?*), the deep rhythmic beats will then be sounded.
The sun will be the lamp and Mount Girnār[24] the wedding canopy, the whole world will offer marriage songs.

Refrain

The Prophet set the *Pāṭ*, the brave hero Alī was born as a lion.
God, the Lord of the Resurrection (or God Eternal) did that. Alī came as the King of the Fortress of Alamut, O Brothers.

The Satpanthī text is not a Ginān, as such, but a short piece of two verses entitled *Pāṭha* found in Nanjiani's collection[25] with what could be a *bhaṇitā* of Pīr Sadruddīn.

Transliteration: *Pāṭha*

Pachama daśe Alī apano bhaṇīje, soï Dhelama deśa,
Gaḍha Alamota Pāṭaṇa kahīje, tyāṃ beṭhā mānakha veśa. (1)

Keka agavā thānaka kahīje, varacā māṃhe vāsa,
Pīra Sadaradīna cālīā, kroḍī chatriśa laïne sātha. (2)

Translation: *Invocation*

1. Among us, Alī is said [to live] in the West, in the very country of Daylam.
The fort of Alamut is said to be the city of Pāṭaṇ, there he is sitting in the attire of a man.

2. It is said that his seat is the first, and there is proclaimed his dwelling.
Pīr Sadardīn came (to him) with thirty-six crore [of souls].

Both texts make Alī the king of Alamut as in the previous Gināns, but in the second shorter examples, it may be argued that Alī is understood as the

incarnation of the Imām of the time since it is stressed that he appears in '*mānakha veśa*', that is, human attire. Conversely, the Bārmatī Panthī version is consistent and refers only to Hazrat Alī. He is born in the house of Abū Ṭālib, and as a young man he fights at the side of the Prophet Muhammad to help him in his divine task (verse [*ved*] 2 to 5). But this same Alī is born in Alamut and rules over its fortress (verse [*ved*] 1 and refrain). Moreover, he is married to Fātima in the Saurashtra province of Gujarāt, at Mount Girnar. The refrain gives a precise description: the one who is the Brave Hero, like a lion in the battle, is the same as the king of Alamut, and is awaited as the redeemer at the end of the time (*Kāyama Deva*, the *Qā'im*).The intermingling of the three loci *Alamut, Mecca* and *Girnār* shows to what extent the Bārmatī Panthīs, at one stage of their history, might have been part of the Ismaili Satpanthīs, and this in spite of the present Hindu affiliation of the Bārmatī Panthī community.

Notes

1. On the history of the Bārmatī Panthīs, see Mohan Devraj Thontya, 'History of Barmati Panth', manuscript draft, 124 pages; Nathalal Gohil, *Bāramatī Sampradāya (Kaccha-saurāṣṭranā meghavāḷa samājamāṃ cālatī bāramatī upāsanā),* Ahmedabad: Shri Meghani Lokvidya Sanshodan Bhavan, 2002; Kavi Kanji Khengar Kocara, ed., *Māmaïdev Purāṇa*, Gandhidham, 1974; Matang Malsi Ladha Bhagavant, ed., *Mātaṅga Purāṇa, ane Meghavāḷa samājanā utpati*, Gandhidham: Matang Jatashankar Malsi Bhagavant, 1992.
2. We thank Dr. Michel Boivin for this piece of information. See Françoise Mallison, 'The Bārmatī Panth: A Messianic Sect established in Sindh, Kutch and Saurashtra', forthcoming.
3. Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities, Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis of Rajasthan*, New Delhi: Manohar and Centre de Sciences Humaines, 1997.
4. Françoise Mallison and Zawahir Moir, '"Rencontrer l'Absolu, Ô Ami", un hymne commun aux hindous tantriques et aux musulmans ismaéliens du Saurashtra (Gujarat)', in *Altérité et identité: Islam et christianisme en Inde*, ed., J.Assayag and G. Tarabout, *Puruṣārtha* no.19, Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1997, pp. 265-76.
5. In the 1960s, some Maheshwaris in Karachi became interested in Gināns and tried to collect them from the Mātaṅgs. The late Mr Kheraj Thontya, the father of the author, was among them. He used to note down Gināns recited by Mātaṅgs at his house and collected hundreds of them from different Mātaṅgs, including Mr Malsi Ladha Bhagwant of Kutch (who died in 2003), the author of *Mātaṅga Purāṇa* on the history of the Bārmatī Panth (see note 1). Inspired by their example, the author collected some more Gināns after his father's death. He has with him now as many Gināns as an average Mātaṅg.

6. The last part of the Ginān cannot be read properly on the manuscript and does not make sense. It looks like an incomplete interpolation.
7. *Paca vīsa* for *pāñca*: 5 x *vīsa* : 20, an idiomatic turn standing for 100, namely, 'quite a number of'.
8. The two enemy sisters are often interpreted as Islam and Hinduism but there is nothing to confirm this.
9. The King *Has Ved* could be 'Hariścandra' who is often associated with Nikalaṅk as one of his main followers.
10. The apparition of Multan is surprising here. Multan was the capital of a short-lived Ismaili kingdom around AD 1000. The Mīrs, Mers, Mihīras are a tribe who came from Central Asia around the fifth century. They spread in western India from Rajasthan to Sindh, Punjab, Gujarat.
11. King Baḍ would be the Demon King Bali who was defeated by the fifth avātar of Viṣṇu, Vāman. This verse seems to be an erroneous addition, it does not offer any possible meaning.
12. Sacedina Nanjiani, *Khojā Vṛttānta. Khāsa Khojā grahastho sārū*, Ahmedabad: Sanshet Bahadur Press, 1892, p. 134. The first lines are quoted by K.M. Jhaveri in *Gujarātī sāhitya, V, Madhyakālano sāhityapravāha*, ed. K.M. Munshi, Mumbai: The Sahitya Prakashak Company, 1929, p. 194.
13. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, SOAS South Asian Texts, no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992, p. 58; Zawahir Moir, 'Historical and Religious Debates amongst Indian Ismailis 1840-1920', in *The Banyan Tree: Essays on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages*, ed. Mariola Offredi, vol. 1, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, pp. 139-42.
14. Nanjiani, *Khojā Vṛttānta*, p. 134.
15. *sostrapana* for *trepana*: fifty-three or *so*: a hundred and *trepana*? *So* would then repeat *pacavisá* (*pāñca vīsa*).
16. Rāṇī Pālaṇ De, the daughter of the king of Dhar, having been converted by Nūr Satgur, became his disciple and his wife.
17. '*Amana*' does not make sense as the usual word in this type of enumeration is '*Apana*', meaning Upaniṣad, as in the Bārmatī Panthī version.
18. '*karana*' does not make sense and could be there for '*karama*' meaning *karma*, as in the Bārmatī Panthī version. This passage remains however obscure in both versions.
19. *Āspār Paṇḍiyo,* as the title given to Nūr Satgur in the Bārmatī Panthī hagiographic Gināns, could be explained as follows: *Paṇḍiyo* for Pandit (learned, as used for the famous Mahāmārgī Sant: Devāyat Paṇḍit, supposed to be the brother of Mātaṅg Dev), and *Ās-pār* as a formation based on *Āśā-pūrā* 'the one who fulfils all the desires'. This is the name of the famous Devī, patron of the Kingdom of Kutch, who receives many royal rituals. In this Ginān, the learned Nūr Satgur fulfils the desire of Alī, and this title is particularly suited to the occasion. Incidentally, the royal rites of the consecration of a new king in Kutch included a ritual by a Meghwar priest of the Bārmatī Panth who put a *ṭikā* on the forehead of the future ruler.

20. On the hagiography of Mātaṅgdev see Mohan Devraj Thontya, 'History of Barmati Panth', draft, pp. 4-13.
21. *Pāṭa*, the plank on which the ritual offerings are placed for the *Pāṭa-pūjā* of the Bārmatī Panthīs, but also the low table used for the Satpanthī ritual of *Ghaṭa-pāṭa.*
22. These are days counted from the lunar fortnights of the lunar months during which special rituals might be observed.
23. '*Tālabha*': Abu Ṭālib, father of Alī.
24. '*Giranāra*': Mount Girnār near Junagadh in Saurashtra (Gujarat), a sacred mountain, abode of holy men of all persuasions, famous for its Śaiva, Śakta and Jaina shrines as well as Sufi tombs.
25. Nanjiani, *Khojā Vr̥ttānta*, p.169.

Gināns Attributed to Unknown Composers

Translated by Balvant S.Jani

Editors Note

We introduce you here to fifteen texts selected, transliterated and translated by Dr. Balvant S. Jani, University of Rajkot.

The texts are taken from a volume, in his possession, entitled *Śrī Nakalaṅka bhajanasaṅgraha*, vol. 1,[1] which contains about three-hundred short texts of the *pad-bhajan* type in honour of Nakalaṅk Avatār. Nakalaṅk, a form of Kalki, the tenth avatār of Viṣṇu, is represented by the Shi'ite Imām Alī in the Ismaili Satpanth tradition. However, these *pad*s are signed by authors either unknown to (or possibly forgotten by) the Ismaili Satpanth tradition. At the same time, the second volume, entitled *Nakalaṅka śāstra,*[2] contains longer texts or *granth*s composed by Pīr Shams, Pīr Sadruddin and Pīr Hasan Kabiruddin whose works are recognized to be part of the Satpanth tradition. The two volumes date from 1921 and 1922 respectively. They were published by the *Nakalaṅka Jñāna Prasāraka Maṇḍaḷa* (the Circle for the Propagation of the Knowledge of Nakalaṅk) of Bombay.

It so happened that in his native place of Kamaḷāpur (tāluka of Jasdaṇ, Rajkot District), where Dr Balvant Jani spent his childhood, there was an important Khoja Ismaili community. Before these Khojas departed for Pakistan due to the Partition, they shared a warm and mutual friendship with the Hindu community. Dr Jani's grandfather used to visit frequently his Ismaili Satpanthi friends' homes to sing Gināns with them, and he used to collect hand-written and published Ginān books which he kept at home. Dr Jani, thus, got to know the local Satpanthi Ginān tradition, and he inherited these documents.

But who were the authors of the *pad-bhajans* found in the first volume, a selection of which are translated here? With names like Hīro, Tribhovan, Lakṣmaṇ, Jīvaṇ Mastān, etc., were they Hindu? Or were they Ismaili

Satpanthis who also had Hindu names? All we know about the composers of the *pad-bhajan*s are their names with the exception of Trīkam who is said to be the first author of a group hailing from the 'Borasada Nakalaṅka Jñāna Prasāraka Maṇḍaḷa', and thus originating from Borsad (Anand District). Dr Jani thinks that these individuals may have been the heads of local Ismaili Satpanthi communities, namely, their Mukhīs or Kāmaḍiās[3] who were not necessarily relatives of Pīrs or Sayyids. They might also simply have been *Guptī* Khoja devotees who secretly adhered to Satpanthi Ismailism but were outwardly Hindus.

The three-hundred texts in the first volume are highly interesting for the study of Ginānic literature. They share the language, the images and the style of Ginān compositions, and contain themes and teachings of Satpanth Ismailism. For these reasons, according to Dr Jani, these compositions ought to be called 'Gināns'. They also show striking links with the *pad*s of the Saurashtrian *sant-vāṇī* tradition, and some of them indicate more explicit connections with the *pāṭa-pūjā* cult of the Mahapanthis, one of the components of the *Sant-vāṇī* current. In addition, almost all the compositions are preceded by the title line of a well known Vaiṣṇava *pad* to indicate the correct melody of the composition.[4]

The fifteen texts provided here comprise four *pads* by Hīro (A - I to IV), three by Tribhovan (B – V to VII), three by Mansukh (C – VIII to X), four by Lakṣmaṇ (D – XI to XIV), and one by Trikam (E - XV). Dr Jani has transliterated and translated each of the following texts on the basis of the volume in his possession (I-XV).

Compositions

A. Hīro

I

Nakalaṅkane namana karo

(Bheravī)

Nakalaṅkane namana karo dasamuṃ darasana che,
Magna manamāṃ haśo to premathī paraśana che; (1)

Bhajana karo sajana māra e khudānuṃ nura che,
Chupāvyo e chupato nathī hājarā hajura che. (2)

Arūpamāṃthī rūpa dhāryuṃ bhupano e bhupa che,
Veda vāṇī vadī rahyā tejanuṃ svarūpa che; (3)

Bhaktano bhagavāna che (ne) Kāḷīṅgāno kāḷa che,
Patnīono pati pyāro māvadīno bāḷa che. (4)

Bhakta taṇā kalaṅka kāpī Nakalaṅka kahevāya che,
Kārya badhāṃ purāṃ karī tejamāṃ samāya che; (5)

Hātha joḍī Hīro kahe Alī mahāro āya che,
Jñāna dhyāna gotī guṇa Govindanā gāya che. (6)
(p. 6, garbo no. 10)

I

Bow down to Nakalaṅk

(*Rāg Bhairav*)

1. Bow down to Nakalaṅk, He gives His vision as the tenth incarnation of God,
   If your mind is engrossed in meditating upon Him, He will be pleased with your love.

2. O my King! Worship Him who is the lustre of God,
   Even hidden, He cannot remain hidden. He is ever-present in front of you.

3. From the Formless He took form, He is the King of kings,
   He is himself the form of the Light of the speech that the Veda utters.

4. For the devotee, He is God, and for the demon Kāliṅgā He is the Death,
   For the faithful wives, He is as dear as are their husband to them, and for the mothers he is dear like their child.

5. Since He erased the blemishes of his devotees, He is called 'Nakalaṅk' (the Immaculate One),
   After having fulfilled the mission [of His appearance], He submerged Himself in His [original] light.

6. Folding his hands, Hīro says that Alī is mine.
   Having searched out through knowledge and meditation, he sings the merits of Govind.

II

Sāta Vārano Garabo

(Jaḷa bharavā dīyo e rāga)

Alī āvone kaḷīyuganāṃ kuḍāṃ karamone ṭāḷavā,
Daraśana dīyone paraśana thai Alījī amane pāḷavā; (*ṭeka*)

Somavāre te Sāmaḷiājī mane māragaḍāmāṃ māḷīyājī,
Daraśanathī dukhaḍāṃ ṭaḷīyaṃjī. Alī āvone (1)

Maṅgaḷavāre te mana māruṃ samaraṇa karatāṃ lāge sārūṃ,
Jaga juthuṃ te lāge khārūṃ. Alī āvone (2)

Budhavāre baḷa buddhi āpo saṅkaṭa svāmī mārāṃ kāpo,
Huṃ chorūṃ tamārūṃ ne tame bāpo. Alī āvone (3)

Gurūvāre guṇa gāīśuṃ tārā dasamā darasananā che vārā,
Nakalaṅka Naraharī dhaṇī che mārā. Alī āvone (4)

Śukaravāre sācā sāthī jaḷamāṃthī choḍāvyo hāthī,
Aḷagā nā raho Alī mārāthī. Alī āvone (5)

Śanīvāre suratī hoya sārī mukti malaśe maṅgalakārī,
Joī joīne Jāūṃchuṃ huṃ vārī. Alī āvone (6)

Ādītavāre Antarajāmī, Nakalaṅka namuṃ huṃ śiṣa nāmī,
Guṇa gāya Hīro ānanda pāmī. Alī āvone (7)

(p. 8, garbo 14)

II

Garbo of the Seven Week Days
(Singing style: Jaḷ bharvā dīyo)

O Alī! Come to dispel the evil deeds of the Kali Age, come to erase them;
O Alījī! Be pleased and afford us your vision to maintain and nourish us. *(Refrain)*

1. On Monday Sāmaḷīyā met me on the way,
   By his vision the miseries were removed. O Alī! Come...

2. On Tuesday my mind feels good to remember you,
   And I realize that this world is false and disagreeable. O Alī! Come...

3. On Wednesday give us intelligence and strength, and O Lord! Remove our calamities,
   You are my father, and I am your child. O Alī! Come...

4. On Thursday we will sing your merits; this is the turn of having your vision in your tenth [incarnation].
   Narhari Nakalaṅk is my master. O Alī! Come...

5. On Friday you are our true companion; you rescued the elephant caught by the crocodile in water,
   O Alī! Please do not remain away from me. O Alī! Come...

6. On Saturday meditation happens to be good so that we would attain the auspicious liberation,
   On having seen you I joyfully surrender to you. O Alī! Come...

7. On Sunday, O Nakalaṅk, the inward knower, I bow down to you by bending my head,
   Full of bliss, Hīro sings your merits. O Alī! Come.

III

Pandara Tīthīno Garabo

(*Rādhā Harī ramo e rāga*)

Śarasvatī mātāne samarūṃ Gaṇapatanī lāguṃ pāya,
Vāṇī āpo re nara Nakalaṅka tāṇī. *(ṭeka)*

Pāḍave padhāro pāṭa amārī māṭa ughāḍo ghāṭa,
Vāṭa huṃ jotī re nara Nakalaṅka tāṇī. (1)

Bīje śukaravāra navaserohāra karyo taiyāra,
Gaḷāmāṃ nāṅkhore nara Nakalaṅka taṇā. (2)

Trīje tribhuvana rūpa Jagatanā bhupa gunthāvuṃ khumpa,
Mukavā māthere nara Nakalaṅka taṇā. (3)

Cothe caturā nāra nīkaḷī bahāra thaī che taiyāra,
Varavā varanere nīrañjana Nakalaṅkane. (4)

Pāñcame puro āsa dharī viśvāsa āvīchuṃ pāsa,
Kahīne ubhīre nara Nakalaṅka kane. (5)

Chathe vahāla cheka mukyāṃ śum eka nahīṃe neka,
Tekanā toḍore nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (6)

Sātame karajyo sāra karaso nahīṃ vāra thaichuṃ taiyāra,
Tamārī māṭe re nara Nakalaṅk dhaṇī. (7)

Āthamanāṃ edhāṇa, āgamanī vāṇa māryāṃ hatāṃ bāṇa,
Prītīthī amane re nara Nakalaṅka tame. (8)

Nome Nakalaṅka nātha jhālīne hātha cālone sātha,
Karagarī kahīere nara Nakalaṅka hame. (9)

Dasame dayānuṃ dāṇa āpo bhagavāna bhulāvo bhāna,
Nahī nārīnere nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (10)

Ekādaśīno vr̥ta karīsuṃ tr̥ta hati e sarata,
Rāsamāṃ ramatāṃre nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (11)

Bārase pakaḍo bāṃya nahīṃ rahevāya tamo vīṇa kyāṃya,
Nathī sahevātuṃre nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (12)

Terase parabhujī tarata sambhārī sarata jāuṃ che mr̥ta,
Lokamāṃ ājere nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (13)

Caudase cālyā āpa choḍāvā pāpa jagatanā bāpa,
Meghaḍīne maḷavāre nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (14)

Puname thayā parasana dasamu daraśana dhaṇīne dhanya,
Meghaḍīne maḷīyā re nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (15)

Amārase yā Alī vāta bahu balī Hīrāne maḷī,
emdhāṇī āje re nara Nakalaṅka dhaṇī. (16)

(pp. 9-10, garbo no. 15)

III

Garbo of the Bright Fortnight Days

(Singing style: Rādhā Harī ramo)

Remembering Mother Sarasvatī, and bowing down to the feet of Gaṇapati:
'Please give me the words [to praise the merits] of Lord Nar Nakalaṅk'.
(Refrain)

1. On the First Day, please take your holy seat on the *pāṭa* (ritual table) and please open up for us the *ghāṭa* (vessel for sacred water), I am eagerly waiting for Nar Nakalaṅk.

2. On the Second Day, the Friday, the nine-stringed garland has been prepared. Put it on your neck, O Nar Nakalaṅk!

3. On the Third Day, I got the umbrella adorned for you; O Master of the universe in the form of the three worlds, put it above your head, O Nar Nakalaṅk!

4. On the Fourth Day, having decorated herself and being ready, the clever woman has turned out to marry the bridegroom, the Immaculate Nakalaṅk.

5. On the Fifth Day she is standing near Nar Nakalaṅk, saying to him that she has come to him with hope and trust.

6. On the Sixth Day, I say: 'O Beloved! You would not after all desert me like this! You have promised to grant whatever is desired. You would not, O Master Nar Nakalaṅk, give up such a vow of yours.'

7. Please render the Seventh Day excellent, that is, meet us, and do not delay. I, on my part, am eager and ready to meet you, O Master Nar Nakalaṅk!

8. On the Eighth Day, now we have got the indications of your arrival. Your words were striking arrows of love upon us, O Master Nar Nakalaṅk!

9. On the Ninth Day, O Lord Nakalaṅk! We tell you entreatingly that please walk with us holding our hand.

10. On the Tenth Day, O God! Please give us the boon of your mercy, that is, to forget consciousness [of everything] except your [newly married] wife.

11. On the Eleventh Day, you set this condition: that we should perform the vow of *ekādaśī* while playing the circular dance (*rās*), O Master Nar Nakalaṅk!

12. When the Twelfth Day has arrived, now please hold our arm, because now we cannot remain without you. O Master Nar Nakalaṅk! Now, we could not bear [any separation].

13. When the Thirteenth Day has arrived, please recollect your promise that you will come into the mortal world today, O Master Nar Nakalaṅk!

14. On the Fourteenth Day, O Master Nar Nakalaṅk, you started to deliver the world from its sins, and to meet Meghaḍī.

15. On the Full Moon Day, you were pleased, giving your vision for the tenth time and meeting Meghaḍī; it is praiseworthy for the Master Nar Nakalaṅk.

16. On the Moonless Night, O Alī! Hīro got the good news, and today he got a sign of the Master Nar Nakalaṅk.

IV

Pada Śera

Pāñcahajhāra bāvīśa varasathī Gujara deśamāṃ paḍī che rāta,
Sulatāna Mahamadaśā bhāṇa pragaṭatāṃe rajanīṭaḷibhae prabhāta;

Koṭeka śasī kī śobhā, Sulatāṃna Mahamada Śāhai;
Bandā karāle tobhā, Sulatāna Mahamada Śāhai.
Dhaṃna dhaṃna divasa ājano, dhana ghaḍī palavāra;
Sulatāna surya pragāṭa bhae, varatyo je jekāra.
Jejekāra varatāyo, āe Alī avatārī;
Bando kā bandha choḍāyo, āe Alī avatārī.
Ravī uge rajanī ṭaḷe, jīva mokṣa ho jāya;
Sulatāna Mahamada pragaṭabhae, ananta koḍano rāya;
Ananta koḍa odhāraṇa, Nakalaṅka Nirañjana Rāya;
Bhajavāthī thāse tāraṇa, Nakalaṅka Nirañjana Rāya.
Veda kītāba bhāṅkhī rahyā, Gītā kare pokāra;
Ā jamānekā hājara Imāma e dasame Nakalaṅki avatāra.
Āgaṃma tanā eṃdhāne haṃmakuṃ bacāne āe;
Nakalaṅki naranīravāṇe, haṃmakuṃ bacāne āe.
Sarakāra ke kīratāra he, saba devaṃnakā deva;
Hātha joḍī Hīro kahe, darasana karo tatakheva.
Darasaṃna hamukuṃ mīlīa paraśaṃna thayā maṃna merā;
Corāsī pherā ṭaḷiā, paraśana huvā maṃna merā.

(pp. 80-1, pad no. [4])

IV

Pad Śer

Since five thousand and twenty-two years there has been night in the land of Gujar, but with the rise of Sultān Mahamad Śā, like a sun, night there has ended and daylight has dawned.[5]

There is the beauty of billions of Moons, then, O Disciples! You decorate the Sultān Mahamad Śā. (*or* Ask for forgiveness to Sultān Mahamad Śā.)

Blessed is the day, blessed are the hour and the second when the Sultān, like the sun, has manifested Himself, and when on Him acclamation of victory has been broadcast.

The acclamation of victory for Alī the Incarnate has been promulgated; the bonds of the slaves have been removed, and Alī the Incarnate has arrived.

With the rise of the sun, the night begins to disappear; in the same way with the rise of Sultān Mahamad, the King of billions, the souls [surrounded by the ignorance] have been liberated.

There are innumerable millions of indications that Nakalaṅk Nirañjan is the king; by only worshipping Him one would be able to cross over the worldly existence.

The books of the Veda say and the Gītā declares that Nakalaṅk, the tenth avatār, is the present Imām of the Times.

The *Āgam* (hymns of prediction) indicates that He has come to save us; Nar Nakalaṅk Nīrvāṇ has come to save us.

He is the Creator of the rulers, He is the God of all gods. Folding his hands, Hīro says: Grant us Your vision immediately.

Upon receiving His vision, our minds have been pleased. The transmigration through the eighty-four lakhs of births has come to an end, and our minds have been pleased.

B. Tribhovan

V

Āje Alī maḷavāno joga

(Harī bhajatāṃ haju koīnī lāja jatāṃ nathī jāṇī re e rāga.)

Āje Alī maḷavāno joga malyo tane sārore.
Pāmyo moṅgho tuṃ manakhā deha jāse janamārore. *(ṭeka)*

Kara bhakti to bhavajala pāra Alījī utārere,
Tārī buḍatāṃ jhālase bāṃya vālo caḍhī vhārere. Āje (1)

Kharo janma maraṇano bhaya sarvane māthere;
Jama kiṅkaro jālase jhaṭa tyāre koṇa sāthere. Āje (2)

Kharekhara hisābanā lekhāṃ Alī jyāre lesere,
Tyāṃ koṇa karase thārī sahāya daṇḍaja ghaṇo desere. Āje (3)

Tuṃ to muk māyāno phanda anitīnā dhandhā re;
Kahe Tribhovana ceto koi śāhanā bandare. Āje (4)

(pp. 1-2, bhajan no. 2)

V

Today to meet Alī

(Singing style: Harī bhajatāṃ haju koīnī lāj jatāṃ nathī jāṇīre)

Today you have got a good chance to meet Alī, because you have now got a precious human body, and in it you will pass your lifespan. *(Refrain)*

1. If you would worship, respected Alī would help you cross the stream of births and deaths; when you would be drowning in the ocean of the existence, He would come to rescue you and hold your hands.

2. Truly the fear of birth and death hangs over the heads of all. When the emissaries of death come to catch you, who else will be with you?

3. When Alī takes stock of the debit and credit sides of your account in the form of your actions and gives you a heavy fine, who will be with you to help reimburse it?

4. O you all, give up the activities of immorality which is the bondage of Māyā (illusion).
Tribhovan says: O servants of Śāha, be cautious!

VI

Hāṃre mana pīrasā pīrasā tuṃ japa re

(Hāṃre Sitārāma saṅgāte sajare e rāga)

Hāṃre mana Pīrasā Pīrasā tuṃ japare japare ho,
Mana Pīrasā Pīrasā tuṃto japare. *(ṭeka)*

Kudīre māyā tārī nathī rahevānī, ante eto paḍī javānī.
Eto jāṇaje khoṭuṃ badhuṃ lapare. Ho mana (1)

Juthīre sādhanā choḍī de mana tuṃ emāṃthī pāmīśa tuṃ na kaśuṃ;
Eto jāṇaje khoṭuṃ badhuṃ gapare. Ho mana (2)

Ghara gotī tuṃ besa ṭharīne, oḷakha Alīne bhakti karīne,
Karīle Pīrasāno japare. Ho mana (3)

Oḷakhī Ie Nakalaṅka dhaṇīne, parakhīne tuṃ pārasa maṇīne;
Kaḷīyugano jāpa tuṃ japare. Ho mana (4)

Kahe Tribhuvana kāyā paḍī javānī bhumi bhaḷīne māṭī thavānī,
Eto hatī pañcabhutanī kharī lapare. Ho mana (5)

(p. 2, bhajan no. 3)

VI

Oh! Mind! Repeat 'Pīr and Lord'

(Singing style: Haṃre Sītārām saṅgāte sajare)

O Mind! Repeat 'Pīr Shah' 'Pīr Shah'.[6] O Mind! Repeat 'Pīr Shah' 'Pīr Shah'. *(Refrain)*

1. Deceitfull wealth will not stay with you forever; it is going to disappear at last. Hence, know all these (material) things as deceitful obstacles.

2. Abandon false worship! You will obtain nothing from it; know all this as counterfeit rumours.

3. Having searched out the home [in the form of real devotion], become steady and sit down in it, and perform devotion to recognize Alī. Repeat 'Pīr Shah'.

4. You, recognize the philosopher's stone, [that transforms the iron into gold], in the form of the Master who is Nakalaṅk. Practise the *jap* [repeating the word] of the Kaliyug.

5 Tribhuvan says that this body is going to fall; it will merge into the earth by mixing with the dust. This body is an encumbrance made of the five elements.

VII

Tuṃ māna śīkhāmaṇa

(rāga garabī)

Tuṃ māna śīkhāmaṇa māyarīre, dhara Śāhānuṃ ekaja dhyāna.
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. *(ṭeka)*

Muka jhaka khoṭī tuṃ manathīre, rākha ṭhekāṇe tāruṃ bhana;
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. (1)

Avara na āpe koī lāḍavore, āpa dhīṅgā dhaṇīne māna;
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. (2)

Bhame bhavamāṃ śuṃ tuṃ bhutaḍare, muka māyānuṃ khoṭuṃ tāna;
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. (3)

Paramārathamaṃ tuṃ pāya dharīne devuṃ hoṃśe Karīne dāna;
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. (4)

Dāsa Tribhuvananī vinatīre, karo arpaṇa Alījīne jāna;
To Pīraśā pāra utāraśere. (5)

(p. 4, bhajan no. 8)

VII

May you accept the advice

(Singing style: Garbī)

May you abide by our advice and meditate on Shah only; then Pīr Shah will help you cross over the cycle of transmigration. (*Refrain*)

1. If you give up the persistent temptations in your mind and keep your thoughts in proper place; then, Pīr Shah will help you cross over the cycle of transmigration.

2. None else is going to give you the sweetmeat [of liberation]. Believe in the steadfast powerful Master; then Pīr Shah will help you cross over the cycle of transmigration.

3. Why are you loitering in many births like a ghost? Give up the wrong absorption in illusion; then Pīr Shah will help you cross over the cycle of transmigration.

4. Having aimed your feet in the direction of the highest goal (or generosity), you should give donations; if you do, then Pīr Shah will help you cross over the cycle of transmigration.

5. The servant Tribhuvan urges: Bestow your life to respected Alī; then only will Pīr Shah help you cross over the cycle of transmigration.

C. Mansukh

VIII

Yā Alī

(Śrī Rādhīkāpatī e rāga)

Yā Alī dhaṇī karī karūṇā ghaṇī,
Dayā karī dāśa pare, āvyā ambhaṇī. *(ṭeka)*

Nara Nakalaṅka Nārāyaṇane vanduṃ vāraṃvāra,
Sadabuddhī sevakane āpo, dīnataṇā dātāra. Yā Alī (1)

Tama guṇa gāvā jñānaja āpo, dayā karī dayāḷa,
Bāpā bāḷa tamārā jāṇī, sadā karo sambhāḷa. Yā Alī (2)

Sevakanā saṅkaṭa kāpīne, svāmī karajyo sahāya,
Bhavasāgaramāṃ buḍato dekhī āvī pakaḍo bāya. Yā Alī (3)

Bhakto upara bhāva karīne, dhaṇī dyone daraśana,
Tamane maḷavā talapī rahyāche, sevakanā tanamana. Yā Alī (4)

Arja amārī dhyāna dharajyo, dayā karīne deva,
Manasukhadāsa tamāro kaheche, joḍīne kara beva. Yā Alī (5)

(pp. 83-4, pad no. 1)

VIII

Oh! Alī! Great mercy you have done

(Singing style: Śrī Rādhīkāpatī)

O Alī Master! You have shown great mercy on us.
Having pity on your servants, you have come to us. *(Refrain)*

1. I bow down repeatedly to Nar Nakalaṅk. O Generous to the poor! Please give a straight mind to your servant.

2. O Merciful, take mercy and give us knowledge to sing your merits. O Father! Always take care of me as if I were your child.

3. Please help your servants by removing our calamities. Please take hold of my hand upon seeing me drown in the ocean of births.

4. Keeping mercy on your faithful, O Master, bestow your vision. The body and mind of your servant have been restless for meeting you.

5. O God! Please take mercy on us and consider our entreaty. Your servant Mansukhdās requests you with clasped hands.

IX

Tame āvone Nakalaṅkarāya

(Mārā Satapanthanā Saradāra e rāga)

Tame āvone Nakalaṅkarāyare, Yā Alī alabelā,
Tama dāsanī karavā sahāyare, dhaṇī āvajo vahelā. *(ṭeka)*

Bhaktajanone uddhāravā, tame padhārone Mahārāja,
Vahelā āvī Vīṭhalā, tame sudhāro sevakanā kājare. Yā Alī (1)

Vāyado cothā Jugano, tame karyo hato Kīratāra,
E edhāṇa āvī maḷyuṃ, have vilamba na karaso lagārare. Yā Alī (2)

Dāsa sarave ātura che, daraśana dayo dayāḷa,
Mana vāñcchīta phaḷa āpavā, tame Karūṇā karo kṛpāḷare. Yā Alī (3)

Dāsanā dukhane ṭāḷajyo, dhaṇī āpīne odhāra,
Manasukha upara mahera karī, Prabhu ughāḍo mokśaṇuṃ dvārare.
Yā Alī (4)

(p. 84, pad no 2)

IX

O King Nakalaṅk! Please do come

(Singing style: Mārā Satpanthnā sardār)

O King Nakalaṅk! O Alī, the charming one, You please come to help your servant,
O Master, please do come soon. *(Refrain)*

1. O Great King! To rescue persons who are your devotees, please do come. O Viṭhal! Please come soon and improve the tasks of the servant.

2. O Creator! You made the promise to take incarnation in the Fourth Age. Since signs of its fulfillment are here, please do not delay in the least.

3. O Clement One! All the servants are eager to have your vision. O Graceful One! Please take mercy and bestow the fruitful wish of their mind.

4. O Master! Give us relief; please remove the pains of your servant. Taking mercy on Mansukh, O Lord! Please open the door to liberation.

X

Oma Alīne pāya paḍo

(Gaubrāhmaṇa Pratīpāḷa Mahārāja e rāga)

Oma Alīne pāya paḍo sahuṃ, bhajana karone bhāva thakī,
Nakalaṅka Nara nirañjana keru, dhyāna dharo kare sahāyanakī. *(ṭeka)*

Sahu maṇḍala maḷīne karo bhajana ṭaṅkāra,
Tethī vhālo vege āvī kare sahunī vhāra. Oma (1)

Dayā nidhī che deva eto sarvano saradāra,
Kāḷiṅgāne mārī karase, bhaktono udhāra. Oma (2)

Satapantha prakāśī kevuṃ karyuṃ sahune jāṇa,
Āgama vāṃṇinuṃ niśce maḷīyuṃ edhāṇa. Oma (3)

Dāsapara dayā karī āvyā Dīnānātha,
Magna thai Manasukha kahe joḍī beva hātha. Oma (4)

(p. 85, pad no. 3)

X

Om! Fall at the feet of Alī

(Singing style: Gaubrāhmaṇ Pratīpāḷ Mahārāj)

Om! All of you fall down at the feet of Alī and worship Him with feelings.
Meditate upon the Immaculate Nar Nakalaṅk; He will help surely.
(Refrain)

1. All of you gather together and intone the sound of devotional songs,
   so that the Beloved One would come fast and rush to succour all.

2. Being the chief of all, God is a treasure of mercy.
   He will kill the demon Kāḷīṅgā and rescue all his devotees.

3. Having shown the True Path (Satpanth), how has He revealed to all the sacred knowledge!
   The sign has been definitely received of what was already told in the *Āgam* words.

4. Taking mercy on his servant, the Lord, Protector of the miserable, has come.
   This has said Mansukh, engrossed in his devotion, with both hands clasped.

D. Lakṣmaṇ

XI

Jāga Jāga Nirañjana Nakalaṅka

(Jāga Mahādeva e Rāga)

Jāga Jāga Nirañjana Nakalaṅka bhīḍa paḍī Meghalī gatane,
Bhāta Bhātanā pantha āvīne choḍāvā beṭho che satyane.
Jāga (1) *[ṭeka]*

Jhaḍapa vahālā Meghaḍīna paraṇanāra māhāra sīradāra,
Uṭho āvīne vhālā karo māhārī vāhāra. Jāga (2)

Dasamu rūpe dedāra dharīne vhelā āvo vāre dhāvā,
Meghaḍī gata sarva vāṭa juve che Om Alīno kara shāvā.
Jāga (3)

Dhanye dharatīmāṃ dhāma dhaṇīne nirākāra najare dīṭha;
Kṛṣṇa rūpe kaḷā karīne ākhara jyotīmāṃ peṭha. Jāga (4)

E jyotī budhamāṃ āvī santa janone gayuṃ phāvī,
Uṭha Lakṣmaṇa Alī padhāryā motīḍe le tuṃ vadhāvī. Jāga (5)

(p. 98, bhajan, pad no.1)

XI

Wake up, O Nakalaṅk!

(Singing style: Jāg Mahādev)

1. O Immaculate Nakalaṅk! Wake up, Wake up! The Meghalī (Meghwal?) community is in trouble. Many types of sects have come to make it give up the original Truth. *[Refrain]*

2. O Commander, the Beloved One who has married Meghaḍī! Please get up quickly and rush to our succour.

3. Having given us your vision under the form of the tenth avatār, come quickly, rush to our help. The whole people of Meghaḍī are waiting for Om Alī to hold their hand.

4. We are fortunate that we could see the Master incarnate, He who is formless, with our own eyes on this earth! After performing the skillful [ritual] under the form of Kr̥ṣṇa, ultimately you entered into the Light.

5. On having the realization in the Light, the saints have become pleased. O Lakṣmaṇ! All of you arise! Alī has arrived, give Him the welcome with the pearls.

XII

Kr̥ṣṇa nīkalā jāgī re

(Pīlu tāla lāvaṇī. Govindā guṇa gāvore e rāha)

Kr̥ṣṇa nīkalā jāgī re ā Nakalaṅka nātha, *(ṭeka)*

Rāmā avatāre vahālā Rāvaṇane māryo ne āpyuṃ Vibhīkṣaṇa rāja;
Alyānī salyā thaī paḍī nitye odhāra āpyo śirtāja. Kr̥ṣṇa (1)

Savarī vanamāṃ rahetī hatī Bhīlaḍīnā khādhāṃ eṭhāṃ bora;
Kr̥ṣṇa rūpe līlā karī kahevāyā Mākhaṇana cora. Kr̥ṣṇa (2)

Govaradhana dhārī vhālā mahera karone Pralehādanā pratipāḷa;
Pāñca varṣano ugārī līdho Dhruva ugāryo nahāno bāḷa. Kr̥ṣṇa (3)

Maḷavāne gatane vahelā padhārajo ne odhārajo varna aḍhāra;
Nātha hamārā pragaṭa thaine utāro bhumīno bhāra. Kr̥ṣṇa (4)

Lakṣmaṇa lakṣavāra śīra nāmī līye āvyo che Om Alī deva;
Satapanthane sāco jāṇī harṣathī kari lene seva. Kr̥ṣṇa (5)

(p. 98, bhajan, pad no. 2)

XII

Kṛṣṇa has woken up and come out

(Pīlu tāl Lāvaṇī.Singing style:Goviṇḍ guṇ gāvore)

Kṛṣṇa has woken up and come out in the form of Lord Nakalaṅk.
(Refrain)

1. When the Beloved was Rām avatār, He killed Rāvaṇ and bestowed the kingdom to Vibhīkṣaṇ. Ahalyā was turn into a stone forever, He, her protector, delivered her.

