

**Notes on some newly discovered manuscripts of the Das Avatar of the Satpanthi Nizari  
Ismailis in the collection of the Heritage Society.  
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The Das Avatars of the Ismaili Satpanthis (“Ismailis”) is a sub-concept developed within the concept of the lineage of the continuous divine manifestation before and subsequent to the creation of the universe. There are also several Ismaili works composed under this name by various Pirs, the better known is that of Pir Sadardin and that of Syed Imamshah.

The Das Avatars in Ismailism is quite different from the Das Avatar of the Vaishnavites (called “Hindus” henceforth) as discussed below. The Ismaili Das Avatar has been referenced in the Asal Gat Paat ji Dua, the prayer recited for centuries. However the importance of this work and the special reverence by Ismailis came to the attention of Westerners only from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Going through the catalogue of the newly opened Indic manuscripts section of the Heritage Society (library.ismaili.net) we came across two Das Avatar works which have not yet been referenced in any publications: The Das Avatar Vado (Moto) of Pir Shams and the tenth Dasm Avatar from the Das Avatar Vado of Pir Hassan Kabirdin.

It is important that their existence be known so that in the future scholars can study these works and make a critical edition if they see substantially different content from the known compositions. The Das Avatar of the Ismailis has not developed in a void. This paper will therefore attempt to trace a context for the work itself and for the importance of the discovery of the manuscripts.

Justice Arnould wrote in 1866:

“When the book [Das Avatar] is read in the jamatkhana of the khojas, it is the tenth chapter (as appears in the evidence) which is along now-a-days seriously attended to. When that chapter is commenced, the congregation of the people rises and a remains standing till it is concluded, making profound reverences whenever the reader pronounces the name of the ‘Most Holy Ali’ (Mowla Motizir Ali). Aga Khan Case 1866 - *Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports*<sup>1</sup>, #358—360

## **1. The Das Avatar of the Hindus:**

The Das Avatar of the Hindus is presented as a historical event of 10 incarnations of God (Vishnu) covering the duration of the 4 *Yugs* (period of time)

The concept of 'avatar' - incarnation, is the foremost cardinal of Hinduism. An incarnation - descent of God in whatever form He chose to emerge on the earth for accomplishing a divine objective, or presenting an absolute model of life or sublimating a virtue, along with accomplishing such divine objective, is considered in Hindu way of life a cosmic reality occurring from time to time or when it became emergent for re-setting the world to order<sup>2</sup>.

The Das Avatars in Hinduism is composed of ten reincarnations of Vishnu namely Macch (Fish), Korab (Tortoise), Varah (Boar), Narsinh (Man-Lion), Vaeman (Dward), Farsiram (Standing Man), Ram, Krishna, Buddh and Naklanki, as for the majority of Hindus the later two have still to

come. Each Avatar is an Incarnation, therefore God manifested from birth. But for Hindus, it is only when the injustice become unbearable that Vishnu takes an incarnation to fight Evil. Hindus expect that Nakalanki Avatar (also called Kalki) will be coming at the end of time.

## **2. The continuity of the Divine Guidance in Ismailism through guidances of the Imams-Avatars:**

Ismailis believe in the continuity of the Divine Guidance send through countless prophets in all continents and even through the universe and to the creation. One Farman (Great Declaration of Alamut) addresses itself also to “beings who abide in the universes” - jinn, men and angels<sup>3</sup>. While Ismailis believe as strongly as any other Muslims in all prophets of the old Testament and the faith of Abraham, they are not Jewish. Not more than the belief in Jesus as Prophet of Allah makes them Christian. But they recognise the message of the Book, one book. They, as part of the Abrahamic faith, recognise also the continuity of divine guidance since immemorial times. The use of names of Mesopotamian Gods or Hindu Avatar does not make them anthropomorphic polytheist or Hindus. Knowledge of religion comes in a specific context.

The role of the Imam-Avatar is central in Ismailism. For instance, Krishna is considered as an Imam-Avatar. But Satpanth approach consider that when Krishna declared that all the Gods where within him, he was referring to each attributes of God that is given a different name, akin to the 99 attributes of Allah the One and therefore, originally Hinduism was close to monotheism. It is only later that it became so polytheist<sup>4</sup> that it could not be considered anymore as a monotheist faith. But the 10 Avatars are respected; only the approach and understanding of the Ismailis is monotheist in nature but this is not the only point in which they differ from the Hindu understanding.