2. He ate the jujube fruits tasted by Śabarī the Bhilli woman residing in the forest. As Kṛṣṇa, He performed dallying sports and was called the Butter-thief.

3. O Supporter of the mount Govardhan, O Dear One, please show compassion, O protector of Pralhād who saved Dhruv who was but a small child of five years!

4. Come soon to meet the *Gat* [the assembly of the devotees of the True Path], and to deliver the eighteen castes and classes. O our Master! Please manifest yourself for us and remove the burden [of the sinners] on this earth.

5. Bowing down his head a lakh of times, Lakṣmaṇ has come to Om Alīdev. Having come to know that only Satpanth is true, serve it joyfully.

XIII

Āratī karo dharīne ānandare

(Rāga garabī)

Āratī karo dharīne ānandare bhāi mārā alabeṃlānī āratī. *(ṭeka)*

Narata gurūjī surata gurūjī alakha purūṣa avatāra, (1)
Kyāre odhāraso gata Meghalīne koṇa māsa ne koṇa vārare.

Laṅgana levāse Dhaṇīnā āso māsamāṃ vāra thāvarane bharaṇī; (2)
Kalaṅki bījanā dīna jāna lāvase Meghārāṇīne jase paraṇī.

Neka nārā tamo hete vadhāvo melāṇa jambu dvīpa māṃya;
Paṭarāṇīne paraṇavā prabhu pāṭa padhāraśe varatāśe maṅgaḷa tyāṃya. (3)

Dhāramī dhaṇī savarā maṇḍapamāṃ cālase kaṅkaṇa bandhāse tyāṃya.
Raghuvara rāja bīrājaśe tyāre Nakalaṅka nāma dharāya re. (4)

Vāra nā karaśo vālyama mārā ānanda upajāvī mana;
Vivā karajo nātha Nakalaṅkī Meghārāṇīnuṃ puro mana. (5)

Setāna kāḷīṅgāne khaḍaka taḷe kāḍhajo karajo gata gaṅgāno udhāra;
Dhoḷa gāvā āvaśe Ratnāvaḷī Tārā Drupadī Kuntā satīyo te dvāra. (6)

Ḷadhala ḷai harīnā nāma taṇī tyāṃ bhegā thare sarve deva;
Chatra laī pāñca Pāṇḍava āvaśe have Lakṣmaṇa karī lene seva. (7)

(p. 99, bhajan pad no. 3)

XIII

Perform the waving light ceremony joyfully

(Singing style: Garbī)

My Brothers, perform the waving light ceremony of my Charming One joyfully. *(Refrain)*

1. Respected Guru is the Divine Light, Respected Guru is the Sacred Sound, He who is Unknowable, came down in the form of a man. When, which month, which day will you come to deliver the Meghalī community?

2. The marriage of the Master will be fixed up in the month of Āso, on the fixed day, when the moon will be in the constellation of Bharaṇī. On the second day [of the fortnight] [Na]kalaṅk will arrive with the bride-groom party, and will marry Meghārāṇī.

3. O You, welcome with affection the virtuous woman who will come in Jambudvīp. The Lord will sit on the *pāṭ* to marry the chief queen and, there, auspiciousness will prevail.

4. When the virtuous Master will come under the *savarā* pavilion, the auspicious thread will be tied. When the King Raghuvar will ceremoniously sit [in the pavilion], there, He will bear the name 'Nakalaṅk'.

5. O My Beloved! Do not delay. Having generated joy in the mind, O Master Nakalaṅki! Please marry Meghārāṇī and fulfill her desire.

6. Please crush the demon Kāḷīṅgā under the rock, and please emancipate the *Gat-Gaṅgā* [the assembly of Satpanthi faithful].The *Satī* [virtuous

ladies like] Ratnāvaḷī, Tārā, Draupadī [and] Kuntī will come at the door to sing auspicious songs.

7. Taking the benefit of the name of Harī, all the gods will gather together there. The Five Pāṇḍavas will come and bring the umbrella. O Lakṣmaṇ, you do serve Him now.

XIV

Gāṇṭha vāḷī Govinda vara sāthe

1. Gāṇṭha vāḷī Govinda vara sāthe, vhāḷā cho Vanamāḷī jone;
   Mana magna nā thaso udāsī, Nakalaṅka lejo nyāḷī jone;

2. Nāma taṇō mahīmā che moṭo, durabaḷano dātāra jone;
   Vasamī veḷāe vhālo māro, bhagtono taraṇahāra jone;

3. Līna thaine laganī lagāvo, kuḍa kapaṭane ṭāḷi jone;
   Nāraṇa nāmanuṃ nāṇuṃ oro, kāla krodhane khaḷī jone;

4. Manuṣyā deha te moṅgho maḷyo, Nakalaṅkane nīrakhavā jone;
   Ḍagamaga nahī tuṃ dīlaja mārā, hete harījana thāvā jone;

5. Ḷagā rahīne kyāṃ Jāva āghā, mārā manamāṃ jaḍya jone;
   Nāma samaratā om Alīnuṃ āgaḷa ghaṇā nara sīdhyā jone;

6. Yā Alīnī āśā rākho Nakalaṅkanī niśāṇī jone;
   Atharavedano āvyo vāro, jñāna gāe che vāṇī jone;

7. Līyo vāṇī Pīra Saradīnanī vaḷī Samasa Pīranī sācī jone;
   Vāre vāre śuṃ kahuṃ tujane Viṣṇu purī tuṃ vāñcī jone;

8. Carācara teṃ iśvaranā jaṇyā, khelyo bahu khuvārī jone;
   Jo jañjāla māyānī choḍī, ante jāso hārī jone;

9. Sāgaramāṃ jema pāke motī jagamaga jagamaga jotī jone;
   Heta lāvīne hoṃse dāsī, Harīno hāra parotī jone;

10. Bola be mārā mānya karajo, Lakṣmaṇa para heta dharajo jone;

(pp. 99-100, bhajan, pad no. [4])

XIV

Tied is the knot with the husband Govind.

1. The knot (of marriage) has been tied with the husband Govind. O Vanmāḷī! See! How much dear you are! O Mind! Engrossed [in Him], do not be disheartened, contemplate and minutely observe Nakalaṅk.

2. Supreme is the greatness of the Name. See how He is a generous giver to the disabled ones. See! My Beloved is the saviour of the devotees in their difficult time.

3. Get engrossed in His devotion, for if you get absorbed in Him, your fraud and treachery will be removed. By offering coins in the name of Nārāyaṇ, desire and anger can be stopped.

4. With the precious human birth that has been obtained, contemplate Nakalaṅk. O My Heart! Do not falter, and affectionately become a person belonging to Harī.

5. How far can one go by remaining separate from the one who has been studded in my mind? While recollecting the name of Om Alī, tasks of many persons have been accomplished previously.

6. Maintain hope for Alī and see the sign of Nakalaṅk. The turn of the *Atharvaveda* has come now. Take care of the words that sing the knowledge.

7. Take the words of Pīr Sadardīn; moreover, listen to the words of Shams Pīr; they are true. What should I tell you repeatedly? You yourself must study the *Viṣṇu purī* (*Viṣṇu purāṇa?*).

8. You have not realized, however, that the moving and non-moving are God, and you do see that you have played games that involve great loss. If you stay trapped in the net of Māyā, you will surely be defeated in the end; be sure about it.

9. Just as pearls are generated in the ocean, and are self-luminescent, and shining brightly, keeping affection in her heart, the servant strings the garland of Harī.

10. Please believe in a few of my words, and please entertain affection for this Lakṣmaṇ.

XV

Oma Oma Oma Alī tuṃ eka

(Harīgīta)

Oma Oma Oma Alī tuṃ eka che ādhāra māro *[ṭeka]*

Garībone pāḷanāra abhaṇane bhaṇāvanāra
Jamātane Jagāḍanāra Me-ghaḍīne paraṇanāra ...Oma

Ghāṇīmāṃ pīlanāra śaṅkhane vagaḍānāra
Dīvāno dharāvanāra kāḷīṅgāne māranāra ...Oma

Śahera Makkānā kamāḍa ughaḍaśe Pāṇḍavone bolāvaśe
Muvelī ajā jivatī karaśe bhaktonāṃ kalaṅka kāpaśe ...Oma

Maṅgalā caraṇa kahuṃ vārī vārī Trīkama jāvuṃ balihārī
Vinantī dharo radaya mārī bhavasāgarathī lejo ugārī ...Oma.

(p. 117, no. [1])

XV

Om Om Om Alī You are the only One

(Harī Gīt)

Om Om Om Alī! You are the only One, my refuge! *[Refrain]*

You are the one who maintains the poor and educates the illiterate ones. You are one who awakened the community and married Meghaḍī.

You are the one who crushes the wicked by putting them in the oil-mill, and who sounds the conch. You are the one who bears the lamp and puts to death the demon Kālīṅgā.

You only will open the doors of Mecca, and will call the Pāṇḍavas. You will enliven the dead she-goat and will remove the calamities of the devotees.

Performing the inaugural ceremony, I, Trīkam, am surely joyful with you and earnestly applaud you. Having taken to heart my request, please rescue me from the ocean of births and deaths.

Notes

1 *Śrī Nakalaṅka bhajanasaṅgraha*, vol. 1, ed. Śrī Nakalaṅka Jñāna Prasāraka Maṇḍaḷa (Mumbai), Ahmedabad, 1921.

2 *Śrī Nakalaṅka śāstra*, vol.2, ed. Śrī Nakalaṅka Jñāna Prasāraka Maṇḍaḷa (Mumbai), Ahmedabad, 1922.

3. According to Dr Jani, the tradition of appointing Mukhīs (chiefs) and Kāmaḍiās (accountants) to lead local Satpanthi Ismaili Khoja Communities may be older than generally admitted and date back to the organization of popular cults in Saurashtra. He refers to the work of Hasu Yajnik, 'The Saraju-Songs, A Living Tradition within the Devī-worship Ritual of the Vaiśya Sutār and Sorathiā and Bhopā Rabārī of Saurashtra', in *The Banyan Tree: Essays on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages*, ed. Mariola Offredi, vol. 1, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, p. 227.

4. This was done and we find indications of it, for instance, in the Gujarati compositions of the disciples of the Chisti Pīr Kayamuddin Bava from Mangrol near Surat (see H. Kantavala, *786 Bhakti-Sāgara. Jemāṃ Pīra Kāyamaḍīna Bāvā Sāheba, Abharāma Bāvā ..., Ratanabāī ..., vigerenāṃ bhajano che*, Surat, 1925) or even in Jaina compositions (see the list of 209 Krishnaite *pad*s taken from the list of 2451 model songs for Jaina compositions, and compiled by H.C. Bhayani in Appendix I of N.Vora, *'Jaina gūrjara kavio' māṃ tathā madyakālīna gujarātī jaina rāsāomāṃ nirdiṣṭa paramparāgata deśīonī sūcī*, Gandhinagar: Gujarat Sahitya Academy, 1990, pp. 369-77). This shows the integration of the *bhajan* tradition into the different religious movements of Gujarat.

5. The editor of the first volume has provided a note in Gujarati explaining that 'after the avatār of Kr̥ṣṇa, from the avatār of Buddha (Ādam) until now, that is until the avatār of Nakalaṅk, that is presently the birth of the Āgā Khān in Karachi 43 years ago [i.e. 43 years before 1921], this is the right count of years' (p. 80).

6. *Pīra-śāha* 'Pīr and Lord Imām' is a formula used for the *jap* or *zikar*; new converts were initially told to recite this formula as their *bol* on a rosary (cf. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, SOAS South Asian Texts no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992, p. 173).

A Thematic Study of a Satpanthi Ginān and a Mahapanthi Bhajan

Urmila B. Jani

Prem Pāṭaṇ, a very famous Ginān written by Pīr Shams in the Satpanth of Ismaili Khoja Muslims, stands apart distinctly in several ways from other Gināns. It consists of a loose narrative instead of mere didacticism, and is richly adorned with metaphors denoting the *Ghaṭ-pāṭ* worship. The famous Bhajan of Toḷī Rāṇī in the Mahapanth, in which *Pāṭ* worship is at the centre, is just like *Prem Pāṭaṇ*. Besides presenting the texts of both the above mentioned Ginān and the Bhajan, I shall offer a thematic study of the two works. My endeavour here is to interpret the metaphorical implications of *Prem Pāṭaṇ* and to compare it with different versions available elsewhere, to find out how and what type of alterations entered into *Prem Pāṭaṇ* and, thereby, bring out its ancient nature.

1. *Prem Pāṭaṇ* Ginān of Satpanth by Pīr Shams[1]

eji parem pāṭaṇ rājā man-śudh,
tis ghar radeā de rāṇi (1)

rājā rāṇi beṭhā mohol māṅ,
rāj kare paradhān pañc vir. (2)

hukam āveo re virā gur taṇo,
have kem revāy. (3)

hukam āveo jaṇ be taṇo
trijo kem levāy. (4)

bālak poḍhareo satie parāṇe,
cāleā dev ne duār. (5)

aradhi mejale rāe jī āveā,
tiyāṅ haraṇi dhavarāve bāl. (6)

bālak dekhine bāi ne pāno caḍio
teṇe tajiā pirāṇ (7)

hukam āvio virā gur taṇo,
have kem revāy. (8)

hukam āvio jaṇ be taṇo,
ek thi kem javāy. (9)

cādar vichāvi bāṅdhi gānṭhaḍi,
lai cāleā dev ne duār. (10)

sonā niuṅ diviuṅ āge jagamage,
beṭhā tribhovar śām. (11)

uṭho radeā de rāṇi amia pio,
khore dhavarāvo bāl. (12)

pir śamas gāji boleā,
sāṅbhalo gat jamāt. (13)

2. The Translated Paraphrase of the Ginān

The King of Prem Pāṭaṇ, Manśudh, and his Queen Radīāde are seated in their palace. The Minister and Pañcavīr are administering and looking after the affairs of the state. Just then, both the King and Queen received a message from their Guru inviting them. Both of them decide that as only two of them were invited, a third person, namely, their son, should not accompnay them to the Guru. Hence, putting the child to sleep at home, they leave the palace. On their way, the Queen saw a female deer feeding her young one. Seeing this, suddenly the Queen remembered her child and fell down unconscious. The King was again in a dilemma: as both of them were summoned / invited, he could neither wait there nor could he go alone to the Guru. The King spread a sheet of cloth, made the Queen sleep on it, bundled her up, and carried her to the temple.

The God's temple was resplendent with gold lamps. Tribhuvan Śyām (a name of Lord Vishnu) himself was present there. He asked the Queen Radīāde to wake up and taste the heavenly nectar and feed the child in her lap. Pīr Shams loudly declared, 'Listen, everyone, included those seated in the *Pāṭ* Worship'.

3. Sāsatīyā Kāṭhīkṛta Mahāpanthanuṃ Toḷīrāṇīnuṃ Bhajana[2]

Śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ re santo ameṃ, kema to ra'yeṃ re ...
Sādhuḍāṃ hoya to re ameṃ, nava to ra'yeṃ re ... (*Ṭeka*)

Vāyaka to āvyo re ameṃ, dou to jaṇāṃ re ...
Trījuṃ kāmaṇa to ke vāya, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyā (1)

Sonalāṃ kaṭārī to satīe, kara to dharī re,
Kara to dharī odara chedhyāṃ, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (2)

Odara chedhyāṃ ne satīe, putara janamyo re;
Putara janmyo re mājama rāta, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (3)

Jhāḍanī ḍāḷīye re satīe, bāndhyo hīñcako re,
Bāṅdhyo āmbānī re ḍāla, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (4)

Pavana hiñcorā hari mokale, ālama tāro re,
Ālama tāro re odhāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (5)

Bāī re pāḍośaṇa mārī benaḍī, khabarū rākho re,
Khabarū rākhājo nānerāṃ bāḷa, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (6)

Māre re jāvuṃ dhaṇīne vāraṇe, tārāṃ ke'śuṃ re,
Tārāṃ kesuṃ kesuṃ ho juhāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (7)

Cosaṭh caḍāvī gharanī āgarī, aḍasaṭha jaḍyāṃ re,
Aḍasaṭha jaḍyāṃ re kamāḍa, ho sabdunāṃ bāndhyā[ṃ] (8)

Gāya aḍhāvī satīe gondare, vācharū puryāṃ re,
Vācharū puryāṃ vāḍā māṃya, ho sabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (9)

Vananī vāndaraḍī vanamāṃ vase, moṭī māre che re,
Moṭī moṭī māre che re ṭheka, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (10)

Bacalāṃ varagāḍyāṃ tārāṃ uramāṃ, rakhe bhulatī re,
Rakhe rakhe bhulati coṭa re, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (11)

Mārāṃ bacalāṃ re mārī uramāṃ, Torala tārāṃ re,
Torala tārāṃ re tuṃ sambhāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (12)

Korīyā anna ne kāraṇe re, putara melyo re,
Putara melyo tene re sambhāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (13)

Putara sambhārī satīne prāṇe caḍyo, aṅgaḍāṃmāṃ vyāpī, re,
Aṅgaḍāmāṃ vyāpī vyāpī piḍa, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (14)

Thāna hatāṃ satīnāṃ tharaharyāṃ, Torale chāṇḍyāṃ re,
Torale chāṇḍya turata prāṇa, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (15)

Gatya re gaṅgā amane puchase, Torala kyāṃ re,
Torala kyāṃ melī āvyā re, ho śabdenāṃ bāndhyāṃ (16)

Jesala pacheḍī jo pātharī, maraḍīne bāndhyāṃ re,
Maraḍīne bāndhyāṃ re moṭa, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (17)

Moṭa re bāndhīne śīra para līdhāṃ, Jesala hālyā re,
Jesala hālyā dhaṇīne darabāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (18)

Sāmā mo'la re mahārājanāṃ, dipaka racīyā re,
Dipaka racyā re racīyā cāra, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (19)

Tamare jāgye re jāmo jāmaśe, ūṭho Torānde re,
Ūṭho Toralade re nāra ho, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ (20)

Sāṃsatīyā kāṭhīnīre vinatī, ūṭho Toralade re,
Torīe ūṭhīne kaḷā vāparī, gatyamāṃ je je kāra (21)

Gatyamāṃ je je varatāṇe re, ho śabdunāṃ bāndhyāṃ...

4. The translated paraphrase of the Bhajan

O Saint! How can we stay faithful to words? Both of us have received an order / invitation to attend the *Pāṭ* worship. We cannot take along the third one, the child in the womb, with us. Due to this dilemma, the Queen Toral tore open her womb with a golden knife at night and gave birth to her son. She tied a cradle to the branch of a mango tree, and made her newborn sleep in it, leaving him to God's mercy. The wind rocked the cradle. The Queen requested her neighbour to look after the child, as they had to go to God's temple. She said that she would pray at the temple on behalf of the neighbour too. She locked the sixty-four types of doors with sixty-four types of locks. She sent the cow to the village pasture and locked the calf in the fenced compound.

On her way through the forest, the Queen saw a female monkey leaping high. Seeing her, Queen Toral asked her to be carefull of the young one that was clinging to her belly. The female monkey replied, 'I have fastened my young one to my body and soul, but O Queen, remember to take care of your child. You have forsaken him simply for one small cup of *prasād* (food offerings to God distributed after worship). On hearing the name of her son, the Queen was terribly agonized, and as a result, her body ached a lot. Milk started oozing out of her breast and she died on the spot.

King Jesal wondered what explanations he would offer to the people gathered for the *Pāṭ* worship, when they enguired about the Queen's whereabouts. So King Jesal spread this turban, lay the dead Queen on it,

bundled up her body and carried her to the temple. Four lamps were burning resplendently in God's royal court. 'If you arise O Queen Toral, the worship and devotional songs will become enthralling. The auspicious *Pāṭ* worship would become more graceful. Get up Toral, Sāsatīyo Kāṭhī requests you to get up.' Miraculously Queen Toral got up and everyone applauded loudly in the *Pāṭ* worship.

5. A Comparative Study of the Themes of Both the Works

By studying the contents of both the works, we come to know that there are many similarities between them. First the similarities:

1. In both the texts, a couple/two people receive the order/invitation to attend the worship.
2. In both the narratives, the child is remembered while travelling, that is, on their way to the temple.
3. Both the men in the respective works are in a dilemma of how to go alone to the place of worship.
4. In both the texts, bundling and carrying the dead body of the Queen is indicated.
5. In both the texts, God's court is described as shining resplendently.

Besides the above similarities, there are also some differences between the texts:

1. The child is already born in the Ginān, whereas in the Bhajan, the child is yet to be born, and hence tearing open the mother's womb and giving birth to the child has been mentioned in the Bhajan. There is an allusion to making the child sleep in the Ginān, whereas the Bhajan describes tying a cradle to the branch of a mango tree and putting the child to sleep. In the Bhajan, we find a masterly fusion of the wind / God rocking the cradle and the neighbour looking after the child.
2. A female deer is mentioned in the Ginān, whereas a female monkey is presented in the Bhajan.
3. In the Ginān, the Queen sees the female deer feeding her young one, whereas, in the Bhajan, she sees a female monkey leaping high with her young one clinging to her, and a dialogue and an argument takes place between the Queen and the female monkey. The Queen dies on remembering her child incited by the satirical remarks of the female monkey.

4. The Queen Radīāde revives due to the grace of the Pīr in the Ginān, whereas in the Bhajan, Queen Toral revives due to the request of Sāsatīyā Kāṭhī (husband and guru of Toral).
5. There is a reference to the Queen's tasting the heavenly nectar and feeding her young one in the Ginān, whereas there is no such reference in the Bhajan.

An analysis of the similarities and differences of the two texts clearly reveals that the Ginān is merely a loose narrative, whereas the Bhajan has a neat, sequential growth and persuasive arguments. Hence, I feel that the Bhajan is a well-organized text, whereas the Ginān is intermittent and has only an intimating effect. At the same time, I would argue that the Bhajan is composed under the influence of the Ginān since the narrative aspect alone is given importance in the Bhajan, but the original spirit of the narrative seems to be missing. For instance,the fascinating incident of giving an unnatural birth and then abandoning the child seeks to show the sense of submission and sacrifice as leaving a newborn child is indeed a great sacrifice for any mother.

The deer is a symbol of Nakalaṅk. It is also used to refer to Kāliṅgā. There has been a tradition of presenting a flock of deer / Roses (a kind of cow-like wild animal) as refering to Nakalaṅk.[3] The deer here stands for Kāliṅgā, whereas the forest, the female monkey, its young one, etc., seem to have entered into the Bhajan just to make the narrative more interesting. Hence, with the intention of simply composing an appealing narrative, only those emotions that suit the purpose of the narrative are used in the Bhajan and the original classical fundamentals seem to have been left out / overlooked. The apparent factual differences between the texts can be considered to be nominal, but the important point to note is that the metaphorical reference of the Ginān has also disappeared in the Bhajan. Let us now try to interpret the Ginān in the light of a very important chain of metaphors.

6. The Metaphorical Interpretation of the Ginān

The palace here refers to the human body. This human body is a palace or a township. The mind is its ruler and is pure. The heart is its Queen. The mind does not rule the kingdom (body). It is merely sitting idle. The kingdom is administered by the five senses referred to as ministers.

The child is Māyā (illusion). One has to forsake Māyā (craze for illusion) while praying to the Almighty. Once one abandons Māyā, one should not look back towards it. And yet the child is remembered midway.

The sight of the deer is a symbol of Nakalaṅk Kāliṅgā. The King, that is the mind does not remember it, but the Queen or the heart feels it. Once you remember Māyā, you have to die. The Queen dies. But the mind alone cannot go to a place of worship. It does need a heart as a companion. Though the soul seems to die, it is really everlasting. It never dies. Once it reaches God, the Supreme Being, it can taste the heavenly nectar and become immortal. Thus, this is a story of the heart acquiring immortality. It is referred to here metaphorically that chastity achieves an immortal heart. Gināns exist by sustaining such metaphorical references, whereas all these factors have become diffused in the Bhajan.

7. Discussion on Various Versions of the Text

A distinct version of the same text is found in a booklet entitled *105 Ginān*[4] in which the text is found with some interpolations. In his preface to the third edition of the book published in 1969 by the Ismailiya Association for India, Mumbai, the President of the Association, Gulam Ali Shakur Morani, has clearly stated that 'New words have been introduced into the text with the permission of the Maulana Hazar Imam, and the painstaking task has been carried out due to the hard and sincere work put in by Aalijah Abdul Azizbhai, the in-charge of the Mission Department of the Ismailiya Association for India and missionary Alibhai Mohammad Virani, for which they diserve great credit.'[5] Let us now study these alterations.

No.	*Original version*	*Original words*	*The alterations*
1.	The first half of the second stanza	'*Mohol māṅ*'	*Mohalamāṃ*
2.	The first half of the third stanza	'*Gur taṇo*'	*Śāha taṇo*
3.	The last part of the fifth stanza	'*Dev ne duār*'	*Śāha ne darabāra*
4.	The first half of the sixth stanza	'*Mejale rāe jī*'	*Mañjhile rāyajī*
5.	The first half of the eighth stanza	'*Gur taṇo*'	*Śaha taṇo*
6.	The last part of the tenth stanza	'*Dev ne duār*'	*Śāha ne darabāra*
7.	The last part of the eleventh stanza	'*Beṭhā Tribhovar Śām*'	*Beṭha Alivara Śāha*

It is noteworthy that in the entire Ginān, the number and sequence of stanzas have not changed, except a few words here and there. The major alterations are: *Śāh* is used in place of *Guru*; *Śāh ne darbār* is used in place of *Dev ne duār*; and *Alivar Śāh* is used in place of *Tribhovar Śām*. Many similar Hindu references, as found in the original version of Ismaili Khoja Satpanth, have also been present in many Ginān from the start. They are also found in many Gināns of Pīr Shams. Interpolation and deletion of

certain portions was introduced later on, resulting in different versions of the text.

The Bhajan, which came into existence later, under the influence of the original Ginān, which was composed on the basis of Indian metaphorical and philosophical traditions, has lost both the original context as well as the metaphorical quality. We can assume that the metaphorical meaning of the original Ginān alone can yield the true substance. This is not merely an ordinary Ginān representing a simple narrative, but it is a great work indicating the essence of a rich tradition of a great worship with the help of metaphorical stanzas. Though there are interpolations, they are not an obstacle to a metaphorical interpretation of the text. This Ginān is indeed an ideal, archetypal example depicting the richness of important metaphors in the Ginān school/tradition. The structure of the Ginān itself is sufficient to afirm its antiquity. The version mentioned here is also old and authentic. It is of course older than the Bhajan. Along with Mahapanth, the traditions of Rāmdev Pīr, Jesal Pīr, etc., have come into existence in Rajasthan and Kutch-Gujarat from later times, whereas the Pīr tradition itself is older than Jesal Toral. Thus, the Satpanthi Ginān mentioned here indeed seems to be an ancient work.

Notes

1. The text quoted here is from C. Shackle and Z. Moir, *Ismaili Hymnns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginān*s, SOAS South Asia Texts, no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992, p. 102.
2. The text is from Gosvāmī Mohanapurī, *Jesala Torala* (*Jesala Torala viśe aitihāsika anveṣaṇa*), Porbandar: Gosvāmī Mohanapurī, 1977, pp. 40-1.
3. Balvant Jani, *Bhāṇiya tathā Sūī Haradāsakṛta Rāmāvaḷā* (*Candrāvaḷā Chandamāṃ racita rāmāyaṇakathā*), Gandhinagar: Gujarat Sahitya Academy, 1993, p. (32).
4. *105 Ginān*o *cuṃṭī kadhela ginān*o, ed. Prasangopat Bolavana, 3rd edn, Bombay: Ismailia Association for India, 1969, p. 36.
5. Ibid., p. 5.

Creating a Database of Gināns and Related Materials

Pyarali Jiwa

This database is still under development but it offers a unique electronic tool to seek out information easily and instantly about the Gināns. I first began to develop this database to catalogue my own personal collection of Gināns and related materials. In this paper, I will give a brief history of how my interest in this project came about, and then I will describe the database I developed which has two parts: (a) a comprehensive catalogue and bibliography of all the Gināns and Ginān related materials published so far, and (b) texts of Gināns in English transliteration and Gujarati and Khojki scripts based on the 1920 version of Khojki publications by Laljibhai Devraj. These texts are linked to audio-clips and a list of translations with publication details.

My mother had a beautiful voice and was very fond of singing Gināns all the time. I enjoy listening to the Gināns but, unfortunately, I do not have a good voice so I can sing only a few Gināns. At first, I had only a few Ginān books and cassettes. They were lying all over the house and I could never find the right one when in need. Later on, I also inherited my father's very valuable collection of Granths (longer and often narrative Gināns) and Ginān books, particularly Granths published by Laljibhai Devraj in the early twentieth century.

In 1997, when I was nearing retirement, I thought of organizing my collection of Ginān and other cassettes, and labelling them properly. I found cassettes scattered all over the place: in the bedrooms, the living room, and the car; some were in the wrong cases, and some others were without cases.

To organize and catalogue my collection, first of all I had to listen to all the Gināns in each cassette and write down their titles. This was easier said than done because, although I had heard many of them in the past, for

quite a lot of Gināns the correct title could not be identified. So I had to refer to the few books I had, but many a time it was a nightmare trying to find the correct title. In some instances, I had to listen to the whole Ginān more than once and still could not find the title in any of the books in my collection. For instance, I finally decided to list the Ginān *Firat nejaa tambal vaajase (Phīrata nejā tambala vājase)* as *Teerath ane tambal vaajase (Tīratha ane tambala vājase)* because *teerath (tīratha)* is the more common word used in the Gināns. In absence of a title available in any of the books, I had to look at the last verse identifying the composer of the Ginān, for example, Pīr Sadardin *boliyaa (bolyā)*, and then I had to go through every Ginān by Pīr Sadardin to find the right title. In the process of trying to identify the Gināns in my cassettes, I started acquiring more Ginān books and materials which expanded my own personal collection. I now have one of the finest collections of Ginānic literature and my materials are clearly indexed and included in the database.

I started my project by indexing each book of Gināns in my word processor WordPerfect not realizing that indexing on a spread sheet would be easier as this programme can sort the titles in different columns in alphabetical order. I had already indexed Gināns that were published in about twenty books before I got the opportunity to talk about my project to a computer expert who advised me to transfer the information on to a spread sheet, and who, infact, did it himself. Later, a friend who lectured at the Edinburgh University put the database on Microsoft Access which allowed me to work through various tables. The present database format was designed for me by a database expert on Microsoft Access but the interface is on C+.[1]

As I mentioned earlier, the database is still under development. However, it is quite comprehensive and, therefore, can be a valuable research tool both for Ginān students and scholars. Let me now describe the database. The database lists 986 Gināns of various lengths arranged according to their inceptive (first line) and variants. For each Ginān, it provides the history of that Ginān, name of its composer, publication details (frequently more than one), categorization according to subject or occasion of the said Ginān, the number of verses in the original Ginān, and whether the Ginān is part of Joḍīlo (a group of Gināns to be recited with the same tune). The database features include the following:

A Full list of Ginān Titles which currently consists of 986 inception. (I am using title and incipient interchangeably.)

Title Variations: I have tried to limit this database to only one title for each Ginān to avoid any duplication, but if a particular Ginān is listed under a

different title, the database provides it and where it can be found. For example, the Ginān *Saamee tamaaree vaadee maa(n)he (Sāmī tamārī vāḍī māṃhe)* is listed in some books as *Mowla tamaree vaadee maaa(n)he (Maulā tamārī vāḍī maṃhe).*

Other Materials: A complete bibliography of other Ginān related materials, both books and articles, is included in the database (about 100 references).

Book List: A complete bibliography of all published Ginān books in Gujarati, Khojki and English including the names of the publisher, year of publication, language, with translations, etc. (about 200 books).

Glossary: This section has limited entries but is being developed.

Audio: A comprehensive list of Gināns on audio cassettes and CDs that are currently available (about 600). Some Gināns are listed in more than one cassette or CD.

All the above features are cross-referenced with each other to allow for complex searches.

The second part of the database has texts of the Gināns which can be viewed simultaneously on the computer screen, and at the same time one can play an audio-recording of the Ginān. Approximately 700 audio-recordings of Gināns have been linked to the database.

There is an enormous amount of data and information compiled in the database, which has taken me more than five years to develop, and it will take a few more years to develop a full version. This will require a great deal of time, effort, and resources. At the moment, I have invested my own time and resources to develop the database. However, some scholars have shown interest in helping me build it into a scholarly reference tool.

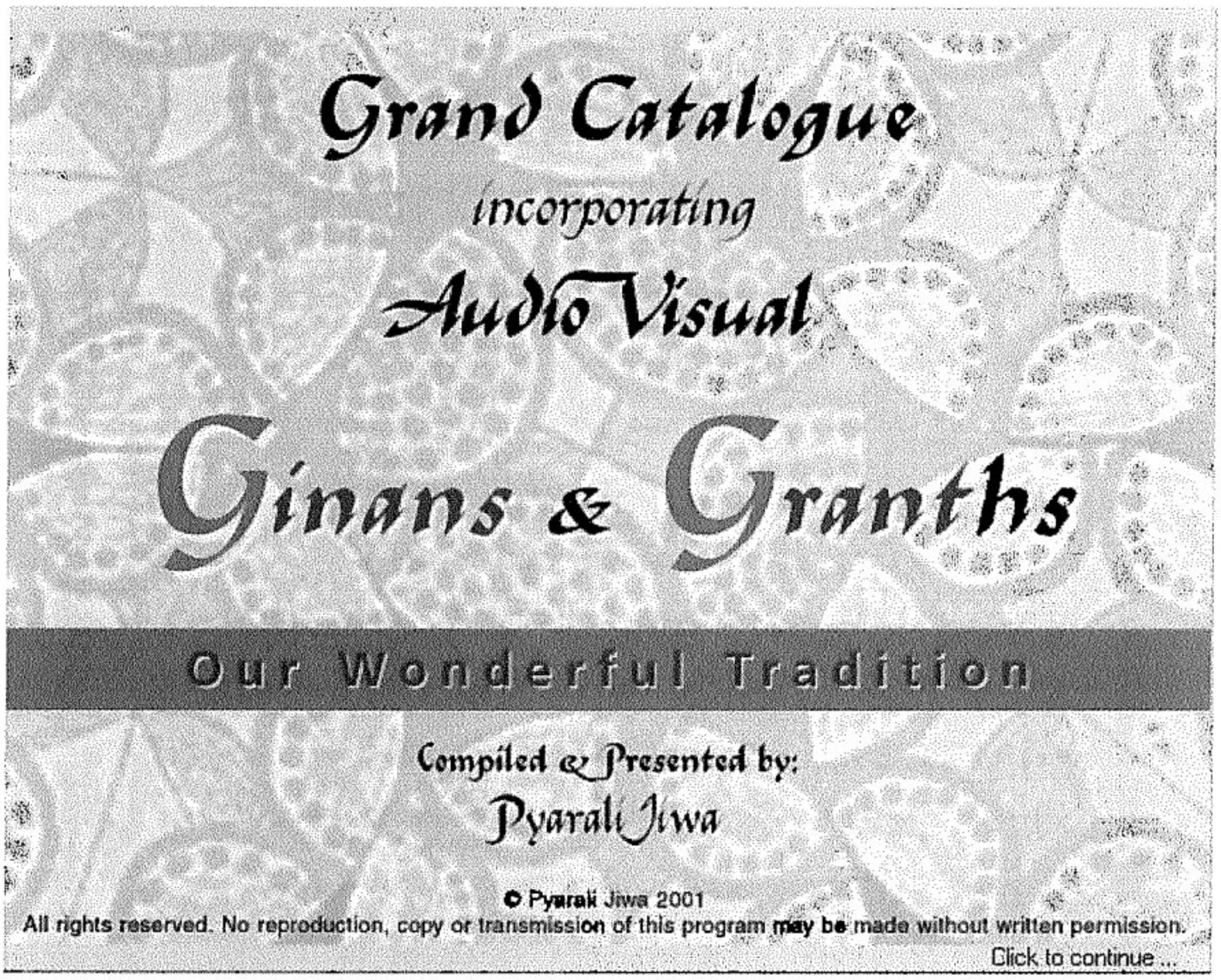
It has always been a pleasure to share my work and collection with others who are interested in the field of Gināns. Since there is no ready access to Ginān materials, as the word goes around about my work, more and more members of the community and other scholars who wish to learn about Gināns and obtain information are contacting me. It is my privilege to be able to share my knowledge and materials. For example, community members every so often request me for a particular Ginān which they can't find. I copy the Ginān from respective books and fax or email it to them with copies of audio recordings. For this reason, I have been nicknamed Ginān Uncle, and I receive at least one request per week either by phone or email from the world over. This project has had the benefit of developing relationships with other Ginān fans.

In conclusion, the database I have created provides instant information on the history, source, theme, etc., of each Ginān. Although this project

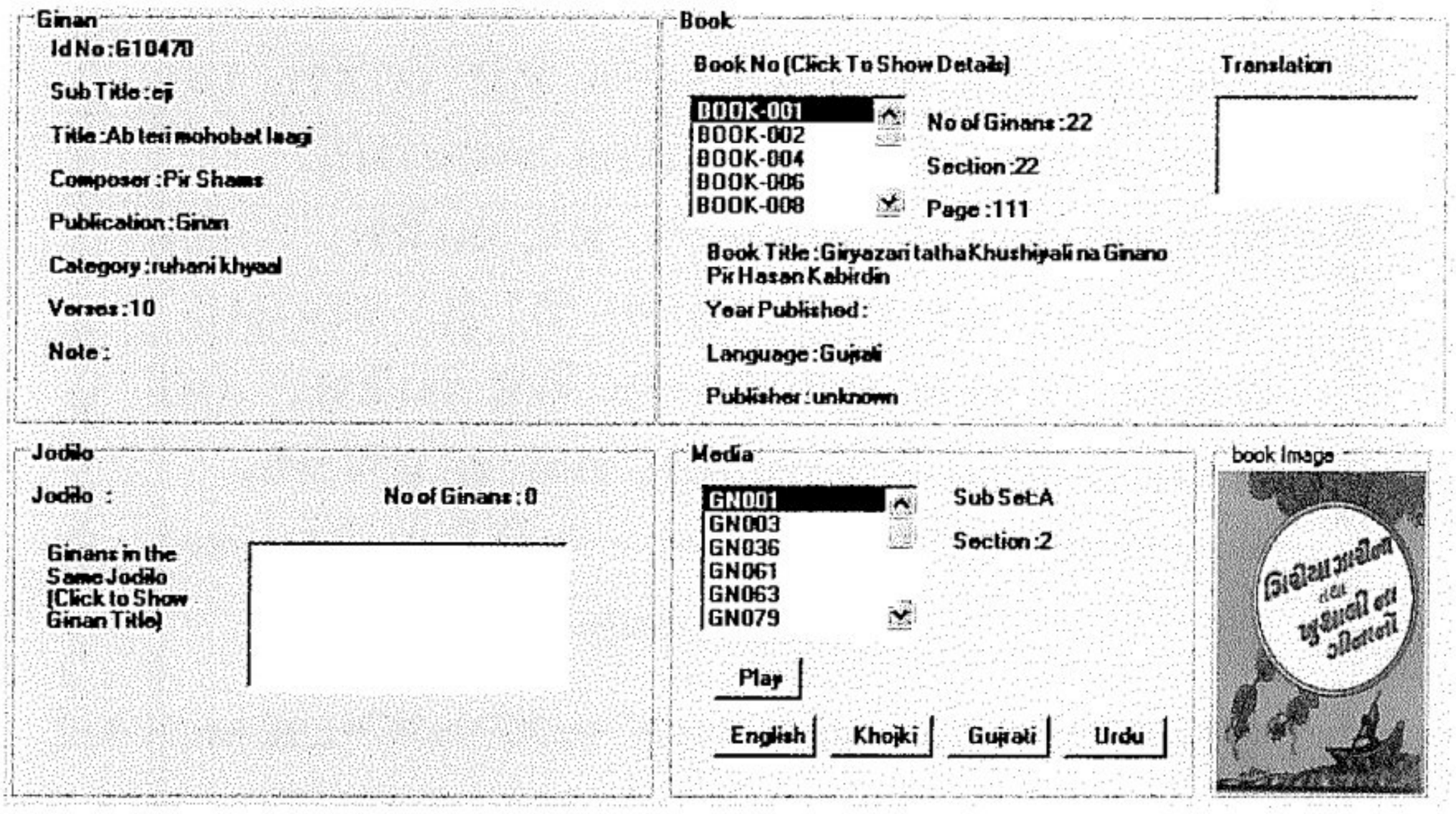
began as a hobby, I am now looking forward to turning the database into a powerful research tool for scholars and other members of the community who wish to study the Gināns.[2]

Notes

1. I am grateful to Mr Azim Jamal and Mr Ming Gang Mo for their help.
2. I would like to thank Dr Tazim R. Kassam for her assistance in revising this presentation for publication.



Initial Screen of the CD-ROM 'Grand Catalogue Gināns and Granths'



Sample screen providing information on one chosen Ginān: *Ab teri mohobat laagi*

(૮૪) ગહાલ મહે પ્રેમાપહું.

પજા ત્મપ મોહ્ન કોડ્રોમા ચાગ,
દીપ કોએ કોડ્રોમા ચાગ;
નેજુંપે નેબ મંચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૧)
પજા ઓચો પરદા પબજીપ દેખો,
ક્રંપ ક્રંપ જીપ દૂજચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૨)
પજા મોહ્ન પ્રપાગ્રે પાપ પ્રેંગ્રપ પંળાપા,
દપપબ દાબ દીચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૩)
પજા ક્રગાજું પ્રપ બ ગ્રપ્રપ ૬ પાગ્યાપા,
ક્રગાજું પંગ જચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૪)
પજા જીવાગ્રા દીવાબા પ્રો જીપ્ત બ બંગોગ્ર,
ગાજું બદીઽગ્રા પાપ જચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ.(૫)
પજા ગાણિગ્ર મેંપા મોએ પ્યાખ જચેગા,
દોપ્યા દીચ ગ્રાજ ચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૬)
પજા ચ્રેચ ચ્રગાચ્યા પ જીબો ગાચમીચ્યા,
ગાબ્યા જું ગાબ ગ્રાજ ચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૭)
પજા જંજચ જાચ્યા પ ગ્રોગ્રબ ગાગવાચ્યા,
કોાક્રગા ગાબકોં ચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૮)
પજા મોહ્ન પ્રગાગ્રગ્રા ખાગ્યા કોં ક્રું દીવાબા,
શ્રીગિગ્ર ગાગ્રચ જીચાવો-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ. (૯)
પજા જીપબા દૈખેગા ગાપ ગાબ ગ્રંપખેગા,
ખાપ ધિગાપ્રગ્રંખા જીપ્યાબ્યા-ગો કોએ પ્યાક્રેમ.(૧૦)

Khojkī text of the Ginān *Ab teri mohobat laagi*

GE10470
Ab teri mohobat laagi
Pir Shams

Eji ab teri mohobat laagi,
dil mere mohobat laagi;
nenu(n)se nen milaavo - o mere saaheb... 1
Eji kholo pardaa sanamukh dekho,
has has mukh dikhalaavo - e mere saaheb... 2
Eji teri suratake Pir Shams piaasaa,
darasan daan dilaavo - o mere saaheb... 3
Eji hamasu(n) ris na karie o piaaraa,
hamaku(n) sa(n)g chalaavo - o mere saaheb... 4
Eji juvaani divaani so kuchh na nibhegi,
jio nadiokaa nir chalaavo - o mere saaheb... 5
Eji aashak teraa tere saath chalegaa,
dosti dil bhich laavo - o mere saaheb... 6
Eji chhel chabilaa e suno alabelaa,
mayaa tu(n) man bich laavo - o mere saaheb... 7
Eji cha(n)chal chaalaa e joban matavaalaa,
mohabat maname(n) laavo - o mere saaheb... 8
Eji teri ramajakaa piaa me(n) hu(n) divaanaa,
ishk akal bhulaavo - o mere saaheb... 9
Eji mukha*d*aa dekheaa tab man harakheaa,
Pir Shams ka(n)thi su*n*aayaa - o mere saaheb... 10

SOURCE: *100 Ginan-ni chopadi bhaag bijo Khojki*, 3rd edition, 1919, published by: Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj.

Khoja Sindhi chhaapkhaanu, 113 Palkhi Mahola Mumbai 9

Ginan No 84. Transliteration by: Pyarali Jiwa, June 2003.

Transliteration of the Ginān *Ab teri mohobat laagi*

GG10470

અબ તેરી મોહોબત લાગી

પીર શમસ

એજી અબ તેરી મોહોબત લાગી,
દીલ મેરે મોહોબત લાગી;
નેનુંસે નેન મીલાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૧
એજી ખોલો પરદા સનમુખ દેખો,
હસ હસ મુખ દીખલાવોં - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૨
એજી તેરી સુરતકે પીર શમસ પીયાસા,
દરસન દાન દીલાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૩
એજી હમસું રીસ ન કરીએ ઓ પીઆરા,
હમકું સંગ ચલાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૪
એજી જુવાની દીવાની સો કુછ ન નીભેગી,
જ્યું નદીચુંકા નીર ચલાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૫
એજી આશક તેરા તેરે સાથ ચલેગા,
દોસ્તી દીલ બીચ લાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૬
એજી છેલ છબીલા એ સુનો અલબેલા,
મચા તું મન બીચ લાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૭
એજી ચંચલ ચાલા એ જોબન મતવાલા,
મોહોબત મનમેં લાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૮
એજી તેરી રમઝકા પીઆ મેં હું દીવાના,
ઈશ્ક અક્લ ભુલાવો - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૯
એજી મુખડા દેખીઆ તબ મન હરખેઆ,
પીર શમસ કંથી સુણાચા - ઓ મેરે સાહેબ ૧૦

Source: 100 Ginan-ni chopadi bhaag bijo Khojki 3rd edition, 1919,
Published by: Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj.
Khoja Sindhi chhaapkhaanu, 113 Palkhi Mahola Mumbai 9
Ginan No. 84
Transliteration by: Pyarali Jiwa June 2003
Transferred electronically to Gujarati Script by Amir Panjwani
November 2003

Gujarati version of the Ginān *Ab teri mohobat laagi*

Rewriting the Gināns: Revolution and Resistance among the Imamshahis

Dominique-Sila Khan

Like most sacred literature, the Ginānic heritage cannot be considered as an immutable literary tradition that has been created and transmitted without any change, since an 'ideal beginning' to the present time. Starting with oral traditions, about which hardly anything is known, continuing with the eighteenth and nineteenth century manuscripts, then with different printed versions in Khojki, Gujarati and other scripts,[1] the Gināns must have undergone a series of gradual transformations that render meaningless the very concept of 'original' texts or of a perfectly 'pure and pristine' tradition. This does not mean, however, that the sacred character of this literature has not ensured, to a great extent, its continuity and homogeneity.[2] On the other hand, the emergence of an authorized canon around 1900 must be taken into consideration. Indeed, some manuscripts seem to have been destroyed during the period when a classification was being made between approved and non-approved Gināns.[3] Consequently one should not forget that only a small part of these texts has been preserved and, still less, studied.

Besides, another, often ignored, fact must be mentioned here: what we know of the Ginānic heritage refers exclusively to the Khoja tradition, that it to say, to the heritage of one particular community. The existence of different types of Gināns related to the Shamsis, the Punjabi community believed to have been converted by Pīr Shams Sabzawari, should also be taken into consideration while studying the phenomenon as a whole. Similarly, the study of the sacred literature of other lost branches of the Nizaris that are at times strikingly similar to the heritage of the Khojas would be extremely helpful for our understanding of the Ginānic tradition. For example, the Barmatis of Sindh and Kutch who now pose as full-fledged Hindus, still refer to their religious songs as Gināns.[4]

Another point regards the so-called 'syncretistic' or 'composite' nature of the South Asian Nizari sacred literature, as preserved in written and oral forms among Khojas and Imamshahis. This has been, and is still, the object of much heated debate among scholars as well as among ordinary members of these communities: was the introduction of non-Islamic elements a deliberate 'strategy' of conversion, a concession made to the converts or simply a poetic—and spontaneous—creation of the popular mind?[5] An interesting point noted by Asani[6] is that during the British period the specificity of the Gināns, as a distinct genre of sacred literature, served to determine the Muslim Shia Ismaili origin of the Khojas. Esmail argues that the perception of the Ginānic tradition as a literature integrating non-Islamic elements is an artificial construction of the mind: 'it is only ideological self-consciousness which sifts among the elements, distinguishing "Hindu" from "Muslim," and seeks to suppress, minimize, or to explain away some of them in an apologetic vein.'[7]

A few specialists have tackled the issue of the re-evaluation of Khoja religious identity starting towards the end of the nineteenth century[8] and the rapprochement with mainstream Islamic traditions. These phenomena, which have resulted in a partial transformation of the Ginānic corpus, have been diversely evaluated, some approving, others rejecting the recent changes proposed by the Nizari Ismaili spiritual leadership. It is interesting to note that the response seems to depend very much on the cultural and religious context of the country where the Nizaris live. While the so-called 'Islamization' of the tradition is felt as a requirement of our times by most Pakistani, especially Sindhi Nizaris (Khojas proper), the Punjabi community (represented by the Shamsis) has a somewhat different perception, whereas the conservative attitude of the groups who have migrated to the Western countries is certainly motivated by a different type of anxiety.[9]

The Ginānic Tradition of the Imamshahis

The case of the Imamshahis has been much less studied and is often misconstrued.[10] The issue is a particularly complex one, owing to the fact that the community has a long history of fragmentation, which continues till today, since there is no single spiritual authority, that is to say no Imām or representative of the Imām, unanimously recognized by the followers. Nonetheless, one should not ignore the importance of the Ginānic heritage among the Satpanthis—as they are still referred to. Mukhi Lalji Devraj himself admitted that point when he went to Pirana in search of Ginān manuscripts.[11]

No evaluation of the Imamshahi literature is possible without an extensive study of their history and oral tradition.[12] The period that concerns us in this paper starts towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The publishing activities of the Satpanthis started, it seems, shortly after Independence: in 1954, one Sayyid published the *Satpanth śāstra*—a three hundred page book that contained, besides an interesting introduction, the text of the Satpanthi *Das avatār* and of the regular Imamshahi *duā*.[13] Another Sayyid, Ahmed Ali Khaki, claiming to be the direct heir of Imam Shah and regarded by some of his followers as the main spiritual authority, published and edited, apart from his own original writings, most of the Satpanthi sacred literature. After his demise, the tradition was continued by his son, Shamsuddin Bava. In 1978, *Śrī Satpanth Prakāś* was published in Ahmedabad, with a subtitle indicating that it was reproducing the ritual text of the *Das avatār*. It had only a short introduction but included some interesting pictures among which the editor himself and his father, the prominent Jalalshahi Sayyid leader, Ahmed Ali Khaki were seen sitting in front of the four Vedas. The *duā* was reprinted separately by the same editor in 1982 from the older edition established by his father in 1937 under the title *Satpanthī yagya vidhi (pūjā no mantra)*.[14] Apart from a lengthy introduction, it included numerous explanatory footnotes that often sought to 'translate' the meaning of the original Islamic elements into a more Indic idiom.

The Satpanthi Athias who had severed their links with the "main branch", as it is often referred to, had established a separate shrine at Pirana and also printed a few books, among which the most interesting may be the undated booklet entitled *Harivaṃs* (which dealt with the genealogy of the Imāms in connection with the *Das avatār*) and the *Duā gyān*.

As Ivanow had already alluded to,[15] a group of ex-Hindu converts, particularly among the Patidars (then referred to as Kanbis), were gradually influenced by Hindu revivalist ideology, mainly by the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma movements. In our more recent studies[16] we have shown that the activities of the contemporary right-wing Hindu movements have triggered a complex crisis of identity among the Satpanthi Patidars. This crisis resulted in an ambitious reform movement initiated by the Kaka of Pirana, Karsan Das.[17] This 'reform' affected mainly the sacred literature, as its Islamic elements appeared unacceptable to many followers. For instance, in 1990 during a meeting of the sect which took place in the Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, the new version of the prayer established by the Kaka was approved: it bore the title *Atharvavedīya Satpantha Yagyavidhi (pūjānā mantro)* and was printed both in Gujarati and Hindi.

Before analysing the revised versions of the Gināns, we will have to examine the changes that were decided among the Nizari 'mainstream' communities by the World Ismailia Assocations in 1975,[18] insofar as the latter reforms can be perceived as the exact counterpart of the Satpanthi Patidar 'venture'.

During the conference that was held in Paris and chaired by H.H. the prince Karim Aga Khan IV, a resolution was passed regarding the classification of the Gināns into three categories: the first one that was unproblematic referred to the texts that did not contain 'Hindu elements' and were to continue to be recited as such in the *jamātkhāna*s. The second category comprised the hymns that included a few Hindu terms. It was decided to replace these words by their Islamic equivalents: in this way 'Hari' became 'Ali', 'Gur', 'Pīr', etc. As for the third category, which had 'excessive Hindu elements' such as the famous *Das avatār*, they were simply banned.[19] The review of the Gināns, along these lines at various workshops, was a painstaking and complex process that, for obvious reasons, has not yet been completed. Besides it triggered a long controversy: which elements were to be considered 'non-Islamic'?[20] We will keep these facts in mind while examining the parallel—but also reverse—process started by the present head of the Imamshahi converted community, the *gaddīvālā* Kaka Karsan Das.

Sifting Out the Cinders

A first point deserves to be mentioned here. Ironically, the *Das avatār* Ginān which was no more acceptable to the mainstream Nizaris because of its extensive description of the ten descents of Vishnu, regarded as a 'basically' Hindu belief, was also rejected by the reforming Satpanthi Patidars on the ground that the last two avatars were openly equated with the Persian Imām.

We will first give a few examples of the 'corrections' that were made by examining a few selected verses drawn from two different versions of the same Ginān entitled *Man Cittavaraṇī*. The earlier version will be marked 'B' and the revised one 'C'. Comparison will occasionally be made with the Khoja canon, that is to say with the version established by Mukhi Lalji Devraj, which will be marked 'A'.

Verse 64

A: *te śāh pīr nũ nām pichhāno husainī āl mãhe*

Recognize the name of the Imām (Shah) and Pīr who belongs to the family of Husain

B: *e gor nī picchān husainī āl mã̃*

Recognize the Guru who belongs to the lineage of Husain

C: *e gor nī picchān hari nā vaṃś mã̃*

Recognize the Guru in the lineage of Hari

Verse 66

A: *āne molā alī śũ man lāhe ... to tame hājar alī śāh re*

Concentrate your mind on the Master Ali ... then Imām Ali will be with you

B: *gor nar śũ chitta lāere ... to nar mahmad śāh hājar āere*

Meditate on the Supreme Guru and Master ... then Nar Mohammed Shah will be with you

C: *gor nar śũ chitta lāere ... to nar nārāyaṇ saṃmukh hoy re*

Meditate on the Supreme Guru and Master ... then Narayan (Vishnu) will appear in front of you

Verse 285

B: *rozā nimāz nitya kare tise musulmān mat kaho....*

Don't call Muslims those who (do nothing but) perform the regular prayers and the annual Ramadan fast....

C : *mandire darśan nitya kare tise harijan mat kaho....*

Don't call Hari's (Vishnu's) devotees those who (do nothing but) go regularly to the temple

Verse 277

B: *mullāh masite....*

The mullah in the mosque....

C : *gafal mandir maĩ....*

The heedless one in the temple....

Verse 325

B : ... *Sadruddīn* ...

Pir Sadruddin (the famous fifteenth century Ismaili missonary)

C : ... *Sahadev* ...

Sahadev (a character from the *Mahābhārata* or a Hindu saint named Sahadev Joshi. It was also the Hindu name assumed by Pīr Sadruddin)

Let us first note the elements which distinguish the Khoja version of Devraj from the Imamshahi text established by Khaki.

For instance, 'Shāh Pīr' and 'Molā Alī' are replaced by the Indic titles 'Gor' and 'Gor Nar' that were in any case already used in the Khoja literature, but this enabled the Patidar reformers to keep this title unchanged, whereas

the expression 'in the family of Husain' was no longer acceptable and thus replaced by 'Hari's lineage'. In verse 66, a triple transformation can be noticed: from Ali Shah to Nar Muhammad Shah then replaced by Nar Narayan; while the reference to Muhammad Shah simply points to the shift of emphasis (from the Imām recognized by the 'mainstream' Nizaris to the Imamshahi supreme spiritual authority of the time), without changing the basically Islamic Ismaili character of that authority, the reformed Satpanthi version 'Hinduizes' his name. However, it must be stressed that, in doing so it is not really innovating, since Hari (Vishnu) was a name often used as an Indic equivalent for the Lord and Imām. There lies, no doubt, the most remarkable peculiarity of this type of change. Worth mentioning also are the *mandir/masjid* and Sadruddin/ Sahadev alternatives now perceived as dichotomies—although the same words had often been used in a tandem in the Ginānic literature. Rather amusing, to conclude this part, is the criticism leveled in the above mentioned verses by the Nizari Ismailis at the hypocritical, 'externalist' Muslims (here of course the Sunnis) replaced by an attack on the ritualist Hindus. However, it will be interesting to add that the character of the hypocritical mullah or Muslim priest is not replaced, in the Hinduized version, by his Hindu equivalent, a Pandit, but by the more general term *gafal* (the heedless one).

Let us now examine some changes that have been made in the ritual prayer (*duā*) of the Imamshahis by comparing Khaki's *Yagya vidhi* with its reformed version, bearing the same title, established by the new *gaddīvālā* Kaka.

The *mantra* number 7 of Khaki's version (corresponding to the *mantra* 3 of Karsan) starts with the formula:

B: *Om farmānjī bismillāh hirahmã̃ nirahīm*

(The Hindu sacred syllable OM is followed by the parallel Muslim invocation 'in the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful')

Interestingly, the editor gives the following explanation in a footnote:

Paramātmā nī āgyā thī ādharũ chũ dayālu paramātmānā nām thī je sadā kripālu che....

which can be translated as follows:

In the name of the Supreme Lord! I begin in the name of the Lord (using the Hindu word *paramātmā*) who is always merciful ....

Imam Shah and the Pīrs preceding him are mentioned, while Muhammad Shah is also referred to as Nar Ali and Adi Vishnu.

In C (Hindi version) the *bismillāh* formula has been dropped and the *duā* starts with:

C: *paramātmā kripālu āgyāse....*
By the merciful order of God....

The list of Imāms and Pīrs is then replaced by:

C: *pratham ādh niraṃjan dhūndhkār srisṭi kā gor nar dharan kiyā avatār....*
First there was only the primeval immaculate God in the darkness, the master and lord of the Creation (*gor nar*) became manifested (litteraly: 'took avatar')

Verse 11 of the *mantra* classified as '7' is as follows:

B : *ālok parlok devlok jumlī jamāt....*
In this world, in the netherworld, in the Divine world, the congregation of the faithful

C: *ālok parlok devlok gor gat gaṃgā*
Same as above then: the holy stream (Ganges) of the congregation.[21]

Verse 13 of the same *mantra*:

B : *Alī niraṃjan niṣkalaṃkī pātra....*
Ali, the spotless and immaculate Person....

sadgor suderdīn
(and) the true Guru Sadruddin

satgor nar imāmśā....
the true guru Imamshah....

didār diyā karorī bār nabī muhammad śams pīr....
(and) he (the Imām) granted his holy vision (*didār*) to the one who is like Prophet Muhammad, Pīr Shams (a famous Ismaili missionary) innumerable times....

C: *niraṃjan niṣkalaṃkī nārāyaṇ....*
The spotless immaculate Vishnu (Narayan)....

patra brahma indra imāmśāhne....
the one who is like Brahma and Indra, Imamshah....

darśan diyā bār karor śivloka udhār kiyā....
he granted his holy vision (*darśan*) and salvation in Shiva's paradise....

Mantra 8 in B (which is 4 in C) has in verse 2 *Śāh nā thām* ... (the abode of the Shah) which becomes in C: *Hari ke dhām* (the abode of Hari or Vishnu).

Mantra 11 of B (7 in C) has *kalmo* (the Kalimah) ... where C has *gurumantra* (the guru's *mantra*). At various other places the word *kalmo* is replaced by *mantra* or *śabda* (Divine word, verb).

Mantra 12 of B (8 of C) which refers to the *ghaṭ* has, in verse 26:

B : *arabī rūpe kalaś mā̃he kalā dharo....*
In your Arabic form manifest your divine power in the sacred vessel....

C : *hamāre ghaṭ mẽ̃ hai prabhu āp vās karo....*
In our sacred vessel dwell, O Lord (*prabhu*)....

A last remark will be made concerning the genealogy of the Imāms which is a central theme in the Nizari Ismaili prayer. Khaki's version mentions the fact that the avatars are followed by Ali and the Imāms who succeed him, but the author mixes them with some figures who are considered as Pīrs or Sayyids in the 'mainstream' tradition. For instance, after Pīr Kabiruddin, the line of Imāms passes onto the family of Imam Shah.

Karsan's text lists the ten avatars and after Buddha says: *harivaṃś āj tak kaliyug mẽ gupta rūp se chalā ā rahā hai, vohī harivaṃś mẽ kaliyug ke ant mẽ dharma ke sthāpnā ke liye ādh śrī viṣṇu bhagavān jo antim dasvā avatār pragat hogā vo ādh viṣṇu niraṃjan niṣkalaṃkī nārāyaṇ....*

'In the Kali Yuga, the lineage of Hari (Vishnu) has existed secretly till now. In the same lineage of Hari, at the end of the Kali Yuga (the last of the four Hindu cosmic ages), the tenth and last avatar of Vishnu who will manifest himself to establish the (true) religion, is none other than the Supreme immaculate and spotless Nishkalanki Narayan.'

To conclude this part, I will make a few remarks on the 'technique' that has been adopted by the reforming authorities among the Satpanthi Patidars. I was lucky enough to meet one of the writers entrusted with the task of 'rewriting' the Gināns. This elderly devotee, who resided in a small village in Kutch, had a profound knowledge of the earlier tradition and kept at home, in a locked cupboard, a big collection of books. Among them were the publications edited by Khaki and later banned by Karsan Das, the 'Hindu' leader of Pirana. Our informant had already prepared and edited the new version of the *Cittavaraṇī* I have examined here: the brand new booklet recently released at Pirana was lying on his desk with a few other reformed versions of the sacred literature. After much cajoling, he accepted to part with a good number of his 'old books' (as he himself called them). While I was reading one of them, the important *Satpanth Sāstra* (published in 1954 and containing the *Das avatār* and the *duā*), I realized that he had started to work on it by writing the 'correct' words with a blue pen above the 'original', now banned, version and inscribing some remarks on the margins. This

was, undoubtedly, the preliminary phase of a work that had been interrupted. I noted the following changes: *kudartī dharma* was replaced by *mahā dharma, khudā* by *prabhu, kabra* by *samādhi, vāfat pāmiyā* by *samādhi lidhī, sahibji* by *paramātmā* and so on.[22]

The Meaning of Reforms

Esmail's remark about the 'ideological self-consciousness which sifts among the elements distinguishing "Hindu" from "Muslim"...'[23] is certainly relevant in this context. However, an essential—albeit obvious—remark must be made at this juncture: in replacing certain terms along new ideological lines, Khojas and Imamshahis were rarely innovating. Both proceeded rather by elimination, and it is noteworthy that it was not difficult for them to find so called 'Islamic' or 'Hindu' equivalents for the new versions of the Gināns—wherever changes were felt necessary, since the Ginānic tradition itself had long ago proposed an elaborate list of those quasi-synonyms.

As Rattansi has rightly noted, the perception of the changes that were made in certain Khoja Gināns (such as replacing 'Naklanki', 'Nar', 'Svami' by 'Ali', 'Nur', 'Mavla', etc.) was different according to the context. For example, the officials of the Ismailia Association were referring to the concept of the Imamate as 'Guidance according to the changed times', also following Aga Khan III's advice in this matter. Others, however, thought that the supposedly 'Hindu' elements were symbolical expressions of the same reality. There was no need to suppress these elements, and such changes could even be harmful, limiting the authority of the Imām and devaluing the Ginānic spiritual traditions.[24]

Let us now examine the reactions among the Imamshahis. It is true that the reform movement concerned mainly the Patidars followers who were strongly influenced by their non-Saptanthi caste fellows and had shifted their political allegiance to the Hindu right wing. However, this wave was the more so powerful as the Patidars represent about 75 per cent of the Imamshahis.

Actually, the opponents were mainly the Imamshahi Sayyids supported by a few Patidars who were either the rivals of the present Kaka and had competed with him for the *gaddī* of Pirana or simply posed as the defenders of 'tradition'. Other Muslim worshippers of Imam Shah, such as the Nurshahi Momins, were indifferent. These Guptis (believers in hiding), originating from low caste communities, had been recently converted to Ithna Ashari Shia Islam and abandoned altogether their former rituals and sacred literature. Their allegiance was limited to their *murśid* whose *dargāh* they occasionally visited. On the other hand, these reforms were also rejected by the Imamshahi Athias—second in importance after the so-called 'main

branch'. They had kept a strong Shia background owing to the fact that their Sayyids, belonging the Sayyidkhani branches, had outwardly identified themselves with the Twelvers. Their Kakas had been preserving the Gupti tradition, resorting to an extensive *taqiyya* rather than tampering with their traditions or facing directly the threat of the Hindutva ideologists. During recent court cases in the nineties that reflected the disputes among the Imamshahis they eventually came in support of the rebelling Sayyids and Patidars. As Karsan's reformed Ginānic literature was gaining ground among the Gupti communities, these Sayyids resolved to publish a whole counter-literature. In doing so they sought to protect their sect, while preserving the former versions of the Imamshahi sacred literature. For instance, in 1994, along with other texts, documents and commentaries, they published the former version of the *duā* in the first volume of their series characteristically entitled *Pāṃcam Ved*'[25] In reproducing the *bismillāh* formula and the list of Imāms-Pīrs they stressed the essentially 'syncretic' nature of their tradition, while acknowledging their historical link with the Nizaris, a rare occurrence in Imamshahi tradition. Interestingly, as a testimony of this common origin, they reproduced entire passages of the British gazetteers as well as Ivanow's famous article in English on the Imamshahis.[26]

A few remarks should be also made about a prominent Satpanthi devotee, Ravji Kanji Patel (often using as his nom-de-plume *Anāmī Antarātmā* or the 'anonymous inner soul'), who had once played an important part in the publishing activities of Khaki's son whose faithful disciple he was. When the latter was forced to go into concealment, secretly supporting the new *gaddīpati* of Pirana, Ravji, who portrays himself as a genuine Satpanthi, but also as a Gandhian and a Theosophist, started to pose as the defender of the 'original' Imamshahi tradition. In a few booklets published by him in the late nineties he openly questioned the validity and authenticity of Kaka Karsan's revised Gināns which he referred to as *bhāṣākya sudhārā vadhārā* (linguistic corrections and improvements).[27] He accuses the present Kaka to spread the 'poison of communalism' by allying himself with right wing Hindutva organizations. He insists that history should not be distorted: the Imamshahi tradition is not a purely Hindu sect. Although it can be rightly called *'Satpanth Sanatan Dharma'*, it must openly acknowledge its Islamic elements and the *rauzā* of Pirana is a sacred space for both Hindus and Muslims. For Ravji the essential message of the Satpanth is the unity of religions.

The future of the debate over the reform of the Gināns and of some religious practices is difficult to predict since at present, the 'reforming' Patidars represent the majority within the Satpanth. The earlier literature, mainly edited by Khaki and his son being 'officially' banned, at present the only books available at the Pirana bookshop are the revised ones. The

Sayyids' counter-literature is obviously not so popular with the ex-Guptis who now wish to pose as full-fledged Hindus, claiming that their elder have been misled by some Sayyids into adopting certain Muslim customs and introducing Islamic elements into an originally pure Vedic Hindu literature and tradition. This idea initially inspired by the Arya Samaj has been readily adopted by the exponents of Hindutva, insofar as it helps them explaining away the now undesirable elements.

The main danger lies of course in the fact that the younger generations who learn only the new version of the Gināns and rituals, as I observed during field research, do not have any knowledge of the earlier tradition. In this way it is a whole literary and religious heritage that threatens to disappear. It can be said that in many respects, the young Patidars, who are sincerely ignorant of their past, do resemble the modern Khojas who have been taught only the 'Islamized' versions of the Gināns.

History as a Hiding Place

The issue that has been tackled here is closely linked to the historical process which gradually led to the construction of a 'monochrome' world replacing the rich diversity of Hindu-Muslim interface.[28] On the other hand, the transformation of the Ginānic tradition among the Khoja and Imamshahi communities can help us to understand similar phenomena that have either been ignored or misconstrued by scholars: I am alluding here to the many religious traditions that are now portraying themselves as Hindu, but have obviously Islamic and in particular Ismaili roots.[29] By studying in detail the sacred literature of these sects one can understand how their gradual re-Hinduization was made possible, and even, quite smooth and easy, thanks to their original liminal character. For instance, the Nizari Satpanthi references to the ten avatars or mythological figures such as the Paṇḍāvas, Draupadī, etc., could not only be preserved—while Islamic elements were slowly erased or replaced—but brought forward as a strong evidence of the purely Hindu origin of those sects. However, even after substantial changes have been made, the sacred hymns of the Barmatis, for instance, are still referred to as Gināns albeit the present followers of the sect tend to deny any connection with the Nizaris.[30]

Similarly, one can see the evolution from some former *bhajans* including Islamic references to the present devotional songs of the Ramdev Nizarpanthi followers. The sacred compositions of the Bishnois, Jasnathis, Aipanthis, Lalbegis and others should be examined in the same light. Comparing them to the changing Ginānic tradition of the Imamshahis would certainly lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Last but not least, the case of the Pranami sacred literature, almost entirely subsumed in their sacred book referred to as *Kulzam Śarīf* or *Kulzam Svarūp*—and now in some revised editions as *Tārtam Sāgar*, should be briefly examined.[31] Interestingly, very few changes or interpolations occurred in the texts, at the very time when the sect was rapidly re-Hinduizing itself. The relatively minor transformations concerned the title of the book, for instance, and the replacement of the word 'Sahebji' by 'Shri Krishna' in the introductory *mantra.* Therefore, the question that arises is the following: how has it been possible for the Pranamis to pose as full-fledge Hindus and, in some cases, as fervent exponents of Hindutva, while refraining from tampering with their scripture which is replete with Islamic references, to a much greater extent than the Gināns? The answer is a complex one. First, one must take into account the secrecy which continue to surround these texts, while numerous books and articles interpreting them in terms of the 'Hindu idiom' are openly published and generously distributed. Second, the original scripture, in its modern printed versions, also does commentary on each verse in the same spirit. Besides, the refined esoteric philosophy exposed in the hymns (appearing at first sight to be purely written in the Sant or Sufi style) functions as a protection against the attempts of 'coarse' reformers who would be ready to tamper with these complex elements. When suspected, the Pranamis generally remind that their gurus and founders, although born and dead as Hindus, purposely included Sufi elements in the literature to promote communal harmony and to create a kind of universal religion. Eventually, a close examination of the Pranami tradition will show that if the literature has been spared, some other elements, such as the exterior shape and decoration of their shrines have been tampered with largely. However, in all these cases, it may be argued that the elders, as I observed during field research, are perfectly aware of what is happening and, at least initially, agreed to make some changes in order to avoid persecution.[32]

To conclude, it may be suggested that the problem of the 'revised' Gināns among both Khojas and Satpanthis, or of similar sacred texts, should also be examined in the context of religious dissimulation or *taqiyya*. Such processes of revision cannot be separated from the broader issue connected with liminal religious traditions that is itself linked to contemporary legal and judiciary systems prevalent in India and Pakistan.

Notes

1. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans,* SOAS, South Asia Texts, no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992; rpt, Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000, pp. 14-17, and Ali Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightment: The*

Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia, Ismaili Heritage Series, no. 6, New York and London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002, pp. 31-4, 42.

2. Aziz Esmail, *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismaili Religious Lyrics (Ginans),* vol. 1, Richmond and London: Curzon Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002, p. 13.
3. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns*, pp. 15-16.
4. I am indebted to Mohan Devraj Thontya who gave me to read the fascinating draft of his dissertation on the Barmati tradition. (See also his contribution in this volume).
5. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightment*, pp. 82-3 and Esmail, *Scent of Sandalwood*, pp. 36-7. (See also the introductory essay of Tazim Kassam in this volume).
6. Asani, ibid., p. 83.
7. Esmail, *Scent of Sandalwood*, p. 28.
8. See Azim Nanji, '*Shari'at*, Custom and Legal Change', in *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South-Asian Islam*, ed. K. Ewing, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, and Amrita Shodhan, 'Legal Formulation of the Question of Community: Defining the Khoja Collective', *Indian Social Science Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1999, pp. 137-51. (See also her contribution in this volume).
9. See Diamond Rattansi, 'Islamization and the Khojah Isma'ili Community in Pakistan', unpublished thesis, Montreal: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1987, pp. 160-5.
10. Esmail, *Scent of Sandalwood*, p. 11.
11. See Dominique-Sila Khan and Zawahir Moir, 'Coexistence and Communalism: The Shrine of Pirana in Gujarat', *South Asia: Journal of Asian Studies*, Special Issue, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 133-54. I thank Zawahir Moir who told me about this interesting episode and generously shared with me her knowledge of the intricacies of Imamshahi history.
12. See also Khan, 'Liminality and Legality: A Contemporary Debate among the Imamshahis of Gujarat', in *Lived Islam in South Asia,* ed. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004, pp. 209-32 and 'Karsan Dās: Un héros vivant. L'identité Pāṭīdār et la secte des Satpanthī au Gujarat' in *L'usage des héros: Traditions narratives et affirmations identitaires dans le monde indien*, ed. V. Bouillier and C. Le Blanc, Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006, pp. 95-119.
13. Sayed Kasimali Durveshali, *Satpantha śāstra yane mokṣagati no sāco mārga*, Garhkampavala: Patel Laljibhai Nanjibhai, 1954.
14. *Satpanthī yagya vidhi* (*pūjā no mantra*), Pirana: Sayed Bavasaheb Ahmedali Khaki, 1937.
15. Vladimir Ivanow, 'The sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Academic Society*, New Series, no. 12, 1936, pp. 19-70.
16. Khan and Moir, 'Coexistence and Communalism', and Khan, Karsan Dās.
17. "Kaka"(*Kākā*) is a Persian title, it refers here to the head of the Hindu converted community who also acts as the *mujāvar* or custodian of the Pirana *dargāh*. Also called *gaddīvālā* he is supposed to be the disciple of the main Sayyid who himself poses as the *sajjada-nashīn*.

18. Rattansi, 'Islamization and the Khojah', p. 157.
19. Ibid., pp. 157-9.
20. Ibid., pp. 159-60.
21. For the symbol of the Ganges, see Dominique-Sila Khan, 'Diverting the Ganges: The Nizari Ismaili Model of Conversion in South Asia', in *Conversions in India*, ed. R. Robinson and S. Clarkes, Dehi: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 29-53.
22. Indic names thus replace their Islamic equivalents, except for *kudartī* (divine) which is replaced by *mahā* (great).
23. Esmail, *Scent of Sandalwood*, p. 28.
24. Rattansi, 'Islamization of the Khojah', pp. 160-1.
25. *Pāṃcam Ved*, Calcutta: Shri Akhil Bharatiya Satpanthi Dharmiya Sangh, 1994.
26. Ivanow, 'The Sect of Imam Shah'.
27. Ravji Kanji Patel, 'Anāmī Antarātmā', *Svādyāya poṭhī yane gyāna goṣṭi saṃvad,* part I, Vaktapur: R.K. Patel, 1996.
28. See Dominique-Sila Khan, 'The Graves of History or the Metaphor of the Hidden Pir', in *Culture, Communities and Change,* ed. V. Joshi, Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002, pp. 154-72.
29. See Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities*: *Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan,* New Delhi: Manohar and Centre de Sciences Humaines, 1997; rpt 2002, and 'The Prannathis of Rajasthan: *Bhakti* and *Irfan',* in *Mutliple Histories*: *Culture and Society: the Study of Rajasthan,* ed. L.A. Babb, V. Joshi and M. Meister, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2002, pp. 209-31.
30. I am indebted to Mohan Devraj Thontya for his valuable information. He is currently preparing a publication on the Barmati or Maheshwari Sampradāy, acknowledging its Nizari roots.
31. Khan, 'The Graves of History' and Dominique-Sila Khan, 'The Mahdi of Panna: A Short History of the Pranamis, parts I and II, *Indian Journal of Secularism,* vol. 6, 2003, no. 4, pp. 61-93; no. 5, pp.46-66.
32. All these sects have been the victims of discrimination at the hand of both Hindu and Islamic fundamentalists; for the Barmatis, present in both Indian Kutch and Pakistani Sindh, this is obvious, but this is still truer of the Pranamis who have been massacred in huge numbers during Parition, since they were perceived as dangerous 'heretics' by the extremist Sunni Muslims. I am indebted to Chavi Sharma for this valuable information.

The Myth of *Nāgadamana* in the *Dasa-avatāra*s and Other Ginān

Françoise Mallison

The episode of the Kṛṣṇa legend that tells how this Hindu God, a child among the cowherds of Braj, overpowered the demon cobra (*Nāga*) Kāliya or Kālināg without killing him, and how he drove him away from the waters of the Yamunā, is well known. It is told not only in the classical Sanskrit epics and Purāṇas, but in many versions in the literature of Medieval northern India, especially in Gujarat.

The Sanskrit Versions

The early Sanskrit versions all locate the myth within the framework of Kṛṣṇa's life story as the eighth avatār of Viṣṇu in the list of his ten descents. The earliest tale is part of the *Harivaṃśa* (Chapters 55 and 56) of the third century which describes how Kṛṣṇa jumps from a *Kadamba* tree into the basin of the Yamunā, thus emptying it of its water, and how, after fooling the spectators with his apparent weakness, he starts fighting the Nāg, overpowering him while trampling and dancing on his huge hood. When the Nāg begs to be released, Kṛṣṇa lets him go and it flees. Kṛṣṇa thus acts according to his duty as avatār by rescuing the region of Braj from a terrible demon.[1]

The *Viṣṇu purāṇa* of the sixth century takes up, in Chapter 7 of Book 2, the same motives of the story but adds the wives of the Nāg, the Nāgiṇīs, who engage in conversation with Kṛṣṇa beseeching him to be clement. In the end, Kṛṣṇa receives the adoration due to a God.[2]

The *Bhāgavata purāṇa* of the tenth century, the main sacred text of Krishnite devotion, in the Chapter 16 of Book 10, tells the same story but describes in full detail the panic created among the inhabitants of Braj,

including animals and plants, who are all afraid of losing Kṛṣṇa as in the previous tales. But when Kṛṣṇa dances on the many hoods of the Nāg covered with jewels, the Nāgiṇīs surrounded by their little ones praise in learned terms the innate saving power of Kṛṣṇa's touch while also pleading for their Nāg's life. They offer precious stones to Kṛṣṇa, crowns and divine pearls as the Nāg folk are known to be keepers of treasure. They also offer him a garland of blue lotus flowers.[3]

The three stories are austere in their classical Sanskrit rendering, and thereby domesticated or tamed. It is obvious that these narrations cannot be the exclusive source of the proliferating number of versions existing in the vernaculars of northern India, and specially of Gujarat. Although the Sanskrit renderings precede the exuberant vernacular versions, they may not necessarily be their source.

The Vernacular Versions

The best known vernacular version is the fifteenth century *prabhātiyuṃ* by Narasiṃha Mahetā '*Jalakamala chāṇḍi jāne bāḷā...*'.[4] This morning song, almost entirely written as a dialogue, starts with the animated appeal of a Nāgiṇī entreating Kṛṣṇa to stop attempting to fight her husband and master. Yet, she is confronted with the arrogance of the self-assured little boy ready to cut and hang the thousand-hooded head of the terrible monster on which he had placed (and lost) a bet at Mathura. With compassionate empathy for the beautiful child, the Nāgiṇī proposes to help him and offers to him her precious necklace. But when he obstinately refuses, she has no other choice then to massage the feet and rub the moustache of Kālināg in order to wake him. But as Kṛṣṇa seems to put the Kālināg into a difficult situation, all the Nāgiṇīs together ask for Kṛṣṇa's pardon and then acknowledge him as their God, showing respect and paying tribute with trays full of pearls.

The first verse (which is also used as the refrain) concisely alludes to a lotus pond '*Jalakamala*', in the same way that this occurs with the garland of blue lotus flowers in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. The allusion is certainly well understood by the public as the quest for the miraculous lotus flowers guarded by demon Kālināg. It was one of the pretexts for Kṛṣṇa's intervention in numerous other versions, especially those by Pir Sadruddin and Imam Shah: Kaṃs, the king of Mathura, trying to get rid of Kṛṣṇa, asks him to fetch these lotus flowers. Yet here the pretext is different: Kṛṣṇa pretends to have lost the Nāg's head in a game. Other versions choose to show Kṛṣṇa diving into these fearful waters while searching for a ball he and his fellow mates had lost playing.

The variety of motives, and also the repetition of specific verse sequences, aroused the curiosity of H.C. Bhayani[5] who finally doubted the

authorship of Narasiṃha Mahetā composition '*Jalakamala chāṇḍī jāne bāḷa*'. The fact that its form is a *prabhātiyuṃ* (song for early morning devotion) is in itself a questionable matter.[6] H.C. Bhayani traced back to several Jaina Sanskrit and Apabhraṃśa versions the features taken up again in Narasiṃha Mahetā's poem. These Jaina versions could not have tapped the Sanskrit Hindu versions for their details, as we have seen. It is more likely they drew inspiration from old folklore tales. He lists Jaina texts like Svayambhū's Apabhraṃśa *Riṭṭhaṇemicariya* (last quarter of the ninth century) where in the first four sections of the sixth canto 'a highly poetic description of *Kāliya-mardana*' is given[7] or Jinasena's Sanskrit *Harivaṃśa-purāṇa* (AD 784) I,91 and Puṣpadanta's Apabhraṃśa *Mahāpurāṇa* (AD 972), 89, 20, 3 where Kṛṣṇa subdues the Nāg by piercing his nose through which a rope is strung so that Kṛṣṇa could spin the Nāg around. For H.C. Bhayani this type of feature does not prove that folk literature was inspired by learned texts but, on the contrary, that the latter borrowed from pre-existing folklore.[8] In fact, these Jaina renderings reveal a vivid imaginative oral tradition of which the so-called *prabhātiyuṃ* of Narasiṃha Mahetā could be yet another example.

Professor Bhayani goes on to compare the *Jalakamala* to many other vernacular medieval texts of Gujarat and north India: folk Rajasthani compositions, the *Nāga-abhimāna-mardana* of Guṇasāgara Sūri (1620), the Ḍiṅgaḷ *Nāga Damaṇa* of the Bard Sāṃyājī Jhulā (1576-1647),[9] etc. He identifies two textual strains: the one including the lotus motive starts with the Digambara Jaina Jinasena's *Harivaṃśa purāṇa* (784) and lasts until the Braj *Sūrasāgara* by Sūra Dāsa at the beginning of the sixteenth century while in Gujarati we have the *Kṛṣṇalīlākāvya* by Keśavarāma (1536) and Premānanda's *Daśamaskanda* in the second half of the seventeenth century; but the striking absence of the lotus motive is met already with Hemacandrācārya (1089-1173), the classical Sanskrit versions and, in Gujarati, with Bhālaṇa (end of the fifteenth century–beginning of the sixteenth century) and Ratneśvara (second half of the seventeenth century).[10]

The success of this episode of Kṛṣṇa's life went uninterrupted through the centuries.[11] This becomes even more remarkable considering the Ginānic contribution to this tradition. H.C. Bhayani was unaware of the latter tradition, but had he known, he would have been able to note that the Satpanthi texts corroborated his thesis in all points.

The Satpanthi Versions

In the Ginānic literature, as in the Sanskrit and vernacular tales, the *Nāgadamana* episode is either told as part of the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, the eighth of the *Dasa-avatāras,* or stands as an independent episode in a Ginān or Granth. The Satpanthi *Dasa-avatāras* are of unequal length and various

forms, from not more than a dozen lines (composed by Pīr Shams) to a few thousands (composed by Imam Shah). They share particular features concerning, for instance, the list of avatārs which sometimes inserts between the seventh (Rām) and the eighth (Kr̥ṣṇa) avatār a tale dealing with Hariścandra, the mythological king of Ayodhya, who sacrificed his life in order to keep his word, a true model of the *dharma*.[12] Sometimes the *Nāgadamaṇa* episode is added separately between Kr̥ṣṇa (the eighth avatār) and Buddha (the ninth avatār). Kr̥ṣṇa also has a specific feature in the Ginān texts as he acts as the main interlocutor of the Pāṇḍavas, and his mission of saving and counselling them goes on right through the tale of the *Buddha-avatāra.*[13] Again, between the ninth avatār, Buddha, and the tenth, Niṣkalaṅka, one meets with the story of the five Pāṇḍavas' ascent to heaven (*Svargārohīṇī*). There is a remarkable interpenetration of the classical epic and Vaishnava mythology, a characteristic feature of the Satpanthi texts,[14] underlining the specific importance of the Kr̥ṣṇa avatār.

According to Zawahir Moir and Christopher Shackle, there might be half a dozen Ginānic versions of *Dasa-avatāras*,[15] two of them being specially known and called *Nāno* and *Moṭo*, respectively attributed to Pīr Sadruddin and Sayyid Imam Shah. Besides, the notion of *Dasa-avatāra* appears quite frequently spread here and there in different Ginān̄s. When the composition is short, with only a single line being devoted to Kr̥ṣṇa, the *Nāgadamana* episode remains unmentioned of course. This happens in the case of the *Dasa-avatāras* of Pīr Shams (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), one of them being of philological, historical and codicological importance,[16] as well as in a short text by Pīr Sadruddin.[17] We shall examine here two versions by Pīr Sadruddin and three others by Sayyid Imam Shah.

Pīr Sadruddin (d.1416?)

Pīr Sadruddin twice describes the *Nāgadamana* episode: in the *Dasa-avatāra nāno*[18] and in a Ginān that puts emphasis on Kr̥ṣṇa's life.[19]

The nineteen lines of the *Dasa-avatāra* are preceded and followed by a few prose sentences detailing the names of Kr̥ṣṇa's parents, i.e. Vāsudev and Devakī. The nineteen verses deal almost exclusively with the *Nāgadamana* story, one amongst Kr̥ṣṇa's numerous heroic exploits to free the Braj country from its demons. However, in these verses, the circumstances of Kr̥ṣṇa's decision are stressed. Kaṃs the demon king of Mathura wants to eliminate him and forces his father Nanda to fetch some of the lotuses guarded by the Cobra Demon in the waters of the Yamunā for a *pūjā* celebrated with full ceremony. Nanda hesitates but Kr̥ṣṇa goes ahead. Half a line is enough to indicate that he subdues (*nāthayo*) Kālināg (line 10). He returns with the lotuses and the frightened Kaṃs tells his wrestler

Cāndarā to fight but Kṛṣṇa breaks his bones and kills Kaṃs. Killing the demon Kaṃs and battling with Kālināg provides Kṛṣṇa with an occasion to fulfil his role as avatār. Exceptional importance is thus attributed to this specific episode which stands in place of a complete avatār tale by itself.

The second tale is included in a long Ginān consisting of 46 verses. At the beginning (verses 1 to 12), different mythological characters such as Prahlād, Hariścandra and the author Pīr Sadruddin are evoked. Verse 13 announces Kṛṣṇa's birth together with the auspicious ceremonies accompanying it such as the name-giving ceremony (verses 22 to 26). The remaining verses focus on telling the Kālināg story (until the final verse 46). This tale's motives, its frame, the lively and joyous mood of the story are strikingly different from the preceding version. Together with his cousin Balarām, the divine child plays with a ball made of gold and set with jewels on the banks of the Yamunā river. He runs and dives for the ball as a Nāgiṇī interrupts him. Their dialogue takes up the questions and even the words of the *Jalakamala* by Narasiṃha Mahetā: 'Child, are you lost? Or have you already reached the term of your young life? Did your parents give birth to another child or have you got a nagging wife at home?' Young Kṛṣṇa proudly refutes everything: 'Awake the Nāg, it is Kān Dev who is standing here'. The battle is brief. Kṛṣṇa rides on the Nāg's tail and the Nāgiṇīs ask for his mercy. Kṛṣṇa returns triumphantly with the lotuses on his head to Kaṃsa's utter loss of hope. Pīr Sadruddin concludes: 'During the *Kali yug,* it is certain Kāyam will arrive'. This version of the *Kāliyadamana* is in the folkloric lineage of the vernacular texts; its language and form follow the model of the *Jalakamala*.

Sayyid Imam Shah (d.1513)

Three versions of the *Nāgadamana* go under the name of Imam Shah (Sayyid or Pīr according to whether he is recognized as a Satpanthi or whether he is claimed as the founder of the dissident group of the Pīrāṇā Imamshahis). Two are part of the two versions of the *Moṭo Dasa-avatāra*, i.e. the Satpanthi and the Imamshahi versions; the third one is independent although included in the Imamshahi *Das-avatāra*.

The Satpanthi version[20] attributed to Sayyid Imamshah is called *Moṭo dasa avatāra* and contains 1601 verses, 232 of them dealing with the story of the eighth avatār where verses 22 to 34 narrate the *Nāgadamana* episode, one of the several exploits according to the purāṇic tradition, quite differently from the manner employed in the *Dasa-avatāra* of Pīr Sadruddin where this miracle fills the entire avatār tale. It belongs to the folkloric tradition of the *Jalakamala* of Narsī Mahetā. Both the aforementioned pretexts for action are brought together here: first Kṛṣṇa goes looking for his ball, then he tells

the Nāgiṇīs that he has lost at a betting game with Kaṃs, the head of the Nāg, whom he calls 'Vāsiṅga Rāya', a form of 'Vāsuki' the king of the cobra divinities living in the netherworld (*Pātāla*) where Kṛṣṇa is headed. Recounted once again here is the lively conversation between the Nāgiṇīṣ and Kṛṣṇa, with a few word for word equivalences (for instance, verse 26: *mārā sāmi jāgaśe, to sahī māraśe tuja* reproduces the refrain of *Jalakamala*: *jāgaśe tane māraśe, ...*). Kṛṣṇa returns from *Pātāla* with the defeated Nāg prisoner. He does not take along any lotus and it remains unsaid whether he liberates his prisoner.

The Imamshahi version of the *Moṭo dasa avatāra* is considerably longer, and thus, maybe less authentic than the Satpanthi version.[21] There are 4601 verses (instead of 1601). Kṛṣṇa the eighth avatār is allotted 590 verses of which verses 128 to 177 describe the *Nāgadamana* (in contrast to the meagre 13 verses in the Satpanthi version). Repetitions and digressions help lengthen the text without adding much to its merits. Kṛṣṇa enters the scene diving after his ball lost in the Yamunā. Looking at what seems like a disaster, Yaśodā laments accompanied by the entire Mathura with the exception of Kaṃs who feels happy. This motif seems borrowed from the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* version, revealing perhaps a tendency to achieve literary stature through the imitation of a classical Sanskrit model. Later on the story unfolds along similar lines in both the texts: the dialogue with the Nāgiṇīs, the revelation of the lost wager, the struggle with (and the defeat of) the Nāg brought back from the netherworld. As a sideline, verse 157 reports incidentally that Kṛṣṇa also fetched some lotus flowers from *Pātāla*, and this additional feat is recalled in verse 163 when Kṛṣṇa receives the applause of the crowd. As in the *Nāno dasa-avatāra* of Pīr Sadruddin, Kṛṣṇa kills Kaṃs immediately after capturing Kāliya.

An independent version[22] is also contained in the Imamshahi *Dasa-avatāra*, placed between the eighth avatār Kṛṣṇa and the ninth avatār Buddha. It is called *Nāgadamana* preceded by a preface (*prastāvanā)* There are two versions of this text according to the different Pīrāṇā editions. The one dated 1956 presents the texts as an *ākhyāna* composed of seven *kaḍavāṃ* of unequal length (verses 3 to 59). The 1978 edition (or re-edition) numbers the verses without interruption from 1 to 226 without heeding the structure of the *kaḍavāṃ*. The prefaces of both texts are almost identical. The reason why the episode came into existence is explained there: Kaṃs, aware of the fact that death awaits him from the hands of Kṛṣṇa, tries out a trick and invites Nanda, who is presented as a minor king, for a game of dice. As in the *Mahābhārata*, he cheats, and Nanda risks losing his kingdom unless his son Kṛṣṇa succeeds in fetching the lotus flowers from *Pātāla* where they are

guarded by Kālināg. No allusion to this event is made in the following text as Kṛṣṇa dives from a *Kadamba* tree (as in the Sanskrit versions) into the water of the Yamunā in order to purify it and/or to fetch his ball. The 1978 preface states that the author is Imamshah Bava, whereas the 1956 preface is silent on this point although at the end of the text itself one finds a signature announcing the name of another author, that is, Brahmānand Bhaṭṭ and the date of S.1913 (AD 1857). The language and style confirm the suspicion of it being a later addition by another hand to the text attributed to Imam Shah. Brahmānand Bhaṭṭ cannot be identified with any precision[23].

After his friends were unable to withhold Kṛṣṇa, the Nāgiṇīs in the water endlessly praise his beauty and try to prevent him from the unjust fight with the Nāg. Kṛṣṇa's parents are out of their mind and the whole of Braj starts lamenting, while the girl friends offer numerous one verse portraits of the divine child. Finally, the Nāg is subdued and suffers while Kṛṣṇa dances on his hoods, playing the flute. The text abounds with refined descriptions trying to imitate the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. The fetching of the lotus is briefly mentioned in verse 175 and the Nāgiṇīs hang a lotus garland around Kṛṣṇa's neck (verse 204). At the end Kāliya is spared, driven away from the waters of the Yamunā; protected by Kṛṣṇa's footprints marked upon his head, he escapes into the ocean. A final question is raised introducing a new motive: the *Kadamba* tree had been immune to Kālināg's poison as it had become immortal thanks to the ambrosia that fell from the beak of Garūḍa and thus the tree could serve as Kṛṣṇa's diving board.

The Satpanthi versions abundantly borrow from all the registers of the myth; they avail themselves of the pool of motives shared by the Jainas, Vaishnavas, etc. But why, generally speaking, did the *Nāgadamana* meet with such success and, more precisely, why was it so intensely appreciated by the Satpanthis?

Charlotte Vaudeville analysed by means of a 'historical approach' the myth of Kāliya.[24] She found, notably from archeological evidence, that Nāg divinities were prevalent in the Braj and Govardhan areas. The myth could explain how the cult of Kṛṣṇa superseded the Nāg cult. Kṛṣṇa is there to replace the Lords of the place but with gentleness. There is compassion in the behaviour of the victorious one who is a young innocent boy facing a monster. This is the whole difference between '*damana*' (submission) and '*mardana*' (killing). What is to be killed is the arrogance of Kāliya.

André Couture does not agree with this historical perspective and prefers a structuralist theory.[25] According to this view, the myth of *Kāliyadamana* embodies a perfect avatār story with all its symbolic components.[26] 'Kṛṣṇa establishes the rules for the government of the world' through his victory over the Nag, yet his victory does not stand for brutal force but for the preferable virtue of compassion.

Whatever the interpretation, both suit the missionary spirit of the Satpanth faith. The new faith takes over the prevalent myths, tales and motifs in Hinduism, and considers them not as an enemy but as a precursor already embodied, without being aware of it, in the new dispensation;[27] and it accomplishes this as smoothly as the Kṛṣṇa cult superseded the Nāg worship. It may also be said that the expected Kāyam at the end of Times will triumph only because he is endowed with the perfect virtues of compassion and mercy. He will abolish the *Kaliyug* and defeat the demon Kāliṅgo whose name recalls those of the Nāg: Kāli, Kāliya, themselves reminders of Kāl, Time. And after all, stories that recount how an innocent youth triumphed over a violent and much stronger and bigger enemy, like David over Goliath, will always have a universal appeal.

Notes

1. *The Harivaṃśa: The Khila or supplement to the Māhabhārata,* vol. 5 of *The Mahābhārata text as constituted in its Critical Edition*, Poona: The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1976, pp. 104-8; André Couture, tr., *L'enfance de Krishna: Traduction des chapitres 30 à 78 (ed. cr.)*, collection *Patrimoine hindouisme*, Laval: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1981, pp. 218-26.
2. Munilal Gupta, ed. and tr., *Śrīviṣṇu purāṇa*, Gorakhpur: Gitapress, S. 2026 (AD 1969), pp. 390-7; H.H. Wilson, tr., *The Vishṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology*, Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 3rd edn 1961 (1st edn 1888), pp. 409-16.
3. E. Burnouf, ed. and tr., *le Bhâgavata Purâna ou Histoire poétique de Krĭchna*, vol. 4, ed. M. Hauvette-Besnault, *Collection Orientale, Monuments inédits*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1884, pp. 168-83.
4. F. Mallison, ed. and tr., *Au point du jour: Les Prabhātiyāṃ de Narasiṃha Mahetā, poète et saint vishnouite du Gujarat*, Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1986, pp.162-5. (see Appendix 1)
5. H.C. Bhayani, 'Jaḷakamaḷa prabhātiyānī pracīnatā ane kartṛtva', *Svadhyāya*, vol. 7, no. 4, S.2026 (AD 1970), pp. 398-412; repr. in *Anusandhāna*, Ahmedabad: Sarasvatī Pustak Bhaṇḍār, 1972, pp. 55-78, and in *Pracīna-madhyakālīna Kṛṣṇa-kāvya ane Narasiṃha-svādhyāya*, Ahmedabad: Raṅgadvār Prakāśan, 1986, pp. 84-101. Quotations are made from the reprint in *Anusandhāna*. H.C. Bhayani comments upon a previous article by P. Chandarvarkar, 'Nāgadamana: parvatiya ane gujarātī', *Svādhyāya*, vol. 6, no. 1, S.2024 (AD 1968), pp. 38-43. See also Upendra N. Dave, 'Madhyakālīna gujarātī kavitā: Śrīmadbhāgavatanā sandarbha', *Svādhyāya*, vol. 36, nos 1-2, s. 2055 (AD 1999), pp. 133-46, specially pp. 137-9.
6. The 'Jalakamala' has neither the *deśī prabhātiyuṃ* tune nor the *jhūlaṇā* metric pattern common to the genre of the *prabhātiyuṃ*, to be sung early in the morning; it is composed in the *harigīta* metre. The only possible hint is that

the Nāg is asleep and should be awakened, a detail pointing to early morning time (F. Mallison, *Les Prabhātiyāṃ de Narasiṃha Mahetā*, p. 41).

7. H.C. Bhayani, 'The Childhood Exploits of Krishna According to Some Pre-eleventh Century Prakrit and Apabhraṁśa Texts', in *Indological Studies*, Ahmedabad: Parshva Prakashan, 1993, p. 211-12.
8. To strengthen this point H.C. Bhayani proposes to consider the composition of Someśvara in his *Mānasollāsa*, the sixteenth chapter of the fourth *viṃśati* (i.e. the seventy-sixth chapter of the whole) where samples of metric poems in regional post-Apabhraṃśa languages, dealing with the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, are given, thus proving the quite early existence of vernacular Krishnite poems. See H.C. Bhayani, 'The Prakrit and Deśa-bhāṣā Passages in Someśvara Mānasollāsa' in *Indological Studies*, Ahmedabad: Parshva Prakashan, 1993, pp. 297-309, and F. Mallison, 'Early Kṛṣṇa *Bhakti* in Gujarat: The Evidence of Old Gujarati Texts Recently Brought to Light' in *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature*, ed. A.W. Entwistle and F. Mallison, New Delhi and Paris: Manohar and École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994, p. 55.
9. Ratudan Rohadiya, ed., *Sāṃyājī Jhulānī prasādī Nāga damaṇa*, Junagadh: Isaradāsajī Cāraṇī Sāhitya Prasāra ane Prakāśana Trust, 1986.
10. H.C. Bhayani, *Anusandhāna*, pp. 62-4.
11. Another episode often retold is that of Sudāmā, the poor brahmin and Kṛṣṇa's childhood friend whose wife had sent him to his successful friend from their common school days to ask for help and who is overwhelmed by the god's generosity. Numerous vernacular versions abundant with details seem to originate in a hoary past independently from the Sanskrit versions. But the figure of Sudāmā has not been taken up by the Ginānic literature. See F. Mallison, 'Saint Sudāmā in Gujarāt: Should the Holy be Wealthy?', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, vol. 29a, 1979, pp. 91-9.
12. Hariścandra, although not a Vaishnava himself, is extremely popular as a model of righteousness in the Bhakti devotional literature. He has become a mythological Bhakta.
13. See the contribution by Teena Purohit, 'Śrībuddha's Gracious Rescue of the Pāṇḍavas in Buddhāvatār' in this volume. See also B.S.Jani, 'Delineation of Kṛṣṇa's Character in "Daśa Avatāra" of Pīr Sadruddin', paper read at the Ninth International Conference on Early Devotional literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages, Heidelberg, 23-6 July 2003.
14. Cf. Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 303, 345-56.
15. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans* (SOAS South Asia Texts no. 3), London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992, p. 157.
16. Gulshan Khakee, 'The Dasa Avatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic and Literary Evidence of the Early Development of ismailism in Sind', in *Sindh through the Centuries*, ed. Hamida Khuhro, Karachi: Oxford University Press, repr. 1993 (1st edn 1981), pp. 143-55.
17. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns*, pp. 158-9.

18. Lalbhai Devraj, ed., *Dasa avatāra nāno (racanāra Pīra Sadaradīna)*, Mumbai, 1921, pp. 9-10 (see Appendix 2).
19. *Pīra Sadaradīna racita Gīnānono saṅgraha*, Mumbai, 1969, pp. 141-4.
20. *Sayed Imam Shah na Grantho*, (without any indication of date nor place), p. 8 (see Appendix 3).
21. Saiyada Bāvā Sāheba Ahamadaalī 'Khākī', ed., *Śrī Satpantha Prakāśa athārta Śrī Sadguru pātra Brahmā Indra Imāmaśāha Bāvāe varṇavela Śrī Harinā Daśa Avatāra*, Pīrāṇā: Satpanthī Sāhitya Sevā Maṇḍaḷa, 1978, pp. 220-4, and Saiyad Śamsdīnā Bāvāsāheb 'Khākhī', ed., *Śrī Satpantha Prakāśa athārta Sri Imāmaśāha Bāvāe bhākhela Daśa Avatāra*, Pīrāṇā, 1956.
22. Ibidem (1978), pp. 261-83, and ibidem, (1956), pp. 116-25.
23. The best known Brahmānanda is the Svāmīnārāyaṇī author (1772-1849) who fails to agree with the 1857 date; another one is the author of a *Nāgasamvād* in 1731, equally too early (see K.K.Shastri, *Gujarātī hāthapratonī saṃkalita yādī*, Ahmedabad: Gujarat Vernacular Society, 1939, p. 134).
24. Charlotte Vaudeville, 'Aspects du mythe de Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla dans l'Inde ancienne' in *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou*, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968, pp. 737-61.
25. André Couture, 'L'enfance de Kṛṣṇa selon le Harivaṃśa: étude de la composition du récit', *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1989, pp. 438-40.
26. This would explain the *Nāno dasa avatāra* episode where Kaṃs is killed just at the end of the Kāliya story.
27. In some versions Kāliya himself has the revelation that he is a Bhakta of Kṛṣṇa without knowing it, as he had received the imprint of the feet of the God on his head. The Nāginīs themselves are very sorry for not having deciphered earlier the mystery of the true nature of Kṛṣṇa. On the ambiguity of the position of Kṛṣṇa toward Kāliya see the analysis of Freda Matchett in 'The Taming of Kāliya: A comparison of the Harivaṃśa, Viṣṇu-purāṇa and Bhāgavata-purāṇa versions' *Religion*, vol. 16, 1986, pp. 115-33.

APPENDIX 1

NARASIṂHA MAHETĀ

Jalakamala Chāṇḍī Jāne Bāḷā

(F. Mallison, *Au Point Du Jour*, pp. 162-3)

Jalakamala chāṇḍī jāne bāḷā, svāmī amāro jāgaśe,
Jāgaśe tane māraśe, mane bāḷahatyā lāgaśe. (1)

Kahe re bāḷaka tuṃ māraga bhūlyo, ke tārā verīe vaḷāviyo;
Niścaya tāro kāḷa khūṭyo, ahiṃāṃ te śīda āviyo. (2)

Nathī nāgaṇa huṃ māraga bhūlyo, nathī mārā verīe vaḷāviyo,
Mathurā nagarīmāṃ jugaṭuṃ ramataṃ, nāganuṃ śīśa huṃ hāriyo. (3)

Raṅge rūḍo rūpe pūro, dīsanto koḍīlo koḍāmaṇo;
Tārī mātāe keṭalā janmyā, temāṃ tuṃ aḷakhāmaṇo. (4)

Mārī mātāe bahu janmyā, temāṃ huṃ naṭavara nahānaḍo;
Jagāḍa tārā nāgane, māruṃ nāma Kr̥ṣṇa kahānaḍo. (5)

Lākha savāno māro hāra āpuṃ, āpuṃ re tujane doriyo;
Eṭaluṃ mārā nāgathī chānuṃ, āpuṃ tujane coriyo. (6)

Śuṃ karuṃ nāgaṇa hāra tāro, śuṃ karuṃ tāro doriyo;
Śāne kāje nāgaṇa tāre, karavī gharamāṃ coriyo. (7)

Caraṇa cāmpī mūcha maraḍī, nāgaṇe nāga jagāviyo;
Uṭhone baḷavanta koī, bāraṇe bāḷaka āviyo. (8)

Beu baḷiyā bāthe vaḷagiyā, Kr̥ṣṇa Kālināga nāthiyo;
Sahasra pheṇā phumphave jeme, gagana gāje hāthiyo. (9)

Nāgaṇa sau vilāpa kare je, nāgane bahu du:kha āpaśe;
Mathurā nagarīmāṃ leī jaśe, pachī nāganuṃ śīśa kāpaśe. (10)

Beu karajoḍīne vīnave, Svāmī mūko amārā kanthane;
Ame aparādhī kāṃi na samajyāṃ, na oḷakhyā Bhagavantane. (11)

Thāḷa bharī nāgaṇī sarve, motiye Śrīkr̥ṣṇane vadhāviyo;
Narasaiṃyānā nātha pāsethī, nāgaṇe nāga choḍāviyo. (12)

Leave the lotus pond, my child,
Or our Lord will awake!
If he awakes, he will kill you
And [on my conscience] will lie the murder of a child. (1)

– Tell me, Little One, did you lose your way?
Or were you sent by your enemy?
Your life, to be sure, will not last much longer,
Otherwise why should you have come here? (2)

– No, Nāgaṇī, I did not lose my way
And it wasn't my enemy who sent me.
I played with dice in the town of Mathura
And I [bet and] lost the Nāg's head. (3)

– Your complexion is beautiful and you are well built,
As we see you full of ardor, our heart is enchanted.
How many [children] were born of your mother?
[Are you] the less loved one among them? (4)

– My mother gave birth to two children,
I am the younger one, Naṭavara, the One who dances.
Awaken your Nāga [and tell him]
My name: Kṛṣṇa, the little Kahāna. (5)

– I shall give you my necklace worth a lakh and a quarter,
I shall give you the jewel adorning my neck,
Without letting my Nāg know
I shall give it to you, little thief! (6)

– What would I do, Nāgaṇī, with your necklace?
What use would be to me the jewel on your neck?
Why, Nāgaṇī, commit a theft in your house? (7)

The Nāgaṇī, in order to awaken her Nāg,
Squeezes his feet, pulls his mustache.
– Do get up, Powerful One! A small
Boy has arrived, and is waiting at the door. (8)

Both are strong, they hold each other and fight
But then Kṛṣṇa subdues Kālināg.
His thousand hoods whistle as strongly
As does the sky while the *hasti* storm lasts. (9)

All the Nāgaṇīs break into lament:
What suffering will He not cause to the Nag!
He will take him along to the town of Mathura
And there He will cut his head! (10)

They join their hands and imploringly cry out:
– O Lord, release our Master!
We are guilty, we had not understood,
We did not recognize that You are the Adorable. (11)

Their plates heaped with pearls,
The Nāgaṇīs pay homage to Kṛṣṇa.
Thus they were able to deliver their Nāga
Who was at the mercy of the Lord of Narasiṃha. (12)

APPENDIX 2

PĪR SADRUDDIN

Dasa avatāra nāno, avatāra 8mo

v.1-19: Nāgadamana episode (L. Devraj, *Dasa avatāra* ..., pp. 9-10)

Tāre kopīyo Kamsāsura kāla, teḍī lāvo te Nandajīnuṃ bāla; (1)
Vege karīne velā thāo, eka ghaḍīnī vāra ma lāvo. (2)
Eka tāla māṃhe velā jāo, jāi lejo amāruṃ nāma. (3)
Nanda sāthe che eka kāma, pujā māṇḍī che Mathurā gāma. (4)
Te māṃhe joie che kamalanā kāṃya, teḍī lāvo te Nandajīnuṃ kāna (5)
Nahiṃ kāṃ chāṇḍo Gokala gāma, nahīṃ kāṃ bījo dharāvo nāma (6)
Tāre Nanda bolīyā dharīne neha, Kaṃsa kopeyo suje naṃhī kāma (7)
Ame chāṇḍasuṃ Gokala gāma, tāre bolīyā Trībhovara Śāma (8)
Ame jāesuṃ kamalake kāja, have potā te kaṃsajīnā rāja (9)
Uṭhī cāleyā Śāhā Trībhovara Śāma, jāi nātheyo Kāḷio nāga. (10)
Aṇi sāreyā kamalānāṃ kāja, tāre Kaṃse kahyo eto moṭo sala (11)
Mokaleo Cāndaro mala, tene Kaṃse kahī eka vāta. (12)
Ene jhālīne karajo eka ghāta, tāre male kahī aradāsa. (13)
Kaho to rāejī jhālī lāvuṃ tamāre pāsa, tāre Kaṃsa suṇīne thayo ralīyāta. (14)
Tame sāmbhalo mārā mala, vege karīne vehelāṃ thāo. (15)
Eka ghaḍīnī vāra ma lāo eka tāla māṃhe vehelā jāo. (16)
Vacana suṇine male kīdhī riḍa, śāhe hāthe maroḍeā tenā śarīra. (17)
Śāhe māreyo Cāndaro mala, trana bhamaṇanuṃ ṭāleo sala (18)
Śāhe māreyo rāja Kaṃsa, chedaviyā tenā vaṃśa. (19)

And then black Kaṃsāsur became angry [and said]:
'Summon the child of Nandajī and bring him here. (1)

Do it right now, be quick, bring him here within less than half an hour. (2)

Within the time taken by one beat (*tāla*), go there fast and invoke my name. (3)

[Tell them:] 'There is a task for Nanda: in the village of Mathura a *Pūjā* is arranged. (4)

For that the lotus garland is needed; call for Kāna (Kṛṣṇa) of Master Nandaji, make him come.' (5)

[If you refuse:] 'Quit forever your village of Gokul.
[If you don't want,] take another title [of nobility ?]' (6)

Then Nanda replied affectionately [but] angry Kaṃs did not listen. (7)

[Nanda gives up:] 'We shall leave the village of Gokul',
– [however] then Śyām the Lord of the three worlds said: (8)

'I shall go and bring the lotus, and then take them myself to the kingdom of Lord Kams.' (9)

He got up and went on his way, He the King Śyām, the Lord of the three worlds, he went and undid the Nāg Kāliya; (10)

As He brought all the lotus needed, Kaṃs said to himself:
This one is a powerful rock. (11)

And he sent for the wrestler Cāndara; Kaṃs told him thus: (12)

'Seize him, and then choke him', whereupon the wrestler demanded: (13)

Order me, King, to seize and bring him here.
Upon hearing this, Kaṃs rejoiced [and said:] (14)

'Listen to what I told you, wrestler, hurry and be quick. (15)

Fetch him within one hour, hurry up within the time taken by one beat (*tāla*).' (16)

After listening to these words, the wrestler cried out [because] the Lord [Kṛṣṇa] strangled his body, with His hands. (17)

The Lord killed the wrestler Cāndara, the Rock of the three worlds undid him. (18)

The Lord killed the king Kaṃs, He put an end to his lineage. (19)

APPENDIX 3

SAYYID IMAM SHAH

Moṭo dasa avatāra, avatāra āthamo

v.22-34: Nāgadamana episode (*Sayed Imām Shah no Grantho*, p. 8)

Je gokulamāṃ gāīyum cārīyuṃ bahu khelaja karī,
te deva eka daḍā kāraṇe jala Jamanāmāṃ jhapalāṇā Śrī Harī (22)

Tyāre Jamanā jhapalāvī Śrī Kaṣṇajī pātāle jāe,
tyāṃ jāi ubho jyāṃ suto Vāsiṅga rāya. (23)

Tyāṃ beṭhī paga cāpe nāganī,
te dekhī bālakane acambe ghaṇī. (24)

Hāṃre bālaka tuṃ śuṃ bhulo che vāṭa,
tuṃ kema āvīyo vīsame ghāṭa. (25)

Hāṃre bāḷaka tuṃ vaḷa pācho vacana suṇajo muja,
nahīṃka mārā sāmī jāgaśe to sahī māraśe tuja. (26)

To tuṃ suṇa nāganī huṃ kahuṃ eka vāta;
huṃ kaṃī nathī bhulo vīsamī gaṭa. (27)

Je kaṃsa rāya che Mathurā taṇo,
tāṃsuṃ meṃ khela māṇḍīyoṃ che ghaṇo. (28)

Tyāṃ hārīyo tārā Vāsiṅganuṃ śīśaja nīravāṇa,
tyāṃ nāganī nāga jagāḍīyo te karīyo jāṇa. (29)

Tyāre Śrī Kaṣṇajī sāthe macī ghumasāṇa,
tenā vīkhe sāvarā kevāṇā Śrī Sāraṅga prāṇa. (30)

Tyāre kopīā Śrī Kṛṣṇajī dharīyo bhuja bala,
tyāṃ Śrī Kṛṣṇajīe nāthīo nāga dehī paga tala. (31)

Jyāre paīyārathī nāga nāthī lāvīā Śrī Kṛṣṇajī rāya,
tyāre Gokula Mathurā māṃhe ṭhāṭha varatāe. (32)

Tyāre gokula Mathurāmā varatyo jya jyakāra,
paṇa Kaṃsa āgala paḍī che pukāra. (33)

Hāra Kaṃsa Śrī Kṛṣṇajī gayātā pātāla,
tyāmṭhī lāvīyo eka mahā vīkarāla. (34)

When He went to graze the cows, He played many games, and
this God, Śrī Hari, because of a ball, jumped into the Yamunā.
(22)

Having jumped into the Yamunā, Śrī Kr̥ṣṇa went to the netherworld,
He kept on standing while the king there, Vāsīṅg, was sleeping. (23)

Sitting right there a Nāgiṇī massaged his feet,
when she saw the child, she was surprised. (24)

'Child, have you lost your way?
What a hostile situation have you fallen into? (25)

Child, return, listen to my words: for otherwise my Lord
will awaken, and he will kill you certainly.' (26)

'Listen to what I am telling you, Nāgiṇī, listen to my only
word: I have not been lost on any treacherous road. (27)

With Kaṃs the king of Mathura
I have been playing and betting a lot. (28)

I definitely lost the head of your Vāsīṅg.' Upon this the
Nāgiṇī awoke the Nāg and made them meet each other. (29)

Then fighting with Śrī Kr̥ṣṇa, he throws his venom on Śrī
Sāraṅga-Prāṇa.
(*for Sāraṅgapāṇī, a name of Viṣṇu-Rāma:*
'He who holds the bow') (30)

Madly furious, Śrī Kr̥ṣṇa undoes the Nāg by the strength of
his arm, and He walks on his body with the soles of His feet. (31)

When, after having undone the Nāg under his feet, Kr̥ṣṇa the
King and the Lord, took him along. At Mathura and Gokul
there were great feasts; (32)

At Mathura and Gokul there were cries of 'Victory',
but a complaint was adressed to Kaṃs: (33)

'Oh, Kaṃs, Śrī Kr̥ṣṇa has gone to the netherworld,
from there he fetches a great terror.' (34)

Śrībuddha's Gracious Rescue of the Pāṇḍavas in *Buddhāvatār*

Teena Purohit

Ginān scholarship, for the most part, has fallen into either the categories of translation and textual criticism or (and sometimes in tandem with) thematic and historical discussions about the literature.[1] Within this corpus of secondary material on Ginān literature, I have found neither formal translation work nor historical/thematic enquiries pertaining to the Ginān *Buddhāvatār* attributed to Pīr Sadruddin.[2] As a result of the paucity of scholarship around this text, I was only able to work with primary source material. As my primary interests don't fall in conducting a formal translation of the text, I assumed a method of reading and analysis that combines use of a translation of the Ginān, alongside an original of the printed Gujarati version from the India Office Library.[3] As this five hundred-versed poem is replete with potential topics of discussion, I limit the discussion to my specific interests in the Ginān: notions of avatar, revelation, and religious polemics.

Introduction

In the traditional order of avatars of Viṣṇu, Buddha generally appears as the ninth descent. However, unlike the preceding eight avatars or the tenth, Buddha's appearance is inconsistent: he is sometimes excluded from the series altogether.[4] When Buddha is acknowledged in the avatar sequence, the role he assumes is most often one who serves as a model of compassion and righteous conduct, following the more conventional traits of his fellow avatars. This, however, is not always the case. While his inconsistency as an avatar of Viṣṇu is one kind of deviation from the tradition of descents, Buddha is further removed from traditional representation through the ways

in which he is sometimes portrayed. Contrary to the normative avatar call of duty, Buddha is, in some instances, described as leading humankind astray with false teachings.[5]

In the Ginān, *Buddhāvatār*, one finds yet another configuration that the Buddha assumes with regard to the avatar sequence. In this poem, Buddha emerges in an avatar guise yet to be seen, proclaiming a message unheard by any other account—thereby contributing, in another respect, to his lack of canonicity. In the poem *Buddhāvatār*, Śrībuddha, as he is called, is introduced as the manifestation of Hari. He is, in accordance to traditional orders of descent, the ninth in the arrangement of avatars of Viṣṇu.[6] The ninth placement in the sequence of avatars is, however, the only correspondence one can draw between Śrībuddha and any other account of Buddha. While one finds some semblance of traditional Buddhist philosophies—one that preaches compassion, promotes *dharma*, and rejects Brahmanical social orders—the message of *Buddhāvatār* is one that is wholly unique in its espousal of righteous conduct, supersessive theology, and teleological revelation.

Buddhāvatār's message is quite expansive, oscillating between the prosaic—prescriptive and proscriptive codes of behaviour—and the meditative: a series of ruminations on the nature of the divine. The culminating and most dramatic moment, however, is the final conversion of the protagonists of the poem, the Pāṇḍavas, to Śrībuddha's message.[7] While this moment serves as the climax of the poem, it in no way undermines the body of text, as the discussions therein are thematically significant both in and of themselves as well as for the purpose of setting the stage for the climactic moments of revelation. This paper analyses the exchange between Bhīm and Buddha, couched in the central body of the text, along with the culminating moments of the Pāṇḍavas' final conversion, as seen through the figure Jujeṣṭhaṇ. More specifically, I explore how the figures of Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ are isolated and positioned in dialogue with Śrībuddha. I intend to demonstrate that the literary device of dialogue, and the voicing of the Pāṇḍav protagonists therein, functions to elucidate the significant motifs of the poem: the progressive degeneration of knowledge about the divine as represented through the Brahmins, the propagation of a new revelation by Śrībuddha, and the possibility of salvation for the coming age as epitomized by the Pāṇḍavas.

Śrībuddha as Avatar

The poem opens with the arrival of Śrībuddha at the house of the Pāṇḍavas, at which point the physicality of Śrībuddha's form—one that is simultaneously repulsive and compelling—is of immediate interest.

Śrībuddha's external appearance is jarring, as the poet describes his outward form as one that is repulsive due to his ugly face and deformed legs.[8] The description of his unattractive bodily appearance is further detailed with a focus on his bodily odor, where an unpleasant and potent smell emanates so profusely that nobody can bear to stand near him.[9] On the one hand, he is physically utterly repulsive to the senses, but at the same time, the narrator describes his avatar guise as one of a '*muglī rūp*'.[10] Śrībuddha is also dressed as a warrior, holding in his hands the befitting weapons of a knife, dagger, sword, and bow and arrow.[11] Whereas the unsightly aspects of this appearance brand him with the appellation of a low-caste person (*caṇḍāḷ*), the warrior accoutrements of his Mughal form elicit royal titles, such as *divān* and *mīr*. As if the paradoxical depiction of low-caste royalty were not complex enough, the final strokes on the already vibrant image illuminate who this Śrībuddha really is: Jādurāy, the 'King of the Yādavas',[12] who has manifested himself to restore order on earth. The last verse of the section introducing Śrībuddha highlights this disjuncture of external form and interior essence, stressing the incongruity with the remark that 'it was in *this* (emphasis mine) form that Jādurāy arrived at the door of the Pāṇḍavas.[13]

Śrībuddha arrives at a point that is cosmically significant to the poem. The moment in time of *Buddhāvatār*—the juncture between the *duāparjug (dvāpara yuga)* and *kalajug (kali yuga)*[14]—corresponds to the completion of the battle in the *Mahābhārata*, where *duāparjug* is brought to an end.[15] The post-battle setting that Śrībuddha enters in *Buddhāvatār* can therefore be understood as a kind of continuum to the narrative of the *Mahābhārata*. Śrībuddha enters this scene where two separate collectives, introduced at this point and referred throughout the poem as 'the Pāṇḍavas' and 'the Brahmins' are engaged in ritual performance. The five Pāṇḍav brothers are performing the Vedic fire ceremony (*hom jagan*) and next to them, Brahmins are reciting the Vedas. While the Vedas and the *hom jagan* ceremony collectively comprise a complete set of misguided texts and rituals, it is only the Brahmins, not the Pāṇḍavas along with the Brahmins, who represent an unsalvageable position with regard to Śrībuddha's message.

The Brahmins are affixed into a role of permanently misguided practitioners, for they serve as persistent polemical targets who are repeatedly repudiated by the narrator throughout the poem. The Pāṇḍavas, on the other hand, are conflicted devotees, as is demonstrated by their shifts in response to the Brahmins' authority. In the first section of the text, the Pāṇḍavas are in conversation with the Brahmins, trying to understand what the proper action for having killed the Kauravas ought to be. While the Pāṇḍavas initially hold steadfast to the authority of the Brahmins, as the poem unfolds, they become the central protagonists who struggle to fight off the power of the Brahmins. The entrance of Śrībuddha onto this setting of Vedic ritual

and recitation is therefore a significant juxtaposition, as it signifies the central polemic of the entire poem: Śrībuddha, representing the culminating and final revelation, breaks into the performance of the *hom jagan* ceremony with the intention of saving the Pāṇḍavas from the progressively declining Brahmanical traditions.

Not only is Śrībuddha's entrance cosmically significant, it is also corporeally so. As an avatar, he has taken on a human form to engage with humans about his message. He has chosen the Pāṇḍavas as his recipients and potential devotees. Unlike the Brahmins who are univocal and lack individual presence throughout the entire poem, the Pāṇḍav characters, particularly Jujeṣṭhaṇ and Bhīm, are individualized and voiced, thereby allowing their 'humanness' to be heard in such a way that invokes sympathy. Śrībuddha, too, is humanized, for as an avatar, he assumes a persona that grounds him to the worldly realm. In order to connect human to human, the poet employs the form of a dialogue by which figures such as Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ are able to engage with Śrībuddha. By participating in the mode of a dialogue, Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ's conflicts and questions become amplified, and Śrībuddha's response allows for the propagation of his message. The dialogue form, along with Śrībuddha's avatar disposition, ultimately serve the purpose of gradually drawing the protagonists and the reader into the conversation which, in turn, becomes the experience of revelation—the understanding of Śrībuddha's teaching as well as the realization of his divinity.

House of the Pāṇḍavas

Prior to Śrībuddha's conversations with Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ, the Pāṇḍavas are positioned under the Brahmins' guidance and authority, as they are preparing for the *hom jagan* ceremony. After the description of Śrībuddha's arrival, the poem turns to King Jujeṣṭhaṇ, the conflicted and tortured king who is unable to overcome the pain of having fought the war with the Kauravas. Jujeṣṭhaṇ tells the Brahmins, 'The sin of killing 3,240,000 Kauravas rests on me.'[16] He follows this lament of guilt with a query to Brahmanical authority, asking, 'What is the punishment for having committed this sin?[17] Instead of invoking any kind of philosophical discourse on the impermanence of the body or significance of *kṣatriya* duty, the Brahmins instead tell him to invite one thousand Brahmins for dinner, and 'in this way, this sin will be forgiven'.[18]

Through the figure of Jujeṣṭhaṇ—who harbours the guilt of having killed the Kauravas—one sees the kind of tensions the Pāṇḍavas face. Jujeṣṭhaṇ doesn't simply accept the Pāṇḍavas' defeat of the Kauravas as victory. Consequently, the reader is moved to engage with the king's

condition, as the voicing of his despair compels the reader to understand further the nature of the character's conflict, and in turn sympathize with his desperation and ultimate decision to listen to the Brahmins. Nevertheless, the tone of the narrative shifts quickly, for having commiserated with Jujeṣṭhaṇ's condition after his expression of despair, the text reverts to the Pāṇḍavas' position in the narrative where, at this point, the narrator explains, 'taking the Brahmins' advice, the Pāṇḍavas were led astray and they celebrated the *hom jagan*'.[19]

This particular representation of Brahmins—as ones who are preoccupied with customs related to food (as demonstrated through the hyperbolic solution to feed one thousand Brahmins) and fixated on the recitation of the Vedas—is a trope one finds in many accounts of *bhakti* poets' encounters with Brahmins. In *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography*, W.L. Smith writes about this feature in relation to *santa*s such as Kabīr, Eknāth, and Ravidās, all of whom critique the behavior and actions of Brahmins. One account in the *Ravidās Rāmāyaṇa* describes an incident in which the queen of Chittor, Yogavatī, arranged for a celebratory dinner for finding her guru Ravidās. Smith writes:

> To celebrate her finding a guru, a great festival was arranged and rishis were invited from all quarters to come and get darsan of Raidas. After the ceremony had been performed to the sound of the Vedas, Raidas was given a seat of honour and this aroused the ire of all the Brahmans present. Food was served and everyone sat down in rows to eat. The arrangement displeased the Brahmans who complained that they would be polluted if they eat in the presence of an untouchable and announced that they would rather go home than eat together with him. Suddenly each Brahman found a duplicate of Raidas sitting on each side of him. They then hung their heads, overcome with shame. (*RR* 173-8)[20]

While both Ravidās and Śrībuddha confront Brahmanic hegemony as part of their narratives, the outcome of the Ravidās story reveals an immediate sympathetic reaction to Brahmanic hubris, whereby multiple Ravidāsas 'magically' appear to undermine Brahmanic authority. In the confrontation between Śrībuddha and Bhīm, however, Śrībuddha must work to convey the inefficacy and misguided nature of Brahmanical values to Bhīm, as Śrībuddha's arrival to the house of the Pāṇḍavas doesn't result in the instantaneous propagation of the subaltern's message, as in the Ravidās story. *Buddhāvatār* situates the 'work' of Śrībuddha's delivery in the form of dialogue with Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ, where only after initial resistance, is his message conveyed and understood.

Prior to Śrībuddha's arrival, the Brahmins are aware of the imminent *caṇḍāḷ* visitor, who is soon to arrive to the house, cause trouble, oppose the *hom jagan*, and make arguments.[21] As a preventive measure, Bhīm is chosen

to protect the house of Pāṇḍavas and therefore placed in the position of a guard. Śrībuddha arrives to the Pāṇḍavas' house starving, but since the Brahmins order a guard to be placed at the door, Śrībuddha is prevented from receiving food.[22] When Śrībuddha confronts Bhīm at the door of the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīm initially resists the guest's insistence to come in, because as predicted by the Brahmins, Śrībuddha begins to argue with Bhīm about allowing him to enter. Bhīm, abiding by the proper Brahmanic rules of pollution, precludes the entrance of the *caṇḍāḷ* visitor. The conversation between the two is as follows:

> Jādurāy had taken such a repulsive form that one could not look him straight in his face.
> Śrībuddha said, 'Listen, Bhīm, Let me get in.
> I am starving. This is how I have arrived to the door of King Jujeṣṭhaṇ.
> Allow me to get food and see the *hom jagan* ceremony.'
>
> 'Listen, *caṇḍāḷ* one,' says Bhīm, 'it is forbidden to enter.
> The place where Jujeṣṭhaṇ is performing the *hom jagan*, the Brahmins are reciting the Vedas.
> Where this is happening, no one wants to see your low-caste face (*caṇḍāḷ mukh*).
> The Brahmins are reading our Vedas, and your ugly form will cause harm.'[23]

It is evident that Bhīm has clearly insulted Śrībuddha, but instead of lashing back at Bhīm's harsh words, Śrībuddha strategically hooks on to the word *caṇḍāḷ*, and begins his exposition on what *he* believes to be *caṇḍāḷ*, thereby marking the beginning of a dialogue between the two. Śrībuddha's rebuttal begins in the following way:

> Listen, Bhīm, let me tell you about what is *caṇḍāḷ*.
>
> Those who pretend to understand the Vedas,
> Those ones are *caṇḍāḷ*.
>
> The Brahmins recite the meaningless Vedas
> They have no knowledge of *Hari avatār*.
>
> Those who do not know the fourth Veda
> Those ones are *caṇḍāḷ*, O Bhīm.
>
> Of the present avatar, the Brahmins have no knowledge.
>
> They speak lies out of their own self-interest.
> They have no awareness of liberation of the soul.
>
> The Brahmins have knowledge of the three Vedas
> Of the fourth, they have no knowledge.

Those who have no knowledge about the fourth Veda
Those ones are *caṇḍāḷ*.

During the *Duāparjug*, three Vedas have gone away and eight avatars of Hari have been completed.

Today, I have come as the ninth avatar

The *caṇḍāḷ* Brahmins are greatly ignorant
And they trample on the name of *Buddhāvatār*.[24]

Unlike the Ravidās situation where the 'victor' of the conflict is illustrated through a third-party narration of the appearance of multiple Ravidāsas, Śrībuddha's sentiments come from his own voice, for he must *convince* Bhīm of his position through his speech.[25] He explains to Bhīm that the Brahmins not only engage in futile rituals, but they have no understanding of the most significant aspect of Śrībuddha's teaching, *Hari avatār*. For these reasons, Śrībuddha ironically labels the Brahmins as *caṇḍāḷ*. As part of his teaching, he is claiming that the time of perfunctory knowledge, consisting of earlier manifesftations and the first three Vedas, has passed, and the precise moment of the poem—the juncture between the *duāparjug* and *kalajug*—is the time for a new kind of understanding regarding the nature of divine manifestation, the awareness of Śrībuddha as the ninth avatar, and the knowledge about the tenth avatar to come. Śrībuddha implores Bhīm to move beyond the finite and futile knowledge of the Brahmins who trample on the name of *Buddhāvatār*, and accept the new teaching, where Śrībuddha is the ninth manifestation incarnate.

Śrībuddha as Special Revelation

In *Avatar and Incarnation,* Geoffrey Parrinder attempts to trace the concept of avatar through a study of Viṣṇu's descents as found in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the commentarial tradition of Rāmānuja, and the *Purāṇas*. In the section of his book titled 'Twelve Characteristics of Avatar Doctrine', one of the points Parrinder makes about the avatar is that he is a guarantee of divine revelation. Parrinder states that the avatar's goal is to bestow revelations of God to humans. He draws this particular point out further, detailing the specificity of the avatar role, whereby the avatar often participates in a twofold function with regard to human encounters. He calls this duality a 'special revelation', where the avatar is simultaneously the 'divine teaching' and the 'self-manifestation of the divine to human persons'.[26]

In telling Bhīm that he has arrived as the ninth manifestation of Hari, Śrībuddha is offering Bhīm 'the self-manifestation of the divine' in addition

to the new "divine teaching" he has explained through the discussion of *caṇḍāḷ*. Bhīm initially wants to dismiss Śrībuddha because of his unsightly appearance as well as his obedience to the Brahmins' command to guard the entrance of the household. However, after Śrībuddha delivers his expositions on Brahmins and their lack of knowledge, Bhīm begins to get drawn into the revelatory experience and realizes that Śrībuddha is not who he appears to be. He discovers that the avatar is not a reviling person, but rather, that he is wise and the words that Śrībuddha utters come from *Vaikuṇṭh* (the paradise of Viṣṇu).[27] To realize that the origins of Śrībuddha's utterances are Viṣṇu's celestial city demonstrates Bhīm's new knowledge about the nature of Śrībuddha, the once-reviled visitor. Bhīm now comprehends the nature of divine descent, and that Śrībuddha is the present avatar of Hari.

Even after Bhīm remarks that Śrībuddha's words come from *Vaikuṇṭh*, he is still inclined to push the dialogue further. Bhīm is interested in fully understanding the meaning of *caṇḍāḷ*. He wants to know who from the *kṣatri jāt* (caste) are *caṇḍāḷ*, the *jāt* of men, the *jāt* of women, and finally, who is considered the most *caṇḍāḷ* of all.[28] Śrībuddha's response to Bhīm's inquiry provides a list of actions that are acceptable and unacceptable, along with explanations about *caṇḍāḷ* acts that allow him to comment on a range of behaviour.[29] This discussion results in Bhīm's full understanding of the kinds of practices and beliefs that are allowed and prohibited by the new teaching. Only after Śrībuddha completes his full exposition on the nature of *caṇḍāḷ* does Bhīm fully accept Śrībuddha as an avatar and his teaching, thereby concluding, 'He is Lord of the Three Worlds'.[30]

Having internalized Śrībuddha's message, Bhīm is anxious to share what has been revealed to him, so he immediately conveys the news about the visitor to Jujeṣṭhaṇ. Relaying the newly acquired information, Bhīm tells Jujeṣṭhaṇ that Śrībuddha imparts wisdom about the reign of the *Atharva Veda*, and that his words come from *Vaikuṇṭh*, but most importantly, he who the Brahmins call *caṇḍāḷ* is in reality the merciful Buddha avatar.[31] After hearing about the divine nature of this visitor from Bhīm, Jujeṣṭhaṇ turns to Sohodev, asking him what this divine manifestation is all about.[32] Sohodev tells Jujeṣṭhaṇ that Śrī Karsan (Kṛṣṇa) has taken the form of the Buddha and insists that Jujeṣṭhaṇ ought to do what Śrībuddha says because if he doesn't, he will strongly regret it. Sohodev echoes what Śrībuddha has already proclaimed, namely that the Brahmins have gone astray, they greedily read the meaningless Vedas, and reject the concept of *Hari avatār*.[33]

After the Brahmins unsuccessfully try to convince Jujeṣṭhaṇ and his brothers not to meet the low-caste visitor, the Pāṇḍavas instead, take Sohodev's advice and make their way to meet the guest. In doing so, however, they don't dismiss the Brahmins' words altogether, as the Pāṇḍavas

heed the advice of the Brahmins and sprinkle the ground with holy water from the Ganges before meeting Śrībuddha. When the five brothers first encounter Śrībuddha, Śrībuddha, immediately asks them: 'Why did you listen to the Brahmins? Why create doubt in your heart?'[34] Although he initially scorns their behaviour, he at once offers forgiveness, on the condition that they submit with pure hearts.[35] He then offers them a vision (*didār*), for he states 'if you have my *didār*, you will reap the benefit of infinite sacrifices'.[36] After this moment, the Pāṇḍavas realize that the Brahmins led them in error with making them perform the sacrifice, and it is Śrībuddha who has always been 'compassionate to the house of the Pāṇḍavas'.[37]

Another point Parrinder makes about the encounter between the avatar and the devotee is that the encounter is more than a teaching session or an argument in morality. Parrinder states that the relationship between the avatar and the devotees is more intimate than this, for most importantly, 'God is implored to show mercy and grace.'[38] As part of the revelation, this is what Śrībuddha appears to do, for even though Jujeṣṭhaṇ listens to the Brahmins and participates in the *hom jagan* ceremony, Śrībuddha forgives him and the Pāṇḍavas for having done so. The five Pāṇḍavas collectively realize that they are sinners and that Śrībuddha is the one who forgives.[39] Jujeṣṭhaṇ is first to concede to the mistakes they made, and he is confused by the mercy with which Śrībuddha acts. He exclaims, "We are full of sins. How can we suddenly have *didār*?'[40] However, having fully realized the extent of Śrībuddha's mercy through his offering of *didār*, the Pāṇḍavas fall at Śrībuddha's feet upon this vision.[41]

Sakhya Ras: Bhīm as Paradigmatic Devotee

David Haberman discusses the notion of special devotees in his book *Acting as a Way of Salvation.* He describes these 'paradigmatic individuals', as those who are viable role models for religious actions concerned with transcendent reality. The paradigmatic individual is an exemplary divine figure who is found in mythical narratives, scripture, and sacred biographies. He/she is one who is a 'condensation of cultural values', one who embodies perfection via a particular 'mythological identity'.[42] While his book itself explores the dramatic technique of '*rāgānuga bhakti sādhana*', where the practitioner identifies with paradigmatic individuals of Vaishnava mythology in order to enter Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, I will relate the situation of the Pāṇḍavas in *Buddhāvatār* in light of Haberman's analysis.

Before doing so, it is important to understand the background to paradigmatic devotees in Vaishnava theology. In the sixteenth century, the theologian and aesthetician, Rūpa Gosvāmin categorized the different types of relationships between devotees and Kṛṣṇa in the seminal text

Bhaktirasāmr̥tasindhu. Herein, Rūpa Gosvāmin reinterprets the concept of *ras,* originally defined as 'essence' or 'taste', within the context of *bhakti*.[43] He asserts *bhakti* to be the one and absolute *ras*, an alternative to the standard nine discussed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bhārata and outlines the various *bhakti rasas* in the following way: The primary *bhakti rasa*s include five categories: tranquility (*śānta*), servitude (*prīta*, [elsewhere *dāsya*]), friendship (*preyas* [elsewhere, *sakhya*]), parental affection (*vātsalya*) and amorousness (*madhura*).[44] Later traditions of Vaishnavism take up the discussion of *bhakti ras*, and in *Nectar of Devotion,* for example, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami provides commentary on Rūpa's text. Drawing out the definitions of the different *rasa*s and providing examples of figures who are models of devotion, Bhaktivedanta Swami explains that the primary models of devotion for *sakhya ras*, the mood of friendship, are the sons of Pāṇḍu: Yudhiṣṭhir, Bhīm, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahadev, and the *sakhā*s of Vr̥ndāvan.[45]

The mood of *sakhya ras* that Arjun assumes in the *Bhagavad Gītā* provides a model for comparing Bhīm's relationship with Śrībuddha, for similar to *Buddhāvatār*, the *Gītā* employs a dialogue form that allows for realization of the avatar as supreme deity. As is also the case in *Buddhāvatār*, the *Gītā* opens with the avatar in a subservient position to devotee. Kr̥ṣṇa is Arjun's charioteer on the battlefield and advisor during Arjun's time of crisis. However, as the dialogue unfolds, Arjun enquires further into his duty as a warrior and questions Kr̥ṣṇa about the nature of god in relation to his personal predicament. The conversation between Kr̥ṣṇa and Arjun evolves to the point where Arjun finally understands Kr̥ṣṇa's true nature, thereby marking the climax of the poem, where Kr̥ṣṇa reveals his divine form of the *Viśvarūp* to Arjun. The process by which Arjun realizes his duty and, in turn, his devotion to Kr̥ṣṇa is *sakhya ras,* the mood of fraternal friendship. The *sakhya ras* between the two operates in such a way that Arjun first builds his trust in the relationship with the avatar, and in this way, Arjun is brought into the fold of the 'friend'. Gradually, however, what appears as friendship between equals becomes, on the part of the Arjun, the realization of Kr̥ṣṇa as divine and the inception of Arjun's *bhakti.* In this process, not only does Arjun's friendship with Kr̥ṣṇa evolve into one of devotion, but most importantly, the "friend" reveals his innermost secret: his divine nature. After Kr̥ṣṇa reveals his divine form, Arjun exclaims,

Thinking you a friend,
I boldly said,
'Welcome Krishna!
Welcome cousin, friend!'
From negligence or through love
I failed to know your greatness.

> You are father of the world of animate and inanimate things, most worthy of worship,without equal.
> Where in all three worlds is another to match your extraordinary power?[46]

Just as Arjun moves from a friend to a devotee as the dialogue unfolds in the *Gītā*, Bhīm is drawn into the experience of Śrībuddha's revelation in *Buddhāvatār*. However, in *Buddhāvatār*, the process by which this happens is the discussion of *caṇḍāḷ*—a term that metamorphoses in connotation and expands in function as the narrative unfolds. In the opening of the poem, *caṇḍāḷ* refers to Śrībuddha, the low-caste person, and at this point, the ownership over its meaning falls in the domain of the Brahmins. Śrībuddha, at first, steps into this particular role, for he humiliates himself by arriving in an unpleasant state—smelling, disturbing to look at, and begging for food. Once the conversation between Śrībuddha and Bhīm begins, however, Śrībuddha gradually claims ownership over the meaning of *caṇḍāḷ*. In this skillful manoeuver, he first transfers the term once applied to himself onto the Brahmins, and after doing so, he then uses the term as a point of entrance to discuss his own teaching about *Hari avatār*. It is only after Śrībuddha successfully inverts the definition of *caṇḍāḷ* and deploys it as a springboard to launch his own teaching, that Bhīm start to trust the words of the avatar, and like Arjun, realize that his companion in conversation not only bestows divine teaching, but is also the manifestation of Hari himself.

Conclusion

Śrībuddha successfully rescues the Pāṇḍavas from the descending path of ritual Brahmanism. As the narrative demonstrates, however, the process by which Śrībuddha alters the Pāṇḍavas' trajectory of descent isn't altogether effortless. The multivalent representations of Brahmanical authority—such as assumptions about the meaning of *caṇḍāḷ* and performance of Vedic rituals—persist in the consciousness of the Pāṇḍavas, thereby functioning as points of resistance in the propagation process. This kind of resistance, however, is an important aspect to the narrative of a divine incarnation. It is a particular mode of operation of the avatar, one that John Carman calls 'gracious condescension'.[47] According to him, 'gracious condescension', on the part of the avatar or incarnation, involves more than God's self-revelation. It is 'both the act of bending or stooping down and the skill to do so in a way that overcomes the resistance of the person lower down to being helped, the grace—in its artistic as well as its theological sense—to put the needy person at ease'.[48]

Since Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ are 'lowered down' by their affiliation with the Brahmins and are therefore reluctant to internalize Śrībuddha's message

fully, both figures, according to Carman's analysis, demonstrate a "need" for Śrībuddha's grace. Since Bhīm adheres too closely to Brahmanical understandings about the nature of *caṇḍāḷ*, Śrībuddha demonstrates a kind of 'grace' in rhetoric by subverting the meaning of *caṇḍāḷ*--one that not only functions in successfully undoing Bhīm's understanding of the concept, but also transforms his perception of Śrībuddha from one who is *caṇḍāḷ* to the manifestation of Hari. This act of subversion serves not only to dislodge a significant component of Brahmanical structure, caste rules, but also to convince Bhīm of the new knowledge of the present manifestation, Śrībuddha himself.

Śrībuddha's grace extends even further than his teaching, for he is also merciful to his devotees. When Jujeṣṭhaṇ is unable to suspend the Brahmins' advice of preventive measures for encountering the *caṇḍāḷ* visitor, Śrībuddha forgives Jujeṣṭhaṇ and the Pāṇḍavas for not having relinquished the futile rituals. Not only are the Pāṇḍavas' previous actions abrogated as part of Śrībuddha's mercy, Śrībuddha offers rewards that, he claims, surpass infinite *jagan*s. While Śrībuddha's grace is boundless with what it offers, it is not indiscriminate with regard to its recipients. Śrībuddha doesn't 'stoop down' for everyone in the text, for only the Pāṇḍavas, and specifically Bhīm and Jujeṣṭhaṇ, receive the special revelation. The Brahmins, for example, are not at any point, in conversation with Śrībuddha, for their narrative role is one that is entirely relational to the Pāṇḍavas, solely representing the shackles from which the Pāṇḍavas need to be extricated. It seems that this kind of tension, rather than arbitrary disclosure of revelation, is what *Buddhāvatār* is interested in highlighting, for *Buddhāvatār's* richness lies not simply in the imparting of Śrībuddha's message, but more so in the dexterous detangling of the Pāṇḍavas from the Brahmanic fold. The narration of this process, buttressed by the insertion of first-person conversion, appears to be *Buddhāvatār's* greatest skill—artistically as well as theologically.

Notes

1. Ali S. Asani, *The* Būjh Nirañjan: *An Ismaili Mystical Poem*, Cambridge: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1991; Ali S. Asani, 'The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan: Its Origin, Characteristics and Themes' in *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India*, ed. Diana Eck and Françoise Mallison, Groningen: Egbert Forsten and Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991; Tazim Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*: *Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāʿīlī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams,* McGill Studies in the History of Religions, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995; G. Khakee, 'The Dasa Avatāra of the Satpanthi Ismailis and Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan', Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972; Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Ismāʿīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, Delmar, New York:

Caravan Books, 1978; C. Shackle and Z. Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, SOAS South Asia Texts, no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992.

2. Dominique-Sila Khan has just informed me of her forthcoming article, 'Reimagining The Buddha: The Figure of Sakyamuni in the Nizari Ismaili Tradition of South Asia' in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*.
3. Mukhi Laljibhai Devraj, ed., *Buddha Avatāra (racanāra Pīra Sadaradīna)*, Bombay: The Khoja Sindhi Press, 1919. A translation of the Ginān is found at the website: :http://www.ismaili.net/granths/budheng.html
4. John Carman, *Majesty and Meekness*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdsman, 1994, p. 21.
5. C. Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen, eds. and trs., *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978, p. 63.
6. '*Navamuṃ rūpa harī buddha avatāra, mugalī rūpa dharyo murāra'*, verse 1, *Buddhāvatār*. (the transliteration is faithful to the, very often fancy, orthography of the quoted edition [note 3])
7. The Pāṇḍavas named in this text are Jujeṣṭhaṇ, Bhīm, and Sohohev, who most likely correspond to Yudhiṣṭhir, Bhīmsen, and Sahadev of the *Mahābhārata* epic tradition accordingly. The characteristic features of these three—Bhīm as the mightiest of the Pāṇḍavas, Sahadev as wise one, and Yudhiṣṭhir as the steady-minded ideal king—correspond to the representation of all three figures in Buddhāvatār.
8. '*Mukha cīñcā paga vāṅkā jāṇa, page kośa pehere divāna*', verse 2.
9. '*Girata koḍa śarīre vahe, pāse koī ubho nava rahe*', verse 4.
10. See above, endnote 6.
11. '*Churī kaṭārī bāndhe tarvāra tīra, kamāna bāndhī caḍāve ho mīra*', verse 3.
12. The usual interpretation of '*Jadurāy*' as 'King of magic' in the Ismaili Gināns here rather seems to refer to the traditional epithet of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu in the *bhakti* literature: *Jadu/Jadava/Yadava-rāya*, 'King of theYadavas' (personal communication of Françoise Mallison).
13. '*Evo rūpa dharyo jādurāya, pāṇḍavane dvāre potā jāya*," verse 6.
14. '*Tāre lāgo kalajuga ne duāpara utaryā, deva rakhīsara thāma choḍī gayā*', verse 8.
15. Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the* Mahabharata, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 62.
16. '*Khoṇī aḍhārano huo nīkheda, tenu hama śīra jaṇāṇuṃ pāpa*', verse 12.
17. '*Suṇo bharāmaṇo huṃ puchu bheva, keso pāpa taṇo hove nīkheva'*, verse 13.
18. '*Eso bhīrāmaṇe kahayo bheva, to pāpa taṇuṃ hove nīkheva*', verse 17.
19. '*Bhirāmaṇane vacane pāṇḍava bhulā jāya, māṇḍayā homa jagana teṇe ṭhāṃya*', verse 18.
20. W.L. Smith, *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography*, Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 2000, p. 212.
21. '*Caṇḍāla eka āle eṇe thāṃya, ta jaganamāṃhe kara upāya'*, verse 20.
22. '*Pehelo prole melo eṇe ṭhāya, bhalā burā na pāve jāya*', verse 22.

23. Verses 27-34.
24. Verses 35-49.
25. Debates between figures of the *nirguṇa* tradition are quite common. In the *janam-sākhi*s of Guru Nanak, Nanak is frequently depicted in conversation with Gorak Nāth, for example, where the former always ends up converting the latter to his philosophy. Also, Kabīr and Raidās are described as arguing about the nature of God, with Kabīr taking the *nirguṇa* position and Raidās the *saguṇa* position. See W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sākhis,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980. Also, J.S. Hawley and M. Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
26. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
27. '*Kāṃīka rūpa dīse che ghanuṃ, vacana bole jema vaṃīkuṇṭha taṇuṃ*', verse 53.
28. Verses 55-126. *Kṣatrī jāt, māṇas jāt, strī jāt*, and *mahācaṇḍāḷ* in *mānas jāt*, respectively.
29. Verses 105-20. Some examples include those who are proud and have no scruples when killing, financiers who are deceitful in money-lending and falsify weights and measures. Among the *jāt* of men, those who take two wives and give less love to one of them, and men who in their hearts have neither pity nor faith, and who commit ill deeds and sleep with a clear conscience are *caṇḍāḷ*. Among women the *caṇḍāḷ* include those who don't serve her parents-in-law and husband, those who leave their husbands for another man, and those who spoil the family name. As for the most damned of all, many examples include one who doesn't consider his *dharma*, who charges extra interest, who doesn't understand others' sufferings, and one who doesn't pay the tithe (*dasond*).
30. '*Tāre bhīma cintā karī che ghaṇī, e che trībhovara dhaṇī*', verse 167.
31. '*Buddha avatāra huvo dīna dayāla, tāṅkuṃ bhīrāmaṇa kahe caṇḍāḷ*', verse 179.
32. See note 7.
33. Verses 183-7.
34. '*Kāyakuṃ kahayā bhīrāmaṇakā karo, kāyakuṃ manamāṃ seṃso dharo*', verse 211.
35. '*Jo nīramaḷa mana karī dekho amārā pāya, to pāpa tamārā sarave jāya*', verse 212.
36. '*Jo dīdāra āvī amāra choya, to anata jagana taṇuṃ phalaja hoya*', verse 213.
37. '*Juṭha bhīrāmaṇa māhā rūkhī rāya, jagana maṇḍīvīyo karī upāya*', verse 226. '*Pāṇḍava vaisa upara sadā kiarpāḷa, tame dharaṇīdhara cho dina dayāḷa*', verse 227.
38. Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation*, p. 126.
39. '*Amo bandā tamārā chīe gunehagāra, tamo sāheba cho bakṣaṇahāra*', verse 228.
40. '*Ame pāpī māhā gunehagāra, te ekāeka kema dekhuṃ dīdāra*', verse 216.

41. '*Tāre paṛadā choṛīne sāmīnī sāme cālyā jāya, te jāī harīne lāgā pāya*', verse 219.
    '*Sāmījīne pāya paṛayā, tāre rājā jujeṣṭhaṇ venatī karyāṃ*', verse, 220.
42. David Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānuga Bhakti Sādhana*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 8.
43. Within Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Rūpa's work was the most influential, and it is his addition and alteration of the *ras* theory, which provides the framework for the modes of relationships of the paradigmatic individual.
44. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 13.
45. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Nectar of Devotion: A Summary Study of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, Boston: Iskon Press, 1970, p. 326.
46. Barbara Stoler Miller, tr., *The Bhagavadgita, Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
47. Carman, *Majesty and Meekness,* p. 21.
48. Ibid.

Religious Traditions and Early Ismāʿīlī History in Western India[1]

Some Historical Perspectives on Satpanthī Literature and the Gināns

Samira Sheikh

In recent years, there has been significant research on the literature and institutions of the Ismāʿīlīs in South Asia. In addition, there has been some investigation of the parallels between Ismāʿīlī literature and ritual with that of certain other groups, particularly in western India.[2] This research has produced results with important consequences for the study of religious history, but is still on the margins of the history of South Asian religion and literature. This might be an appropriate occasion to evaluate the implications of this research from a historical point of view and list some of the issues that might be clarified by more research.

What kind of information can the Gināns and related compositions give us? How are the Gināns to be placed in the larger history of religious literature in north India? Although the earliest manuscripts of the Gināns date from the eighteenth century, they obviously refer to events and traditions of an earlier date.[3] What then can these compositions tell us about religious conditions of the medieval period? How are Gināns and Satpanthī compositions studied at present and can alternative approaches be suggested?

Ismāʿīlī History in Northern and Western India

It is increasingly clear that Ismāʿīlī preachers were influential in many parts of north and north-west India from a very early period. There were Ismāʿīlī converts in Sind by the late ninth century, followed by political power in

the form of an outpost of the Fāṭimid Caliphate in Multān.[4] The Fāṭimid principality lasted less than fifty years and was destroyed by the strongly Sunnī Ghaznavid Maḥmūd in 1005, but small Ismāʿīlī populations continued to live in the Sind-Multān region. After this, the *daʿwa* (mission) in Multān remained in existence and Ismāʿīlī revolts against the Ghaznavid governor occurred in 1041 and then against the Ghūrids in 1175. Although there is no certainty about what groups were the first to be converted, it is likely that these included pastoralist and peasant groups from the countryside in Upper Sind, perhaps including branches of the Jats and Sūmras.[5] However, this phase of pre-Nizārī Ismāʿīlī influence in Sind does not seem to be explicitly associated with or recalled in the Ginān̄s.

The next Ismāʿīlī mission was established in Gujarat by *dāʿīs* from Ṣulayḥid Yemen in the reign of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustanṣir b'illāh (d. 1094). According to a version from the Mustaʿlī tradition, a *dāʿī* Abd Allāh arrived in Gujarat and made his way to the capital, eventually winning over the ruler as a convert. After the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism of 1094, the Nizārī variant of Ismāʿīlism was introduced into Sind and became the dominant form, with its main centre at Ucch, south of Multān. This time, proselytization was aimed at the trading communities, and sections of the Lohān̄ā community were converted.

Missionaries now began to travel to other parts of north India and the next major sites of Ismāʿīlī settlement and activity were Gujarat, Kacch and Rajasthan. The Druze sect also was active in Sind.[6] Small colonies of Ismāʿīlī merchants appear to have settled in the trading ports along the coast. The earliest Islamic buildings in India, at Bhadreśvar in Kacch, were constructed by Ismāʿīlī merchants with links to Fāṭimid Yemen in the late twelfth century.[7] Although there is no evidence that this colony had spread further inland or had links with other Ismāʿīlī groups in the subcontinent, missionary influence in the hinterland can be inferred from a twelfth-century Ismāʿīlī gravestone of the son of a *dāʿī* at Nāgaur in Rajasthan.[8] From about this time, various *dāʿīs* are believed to have been working in north India, beginning with Satgur Nūr. Pīr Shams was active in Sind and Punjab and is also believed to have carried the message to Kashmir and Bengal.[9] We thus have a picture of Ismāʿīlī missionaries fanning out into northern and western India from the late ninth century. By 1500, pockets of Ismāʿīlī influence were to be found all over north India, particularly in Sind, southern Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

In the early period, it appears that the Ismāʿīlīs in western India consisted of ethnic Arab or Persian merchant settlers as well as local converts from pastoralist, cultivating or merchant groups. These may have included militarised peasants and pastoralists from north-west India, some of whom went on to become part of the emerging Rājpūt status hierarchy.[10] The early

tales also include miracle stories in which the *dāʿīs* faced adversaries such as *jogīs* and Ṣūfī Pīrs who were worsted in the contest and were banished or forced to accept the Ismāʿīlī message. After the fall of Alamūt to the Mongols in 1256, more Nizārī missionaries came to Sind and Gujarat, Ucch in particular becoming an important centre. While the Nizārī missionaries worked among the peasant and pastoralist groups, the Mustaʿlī influence seems to have been restricted to merchant groups who came to be called Bohrās or Vohrās. Although it appears that Mustaʿlī missionaries did not have a wider influence, this has not yet been systematically researched.

This crucial phase of Nizārī activities, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, has hardly been chronicled in non-Ismāʿīlī historical records, the traditions in the Gināns being almost the sole source of information about them. There are scattered mentions of 'heretical' and 'semi-Islamized' groups in the accounts of the Delhi Sultāns, some of whom were Ismāʿīlīs.[11] Kacch, with its proximity to Sūmra-dominated lower Sind and its history of Ismāʿīlī settlements from the twelfth century was a natural home for Ismāʿīlī groups. Maḥmūd Begaḍā, the Sultān of Gujarat, campaigned against the chieftains of the region in 1471 and compelled the Sūmras and Sodhās to submit. His injunctions to them included giving up matrimonial and other relations with Hindus and being instructed in (Sunnī) Islam.[12] By the end of the fifteenth century, the influence of Ismāʿīlīs in Gujarat was in decline, partly due to the activities of the Suhrāwardī and Qādirī Ṣūfīs, supported by the Chishtīs.

Although the Gināns are virtually the only source of information about the activities of the *daʿwa* in this period, it is clear that it was a time when considerable success was achieved. This is buttressed by the recent recording of new information about the *daʿwa* and its converts from the compositions and traditions of pastoralist and occupational groups such as the Biśnoīs, Meghvāls, Ahīrs and so on. Many of these corroborate and reflect the themes in the Gināns and show that Ismāʿīlī influence encompassed much wider circles than previously suspected. These indicate that the sects of Rāmdev, Jambhā, Āī Mātā and other such figures that appear to be manifestations of saint and hero-worship within popular Hinduism were formerly part of the larger Nizārī *daʿwa* in the subcontinent (sometimes called the Satpanth) and are still linked through the commonality of their compositions, practices and networks of pilgrimage.[13] Some of these sects thought fit to jettison or hide their Ismāʿīlī affiliations later, but they were known in some cases to the Nizārī *daʿwa* and later were revealed to ethnographers. As these shrines and compositions cannot usually be reliably dated, it is only through careful comparative study that they reveal patterns and trends. However, questions still remain. To what extent were Ismāʿīlī groups in the pre-fifteenth century period linked to each other? Did individual preachers branch out into their own sects or did they maintain contacts with a central authority in Multān,

Ucch or Persia? While the 'official' branches of the Nizārī *daᶜwa* were clearly closely linked, what was the nature of contact of the central *daᶜwa* with the hero and saint-cults and their lay adherents?

Such sects, particularly those that demonstrate signs of 'syncretism', have often been dismissed as marginal to the history of religious identity in South Asia. They are seen as part of secret, low-status, cultic beliefs without much consequence for the history of either Hinduism or Islam.[14] However, it is now becoming clear that such sects were much more significant than formerly believed and also commanded a widespread lay allegiance, whether covert or not. Further, medieval sectarian religiosity is closely bound up with the processes of caste and state-formation in western India. Several indications and illustrations of these processes may be discerned in the Gināns and Satpanthī compositions.

An Overview of Religious Developments in North-West India

While attempts have been made to place the history of the Ismāᶜīlīs in the context of other Muslim groups functioning in South Asia, e.g. the Ṣūfīs who are believed to have been responsible for much of the conversion to Islam in the early period, little effort has been made to place the Ismāᶜīlīs in the religious context of their potential converts. The Ismāᶜīlīs were in fact among a number of groups competing for followers, patrons and resources. Thus, to understand the spread of the Ismāᶜīlīs, it might be as useful to study the rise of Vaiṣṇavism as to study the Ṣūfīs. This would also go some way towards explaining the links between medieval Indian sectarian literature and Satpanthī compositions. Our understanding of Ismāᶜīlī history tends to be coloured by the experience of the Khojā community and its process of self-definition from the nineteenth century. However, Ismāᶜīlī history in South Asia extends over a much wider field. Although it was never a 'state' religion in India (apart from the short-lived Fāṭimid outpost in Multān), the history of the Ismāᶜīlīs is inextricably bound up with politics and we may find that it revises our understanding of the process of medieval state formation, the rise of the Rājpūts, the rise of sectarian traditions and the widespread 'syncretic' traditions of the region.

It is often not recognized that the penetration of Brahmanical civilization into Gujarat from the eighth century was virtually coterminous with the settlement of Muslim merchants along its coast. Islam in the region is thus virtually as old as the religious cults then being unified under the Purāṇic body of literature. Further, the introduction of Islam in India was neither by conquest nor by the militant Ṣūfī as in north India and Bengal. The earliest layer of Islamic conversion, largely by Ismāᶜīlī missionaries, was accomplished through persuasion and covert means which did not insist on

the relinquishing of established life-cycle customs. In this, Islam was presented as one of a variety of competing belief-systems that often used similar methods.

This long history of engagement with indigenous groups in north India is closely bound up with the transformation and evolution of local polities and societies. As Ismāʿīlī preachers established footholds all over the region between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries, the political landscape was transforming itself. Pastoralist chieftaincies were replaced by the Delhi Sultanate whose armies were sent out over large parts of the subcontinent. Many local rulers were defeated and supplanted by governors from Delhi—as in Gujarat—while other chieftains continued in their holdings on payment of tribute. Pastoralist clans migrated into Gujarat, Sind and Rajasthan, settling and clearing new territories and establishing new principalities. Over time, many of these were incorporated into a widening network of clans who intermarried and established a hierarchy of status amongst themselves – later collectively called Rājpūts. Other clans, some of which were militarily less successful, or were incorporated by conquest into the Rājpūt hierarchy, achieved lower-status positions.

Buddhism was then on the decline all over north India, including Sind. In lower Sind, sections of the Buddhist laity in the towns would seem to have converted to (Sunnī) Islam.[15] In the Gurjara-Pratihāra dominions there is evidence of the practice of Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Jainism. This was a period of the invention of royal cults marked by sacrifice, ritual gifting and the building of signature royal temples.[16] The Gurjara Pratihāra kings were not, however, associated with a singular royal cult and patronized, at various points, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and the worship of the sun, each of which was associated with temple-building.[17] Rulers were not the only ones to build temples—in fact, donations for temple construction by merchants, officials, artisan guilds and subsidiary clan chieftains were more common than royal constructions.

From the tenth century, settlements expanded into new territories. The expansion of Gurjara Pratihāra and later Caulukya dominion over new areas was accompanied by signs of their control, often including temples. These temples housed local deities who had been appropriated or modified as versions of the royal cults in the usual method of the expansion of Brahmanism. These were usually assimilated as local versions of Śiva or the mother-goddess, and in some cases as *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. In some cases, powerful guardians of local shrines were granted land and continued in their positions. Elsewhere, Brāhmaṇas were invited to settle and administer temple properties.[18]

Another aspect of religiosity in the period was the prevalence of ascetic orders. These were usually Śaiva denominations, in western India particularly

the Lakulīśa sect of the Pāśupatas. Śaivism was the royal cult of the Caulukyas, and Śaiva monastic orders were heavily patronized in their territories. There were also some Tāntrik ascetic cults, some of which may have been Buddhist in origin as well as the Nāth *sampradāya* which often features in early Ṣūfī and Ismāʿīlī traditions.

Although Gujarat is now squarely associated with Vaiṣṇavism, there is little evidence for popular Vaiṣṇavism in this period. It was not patronised as the sole royal cult, although Vaiṣṇava streams including the Bhāgavata, Kr̥ṣṇaite and cults of Vāmana and Varāha did find followers and patrons intermittently. From the fifteenth century, there is evidence that Dvārakā and sites associated with Kr̥ṣṇa were being incorporated into a trans-regional pilgrimage cycle.[19] There are indications that Kr̥ṣṇaite Vaiṣṇavism was beginning to find considerable popular appeal, this time not associated with the courts but featuring *bhakti* or personal worship among merchant groups in particular.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that Sunnī Muslim missionaries had also achieved some success in western India. By the thirteenth century, apart from the long-established colonies of Muslim merchants in the coastal towns, there were also inland settlements in places like Pāṭaṇ, Bharūc and Jūnāgaḍh.[20] However, unlike the Ismāʿīlīs, there is little indication of the mode of conversion practised by Sunnī missionaries or what groups they first converted. According to the Verāval inscription of 1264, local Muslim communities included oil-pressers, whitewashers and other occupational groups.[21]

While several cults and sects were appropriated into state-sponsored Brahmanism, others were evolving and migrating. As the pastoralist clans settled, found new resources and were incorporated into military hierarchies and employment, they became part of a trans-regional armed peasantry which drew up their own sanctified heroes and deities. Several pastoralist groups venerated mother-goddesses, many of which were adopted as *kul-devīs* or clan-goddesses.[22]

Ismāʿīlism in western India has many of the characteristics of medieval belief-systems which arose outside the purview of state patronage. This may have something to do with the fact that Ismāʿīlī beliefs were disseminated among merchants, pastoralists, peasants and lower-status occupational castes over a wide geographical area. Conversion to Ismāʿīlism was not a unitary phenomenon. There were several strands of it and the literature reveals some of these tensions.[23] The Ismāʿīlīs had to compete for resources with other proselytizing groups active in this period and possibly also with each other. When Imām Shāh arrived in Gujarat in the mid-fifteenth century, it is likely that a number of Ismāʿīlī traditions

were already coexisting in Gujarat. While there might have been a millenarian dream that all converted groups would one day rise up in unison, in practice all these groups continued to evolve within their own social circumstances. At times there was some political organization, and accordingly some of the literature represents political aims; at other times, it has a more didactic or devotional aspect.

Like other religious groups, the Ismāʿīlīs had political objectives. In some cases, this took the form of actual political mobilisation, e.g. the groups who marched on Delhi during the reign of Raẓiyya. It is evident that the *dāʿīs* were aware of the hierarchies within the local society they encountered —they approached powerful pastoralist groups in the countryside, some of which took on a militant character and posed a military threat to the towns and centres of power. In other cases, political intervention was through access to rulers. In common with other sects who made attempts to influence rulers and those around them, the Satpanthī tradition has several examples of attempts to link up with rulers, their wives and subordinates.[24]

Elsewhere, well-known figures are invoked to lend legitimacy to the tale. For example, Siddharāja, the archetypal and long-lived Caulukya ruler (r. 1094-1143), is alleged to have been converted to a variety of traditions, including Nizārī and Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlism, Sunnī Islam and Jainism.[25] The Nizārī tradition of the conversion of Siddharāja is a classic example of a conversion narrative. Here, Satgur Nūr first caused the idol in the royal temple to dance at his bidding, which caused the priest to surrender to the Pīr. He then had a confrontation with and routed the king's magician preceptor, a *jogī* or Śaivite ascetic. After witnessing several miracles, the king and queen accepted the new faith.[26] Here the narrative indicates familiarity with the structure of Caulukya authority, recognizing the priest as the custodian of the idol-temple and the *jogī* as the ruler's counsellor.

Some of the groups who accepted the Ismāʿīlī message went on to undergo processes of Rājpūtization—this includes Jats, Sūmras, Bhattis, perhaps the Sammās. Other groups were left out of this process of upward mobility, becoming part of the continuum of armed peasants and pastoralists all over north India. Certain groups that responded to the Ismāʿīlī message later found that this affiliation was damaging to their chances of rising in status and jettisoned traces of it. Nevertheless, several of them retain traces of previous practices which included accommodation of Ismāʿīlī practices.

Gināns and Other Contemporary Literature

To what extent was the Satpanth a unified tradition? It has already been suggested that the search for continuities with the Fāṭimid tradition has its

limitations and that the Satpanth was created out of uniquely subcontinental religious experiments.[27] While it is clear that there are striking similarities in the organisation, rituals and compositions of groups from the wider Satpanthī traditions, there are also significant variations. Differences between leaders often led to splits in the community—to what extent then were these differences expressed in the literature? In other words, can doctrinal, ritual or formal differences be detected between say, Imāmshāhī compositions and similar ones from other traditions? Various streams may be discerned within the compositions—some of them veering towards the mystical, others with more political messages, still others that are narrative in tone. This diversity may in part be because they record different aspects and episodes of Satpanthī tradition, at times inflected by local conditions. Also they have surely been modified to suit the needs of the community using them.[28] Compositions tend to be inflected by the religious choices made subsequently by the community—with more 'Islamic' or 'Hindu' phraseology as the case might be. Another factor in the modification is in the mode of their collection into a repertoire.[29] The occupational profile of the user communities may also be linked to the kind of compositions they prefer. It might be profitable to compare the compositions preferred by the merchant-dominated Ismāʿīlī Khojās with those of backward-caste occupational groups who produced a very different literature. The Gināns thus need to be studied in the light of all these factors.

An attempt shall be made here to list some of the comparative frameworks within which the Gināns and Satpanthī compositions are being studied and where further research may be directed.

1. The Ismāʿīlī Gināns have much in common with the religious literature of groups that have prior or present links with the larger Satpanthī tradition including the Mahāmārgīs, Nizārpanthīs and so on.[30] Within the network of groups affiliated secretly to the Ismāʿīlī or Satpanthī tradition, some groups have a formal relationship marked by the payment of dues, and other membership criteria. In other groups, only a small number of individuals is aware of a continuing or former connection to the Ismāʿīlīs, while a proportion of lay followers approach the shrine or use the compositions in ignorance of connections with the Satpanth, as in the case of the cult of Rāmdev Pīr.

In yet other cases, there is an awareness and perhaps reciprocal borrowing of compositions between Satpanthīs and followers of other groups. This is a common practice with medieval devotional compositions. For example, Kabīr's compositions or those with his *bhanitā* are not used exclusively by Kabīrpanthīs but by a wide range of other groups. Similarly, the Sikh scriptures incorporate compositions belonging to a range of distinct

traditions. This requires at least a recognition of common mystical aims and vocabulary, so we may surmise that Satpanthīs recognized such a commonality with other traditions. Continuing on the lines of recent research, it is thus necessary to disaggregate and classify the themes and linguistic forms in Satpanthī literature and compare them with other compositions. While this will certainly explicate literary and religious themes, it may also help clarify aspects of mutual literary appropriation between traditions.

2. The Gināns may also be studied in the light of their relationship to the Ṣūfī literature of western India. Historically, it is difficult to disentangle Ismāʿīlīs and Ṣūfīs as prominent Ismāʿīlīs often passed as Ṣūfīs in order to escape persecution. It is likely that there were Ismāʿīlīs in prominent positions in the courts of Gujarat and the Deccan Sultanates. For example Shāh Ṭāhir, a courtier of Burhān Niẓām Shāh (1508-54), was an Imām of the Muḥammad-Shāhī line.[31] The corpus of Ṣūfī literature may well include contributions from Ismāʿīlīs. The sultāns in western India often promoted vernacular literatures and it may be that court-affiliated writers, whether Ismāʿīlī or Ṣūfī, contributed to the rise of Indo-Muslim literary dialects. While most court-affiliated and Ṣūfī literature is in Persian, there are important contributions in Gūjarī and Dakkhanī, which bear linguistic similarities with the language used in some of the Gināns. Gūjarī was often inflected by Panjābi and Sindhī because of the origin of its practitioners, many of whom were from Ucch, Multān, Thānesar and other regions where Ismāʿīlīs were influential. There are also thematic similarities, especially in some of the messianic themes of Ṣūfī literature which have usually been attributed to an undifferentiated Shīʿī influence. It may be useful to compare Gināns and Satpanthī compositions with Ṣūfī ones, both in terms of content and linguistic features. This may be particularly apposite in Gujarat where messianic groups such as the Mahdavīs were influential in the sixteenth century.

3. The third link is the relation of the Satpanthī literature with *bhakti* and the Sant tradition. Satpanthī literature and the Gināns arose alongside certain *bhakti* cults and have some features in common. In some cases, important disseminators of *bhakti* had a covert affiliation with Ismāʿīlīsm, for example, the preceptor of Ekanāth may have been an Ismāʿīlī.[32] Other important figures such as Kabīr and Rāidās, especially from the *nirguṇ bhakti* tradition are also claimed (perhaps retrospectively) within certain strands of Satpanthī belief.[33] Another factor in common is the tradition of congregational worship and the recitation of devotional texts, *bhajans* or Gināns as the case might be. In Gujarat, the rise of revivalist Vaiṣṇavism from the sixteenth century has effaced many of the features of Satpanthī and *nirguṇ bhakti* practice,

although these connections are clearer in the practices of lower-status groups. However, more research needs to be done on overlaps, borrowings and links between sectarian traditions.

4. The Satpanthī tradition is also linked to the ballads and heroic story cycles found all over western and central India.[34] This of course is due to the fact that many of the groups affiliated to the Satpanth were subject to the process of Rājpūtization or emulated Rājpūt practices. One of the most common forms of Rājpūt literature was the story-ballad featuring a heroic warrior, often composed and recited by professional bards and genealogists. Important examples of this literature include the *Kānhaḍade Prabandha* and versions of the Hammīr story that were composed largely in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Other tales from the voluminous oral tradition include the story-cycles of Pābujī and Ālhā and in a similar mode but within the Satpanthī tradition, the stories of Rāmdev and in Gujarat, of Jesal Pīr, Mallināth and Rāṇī Rūpānde. The heroic ballad mode was repeatedly used in the subsequent centuries for virtually every semi-deified Rājpūt hero, and still continues to be used. However, it is still not clear how such heroes as Rāmdev and Jesal were transmuted into Ismāʿīlī Pīrs. What are the links between pastoralism and the Satpanth? Can clues be found in the compositions?

The ballad tradition originated in a period when Rājpūt identity was less fixed, and associated more with military success and alliance-making than genealogy and status.[35] With the hardening of Rājpūt identity from the sixteenth century, there may have been a corresponding decline in the influence of Ismāʿīlīs among Rājpūtizing groups. While Ismāʿīlī or Satpanthī groups continued to be active, they were more successful among groups that had a lower status or were marginal to the dominant networks of Rājpūts in Rajasthan. For example, the Ismāʿīlī-influenced Praṇāmī sect became important in sixteenth-century Bundelkhand, then ruled by the marginal Bundelā Rājpūts.[36] What then, was the nature of Ismāʿīlī influence on the history of such groups?

5. The last and least explored area of possible comparison is the relation of the Satpanthī corpus with contemporary Sanskrit literature, especially the Purāṇas.[37] While it might seem that the world of Satpanthī literature and its adherents belonged to a non-Sanskritic world, there are nevertheless links with the Sanskrit tradition that have not yet been explicated. The first question is that of the incorporation of Purāṇic deities into the literature, especially of the *niṣkalaṅkāvatāra*, the tenth 'untainted' *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, who is often seen in Satpanthī compositions as the *qā'im* or messiah. The Kalki/Nikalaṅk figure is homologous with the messianic ᶜAlī in the Ismāʿīlī tradition—the

righter of wrongs, the mounted sword-wielding warrior. While he is not an important figure in the Brahmanical Purāṇic literature, he is nevertheless found incorporated into a number of messianic belief-systems—both Hindu and Muslim.

There are representations of Kalki in twelfth and thirteenth-century sculptural friezes of Gujarat, and several inscriptions refer to the Caulukya ruler Ajayapāla as *niṣkalaṅkāvatāra.*[38] The figure of Kalki is explicated in the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, including the late and accretive *Kalki Purāṇa*, parts of which may have been compiled in response to the appropriation of the Purāṇic *avatāra* figure by Satpanthī-linked groups. The vogue for the messianic Kalki figure could have prompted the redaction of a text which defined the stigmata of the deity and re-established him as part of the Brahmanical pantheon. This may be a case of appropriation and re-appropriation of a messianic figure who achieved a certain popularity in this period. Other marginal figures from the Purāṇic myths such as Prahlād and Hariścandra are also regularly found in Satpanthī texts. What do these figures represent in the Satpanthī tradition? Why were these particular figures chosen to be incorporated?

The importance of solar motifs in Satpanthī compositions, particularly those attributed to Pīr Shams, also deserves further investigation for links with sun worship in India. Such motifs include the name *shams* (= sun [Ar.]), alliance with Surjādevī (*surja* = *sūrya* [sun in Sanskrit]), Pīr Shams' command over the sun and so on. In the pre-Nizāri period, it is possible that some sun worshippers were converted to Ismāʿīlism in Upper Sind.[39] This was roughly contemporary with the evidence for the introduction of the sun cult into India from the eighth century.[40] The references in the Ismāʿīlī tradition to solar motifs indicate domination or control over the solar tradition, as witnessed in Pīr Shams' command to the sun, or at the very least some form of accommodation with it. Allusions to the solar tradition, perhaps including themes from the *Bhaviṣya* or *Sāmba Purāṇas* may then have been coded into the compositions as a reminder of the encounter.

It appears that the Purāṇas of particular interest for comparison with the Satpanthī tradition are some of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas which feature the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, in particular Kalki, and the Purāṇas pertaining to sun-worship, including the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* and the *Sāmba Purāṇa.* The first section of the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* deals with the sun-cult, possibly borrowing from the *Sāmba Purāṇa.*[41] The third section, probably written in the early nineteenth century, is a mixed bag of themes that include the Biblical Genesis, the Mughal empire, British rule and myths and biographies of sectarian leaders from Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja to Kabīr and Rāidās.[42] The Purāṇic corpus itself was in the process of being compiled throughout this period (accretions to the main texts continued even in the twentieth century).[43]

As some of the Purāṇas were compiled in response to sectarian divisions and the emergence of pilgrimage networks, it is conceivable that some sections were written in response to the rise of the Satpanthī network.

Conclusion

The Ismāʿīlī groups were part of a network of linked religious movements from medieval times and may have been a catalytic factor in the development of much of modern religious identity. They were part of a continuum of religious affiliation—internally contested and more often than not, opposed by state authority which made regular attempts to apply normative standards to it. Each of these traditions is a site of contestation: while they may represent spaces set aside from normative religious traditions, they also represent a history of intense and often violent struggle for power and resources. The millenarian aspects of some of the Ginān̄s reflect these social and political contests. Others, in their stories of conversion and mystical awakening and the worsting of *jogīs* and rival Pīrs represent efforts to acquire followers, humiliate opponents and find patrons. A common vocabulary of messianic themes featuring a martial, mounted avenger cast in the local idiom were common all over India, especially among sedentarizing pastoralist groups gradually being fitted into a caste order. These themes recur regularly from about 1300, including the colonial period.[44]

How are these phenomena to be interpreted? It may be that the Ismāʿīlī phenomenon is much more widespread than has yet been recognized and that we would encounter an Ismāʿīlī preacher at the root of almost every marginal, low-status sectarian religious tradition in north India. Although it sometimes seems that most esoteric communities were linked to the Satpanth, it is more likely that many of them partook of a common vocabulary of secrecy and mystery. Formulaic themes could have been added to current poetry to make them more 'Nāth-like' or more 'Ismāʿīlī' or to assign sectarian authorship. We find some combination of these motifs in 'syncretic' communities all over India, including the south. Here it is necessary to distinguish, as far as is possible, what is the nature of 'real' contact between groups, and what merely partakes of a common language. Further, it is necessary to determine what constitutes this common language, and how prevalent it was.

It is equally likely that there existed a stratum of religious affiliation in which overarching religious identities—'Hindu', 'Vedic', 'Sunnī' and so on, which certainly existed, from the evidence even of the marginal traditions —were undergirded by a phenomenally widespread and variegated set of cultic and messianic institutions. Some of these were patronized by local authority and recast according to normative standards, others surfaced into

the normative world from time to time. Yet others were (and are) patronized by lay devotees for the purposes of enhancing fertility, cure from disease and general religious merit.

This stratum of religion, of which the Satpanth was a vital part, may turn out to be as influential in the creation of religious affiliation in South Asia as normative 'official' religion. It is exclusive and inclusive at once—while affiliation to the inner circle is jealously restricted, inclusivity is championed outwardly. The compositions are similarly multiform: on the one hand they represent exclusivity and group membership and are shrouded in secrecy, on the other hand they are widely known, mutually borrowed and modified to suit community needs. They are regionally differentiated, yet their themes are trans-regionally recognizable. This paradoxical familiarity and exclusivity defined north Indian religious identity even more than the normative traditions. Perhaps much of modern popular and even normative religious practice in South Asia will turn out to have been forged through interaction with the Satpanth.

Notes

1. In order to avoid the infelicitous 'North South Asia', the terms 'north India' and 'western India' will here include Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab as well as Sind in Pakistan.
2. See in particular, Françoise Mallison and Zawahir Moir, '"Rencontrer l'Absolu, O Ami": Un hymne commun aux hindous tantriques et aux musulmans ismaéliens du Saurashtra (Gujarat)', *Puruṣārtha*, no. 19, 1997, pp. 265-76; D.-S. Khan, *Conversion and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan,* New Delhi: Manohar and Centre de Sciences Humaines, 1997; D.-S. Khan and Zawahir Moir, 'Coexistence and Communalism: The Shrine of Pirana in Gujarat', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 133-54; D.-S. Khan, 'The Lord will Marry the Virgin Earth: Songs of the Time to Come', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 28, 2000, pp. 99-115; F. Mallison, 'Saints and Sacred Places in Saurashtra and Kutch: The Cases of the Naklaṃki Cult and the Jakhs' in *Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003, pp. 332-49.
3. C. Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992, p. 15.
4. Derryl N. MacLean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989, pp. 134-5.
5. Ibid., p. 132, fn. 19, pp. 41-2, 50.
6. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 210, Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance : Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāʿīlī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995, p. 49.

7. Z.A. Desai, 'Kūfī epitaphs from Bhadreśwar in Gujarat', *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, Delhi: ASI, 1965, pp. 1-8; Mehrdad Shokoohy, Manijeh Wolpert-Bayani and Natalie Shokoohy, *Bhadreśvar: The Oldest Islamic Monuments in India*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, pp. 3-4.
8. Mehrdad Shokoohy, *Rajasthan* I. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part IV Iranian inscriptions down to the early Safavid period, vol. 49, *India: State of Rajasthan*, London: Lund Humphries, 1986, pp. 76-7.
9. The dates of this semi-legendary figure are discussed in Kassam, *Songs*, pp. 93-4. According to Daftary, he must have lived in the fourteenth century. Daftary, *Ismāʿīlīs*, p. 478.
10. On this phenomenon, see Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
11. On the rebellion of Nūr Turk in the reign of Raẓiyya see Minhāj al-Dīn Abū ʿUmar ʿUthmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī, *Tabaḳāt-i-Nāṣirī: a general history of the Muḥammadan dynasties of Asia, including Hindūstān, from AH 194 [810 AD], to AH 658 [1260 AD], and the irruption of the infidel Mughals into Islam*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872-81, pp. 646-7. Firūz Shāh claimed to have suppressed rebel sects including the Shīʿī Rāfiẓīs and other 'heretics'. Sultān Fīroz Shāh, 'Futuḥāt-i Fīroz Shāhi', in *The History of India as told by its own Historians: The Muhammadan Period*, vol. 3, ed. H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, London: Trübner & Co., 1871, pp. 377-8.
12. S.C. Misra and M.L. Rahman, eds., *Mir'āt-i-Sikandarī*, Baroda: M.S. University, 1961, p. 127.
13. Khan, *Ramdev Pir*, passim.
14. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Subcontinent*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, p. 140.
15. Maclean, *Arab Sind*, pp. 57, 68.
16. Ronald Inden, 'The Ceremony of the Great Gift (Mahādāna): Structure and Historical Context in Indian Ritual and Society', in *Asie du sud: Traditions et changements*, ed. M. Gaborieau and Alice Thorner, Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979, pp. 131-6.
17. B.N. Puri, *The History of the Gurjara-Pratihāras*, revd edn, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986, p. 139.
18. For more details see S. Sheikh, 'State and Society in Gujarat, c. 1200-1500: The Making of a Region', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2003, Chapter 4.
19. F. Mallison, 'The Cult of Sudāmā in Porbandar-Sudāmāpurī', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, vol. 29, no. 3-4, 1980, pp. 216-23.
20. Z.A. Desai, 'Muslims in the 13th century Gujarat, as known from Arabic inscriptions', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1960, pp. 353-64.
21. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization from the Sixth Century BC to the Eighteenth Century AD*, vol. II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, pp. 402-08.

22. On *kul-devīs*, see Lindsey Harlan, *Religion and Rajput Women: The Ethic of Protection in Contemporary Narratives*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, Chapter 3. Also see Harald Tambs-Lyche, *Power, Profit and Poetry: Traditional Society in Kathiawar, Western India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1997, pp. 32-5.
23. In some writing on Ismāʿīlī history, while both Hinduism and Islam are represented as differentiated, plural and in the process of being constructed, it is paradoxically the Ismāʿīlī faith that emerges as essentialized and unitary down the centuries. It is necessary to point out that the Ismāʿīlī phenomenon in South Asia was also differentiated, and converts were from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a variety of political objectives. For an argument that South Asian Ismāʿīlism was distinct from its Fāṭimid or Nizārī forbears, see Kassam, *Songs*, pp. 19-22.
24. As witnessed in the stories of Surjādevī, Rāṇī Rūpānde and Kākā Akelā and his wife, the gardeners of the king's minister and several others. See Kassam, *Songs*, p. 102 and Khan, *Ramdev Pir*, pp. 86-7. It is significant that many of these stories have the queen being converted secretly to the faith, eventually convincing her husband through her steadfastness. Similar tales testifying to the influence of the queen in insinuating religious change in royal households are seen in the adoption of *gurus* and mother-goddess cults. See Harlan, *Rajput Women*, Chapter 3, especially pp. 100-1 and Parita Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mirabai*, Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 105-6.
25. S.C. Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat: Preliminary studies in their history and social organization*, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964, p. 12.
26. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
27. Kassam, *Songs*, pp. 19-22.
28. A.S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002, pp. 29-31.
29. The collation and eventual publication of the compositions of Kabīr and other medieval poets served to fix a repertoire that had formerly belonged to a more diffuse and transmutable oral repertoire. Similar processes may have obtained in the collation of the Gināns and Satpanthī compositions partly from manuscript sources and partly from the oral tradition preserved by devotees and professional bards in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
30. See among others, Khan, *Ramdev Pir*, Mallison, 'Saints and Sacred Places in Saurashtra and Kutch: The Cases of the Naklaṃki Cult and the Jakhs', p. 335; Mallison and Moir, 'Un Hymne Commun'.
31. Daftary, *Ismāʿīlīs*, pp. 487-90.
32. H. van Skyhawk, 'Ṣūfī influence in the *Ekanāthī-bhāgavat*', in *Devotional Literature in South Asia, Current Research, 1985-1988*, ed. R.S. McGregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 77-8, see fn. 23.
33. Khan, *Ramdev Pir*, pp. 254-7.

34. Khan, *Ramdev Pir*, pp. 76-7 and Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims and Dalits*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 2-4 and passim.
35. Kolff, *Naukar*, passim.
36. D.-S. Khan, 'The Mahdi of Panna: A Short History of the Pranamis, Part I', *Indian Journal of Secularism*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2003, pp. 61-93; D.-S. Khan, 'The Mahdi of Panna: A Short History of the Pranamis, Part II', *Indian Journal of Secularism*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2003, pp. 46-66.
37. Hiltebeitel explores the version of the Ālhā story in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa. See Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking*, passim.
38. See, for example, the inscription of Brahmanwada (1175 CE) in G.V. Acharya, *Historical Inscriptions of Gujarat*, Bombay: Sri Forbes Gujarati Sabha, 1933-42, vol. 3, no. 157B, and Patan (1199 CE) in A.S. Gadre, *Important Inscriptions from Baroda State*, vol. 1, Baroda, 1943, p. 71.
39. Maclean, *Arab Sind,* p. 132.
40. D.R. Bhandarkar, 'Ghatiyala Inscriptions of Kakkuka, S. 918', *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 9, ed., E. Hultzsch and Sten Konow, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1907-08, pp. 277-81.
41. Ludo Rocher, ed., *The Purāṇas, A History of Indian Literature*, vol. 2, Fasc. 3, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986, p. 132.
42. Ibid., p. 133.
43. *Tīrtha* and *sthala-mahātmyas* (compositions in praise of shrines or sacred places) composed in the early twentieth century were often attributed to the *Skanda Purāṇa.*
44. See for example the messianic theme in Sumit Sarkar, 'The Kalki-Avatar of Bikrampur: A Village Scandal in Early Twentieth Century Bengal', *Subaltern Studies* no. 6, ed. Ranajit Guha, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 1-53. Many of the so-called 'subaltern' protests of the colonial period featured a messianic theme, usually missed or glossed over by historians seeking only an anti-colonial or nationalist agenda.

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The Entanglement of the Gināns in Khoja Governance

Amrita Shodhan

Religious groups have strong internal ties and, in many cases, constitute an important source of authority separate from the state. The state can find itself in competition to this authority, or these groups can submit to the state as a legitimate source of power for settling internal disputes. Under conditions of imperialism the modern state arrogated to itself all rights of action in a sphere it defined as 'public'. The history of the modern public is wide ranging; however, for our purposes here, public refers to all matters dealing with property and peace. Thus, the state reserved all matters dealing with property within religious groups, especially those that involved violence.

The disputes amongst the Khojas regarding the payment of dues, the use of common property, and the management of the community thus came under the jurisdiction of the civil courts. This treatment of Khojas under the civil court has two genealogies: (1) the conception of colonial religious groups, and (2) the secularization of state rule. I shall discuss these briefly below and then discuss the manner in which the Gināns were employed in these disputes.

The colonial conception of religious groups determined the Indian Supreme Court's treatment of the Khojas. The model that the colonial state used to understand the groups they were dealing with was the one they were familiar with from Britain, modified by their understanding of local conditions. Thus, the East India Company and its judges in India attempted to understand religious groups in India according to the familiar institutions of church and sect. The church was seen as a body governed by a head, carrying its teaching in some book. The sect was understood as a breakaway group that expressed its founding principle in a covenant when it began.[1] Hinduism and Islam were seen as the primary 'churches' in India, and the

smaller groups within these traditions were seen as 'sects'. However, in terms of organization, the British were unable to find a structure such as a single pope or bishop and followers. Hence, they assumed that these religions had no central religious figures of authority. They accepted only the religious texts, for example, the Qurᶜān or the *Manusmṛti*, as the acceptable authority within the respective religious groups. They assumed that these groups were neither an organized congregation nor had an organized structure of authority. It followed that religious communities could be represented by anyone who knew their religious texts rather than by practitioners themselves. Given the nature of the orientalist perspective, native practitioners were not trusted; on the contrary, they were considered to be the least likely to produce an authoritative account of their religion.[2]

This attitude towards religious community is deeply implicated in the movement towards secularization. As the British government began to get involved with questions of colonial governance and subjects, they were also concerned with the question of heterogeneous religious groups at home, primarily the Dissenters, Catholics, Jews. In the nineteenth century these groups began to be accepted as 'Englishmen', namely, subjects with civil rights. Citizenship became the guiding principle of being a member of the nation state. The argument is not necessarily one of tolerance and inclusiveness but one of nation building and empire. The widespread support of the Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1828, and the removal of the civil disabilities of Jews (1830), was motivated, in part, by the conviction that aiming for a nation of good Englishmen was a more realistic goal than creating a nation of good Anglicans. These emancipatory policies were crafted from the same political philosophy which established the colonizing mission of England in India. The person who linked the two, home and colonial policies, was Thomas B. Macaulay (1800-1859), who advocated English education in India and Jewish emancipation at home.[3] This policy of secularization created the possibilities of individuals having rights in the state without recourse to their religious identities. Religious identities were thereby subordinated to the state's secular identity.

Thus, the Khojas were seen as subjects of the empire possessing civil rights. As colonial Muslim subjects, they were treated as members of a community with fixed beliefs which could be ascertained from texts. The state would not attempt to know their beliefs or discuss them, but 'merely' guarantee their civil rights. With these two genealogies, the Khoja disputes are treated in court as if these disputes are entirely divorced from the question of communal faith and practice. We find a complete divorce between the religious collective and the state's legal process.

As a collective the Khoja *Jamāt* did not function in this way. Legal procedures, especially in the pre-1857 period under the Company, show

that the rules and beliefs of the religious collective were ascertained by examining the members of the community, notably, the rich vocal male members in the court and their arbitrators (*vakils*). The *jamāt* council—called the *justi* (with the officers, the *Mukhī* and the *Kāmaṛiā*), and the Sayyids or the Pīrs who made regular collections on behalf of the Imām—were the primary authorities within the Khoja collective. The Pīrs and Sayyids were crucial to the belief system and daily worship of the Khojas. They were also important, along with the Aga Khan, in maintaining a separate polity by the Khojas. These authorities were now made subordinate to the court and the Khojas could not define themselves in terms of their faith.[4]

Under the normative pressure of the court and its categories of governance, the Khojas were forced to define themselves with reference to the Qurᶜān and the categories of Shia and Sunni as defined in the wider imperial context. The splits among the Khojas took place along these lines too—those dissenting from the Aga Khan chose the more 'classical' Islamic identities for themselves, namely, Sunni or Ithna Ashari.

This pressure was exercised most strongly in the Aga Khan Case. This was a court case fought in 1866 in the Mumbai High Court between the first Aga Khan and Khoja commercial magnates (*śeths*) like Habib Ibrahim, Hemraj Jeya and others. During the case the pressure to define Khojas in terms of Arabic Islam was very high. In this context the Ginān literature presented a very difficult 'problem' as it did not fit into the orientalist categories of Islamic literature. However, the manner in which this literature was treated in the court case has been the model for the subsequent characterization of the Gināns, both in religious discussions within the community as well as in academic discourse.[5]

At the beginning of the arguments in court, the existence of the Ginān literature was consistently denied by both parties. The *Das Avatār Ginān* describing Ali as the tenth *avatār* of Vishnu, was also consistently denied as irrelevant. In fact, till the middle of the case, it was often referred to as the *Desatir* which is a pre-Islamic Persian text (included in the *Dabistan* to describe the Mahabadian Zoroastrian sect). This is how the plaintiff, the Khoja merchants' lawyer, Mr. Anstey, presents the *Das Avatār*. The lawyer even makes the argument that the use of this text, the *Desatir*, showed that the Khojas were not a proper Muslim sect at all since the *Desatir* was actually a text of Zoroastrian belief. This ploy of Anstey did not work as the *Das Avatār* was too well known in the community. About half way through the arguments, Mukhī Allahrukhia Soomar uses the title of the Ginān correctly. He identified the *Das Avatār* as a text describing the different forms of Godhead, Vishnu, and Ali as the promised tenth *avatār*.[6] As can be imagined, this presented a tremendous dissonance in the normative paradigm of Shia and Sunni that was being used by the court to understand the Khojas.

The Aga Khan's party developed a strategy to deal with this problem. We see it in the statement of Karim Khan, the Aga Khan's secretary, in calling the *Das Avatār* an instrument of conversion: the conversion begun by the *dāī*s (missionaries) sent to Sind and Hind by the Imāms. The *Das Avatār* and other Gināns were included within Shi'ism as a tool of conversion. The idea of Khojas as converts was discussed at length at that point in the case.

In contrast to this later description, in an earlier legal case argued in 1851 (known as the Great Khoja case) the *Das Avatār* and other practices had been described as Hindu remnants.[7] When, in 1851, they were described as Hindu remnants the judge, Justice Perry, raised an objection in his notes. He suggested, instead, that they were influences acquired later, involuntarily by immigrant groups from Iran to India. Thus, he does not think of these Khojas as local converts having Hindu remnants.[8]

Given this history of describing the Gināns as Hindu remnants or influences, Karim Khan's argument about the Gināns as tools of conversion in 1866 was uninformed. Karim Khan stated that the *Desatir* was a book made for the conversion of the Khojas by Pīr Sadrudin since the Khojas were originally Hindus. Mr Howard, his attorney, in his concluding statement went back to the old stand and again tried to deny the importance of the *Das Avatār*. First of all he called it the *Desatir*; then he said it was read only over dying Khojas, implying that it was irrelevant. Then, being unable to deny its importance, he tried to tie it to Ismaili conversion. He argued that the text of the ten incarnations bore evidence of having been written to smooth the conversion of Hindus to Islam and that nine of these incarnations were of Hindu origin. As recorded in the case proceedings, in the middle of Howard's argument the judge, Justice Arnould, remarked that 'the learned gentleman's point was to show that they [the Gināns] couldn't have been composed by a Suni [sic] but might have been by a Shia'.[9]

Thus, the judge made the necessary link showing that the Ginān texts composed for the conversion of Hindus to Islam were Shia. The fact that there was nothing essentially Shia about the use of local names, symbols, texts and rituals for conversion was later asserted by other scholars. Similar arguments have since been made about Sunni Sufis in their attempt to spread Islam in Bengal. This shows that there was nothing specifically Shia about this method of using local Hindu symbols for conversion.[10]

The judge in his judgment elaborated on the link he found between Ismaili Shi'ism and the strategy of conversion. He cited Silvestre de Sacy, 'the great French Orientalist who created a standard corpus of critically edited texts for the European student'. The judge quoted from the Introduction to de Sacy's *Religion des Druzes,* in which the author has described the instructions given to the *dāī* or the Ismaili missionary. The

da'wa (mission) strategy was for the missionary to represent himself as a sincere partisan of the doctrine professed by the subject. Thus, to a Shia he must pose as Shia, to a Sunni as Sunni, and so on. He must then posit the Ismaili doctrine as the necessary completion of the Shia or Sunni doctrine respectively. De Sacy says, '*[il] fixe son attention par une dévotion affectée et hypocrite*'. In de Sacy's text, this understanding of the strategy of conversion is a masterly reduction of his own earlier discussion of the nine stages of initiation into Ismaili doctrine, also discussed by von Hammer's *The History of the Assassins*.[11]

The initiation of the convert began with the raising of self-doubt and then gradually led to a full understanding of Ismaili knowledge. One could interpret the method of conversion as one where the missionary first admits a premise of the religion of the prospective convert, then raises doubts about it, and finally introduces Ismaili doctrine as the solution. These were the directives given to the Imām's missionaries, the *dāī*s. While von Hammer's description may be accurate in so far it describes the missionary strategy of the Ismailis in medieval times, how these directives could be translated into the Ginān tradition follows a very indirect route from the lawyer's arguments to the judge's conclusion.

However, the judge's pronouncement on the Gināns as conversion literature was very clear, and became definitive in the subsequent characterization of Ginānic literature. It was accepted in the third Aga Khan's own statements as well as in much academic discussion of the Khojas. This formulation of the Gināns sees them as instruments of change, as temporary halts on the way to a more true Islam. This characterization also derives from the way we understand conversion. In English, it suggests two well established positions between which the move takes place, from one religion to another, both of which are fully formed and distinct. This idea of conversion to some extent invalidates the question of the beliefs of the convert. The judge, further pursuing the question of conversion, poses it precisely as a movement from the original community (assumed to be Hindu) to a new community, that of the Ismaili Pīr and his Imām. The religion or belief examined in court is not of the Khojas but of the agents responsible for the conversion.

Gauri Viswanathan criticizes this manner of treating conversion. She says this stress on the agents responsible for conversion is seen mostly in colonial practice, and has continued after independence. Conversion is seen more as a transfer of the individual from one community to another without recognizing the importance of the transformation of beliefs. Beliefs held after conversion are not considered important; rather, the identification of the community to which the individual has converted is considered important. As such, the movement of people is assimilated into a discourse of rights,

and change in belief is privatized to make it non-threatening to the state. The state has to merely acknowledge the community, not its beliefs, since the formation of the state must admit citizens regardless of their religious beliefs. Moreover, the presence of religious authorities such as the pope was seen as threatening to the nation state. Thus, the state suppressed or side-lined them by taking over the social controls of these authorities. This way of viewing conversion sees it as a point of alienation between two faiths. However, Vishwanathan argues that conversion should actually be seen as a dialogue between two different faiths and beliefs.[12]

Viswanathan gives numerous examples of how converts are treated as aliens between two religious groups whose civil rights are supported by the state. She draws them from British ethnography, census figures, discussions of Ambedkar's conversion, and court cases instituted by infuriated parents trying to get their converted sons back. In all these instances, administrative and social leaders see conversion as a calculated political tool rather than as an act of faith which attempts to bring a discussion of belief and religion into politics. The conversions are not private affairs but public ones, as acts which try to bring belief into the public arena.[13]

During the Aga Khan case, too, conversion is discussed as a calculated political tool devoid of a change in belief and faith. It is significant that the last fresh composition of the Gināns occurred just before the Khoja case and the crystallization of the attitude that the Khojas exist as a community without any need to discuss their beliefs or their local structures of authority. The last composer of the Gināns is Imām Begum. She was born in 1785 and died in 1866 according to Varteji.[14] She travelled to Bombay from Karachi, and was welcomed in Bombay by the leading Khojas at Somji Vishram Building in Dongri. She was very popular and would recite the Gināns accompanied by Merali Papavani Sindhi on the sāraṅgī. In Bombay she recited the Gināns in the *Jamāt Khāna* and at the Mahim Dargah, which were reportedly not approved by Imām Hasanali Shah. There appears to have been some unpleasant incidents with her as the Aga Khan is said to have disapproved of the sāraṅgī as accompaniment. However, the Aga Khans since have accepted her Gināns and her also in the Ismaili fold. Her Gināns were perhaps composed around the 1820s. I find her work significant in light of the earlier discussion on the Gināns and their characterization.

I first became interested in the work of Imām Begum as part of my work on women in public life. I felt that women poets would, perhaps, express themes and concerns especially unique to women's experience. Imām Begum's Gināns are extremely moving and spiritual. Her compositions, however, cannot be described as poems of protest against forms of patriarchal domination. Thus, while her Gināns do not reflect an independent feminist consciousness, Imām Begum still seems to have been a centre of expression of faith and belief which the first Aga Khan apparently disapproved.

One oral account suggests that the opposition to her was rooted in the patriarchal concerns of male Khoja members, specifically against their wives who participated too intensely in Imām Begum's discourses and thus neglected their domestic duties.[15] Imām Begum represents the continuity of older Khoja beliefs and the unity of a community with its beliefs. The disapproval attributed to the Aga Khan sets up a kind of opposition to the continuity of this Khoja tradition.

Even before the 1866 case, we find that the Aga Khan was instrumental in introducing new prayers, new forms of worship, new taxes as well as inheritance laws. In this context, Imām Begum's use of the sāraṅgī may have become a point of controversy. With the newly introduced paradigm of the Gināns as conversion literature, the centrality of the Gināns was denied. Can the cessation of Ginānic composition be linked to this decline in the Gināns' authority?

From the 1870s the community had a steady trickle out to the Ithna Ashariyya group. Around 1882 there were twenty-five such families.[16] Around 1900 there was another dispute and a murder at the Mahim Dargah. Subsequently, in 1908, there was another dispute within Imām Sultan Muhammad Shah's paternal family. His aunt, Haji Bibi, asked for a share in the Imām's property and also alleged that they were not Ismaili but were Ithna Ashari. At this time, too, the case was heard at great length; witness depositions were taken by a commission in Kuchh and Kathiawar. The judgement went in favour of the Ismaili group.[17] In this case, Haji Bibi and her supporters denied all knowledge of the Gināns. In fact, she asserted that as she followed the Iranian practices of Hasanali Shah's family and the Iranian court, she denied using the Gināns as religious literature.[18]

In his arguments against the Ismailis, while Kaba admits to the practice of the Gināns, he tries to show that the poems were written merely for the conversion of Hindus. This implied that they had left the Hindus behind and followed only classical Islam. To make his point, he selected certain Gināns and edited them.[19]

There followed a long and drawn out polemic between the Ithna Ashariyya and Ismaili groups after the case. Adelji Dhanji Kaba and others wrote extensively, trying to show that the community was Ithna Ashariyya from its origins, and not Ismaili. The Ginān literature in this dispute (as in the earlier dispute) was supported by the Ismaili group. Mukhī Lalji Devraj published an authoritative collection of Gināns.[20] Among other tracts Pīr Sadrudin's *Ātmadarśana* and *Brahma Prakāśa* were once again published by Varteji. Imām Begum and Bai Budhai's Gināns were also published. This time the grounds for accepting these Gināns[21] were not as a means of conversion but as a recognition of the Ismailis being different from the Hindus and Muslims, and an attempt to bridge the gap between the two.

Varteji says, 'Imām Shah and Manavant Banu Bai Budhai ...worked as the *dāī*s of the Zahir Imām and made successful and immortal efforts for removing the differences between Hindu-Muslims in Hind'.[22] In all his publications under the auspices of the Ismaili Sāhitya Maṇḍal under the Satpanth Sāhitya series, he insisted that the Ismaili religion did not differentiate between Hindus and Muslims. He employed '*vaidik*' terms like '*aham brahmāsmi*' and showed how this was the same as in the Qur'ānic Ayats [and] Hazrat Ali's explanations through Baits, and that both these were best expressed in Pīr Sadrudin's Gināns.[23]

Thus, while under the first Imām Ginān literature was pressured to prove its Muslimness, under Sultan Muhammad Shah this pressure was considerably less. One context for this can be sought in the Imām's own involvement in the politics of independence and the communal atmosphere of the time. From 1912 to 1923, there was growing Hindu-Muslim unity in India. Sultan Muhammad Shah himself was a big supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity and always advocated it from the 1911 Hindu-Muslim conference onwards, even when he was president of the All India Muslim Conference in 1928, when relations between the two groups had hardened.[24] In his time, the Gināns were extolled for the way in which they were above being either Hindu or Muslim. Those gināns which refused to choose between Rām and Rahīm were especially extolled. Qurᶜānic verses were cited to predict the rise of the Imām in the East and the Gināns are described as a witness to the rise. Thus, the Gināns were framed within a Qurᶜānic discourse and at the same time extolled for their difference from it—providing a solution to Hindu-Muslim differences.

The acceptance by the third Imām of the Ginānic stream of belief of the Khojas was very important in preserving the Khoja sense of community and belonging. This could only have been done on the higher ground that Varteji and others found in the 1920s, namely, the argument that the Khoja faith was neither typically Hindu nor Muslim, but a different interpretation of both faiths. On the earlier grounds of acceptance, namely, as tools of conversion, perhaps the Gināns would not have survived at all. With the acceptance of Ginānic inspiration, the Khoja conversion is linked to the faith of the Khojas, and belief becomes a part of the religious collective's public presence. From this point of view, a creative and healthy identity of the community is possible rather than one devoid of religious beliefs.

In the latest academic discourse on the Gināns we find that they are treated as providing inspirational poetry that preserves the faith of the Khojas.[25] Tazim Kassam has a more differentiated appreciation of the various Gināns, rather than as one homogenous literature. Some are seen as recording historical events and messages and others as religious instructions and inspirational compositions.[26] More and more nuanced and careful readings

of Ginān literature can only lead to a better appreciation of the religion and the history of the Khojas.

Notes

1. Thomas O'Dea, 'Sects' in *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, pp. 130-6; Michael Hill, 'Sects' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, pp. 154-9.
2. Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community...*, 2001.
3. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion...*, 1998.
4. Amrita Shodhan, 'Legal Formulation of the Question of Community...',1999; *A Question of Community...*, 2001.
5. N. Dumasia, *The Aga Khan and His Ancestors...*, 1939; J.N. Hollister, *The Shia of India...*, 1979; Wladimir Ivanow, 'Satpanth...', in *Collectanea*, pp. 1-54.
6. *The Bombay Gazette*, 14 June 1866.
7. This strategy of calling certain practices Hindu was not always a natural, obvious or common mode of describing Indian Muslim practices as it seems to us now. Gaborieau suggests that in Muslim writings, from Sirhindi to Shah Waliullah, he has not found this characterization. He therefore suggests that British ethnography was responsible for it. Today we accept this characterization of Indo-Muslim practices as remnants or influence of Hindus as 'common sense'. Marc Gagorieau, 'A Nineteenth-Century Indian "Wahhabi" Tract...', pp. 198-239.
8. Jusitce Erskine Perry, Notebook of June 1847; Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community...*, 2001.
9. *The Bombay Gazette*, 13 June 1866.
10. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims...*, 1981.
11. Sylvestre de Sacy, *Exposé de la religion des Druzes...*, 1837.
12. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion...*, 1998.
13. Ibid.
14. E.A. Varteji, *Satapanthanī devīyo,* 1926; Zawahir Moir, 'Bībī Imām Begam...', pp. 249-65.
15. Mumtaz Ali, 'Sayyida Bibi Imam Begum', p. 17.
16. Judicial Department (JD) volumes of Maharashtra State Archives, 1878, 1880, 1884.
17. James, C. Masselos, 'The Khojas of Bombay...', 1973; N. Dumasia, *The Aga Khan and His Ancestors...*, 1939; Adelji Dhanji Kaba, *Khojā komanī tavārikha*, 1912; *Khojā pantha darpaṇa*, 1913-15.
18. Adelji Dhanji Kaba, *Khojā pantha darpaṇa*, 1913-15.
19. Ibid.
20. Zawahir Moir, 'Historical and Religious Debates...', pp. 131-53.
21. Published with commentary by E.J. Varteji, *Satapanthanī devīyo*, 1926.
22. Ibid., p. 6.
23. Ibid.

24. Alimahomed Janmahomed Chunara, *Nūrūm Mobīn..*, 1950, pp. 485, 522.
25. Aziz Esmail, tr., *A Scent of Sandalwood.., 2002.*
26. Tazim R. Kassam , *Songs of wisdom..*, 1995.

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Kalām-i Maulā

Notes on an Indian Ismaili text

Iqbal Surani

The *Kalām-i Maulā* (words or sayings of Hazrat ʻAlī) belongs to the vast literary corpus produced in the Indian subcontinent by Ismailis who are known under several names: Satpanth (followers of the right path), Khoja (from *Khwāja*, lord), Shamsi (followers of Pīr Shams), Khanai (people who attend the *jamāᶜāt khāna*). This is the only Indian Ismaili text venturing to present the 'words' of Hazrat 'Alī, the first Imām of the Shīᶜa Muslims. As a work consisting of poetic stanzas meant to be sung, the *Kalām-i Maulā* is similar to the Gināns.[1] However, in as much as it purports to be the sayings of Imām 'Alī, the *Kalām-i Maulā* is parallel to the Farmāns (orders and directions given by the Shīᶜa Imāms). Thus, this text draws together the two principle types of literature sacred to the Ismaili faithful, Gināns and Farmāns, both of which aim to meet the believer's (*mu'min*) quest for knowledge initiated and guided by the central and essential figures of the great Pīrs in the Gināns[2] and Imām, in the present case, Imām 'Alī as well as the Hāzir (living) Imām (the material and spiritual pole of the community).

Typically, the *Kalām-i Maulā* is recited every Thursday in the *jamāᶜāt-khāna* between the two evening prayers, as well as on the occasion of funeral vigils. As in the case of the daily readings of the Farmāns, the faithful are requested to recite the Salawat (*salāt*), the prayer of benediction upon the Prophet and his descendants, before the recitation of the *Kalām-i Maulā*. It is up to the reciter to choose which stanzas to sing. Like similar didactic poems from northern India, the *Kalām-i Maulā* uses stanzas composed of two rhyming distiches (AABB) that are easy to learn by heart and that are meant to be recited. The language of the *Kalām-i Maulā* is a simple Urdu/

Hindustani, characterized by a striking consonance in its vocabulary and syntax to the poetic language of the Ginān̄s.

The edited text of the *Kalām-i Maulā* is composed of 327 stanzas divided in 23 sections. Each section has a title which sheds light on the major themes of the whole work listed as follows: Truth; Brotherhood; Good Conduct; Generosity; Avarice; Cupidity; the Carnal Soul; Shame; Tolerance and Gentle Words; Ignorance and Stupidity; the Virtues of Knowledge; Oppression; Injustice; the Virtues of Justice; this Material World; Devotion and Piety; the Virtues of Piety; Patience and Gratitude; Death; Friends; Good Company; Bad Company; Discernment; Discretion; Jealousy; and Courage. The entire composition is like a manual of ethical teachings drawn from the sayings of Imām ʻAlī. These moral lessons pay close attention to the conduct of life in this present world (*dunyā*) seen as a field of activities preparing for the next world (*ʻāqibat, ākhirat*). The main purpose of the *Kalām-i Maulā* is to spiritualize every aspect of life, be it social, economic or intellectual. Its ethical teachings correspond to a vision of the world in which human being is perceived as an instrument of God who is in every heart. Thus, the final purpose of every human action cannot be anything but for the sake of God; otherwise, there could be no meaning to it. The same applies to the existence of the world. Such a *praxis* necessarily means leading a virtuous life.

Let me now address the question concerning the origin and author of the *Kalām-i Maulā*, and then try to elucidate its late inclusion in the corpus of Ismaili literature of the Indian subcontinent. It must be stated at the outset that the faithful believers generally do not worry about the kinds of questions raised here. The faithful take the text for granted and concentrate on living up to the spirit of its teachings. Their approach is devotional. They are essentially preoccupied by the contents, and with feeling the presence and meaning of the content in their hearts through repeated recitals. Yet, the questions of the origins of the *Kalām-i Maulā* are legitimate for the researcher.

The oldest known edition dates from 1873[3] which may suggest that the *Kalām-i Maulā* came into existence rather late in the formation of the Indian Ismaili literary corpus. The various editions published by the institutions of the Ismaili community do not offer any explanation concerning its origin nor any biography of the author. Often, the publications include not the entire text but select stanzas. Being thus confronted with the problem and having few clues, one must examine the *Kalām-i Maulā* itself for indications concerning the author and try to evaluate the different editions.

As such, the title itself *Kalām-i Maulā* as well as the oral signature (*chāp* or *bhaṇitā*) in the last stanza affirms that the original source of the spiritual teachings contained in the text is Maulānā ʻAlī, the first Shīᶜa Imām. In the text, he is referred to as follows: *walī maqbūl (IV,34)* (trusted friend);

maulā (V,39) (lord; also: *rabb, VII,55*); *hazrat shāh (VIII,70)* (blessed king), *sāhib-i asrār (X, 98)* (master of secrets), *kausar sāqī (X,102)* (cup-bearer of Kausar), *shāh-i duldul (XI,113)* (king-rider of Duldul), *shāh-i auliyā (XIV,182)* (king of those near to God), *hazrat amīr (XXI,293)* (blessed prince).

For the time being this is what can be said hypothetically about the source of the text. Although there are no verses in the text that reveal the name and biographical details of the actual composer of the *Kalām-i Maulā*, there are indications that enable us to appreciate his erudition. On the basis of a few examples, one may infer his religious and cultural environment. The exhortations to read the sayings of the Prophet as handed down by the Tradition (*hadīs-rivāyat*), to recite the Qur'ān, and to participate in religious meetings (*'ilm-majlis*), all suggest the author was a pious Muslim imbued with classical learning. The vocabulary used in the *Kalām-i Maulā* and the choice of themes and epithets ('One without Associate', 'Praise of God') abound with expressions in the Qur'ān. Again, the author's exhortations to abide by religious precepts presuppose a fervent follower of the faith. But the author does not seem to be satisfied with only the outside form (*ẓāhir*). The stanzas aim at searching for the symbolic esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*) and raising the soul's sights towards God. Thus, these different elements combined lead towards the conclusion that the author is a pious and fervent follower of the Ismaili faith imbued with the teachings of the Qur'ān and of Hazrat^{c}Alī in the *Nahj al-Balāgha*.[4] The reference to the four paths (*shar*$ī^{c}$*at, ṭarīqat, ḥaqīqat, ma*^{c}*rifat*) shows familiarity with Shī^{c}a Sufism. In addition to a classical upbringing and Persian culture, given the vocabulary and style, the composer of the *Kalām-i Maulā* also shows awareness of the Ginān and of the Bhakti tradition.[5]

Finally, it is important to ask whether the text of the *Kalām-i Maulā* follows an Arabic text such as the *Nahj al-Balāgha* of the eleventh century or whether it is an adaptation of the Persian Ismaili work, *Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī*. In his article,[6] Michel Boivin places the *Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī* in the context of the strategic political and religious views of the thirty-second Imām Mustanṣir-bi'llāh II (d. 1480). The Imām gave a new dynamism to the Ismaili community by restructuring it. This had become necessary after the massacre and dispersion of Ismailis by the Mongols in 1256. The Ismaili da^{c}wa was restructured in order to avoid divisions and defections that would be caused by the usurpation of the functions and authority of the Imām.[7]

I have noted the following features common to the *Kalām-i Maulā* and the *Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī*: both these works attribute their ethical and moral teachings to an Imām. However, in certain contexts the mention of Imām 'Alī refers to 'Alī as the prototype of the Interior spiritual Imām and not simply to the 'Alī of history. Other features common to both texts include

the absence of metaphysical speculation, the reference to the paths of Sufism, and references to the Qur'ān. The names of the authors of either text remain unknown as both works are collections of the sayings of the Imām gathered by anonymous disciples. And this tradition is still alive nowadays.[8]

One must remember that Ismailism, an esoteric form of Islam, was always receptive to the culture of the lands where it spread through the ages[9] so long as the ethical and spiritual ideas had affinities. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising to meet with numerous instances of cultural and intellectual exchange, adaptations, rewriting of texts and commentaries such that it became possible to integrate ideas belonging to several traditions, but having universal appeal, into the accepted corpus of the community until recent times. The *Kalām-i Maulā* is one of these latter specimens.

To conclude, the following quatrain from the *Kalām-i Maulā* well represents the ethical and intellectual spirit of Ismaili thought in its spritual quest, from Iran to the Indian subcontinent:

'ilm jāve jo mar jāe
je koī hai 'ilm paṛhā
mu<u>sh</u>kil nahīm jo hai samjhanhāre
pher paṛhe kare 'ilm kūṃ kharā
paṇ jis sīne ginān vai nā hove
to mu<u>sh</u>kil kaun kare[c]ilm-bicār
to samjho mukh-pāṭ-vidhā thī e bhalā
jis ke sīne ginān diyā kirtār

Knowledge would vanish if were to die
The one who is knowledgeable
It isn't hard for the initiate
To reach and revive knowledge
Yet were it absent from his heart
Who would strive to meditate on it?
Know that he into whose heart the Creator installed it
Surpasses him who talks about it.
(*Kalām-i Maulā* 10.87)[10]

Notes

1. Ginān means gnosis, knowledge for salvation. See C. Shackle and Z. Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, SOAS South Asia Texts, no. 3, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992.
2. Etymologically Pīr denotes someone who is advanced in age. In the Ismaili context as in Sufism, the Pīr is the spiritual guide, who has advanced on the

path of spiritual knowledge. Its equivalent in Arabic is Shaikh, and Guru in Sanskrit.

3. *Kalām-i Maulā*, Bombay: Nirnayasagat Press, 1873.
4. The *Nahj al-Balāgha* (The Path of Eloquence) by Sharīf Rāzī (d.1015) brings together the sayings, sermons and letters of the Imām 'Alī. See Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1986, p. 64.
5. Iqbal Surani, *Explication des vertus de la Connaissance dans le* Kalām-i Maulā, *Un texte ismaélien fondamental,* Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Jean Maisonneuve Successeur, 2003, pp. 19-20.
6. Michel Boivin, 'A Persian Treatise for the Ismā'īlī Khojas of India: Presentation of the *Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī*', in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau, New Delhi: Centre de Sciences Humaines and Manohar, 2000, pp. 117-28.
7. Michel Boivin, idem, pp. 121-4.
8. Iqbal Surani, *Explication des vertus de la connaissance*, and Michel Boivin, 'Presentation of the *Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī*', pp. 118-19, 121.
9. Françoise Mallison, 'Hymnologies vishnuite, jaina, parsi, tantrique et islamique en gujarati: Mode de transmission et thèmes convergents', in *Traditions orales dans le monde indien*, ed. C. Champion, Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Collection *Puruṣārtha* 18, 1996, p. 278.
10. *Kalām-i Maulā*, Karachi: Shia Imami Ismaili Association, 1984 and Surani, *Explication des vertus de la connaissance*, p. 37. This quatrain is selected as a token of my gratitude to Zawahir Moir. In my opinion, she is an exemplary figure who never fails to offer knowledge and spiritual hospitality.

The Concept of 'GOD beyond God' in the *Khaṭ Niriñjan* of Pīr Sadardīn: A Personal Exegesis

Nagib Tajdin

Long before the establishment of the Fatimid Empire in the Maghreb, the Ismaili *daʿwa* had already started to proselytize in the Indian subcontinent. Dāʿī al-Haytham, the nephew of the famous Dāʿī Ibn Ḥawshab, was already preaching there around AD 884.[1] Some authors date the *daʿwa* in India to even much earlier times.[2]

Pīr Sadardīn (b. AD 1290)[3] was raised to the status of Pīr by Imām Islām Shāh,[4] the thirtieth Imām of the Nizārī Ismailis, at a rather old age. His name comes sequentially as number twenty-six of the fifty-one *Sattādhārī,*[5] namely, the authorised Pīrs. He is especially revered and for good reasons: he is one of the rare Pīrs whose many works—Gināns and Granths—have survived to this date. He has also composed the *Duʿā*,[6] the three times ritual prayer that was recited among the Ismailis almost unchanged up to AD 1956. Moreover, he brought the name 'Khoja' to the community in the subcontinent.[7] Pīr Sadardīn carefully chose the name Khoja as it befits the person in search of the Gnosis (*ginān*a[8]). Gnosis could be attained only by a person that would be in search (*khojā*), not by a person that would merely be an honorable person (*khwāja*).

We have based this note on manuscript no. 19 in the collection of the Heritage Society.[9] It is a four hundred-page manuscript in Khojki script written in AD 1895. The text is in black ink but sometimes green and red inks have been used for titles, numbers or separations. It contains several Granths, Gināns and Garbīs. The table of content is on page 398. The manuscript starts with *Khaṭ Niriñjan*, one of the lesser-known works of Pīr Sadardīn. There are minor variances with the text of *Khaṭ Niriñjan* published in early 1900s. The manuscript version is divided into three parts. Each of

the three parts of this Granth is well separated and each part starts with the words *Śrī Satagura Bhirmā ho vācā*—'The word (or teachings) of Satgur Brahmā'. The number of verses in the first part matches a symbolic number for the Ismailis: it contains forty-nine couplets (7 x 7). The first part is the main part as far as we are concerned since it develops the concept of divinity, which we will study in these notes. The second part has eighty-three couplets and the last part known as *Vel*, is one-hundred and twenty-eight couplets long. Every couplet has a rhyme.

Within Islam, and particularly Ismailism, various attempts have been made to define divinity. Even recently, Pīr Shihāb al-Dīn Shāh (d. December1884), the eldest son of Aga Khan II, while discussing the nature of God in his *Risāla dar ḥaqīqat-i dīn* wrote that 'All that is beyond thy imagination, is merely the limit of thy fantasy, not God.'[10]

In previous philosophical writings, Ismailis have explained in various ways the concept of 'God with Attributes' and 'GOD beyond God' sometimes called the Essence by opposition to the word Attributes. As Corbin puts it in his *Trilogie Ismaélienne*,[11] the First Intellect is equaled with God with Attributes, which is itself instituted—not emanated—from the 'Will' of the Essence. Will therefore precedes Existence (GOD beyond God). This is precisely what Pīr Sadardīn explains in his work in a colourful language using a conversation between *Khaṭ Niriñjan* which I understand to mean the 'GOD beyond God', and God, Brahmā, the Creator. And then, Pir Sadardīn brings us in the last verses of this work to his conclusion as to the identity of the *Khaṭ Niriñjan*.

To define both *Khaṭ* and *Niriñjan* is somewhat difficult because behind the obvious meaning of six (*khaṭ*) lies a secret. In my view, *Khaṭ* actually means 'the Highest'[12] and *Niriñjana* comes from the word *añjana*, the eyes. *Nirañjan*,[13] according to me, means beyond what one can see, beyond the reach of the physical eyes. So the expression *Khaṭ Niriñjan*[14] may well have a meaning that is hidden, that is, the 'One beyond the reach of the eyes of the Highest God'. And here we can mention Corbin's explanation of the Name Allah itself which is the name of the First Intellect, 'God with Attributes' (*illāh - wallāh*). That name which is the support of all the attributes comes from the root '*wlh*',[15] the same root for the word nostalgia. Corbin explains that this refers to the nostalgia of 'God with Attributes' who is unable to reach his own Origin. Pīr Sadardīn also explains the same concept but as part of the conversation of Brahmā with the *Niriñjan*. In that conversation Brahmā says, 'You are my mother, you are my father, you are my creator, the invisible without form.' (verse 15).

Let us now review the content of the first section of *Khaṭ Niriñjan*.

The first couplet says:

1. *Ejī ananta juge to āge vahi gayā, tāre āpohi āpa Niriñjana raheā.*
   Many cycles went by and at that time there was only you, the Niriñjan (the Invisible).

The works name is *Khaṭ Niriñjan* but Pīr Sadardīn starts the first verse by calling the entity *Niriñjan* instead of *Khaṭ Niriñjan*. One can speculate that it is Invisible because the *Khaṭ* having not yet been instaured[16] could therefore not yet be called *Khaṭ Niriñjan*, namely, God the Highest.

From the second couplet to the twelfth couplet the work brings the idea of the transcendental God instauring his image on his navel (or centre). We see here that for the sake of simplicity and to approach the subject of divinity without entering into the concept of defining God by the double negativity[17] (God cannot be Attributes and God cannot not be Attributes), the author found a very direct approach appropriate to the time and the people he was addressing. His simple explanation brings the concept that the image of GOD is not GOD but it cannot exist if GOD 'is' not. So, now we have the *Niriñjan* that brings out his own Image, puts it in his center with love and affection for many more cycles. At this point in the text, the *Khaṭ Niriñjan* is also identified as the *Alakh Niriñjan*. (*Alakha* means that which cannot be described).

The Name Brahmā, referring to that Image, appears for the first time in the thirteenth couplet:

13. *Tāre maca nirālambha āsana kari, tāre te Bhiramā rahyā nābhaja dhari.*
    There the Supreme GOD rested; there Brahmā stayed in his centre.[18]

The following three couplets bring us a Brahmā who is unable to understand (comprehend) his own nature and his origin. This is very close to the Declaration of the Great Resurrection in Alamut (AD 1164) when the Imām says that He as 'Maulānā' is beyond all existential considerations and attributes as He transcends them all.[19]

Up to the thirty-first couplet, we see Brahmā, God as Creator, asking humbly from the Invisible GOD, the permission to 'Create' and asking for the eventual salvation of what He is about to create, which is conditionally granted and which is detailed in the following verses. The capacity to create is given to the God Brahmā by GOD through the gift of the *'Traṇa Kāla nuṃ Jāpa'*, the 'Word' of the Three Times (Past, Present and Future). This is close to the theology of Aristote that identifies the *Amr* to God's volition and also close to the concept of *Kun Faya Kun*![20]

31. *Khaṭ Darśana*[21] *upāeā sāra, Te Alakha Nariñjana, āpe kartāra.*
    The Absolute Invisible (GOD) instaured the stage of the Supreme Vision.

The first time we come across the expression *Khaṭ* is in the expression *Khaṭ Darśan*, the word referring to the Highest Vision. Because our interpretation of this expression is different from the widely-known meaning of Six Philosophical Systems, it needs to be explained. In another Ginān of the *Ārtī* category from the same Pīr Sadardīn,[22] we find the following verse:

> *Khaṭ Darśana suna pujaye,[23] amara bheda koi virale payā.*
> Believing in the '*Sun*'[24](sometimes pronounced *Śūnya*) is The Highest Vision, only few understand the eternal (highest) essence.

Now lets look at the alternative translation of the same verse: Believing in the *Sun* is the Highest Vision, only few understand the significance of The Command (*Amr*!).

Here we can equate the command with the origin of Brahmā. In reality, Brahmā, Allāh, God is always associated with the number One.[25] The Highest Vision could be nothing but that Command (*Amr* - Order - Will) which institutes, and therefore precedes, the 'One'. What can better symbolize that stage than he who is at the level of '*Sun*', the ultimate Zero preceding the One?

Brahmā now creates Light, Matter and the Cycle of the Intellect (*Cātur*[26] *Kalap*). Therefore, *Khaṭ Darśan* in this context really means Highest Vision for, at this stage, the Universe is not yet formed.

The remaining couplets up to the forty-ninth develop the notion of various Avatārs of the first cycle of Time (Hav,Kav, Dharam and Kesav) as well as the saved souls of that time who, it is said here, will become one with the (Brahmā-Meśvar-Viṣṇu) 'all-in-one' God.

These are some of the highlights of the first part. Later, the verses line up the identity of Pīr Sadardīn with the Creator. It also clarifies that this is not a defining of multiple gods or two gods.[27] There is one God but two aspects of the same God. Reminiscent of the Sūrā Nūr,[28] the author says that the essence of a lamp is light itself when he alludes to the Qur'ānic image of Light upon light:

> 107. *Dīvā māṃhe thī dīvo sāra, sohi dīvo Nariñjana Nirākāra.*
> Light upon light, and that Light is Niriñjan Nirākār (Invisible ineffable God).
>
> 250. *Pīra-Śāha eka, te nahi jūdā.*
> Pīr and Shāh are One, they are not separated.
>
> 251. *Pīra te je Sāhebe thāpiyā.*
> Pīr (only) is He who has been instaured by the Sāheb (Master).

This latter verse refers to the establishment of Brahmā as Pīr by the *Khaṭ Niriñjan*.

Indeed, throughout the Ginānic literature, Pīrs have defined themselves as the Brahmā. In Ginānic terminology, Pirs claim to be what was known in the pre-Fatimid period as *Imām Mustawdā* and in the Fatimid period as the *Ḥujjat-ul Imām*. In Post Alamut documents, such as the later *Pīr Pandiyāt-e Jawānmardī* revered by both the Persian and the Indian subcontinent Ismailis, the importance of the *Ḥujjat* is central, and has retained its meaning in the word Brahmā or Pīr. Coming back to the expression *Śrī Satagura Bhirmā ho vācā* at the beginning of each part, if we consider that this expression has been added by the scribe, it means that the scribe accepted Pīr Sadardīn as Satgur Brahmā. But if it were part of the original work, it would mean that the author, namely the Pīr, is telling us that whatever he writes is the word of Brahmā.

We see this confirmed by the works of the *Sattādhārī* Pīrs, by the use of expressions such as:

> Pīr Shams: *Āda Bhirmājī āveā, Gura Śamasa-no avatāra.*
> Came the Eternal Brahmā, Manifestation of Pīr Shams.[29]
>
> Pīr Sadardīn: *Bhaṇere Pīra Sadaradīna, Satagura Bhirmā.*
> Said Pīr Sadardīn, the Satgur Brahmā.[30]
>
> Pīr Ḥasan Kabīrdīn:[31] *Eha dhola boliya Hasana Kabīradīna, śreṣṭi nā sirajaṇhāra-re.*
> Ḥasan Kabīrdīn spoke those words, He (is) the Creator of the universe.

It is only in the last three verses of this work that Pīr Sadardīn tells us about the identity of the *Khaṭ Niriñjan*, which is perfectly in tune with the Declaration of the Resurrection in Alamut, and also with the concept of the unity of Pīr-Shāh as defined by the third part of the works.

258. *Gura Nara nī tame karajo srīvā, e Khaṭ Nariñjana uttama meva.*
Serve the *Gur* (Pīr) and the *Nar* (Imām) that is the highest reward of the *Khaṭ Niriñjan.*

259. *Pīra Sadaraddīna boleā sata vacana, e Khaṭ Nariñjana ehi darśana.*
Pīr Sadardīn says: 'The true word, that is the vision of *Khaṭ Niriñjan* (The Highest God).

260. *Śāha nā darśana thī jāve pāpa, te Alakha Nariñjana āpohi āp.*[32]
By the vision of the Lord (Shāh-Imām) all sins are gone (because) He himself is *Alakh Niriñjan.*

There are many ways to look at the beginning of this work. One way would be to analyse the relation of love between Brahmā and its Origin. The other approach would be to see it as an explanation of Eternity and the Pre-Eternity through the various Cycles of divine time that lead to the

appearance of Brahmā, the Creator. A third way to look at this would be to take it as a work that defines what happened between the '*Kun*' and the '*Faya Kun*', Another is to approach it as defining of the two aspects of God in the work of Pīr Sadardīn. The latter is the one I chosen here.

The *Khaṭ Niriñjan* distinguishes itself from amongst the hundreds of Gināns and Granths because it is one of the rare works that courageously attempts to explain the Beginning of the Beginning. The difficult task of explaining the origin of God is tackled in the most simple and understandable way, and it is progressively that Pīr Sadardīn brings the reader, through the knowledge of that dual aspect of the same God, to the knowledge of the identification of *Khaṭ Niriñjan* with GOD beyond God.

Notes

1. Dachraoui, Farhat, *Les commencements du califat fatimide au Maghreb*, Tunis: S.T.D., 1975. A critical edition and analysis of the *Kitāb Iftitah al-Daᶜwa* of the Qāḍī al Nuᶜman (AH 342 [AD 957]), p. 43.
2. According to *Mana saṃjānī-vaḍi,* the monumental work of Pīr Shams in 10,000 veṛses (500 chapters of 20 verses each of which 420 chapters have been published), Imām Ismāᶜīl, the son of Imām Jaᶜfar Ṣādiq, himself converted others to Ismailism in 'Hind' during the last ten years of his life (Chapters 153-4).
3. Wladimir Ivanow, 'The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* New Series, no. 12, 1936, pp. 19-70.
4. According to Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadiq Ali (*Ismailis Through History*, Karachi: Islamic book Publisher, 1997), Pīr Sadardīn came to India during the period of Imāmat of Imām Qāsim Shāh (AD 1310-70). Imām Islām Shāh (AD 1370-1423) is said to have given the status of 'Pīr' to Pīr Sadardīn when he was at a quite advanced age. According to J.H. Lakhani, (*The Great Ismaili Heroes,* Karachi, 1973), Pīr Sadardīn is said to have died around 1380. Obviously, each author gives a different date and there is no unanimity on the subject. However, there is ample internal evidence in the Gināns of Pīr Sadardīn to corroborate the fact that he was preaching during the time of Imām Islām Shāh. In Ginān 2-026 verse 1, he says *Mehdī Śrī Islāma Śāha ne Srevo*, in Ginān 2-035 verse 6 he says *Ejī Nāma parsade Śāha hātiddun dese, thāma dise Śrī Islāma Śāha hojī* (Both Gināns are printed in the series of Six Khojki Gināns books, five of which were edited by Lalji Devraj and printed at Bombay by the Khoja Sindhi Press from 1914 onwards and often reprinted, the sixth one being edited by the successor of Devraj, Rematulla Virji from the Recreation Club Institute in 1934).
5. *Sattādhārī* from the word *Sattā*: Position, Authority, Power.
6. In fact he composed one *Asal Duā* of 17 chapters to be recited three times a day and he also composed a much longer *Ghaṭ Pāṭ jī Duā* recited on special occasions on the establishment of the *Ghaṭ- pāṭ* after the daily night meditation

or on Fridays and on the day of the new moon. These prayers have now been replaced by an Arabic version, which still incorporates some parts from the *Asal Duā*.

7. *Khojā* is a name, which comes from *khoja* (to search; to be absorbed) and not from the usually accepted Khwāja (cf. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadiq Ali, *Ismailis Through History*, Karachi: Islamic book Publisher, 1997). In fact, Sayyid Imām Shāh attributes the concept of Khoja—in the sense of the one who searchs—to Pīr Satgur Nūr (*Moman Cetāmaṇī* v. 199). This understanding is further confirmed by the verse 132 of the *Khaṭ Niriñjan* that commands: *Khojo ginānī, e sat nī rahā*, i.e. 'Search, O Gnostic, for that way which leads to Truth'.
8. Ginān means Gnosis. It comes from the root *jñā*. According to Daniel Donnet: «Les termes sanskrits traduits respectivement par *notion* et par *connaissance* sont de même racine *(jñā:* cf. grec *gi-gnôskô;* lat. *co-gnoscere;* gnose) » (*Aux sources du Bouddhisme*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Folia Electronica Classica, no. 2, décembre 2001).
9. The Heritage Society is an organization created by a group of Ismailis in Canada. The Society maintains a website that provides a variety of resources on Ismaili history, the Aga Khans, Ismaili literature and traditions. The website includes an extensive collection of Ginānic materials such as manuscripts (partly catalogued, edited and translated).
10. Shihāb al-Dīn Shāh al-Ḥusaynī, *True Meaning of Religion (Risāla dar ḥaqīqat-i dīn)*, ed. et tr. Wladimir Ivanow, Islamic Research Association London [Series], no. 3, Bombay: A.A.A. Fyzee, 1933.
11. Henry Corbin, *Trilogie Ismaélienne*. (3- Symboles choisis de la Roseraie du Mystère de Mahmûd Shabestarî.) Bibliothèque Iranienne, vol. 9, Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1961. p. 60.
12. Somewhat the equivalent of the Arabic 'The Most High', one of the ninety-nine names of Allah, as defined in the Qur' ān Chapter 87-1. In my view, *Khaṭ* cannot mean the number six in this context in the Granth where God is somewhere before the One and after the Zero.
13. According to Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadiq Ali, *Glossary of Holy Ginans,* Bombay: Dar ul Ilm Prakashan,1993, *Niriñjan* means that which cannot be seen by the eyes, that which is invisible and it also means the Light.
14. The paucity in Ginānic studies has pushed some scholars to copy each other's definitions mainly from Ivanow who has defined *Khaṭ Niriñjan* as the six invisible worlds. We differ from that definition as Ivanow does not put the expression in its context and fails to realize that before God came into 'being' there was no such thing as six 'invisible worlds'. Ivanow himself candidly admits of his weakness in the understanding of the Ginānic vocabulary. ('Not being an Indologist myself, I was unable to refer to the original gnan literature' in *Collectanea*, vol. 1, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1948, p. 2.)
15. Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, vol. 1, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p. 123.
16. I have used that word as translation of the French word 'instauré' in the sense Corbin used it and as representing the Ginānic word *thāpiya*. Neither the word

'instituted' nor 'established' come close to the meaning and depth of the word *thāpiya*. It has been frustrating to be unable to find in the English language the exact meanings of complex theological concepts found in the Ginānic literature.

17. In fact, the Islamic *Śahāda*, the declaration of faith, itself points to this: 'There is no God but God'. It could have simply said 'There is God only' but it does not.
18. This verse alludes to the Hindu myth of the re-creation of the universe when the god Viṣṇu, resting on the primeval waters, launches a new cycle (*yuga*) by seating the god Brahmā on his lotus-navel (*padma-nābha*).
19. Henry Corbin, 'Huitième centenaire d'Alamût', *Mercure de France*, février 1965, pp. 286-304. «Il est le seigneur des êtres, il est le seigneur qui est l'existence absolue (*wojûd motlaq*), excluant ainsi toute détermination existentielle, car il les transcende toutes».
20. 'Be and it is' refers to the Word of God originating from the Will of God, and means the divine command to bring into 'existence'. Hard to make is the distinction between the stages of the Will of God transformed into the Word which itself is transformed into the result.
21. Here *Khaṭ* refers to the Highest, not to the six philosophical schools of Hinduism (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhyā, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta). It is difficult to agree with Ivanow's translation of *Khaṭ Darśan* in *Collectanea* as 'six pilgrimages' because of reasons already explained in the note 14.
22. Ginān 4-002 of Pīr Sadardīn: *Jhāhera deviyuṃ dīpa māṃ bethā*, verse no. 2 . Six Khojki Ginans Books, vol. no 4: *100 ginān nī copaḍī: bhāg cotho,* ed. Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, Bombay: the editor, c. 1920.
23. Often this verse is mistakenly translated as 'The Six Schools of Hinduism attain only nothing'. These misinterpretations often stem from the fact that *Khaṭ* is translated as 'six' and some kind of translation has to be built to accommodate this number.
24. *Sun* (*Śūnya*) is a complex concept with several meanings: nothingness, zero, void; there is even a Cycle or Time concept associated to this word in the often used Ginānic expression *Sun Kāl*. In the same way, *Amar* means eternal but it also means The Command, The Word, The Will, the *Kun* (Be!) in the expression *Kun Faya Kun*. It has also been used in conjunction with the word *Śabda* (Word, Name) in Ginānic expressions such as *Suna ma thī Śabada nipayā* —From the *Sun* appeared the Word.
25. Qur'ān, Chapt. 112-1: 'Say: He is Allah, the One!'—ᶜAbdullāh Yusūfᶜālī calls that Sūrā as Sūrā 112: 'The Unity, Sincerity, Oneness of Allah' (Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, tr., *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, A Mentor Religious Classic, 4th rpt, New York: The American Library of World Literature, 1955, p. 454).
26. *Cātur* may also mean 'four' (in reference to the four Kalpas: *Jāelā, Fāelā, Arajā and Khalifā Kalap*).
27. Pīr Sadardīn says in Ginān 2-021, verse no. 15: *Ejī eka nūra thī Śāha Pīra upanā, tene kema kari kahie juā juā*—'From one light came Shāh and Pīr; how can we consider them detached?' Six Khojki Ginans Books, vol. no. 2:

100 ginān nī copaḍī: bhāg bījo, ed. Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, 3rd edn, Bombay: the editor, 1919.

28. Sūrā Nūr (XXIV) - Āyat 35: 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.' (Translated by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The meaning of the Glorious Koran*, A Mentor Religious Classic, 4th rpt, New York: The American Library of World Literature, 1955, p. 256.)
29. Ginān 2-049 of Pīr Shams: *Jīva tuṃ jāvā de,* verse no. 2. Six Khojki Ginans Books, vol. no. 2: *100 ginān nī copaḍī: bhāg bījo,* ed. Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, 3rd edn, Bombay: the editor, 1919.
30. Ginān 5-031 of Pīr Sadardīn: *Ānanda ānanda kariyo rikhisaro*, last verse. Six Khojki Ginans Books, vol. no. 5: *100 ginān nī copaḍī: bhāg pāñcamo,* ed. Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, 4th edn, Bombay: the editor, 1934. In Ginan 2-031, verse no. 13 of the same series (see note 29), he says *Bhaṇe Pīra Sadaradīna Sata Gura Brahmā, Athara Veda bhaṇṇe so mera – ejī.*
31. Ginān 5-004 of Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn: *Ramtā Ramtā Prabhu Pātane āvyā*, last verse. Six Khojki Ginans Books, vol. no. 5: *100 ginān nī copaḍī: bhāg pāñcamo,* ed. Mukhi Lalji Bhai Devraj, 4th edn, Bombay: the editor, 1934.
32. The expression *āpohi āp* has been translated here as an equivalent to the expression *tuṃhi tuṃ,* which one can find in other Gināns pertaining to God. (e.g. *Avala akhara yā Ālī tuṃhi tuṃ*). It may also mean 'himself'.

Ta'wīl and Ginānic Literature: Knowledge Discourse and Spiritual Experience

Aziz Talbani and Parveen Hasanali

We are asleep in the cavern of Adam, our father, while the vicissitudes of the age keep resolving.... Now is the time to return to our cavern, to take refuge in the observation of the arcana and in concealment! That is the state of things described by the Prophet when he declared; 'Islam grew up in exile and will return into exile. Blessed are those who go into this exile'.[1]

Introduction

Ta'wīl is generally understood as a hermeneutic exegesis of the Qur'ānic text. In Ismailism, ta'wīl seeks to explore what is understood as the inner (*bāṭin*) meaning of divine revelation.[2] Ta'wīl is a return to the origin, a return to the original meaning of the revelation, hidden beneath the apparent text.

In this study, ta'wīl is examined as a discourse of knowledge in which inner meanings and purpose play an important role in unifying and integrating the discourse. Therefore, in spite of ta'wīlī discourse being played out in variety of historical, cultural and literary contexts, it transcends these limits and becomes the mode by which spiritual transformation is experienced by initiates. Ta'wīl engages participants, sometimes remote in time and place, sometimes upholding diverse beliefs and views, in a process of metamorphosis that enables them to achieve higher levels of consciousness. It brings into play intellectual and spiritual goals and experiences that in essence are metaphysical and transcendent.

Ta'wīl as a literary mode of esoteric interpretation was central to the cosmological world view and *da'wa* of Fatimid and Persian Ismailis.

However, the role of ta'wīl in the Ginānic literature of Nizārī Ismailis[3] has not been studied. The Gināns serve as ideal modes for ta'wīlī interpretations both in form and function. In form, the Ginān generally presents a *mythos*—a story—using metaphors and imagery from the indigenous Indian culture integrated with Ismaili concepts by its creators, Persian and Arab *dā'īs* and preachers of the Imām, known as Pīrs and Sayyids. *Mythos* and ta'wīl also function in parallel ways—the story or the recitation takes the reciter back to the origin to become an active participant in his/her own spiritual experience, whether it is the process of initiation, conversion or a higher stage of spiritual development.

This essay explores the spirit of the mystical and philosophical traditions of Islam within the framework of the discourse of knowledge. Using Ismaili thought and practice as examples, the essay discusses the possibility of experiencing the inner truth (*ta'wīl*) of Islamic teachings. It reflects on how Ismaili literature, especially the Gināns, through metaphors and allegorical narratives, cued initiates to experience the transcendental reality beyond societal discourse and regain the personal nature of the search and the journey into exile.

A History of the Discourse of Knowledge

Islam emerged in the intellectually and spiritually barren discourse of pre-Islamic Arabia. Pre-Islamic Arabia represented materialism and 'ignorance' whereas Islam fostered ideas of knowledge and spiritual fertility.[4] From being the preserve of a small comunity of believers Islam rapidly spread to a large community with military, political and cultural power. The preservation of the status quo was desirable social policy when organizational structures evolved and doctrine was codified.[5] However, the predominance of civil and theological discourses did not diminish the need for alternative discourses responsive to the intellectual and spiritual impulses of seekers. Consequently, diverse political, cultural, and spiritual movements emerged to challenge the status quo, such as Sufi movements, and the religious-political movements of Shi'ism and Ismailism. These movements represented, to different degrees, alternative discourses seeking to change and extend the intellectual and political limits of society and offering diverse spiritual remedies for the malaise in society. The essence of 'Islam in exile' indicates possibilities of diverse discourses of meanings and interpretations that offer men and women solace for their inner impulses and provide them opportunities to search for personal bliss and their individual spiritual destiny.

All forms of knowledge such as history, literature, laws, dogmas, customs, and rituals are products of societal discourses. The history expressed and recorded in literature, art, music, and sciences is representative of the

religious and political culture of society. Institutional and culturally produced knowledge seeks compliance from members and aims at maintaining the status quo. The discourse of power appropriates and transforms dissent into acceptable social and cultural narratives. It is strategically done by systematization, organization, and appropriation. Dissent is individualistic and non-conforming and once it is standardized, it loses the ability to transform and liberate.

Fyodor Dostoevsky's powerful narrative of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* reflects the tension between inner and outer discourses. The protagonist narrates a story about the return of Jesus to Seville, Spain. After being recognized as Jesus, he is taken into custody by the Grand Inquisitor. When night falls, the Grand Inquisitor pays a visit to Jesus in his cell. He informs Jesus that the church has been established on his behalf and they have completed the unfinished business he had left behind. There is nothing he can add to his message. The Inquisitor states: 'And Thou hast no right to add anything to what Thou had said of old.... But let me tell Thee that now, to-day, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet.' [6]

Generally, there are writers, academics, theologians, and historians, who believe in the preservation of regimes and contribute to strengthen the existing discourse. There are also poets, philosophers, writers, readers, artists, and mystics who will challenge authoritarian regimes of discourse by creating contrasting images, metaphors and meanings, suggesting alternative realities and pushing the boundaries of the current discourse. Societal discourse limits the experiences of its members to the known and the familiar. For prophets and mystics, the experience of the transcendental takes place outside societal discourse. Muhammad first experienced the transcendent in Cave Hira, on a mountain outside Mecca. Symbolically, the experience happened outside the discourse of Meccan society. Whether it is the cave within the self, as with the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, or the island outside the mainland discourse, as in Ibn Ṭufayl's mystical tale of *Hayy ibn Yaqzān*, the experience of 'truth' occurs outside the context of codified society, hence requiring both Hayy *and* Absāl to return to the island.[7]

Medieval Islamic philosophers in that golden age of intellectual development constantly wrestled with the problem of what a virtuous society entails and how and whether it was viable for the intellectual to create an alternative discourse. Many of them, including Ibn Sīnā, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd understood and explicated the meaning of exile.[8] The Exile in their works is the persona of the philosopher-mystic within societal discourse. Their approach to rational mysticism still needs to be studied in greater detail and its nuances can be truly appreciated only

if we perceive their search as the alternative discourse or exile within the societies in which they operated. Thus, Ibn Sīnā was best able to explicate the experience of exile in his mystical Persian works, particularly his allegorical tale of *Hayy ibn Yaqzān,* which he wrote during the four months when he was imprisoned: '[at] the beginning of the recital, he [the reader] will be able to gauge the depth of experience that the narrator translates when he speaks of the time when his soul was *at home* and could go forth into pleasant places that lay hidden about its own city'. It is during exile that the soul is at home and it is the alternative discourse that reveals the pleasant places that remain hidden to those who inhabit the city. The return to those hidden *(bāṭin)* places is through the process of ta'wīl.[9]

A Sufi teacher is reported to have advised his disciple saying that there are only two steps to reality: take one step and go out of yourself, and take the second step and enter into the reality. Similarly, philosophers and mystics needed to step out of their cultural contexts to experience transcendental reality. They had to rebel against the discourse of dominant knowledge and choose their own objects of contemplation outside the traditional symbolic order, as was done by the philosopher Abū Bakr ar-Rāzī and mystics such as Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj and Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl. The notion of *mashriq* (Orient/East) both as a dialectic construct and as a symbolic transformation *(ishrāq-illumination)* gains credence in the philosophies of Ibn Sīnā. It is best exemplified in the *Recital of the Occidental Exile* by Suhrawardī, that conjures up the inward cave in which the pilgrim is cast in exile and the transformational return to the original meaning through ta'wīl.[10]

Another mode of exile was asceticism. Asceticism, whether inner or outer, was a denial of the exertion of power. By denying bodily pleasures, sometimes torturing the body and sometimes going into wilderness, mystics refused to submit to the power that was exercised on them and that controlled their social, political, and religious behaviour. In Sufi traditions, the notion of *fanā,* self-annihilation, is the rejection of the power exercised within the consciousness, the power that produces, nurtures and shapes the consciousness.

The classical examples of Moses' exodus, Jesus' crucifixion, Muhammad's *hijrah* and Buddha's renunciation are expressions of dissent. This dissent enabled them to experience the ultimate truth. The quotation from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā,* cited at the beginning of the essay indicates the state of religious affairs after Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet went to Medina to escape from a regime that regulated a highly rigid discourse so that Islam could be nurtured outside the oppressive discourse of the Meccan society of the time. After Prophet Muhammad, the spiritual discipline underwent a change and was superseded by the emerging social and political discourse. Thus, any spiritual search had to take place outside the regime of

knowledge. The *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* are not merely alluding to political and organizational aspects of religion. They are commenting upon a deeper, interpretive level of the discourse of knowledge. The 'vicissitudes of the age' diminished the urge for a higher level of spiritual consciousness from the everyday experience of faith.

Islam going into exile alludes to the similar conditions in which the Prophet went into exile. However the allusion is not to the physical exile he underwent to survive persecution—it was truth and inner knowledge that were in exile. One has to travel to the edge of the discourse of knowledge to acquire inner truth and meaning. The challenge was escaping dogmatism and searching for the innermost knowledge. Hence, this 'outside' was not, and did not need to be, outside 'culture' and geography; it had to be within and concealed. The very idea of concealing identity and living a meaning was *bāṭin*; a hidden meaning behind the manifest. This also means that truth resides outside cultural conditioning; one has to go out of one's conditioning and into *bāṭin*, symbolic language, to discover true meaning.

Da'wa and Ta'wīl: Structure and Meaning

The Ismaili movement gave the notion of *da'wa* a unique character by situating it within wider philosophical and cosmological systems. *Da'wa* literally means to call to, or to invite. Initially, it was interpreted as a call or invitation to the cause of the religious leadership of the Muslim community.[11] For Ismailis, it was also an invitation to the esoteric dimension of religion. Ismaili *da'wa* embraced both these roles. The purpose of *da'wa* in the Ismaili context was to provide an environment and a context in which spiritual experience could be facilitated within the community.

Ismailism developed a system of thought that was symbolic, as well as a cosmology, and a hermeneutic structure within which new meanings could be nurtured and operated in order to preserve moral and intellectual idealism and maintain spiritual chivalry. The Ismaili *da'wa* system provided a structure whithin which intellectual and spiritual meaning (*ta'wīl*) could be operative and meaningful. Ismaili cosmology ran parallel to the *da'wa* system. Divine intervention takes place in the form of mediators. Prophets and Imāms give meaning to the struggle at the terrestrial level. Although it is the individual soul that is engaged in the struggle, it has universal relevance and a reference to the collective need. Therefore, the function and the role of the divine mediator are universal too. A prophet located in time and place represents a discontinuity; he dislodges existing discourses and replaces them with new ones. However, the role of a prophet in cyclical history represents a continuity of universally applicable meaning and purpose.[12] The experience of transcendence, for Ismaili writers, is knowledge par

excellence. This knowledge includes, apart from the revelation received by prophets, a method and process of the continuous unfolding of the inner meaning of revelation through divine assistance (*ta'yīd*). The achievement of political goals is secondary to the eschatological goals in the *da'wa*. Hence, Ismaili *da'wa* cannot be situated in political discourse alone; it supercedes all the limitations of time and space.

The Ismailis articulated a particular world view about the origin of creation and the ultimate destiny of humanity. The cosmology, characterized by the notion of cyclical history, consisted of a description of the beginning and the end of the world and the birth and resurrection of humanity. It was distinct from the chronological and linear concept of history. The concept of cyclical time was unique since it did not accept temporal limits and sometimes transcended history itself. Hence, the very nature of history that is not bound by any temporal or corporeal limits makes it a sacred event.[13] This history becomes a refuge for the truth in exile. It constructs a new order of purpose and meaning, which qualitatively changes the philosophical basis of history and frees it from the dominance of the prevailing discourse, creating a revolution and profound change in human consciousness. Its seeds grow in the consciousness of women and men when they open themselves to experiences taking place beyond the realm of the prevailing discourse, beyond the habitual and the known. Thus, to liberate oneself from the domineering regime of knowledge means to experience the transcendent, to revisit the truth in exile, to recover oneself in original form. The new history is transformational since it occurs outside the regime and it is about the exile and return of the human soul to its origin. This return allows a new vision of human destiny and a new order of things to emerge from within. This vision can be compared to the ecstasy of a mystic, the meditation of a philosopher, and the intuition of a poet or an artist. This vision of history is, in the truest sense, universal. Such a quality of transcendence and the sacred is present in the very structure of the Ismaili worldview. Ta'wīl provides a structure in which the experience of creative interpretation can occur for the initiate. Like any knowledge discourse, ta'wīl also establishes its own regime, it imposes its own boundaries on speculation and intellectual exercises. However, ta'wīl allows diversity of expression and does not encourage community wide application, like a dogma or doctrine since its emphasis is on individual, intellectual and spiritual experiences.

Alternatively, it also implies a method that brings spiritual awakening, which leads to a search for the origin of oneself. The process of discovering the 'original' comprises intellectual exploration and a spiritual quest that result in the discovery of meanings that go beyond visible diversity and apparent contradictions and make the experience of truth possible.[14] It means that the language of ta'wīl is not on the surface; it needs to be deciphered.

The visible form of the Qur'ānic text is taken as symbolic (*mithāl*) and meaning that is discovered through the application of ta'wīl is considered as symbolized (*mumthūl*). However, in the Ismaili context, ta'wīl is not the meaning; it only indicates a deeper level. Each *bāṭin* has its own *bāṭin*. Thus, there is a hierarchy of *bawāṭin* (meanings), compatible with the hierarchal structure of *da'wa*. Each level of meaning is revealed to an initiate according to her/his level of knowledge and spiritual status, further leading to another meaning. It is an ongoing journey of discovery and elevation. Therefore, there is always a relative correspondence between the text and the meaning, between the hierarchal status and the spiritual status. Meaning becomes relevant and comprehensible within the paradigm of Ismaili *da'wa*, which provides an alternative discourse of knowledge. It is within the discourse of Ismaili *da'wa* that exploration, interpretation and appropriation of meaning takes place, and a unified semantic map is created that makes the journey towards self discovery possible. It is a speculative exercise, but for Ismaili thinkers it has a spiritual basis, a transcendental reference that saves 'meanings' from falling into the process of *qiyās*, analogical judgment. The mystery that surrounds allegorical knowledge and its linguistic codes distinguishes and conceals ta'wīlī knowledge from established cultural codes and the discourse of knowledge. Thus, the secrecy that is attributed to Ismailism could be due to the abstract nature of knowledge with which outsiders are not familiar. This not only made Ismaili texts incomprehensible but also invisible. Thus, ta'wīl was meaningful and appropriate within the Ismaili *da'wa* but was often considered abstruse by outsiders. Ta'wīl is a process, not an end in itself. It provides initiates clues to search for new meaning, but the journey continues in spite of it. A modern example of inner quest can be found in Herman Hesse's *Magister Ludi* or *The Glass Bead Game*, where the protagonist is engaged in a game of inner search, removing layer after layer of meanings only to discover that the stages of the game and meaning were clues, not the end in themselves.[15]

Ginān, Ta'wīl and the Experience of Truth in Exile

Ta'wīl permeates the Ismaili way of understanding faith and the world. The allegorical (*ta'wīlī*) aspects of Ginān literature are least studied. Ginān literature, rich in metaphors and symbolism, offers some of the best example of ta'wīl. Gināns offer layers of meaning in a poetic form and present diverse subjects for reflection and meditation. Gināns are distinctly different in form and expression from the Ismaili literature written in Arabic or Persian. The fundamental principles on which a large corpus of Ismaili literature is based are the human intellect and the soul, and their relationship with the spiritual master who guides the initiate in the search for esoteric knowledge. Gināns

are no exception and these are recurring themes in the philosophical Gināns. Gināns frequently use the vehicle of *mythos* as a symbolic story and take it back to its primordial sense of ta'wīl. They tell a story that leads the initiate to the original, experiential meaning. The instruction that is conveyed in the Gināns is layered ta'wīl. Its internal metaphorical structure and its transformative ta'wīl function together as *mythos* that has to be recovered as a story of primordial spiritual origin and return. Another particular aspect of Ismaili instruction (*ta'līm*) is that both *da'wa* and ta'wīl always allude to a level of meaning beyond the interpretative metaphors and symbols applied. Thus, the layered ta'wīl in the Gināns allows one to read them as more than a repository of popular metaphors by which they become meaningful to their initial audience, by which they explain and decipher their role in the mission in the Indian subcontinent, but rather as mystical hymns that facilitate the initiate on the spiritual journey. They are the modes by which the alternative discourse is introduced to a new audience who is seeking a new meaning and interpretation of existing metaphors. Hence, they are essentially the tale of initiation by which the disciple is transposed into the spiritual journey that is awakened by practice and recitation.

One such Ginān, rich in allegorical meaning, is by Pīr Sadruddin, an Ismaili savant of fourteenth-fifteenth century.[16] Pīr Sadruddin plays out the inner journey that a disciple undertakes in the narrative referred to as *Gāvantri* (*The Cow*). The Ginān begins, like many Gināns, with the evocation of *ejī* (Oh soul), an address to the soul. The invocation, which is often repeated in consequent verses, is both a reminder and a remembrance (*dhikr*). As such, the invocation is a trace (*athār*) that reminds the soul of its sacred origins.

In the beginning of the story, a cow grazes in the forest of Vrindāban, a centre of religious significance for the Hindus because Krishna played there as a child. The Pīr creates a context and a setting against which the story of the return of the soul is played out. The Ginān narrates how the cow encounters a lion. This metaphor of encounter, in the opening line itself, throws the initiate directly into the immediacy of the holy, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* that is discussed by Rudolf Otto in his book *Idea of the Holy*.[17]

> In the forest of Vrindāban a cow grazes peacefully.
> While grazing, she encountered a lion.

In Ismaili thought and communal life, food has significant esoteric meaning symbolizing the process of acquiring knowledge. Grazing stands for the acquisition of ordinary knowledge. In the Indian subcontinent, there is an idiom often used by teachers to their underperforming students, saying 'have you eaten grass', suggesting that they have acquired only ordinary

and mundane knowledge. In the story, the grazing cow is content with her ordinary process of learning until her meeting with the lion disrupted her equanimity. She is confronted with the fear of annihilation, of losing her identity and what she is accustomed to. She requests the lion to spare her life because she is nursing her calf. The lion allows her to go back, but only after she promises that she will *return.*

At another level, the cow symbolizes the human intellect that feeds on ordinary knowledge. At the first encounter, the intellect is not ready (intellectually or spiritually) to be consumed by the Master or to be transformed. The intellect needs to be awakened to another level of consciousness. That knowledge is only possible through the Pīr or Imām of the time. The theme of this story is similar in meaning to the tales of initiation narrated by the *dā'ī*, Ja'far b. Mansūr al-Yaman in *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l Ghulām*. A young neophyte meets the *dā'ī* and the *dā'ī,* with his questioning, disrupts the young man's earlier assumptions about faith, its purpose and ultimate goal. However, the neophyte is accepted as a disciple when the *dā'ī* is sure that the disciple is ready for complete transformation.[18]

In the Ginān, the Pīr describes four stages of spiritual advancement. The stages are given as follows:

> In her first leap the cow came to the edge of the field.
> With her second leap the cow entered the field.
> With her third leap the cow came to the gate.
> With her fourth leap the cow entered a state of yearning.[19]

The cow's first leap is to the edge of the field. Does this mean it is a leap from the existing discourse into another field of meaning? The cow, after going through the stages, reaches the gate (of knowledge), returns to its calf and offers it milk. However, the calf refuses to partake of the milk. Intellectual knowledge symbolized by milk is no longer sufficient. In the Fatimid *da'wa*, milk denotes the preliminary stage of an initiate: 'the *dā'ī* would say to his disciples, "for you are beginners, and a beginner is like an infant: you start by feeding him milk, and only later giving him nourishing food"'.[20] The calf has passed the stage of knowledge denoted by milk. Spiritual transformation is now taking place in the soul (calf). Esoteric knowledge makes it possible for a calf to grow and recognize the Pīr and the Imām at the higher level.[21] At this stage of yearning, the soul seeks the vision (*didār)* of the Master. Hence, the calf and the cow return together to the lion. This time it is the calf (soul) who leads the cow (intellect). The intellect submits to the spiritual yearning of the soul. When the cow and calf return to the lion, the calf offers its flesh to the lion. In the esoteric sense, the intellect (*'aql)* and the soul (*nafs)* submit to the Master and the eating of the flesh signifies that the initiate is consumed by the Master. In

Sufi terminology, it is *fanā fī shaykh* (annihilation in the Sufi master). The Pīr is impressed by the level of understanding in the calf. We see a similar spiritual development in *al-'Ālim wa'l Ghulām* where *Salih* the initiate (like the calf) attains the role of the teacher of his own father. 'Their natural relation has been reversed. *Salih* is now spiritually the father of al-Bakhtarī.'[22] The Pīr asks the calf,

> Who has given you such awareness and understanding? Who has instructed you?
> The calf replies,
> The moon and the sun have given me such awareness and understanding.
> Pīr Sadruddin has instructed me.[23]

The calf was not in contact with the Pīr or lion, yet he indicates the process of awakening taking place due to his esoteric practices. He indicates that the process of meditation, in which his breathing exercise, the sun and the moon (inhaling and exhaling through nostrils), and meditation, led to the state of awareness (*sudh*) and understanding (*budh*).

Pīr Shams, elucidating the practice of meditation narrates,

> O master yogi, bring into stillness both the moon and the sun,
> and fix your mind and attention on this pole.
> The third channel starts to reverberate.
> This mystery has been penetrated by few.[24]

This also implies that the actual event of becoming aware or achieving *buddhi,* occurs outside any discourse, even outside the discourse of ta'wīl, and in the absence of any tangible communication links, it occurs in exile. It is a rare occurrence, attained by very few.

Conclusion

Ismailism began as a religious movement that offered a vibrant intellectual and spiritual discourse which allowed individuals to seek the essence of Islam in exile through philosophical and spiritual quest. Ismailism has emerged as a strong social movement with numerous institutions serving poeple all over the world and reaching out to those who need assistance in the areas of health, economy and education. It is a paradigm that promotes a balance between material and spiritual culture. The challenge for Ismailis is to attain intellectual and spiritual experience beyond contemporary secular discourses and embark on the journey to revisit the spirit of Islam in exile. It is ta'wīl that builds the bridge between texts and thought processes that are divided by time, history and culture. Ta'wīl liberates texts from their textuality and returns them to their hidden intrinsic meaning. The examples

that we have used in our analysis give some indication of how the process of ta'wīl can transcend linear time and history. 'Exile' for Ismailis is not outside but is concealed within the inner recesses of the community. The experience of truth resides in silent meditation; it is the house of reflection (*bayt al-khayāl*). The exile is within the eternal Imām and that Imām is discovered through intellectual and spiritual search by just a few. Pīr Sadruddin has said:

> This era is the end of the night (of *kal jug*);
> Where is the path to the Truth? Very few will rarely know![25]

Notes

1. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, IV: 300. The quotation alludes to Sura xviii: 17, the companions of the cave; the seven sleepers. Quoted by Anton M. Heiner, 'The notion of ta'wīl', *Hamdard Islamicus*, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1979, p. 35.
2. I. Poonawala, 'Ta'wīl', in *Encyclopedia of Islam,* London: E.J. Brill, 1954-, Vol. 10, pp. 390-2.
3. Gināns are oral poetry composed by Ismaili preachers known as Pīrs and Sayyids with the purpose of educating believers and prospective converts about Ismaili beliefs and further, about values, doctrine and spiritual matters. For further details, see Azim Nanji, *The Nizārī Ismā'īlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent,* Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1978; Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992; Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismā'īlī Saint, Pīr Shams,* Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995.
4. Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1984.
5. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985.
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor With Related Chapters from The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. Charles Guignon, tr. Constance Garnett, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993.
7. Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ibn Ṭufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzān*, translated into English by Lenn E. Goodman, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1983.
8. For excerpts from the works of medieval philosophers, see the anthologies, R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963; A. Hyman and J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages,* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983.
9. Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital,* tr. Willard R. Trask, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 124-5.

10. Yahyā Shihābaddīn Yahyā al-Suhrawardī, *Al-Risalah; The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihābuddīn Yahyā Suhrawardī,* tr. W. M. Thackston, Jr, London: The Octagon Press, 1982, pp. 100-8.
11. E-Tyan, 'Da'wa', in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new) n: 168-72.
12. Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Times and Ismaili Gnosis,* London: Kegan Paul in association with Islamic Publications Ltd., 1983.
13. Henry Corbin, 'Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth in Ismailian Gnosis', in *Man and Transformation*: *Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series XXXX.5, Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1980.
14. Abu Hāṭim al-Rāzī, *A'lām al Nubūwah,* Tehran: Imperial Academy of Philosophy, 1977.
15. Herman Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game (Magister Ludi)*, New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston, 1969.
16. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, London: SOAS, 1992, p. 121.
17. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. John W. Harvey, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923; 2nd edn, 1950. The English poet, William Wordsworth also expresses this mystical experience when he suddenly encounters a huge cliff during a mundane sailing trip *'. . . I struck, and struck again, / And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff / Rose up between me and the stars, and still / With measured motion, like a living thing, / Strode after me'.* In Wordsworth, *The Prelude,* 1798-99, ed. Stephen Parrish, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982.
18. James W. Morris, ed. and tr., *The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue,* a new Arabic edition and English translation of Ja'far b. Manṣūr al-Yaman's *Kitāb al-'Ālim wa'l-ghulām,* London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001.
19. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from outh Asia*, London: SOAS, 1992, pp. 120-3.
20. Cited by Al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīth dalā'il al-nubuwwa,* ed. A. Uthmān, Beirut, 1969, p. 595, cited in H. Halm, *The Fatimids and their Traditions of Learning,* London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001, p. 19.
21. Dā'ī Ahmad al-Naysābūrī describes the stages of initiation using the image of an infant: 'The first stage corresponds to suckling an infant, the second to raising a child and the third to developing the youthful mind to maturity' in his work, *al-Risāla al-mūjaza al-kāfiya fi shurūt al-da'wa al-hādiya* (On the Requisites of a Well-conducted Mission). Cited by H. Halm, *The Fatimids,* pp. 19-20.
22. Parveen Hasanali, *'Ibn Ṭufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzān: An Analytical Study'*, MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1987, pp. 90-101. The thesis discusses the story of *al-'Ālim wa'l Ghulām* as an initiatory tale in detail.
23. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia,* London: SOAS, 1092, p. 123.

24. Cited by Shackle and Moir, p. 153.
25. Pīr Sadardīn, 'Ejī Nūr velā nūr piyo', *Ginān-e-Sharīf*, vol. 1, Ginan no. 21, Karachi: The Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan, 1996, p. 36.

APPENDIX

List of Gināns in the CD with this Volume

1. *Hamadila Khālaka* composed by Pīr Shams
   Recited by Alwaez Dr Hasanali Walji
2. *Śeṭha kahe tame* composed by Pīr Sadardin
   Recited by Alidina Jamal
3. *Traṇa traṇa Veda* composed by Sayyed Imam Shah
   Recited by Mohamed Khaki
4. *Moṭo dasa avatāra* composed by Sayyed Imam Shah
   Recited by Mahabanu Ratansi
5. *E Sabhāgā* composed by Pīr Shams
   Recited by Mukhi Rahim Jivraj
6. *Suma nahi tuṃ jāga* composed by Pīr Hasan Kabirdin
   Recited by Prof. Tazim Kassam
7. *Āvo mārā munīvaro* composed by Pīr Sadardin
   Recited by Mohamed Virjee
8. *Āṅkhaladī joī joī* composed by Sayyed Fazal Shah
   Recited by Mukhi Rahim Jivraj
9. *Jīrevālā dhanare ghaḍī* composed by Sayyed Mohamed Shah
   Recited by Al-Karim Jivraj
10. *Āye rahema rahemāna* composed by Sayyeda Imam Begum
    Recited by Nargis Balolia

Biography of Singers

1. **Alwaez Dr Hasanali Walji**, may his soul rest in peace, used to recite Gināns in Nairobi jamatkhanas almost every day. He learned his Gināns from an old man from Junagadh, India. He used to give waezes frequently and always started his waez by singing a verse of Ginān (as remembered by Mukhi Rahim Jivraj).
2. **Mr Alidina Jamal**, may his soul rest in peace, grew up in Morogoro, Tanzania. He used to sing Gināns from memory. He used to teach Gināns in religious education classes and made many Ginān tapes and videos so people could learn their tunes and meaning. He moved to Canada in the 1970s (as remembered by Mukhi Rahim Jivraj).

3. **Mohamed Khaki** was born in Tanzania. His interest in Gināns was nurtured by his parents and grandparents. His grandfather used to sing in a Zanzibar jamatkhana. Khaki loves Indian classical music, and has been training as a vocalist. He lives in Toronto with his partner Paul and can be contacted at mkhaki@northwatercapital.com
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