## **3. The Das Avatar of the Ismailis differs from the Das Avatara of the Hindus.**

The concept of Naklanki (Kalki, the last of the 10 Avatars) in Hindu belief is similar to the concept of some Muslims such as the Druzes and the Twelver Shiites who are waiting for the Mahdi.

According to the writings of the Ismaili Pirs<sup>5</sup> this is a restricted vision which limits God’s manifestation to a minute part of Time. Indeed, when the end of time came, countless souls had not reach salvation. since only 4 gadis (90 minutes) were left from the last Khalifa Kalap cycle before the end of the Creation, God in his infinite mercy expanded the duration of the last remaining 4 “*garis*” totaling 90 minutes to 4 *Yugs totaling 4,320,000 years*. Therefore the duration of the 4 *Yugs* is insignificant compared to the total duration of the creation.

The Das Avatar of the Ismailis far from following the historicity presented by the Hindus, is first and foremost a doctrinal concept: A concept where the ten common names of Avatars shared is a minute part of the lineage Imams which manifested themselves before creation, after creation and mostly before the advent of the Das Avatars. In the Ismaili Das Avatar, one will always find a verse reminding that we are talking of the Avatars of Imam Ali. Dasrath, the father of Shri Ram was an Ismaili Imam, it is only at his death that Ram became Avatar-Imam. However for Hindus, Dasrath had no special divine status as his son Ram is considered Avatar since birth. We will also be reminded in the Ismaili Das Avatar, of the name of Ali’s Light before

the start of the Creation. Among the contemporary Ismailis, some like the Senior Missionary Abualy Alibhai have equated the Das Avatar to the Darwinian theory of evolution. Many groups particularly in Gujarat and Rajasthan have interpretations of the Das Avatar which span the whole gamut between the Hindu concept and the Ismaili concept.<sup>6</sup>

Without going into the Druze interpretation of Imam Hakim's declaration that he is the 10<sup>th</sup> Manifestation of God on earth (See Annexe 1) , we should point out that the Aga Khan III has said in a Farman to the Ismaili community in the subcontinent that "Our religion is evidenced by ancient history. - It is just as it was at the time of Imam Hakim-bi-Amrillah and Imam Ala-Zikrihis-Salam." (Bombay, January 31, 1926) – Therefore there was an Ismaili concept of 10 Manifestation of God on earth in the time of Fatimid Caliph Hakim, according to Gibbon<sup>7</sup> and Philip Aziz. In his handwritten affidavit presented to the British Court in 1899 , the Aga Khan III explains how an Avatar such as "Fish" could fit into the doctrines of the Ismailis. He explains it from the fact that:

“..the Khoja prayers always mentioned fish and Ali... as incarnation of the "God" and part of the Universal "One". They have accepted the theory of "Dussoatar" [sic] and Ismailis believe that Ali and others are incarnation of the One.”<sup>8</sup>

It is extremely important to understand that In the Ismaili concept, the Das Avatars are 10 Imams. They are seen as Manifestations (not incarnation/reincarnation in the Hindu interpretation), amongst the uninterrupted line of which there is a mention of 25,920,000<sup>9</sup> "Imams-Avatars" (Manifestations) of the Noor - the Divine Light during one Life Cycle and Existence of Brahma composed of countless Kalaps, Jugs and other such time concepts covering 100 divine years of the Cycle of creation of one Brahma. In this regard, the Asal Dua<sup>10</sup>, which is the previous Ismaili prayer attributed to Pir Sadardin (700AH/1299-819/1418) recited for centuries and at least up to 1956 C.E. gives 27 names of Imams before the names of the Das Avatars, names of Imam-Avatars long before the period of 4 "Yugs" and long before the first Macch Avatar of the Hindus. Some of these 27 names<sup>11</sup> preceding the Das Avatars are similar to some names of Sumerian and Mesopotamian gods and not similar to the name of any Hindu deities.

There is a Gujarati version of the Asal Ghat Pat ji Dua of Pir Sadardin in manuscript hs004 dated 1896. It was found in Mumbai and it gives names of Imams before the Das Avatars such as Alakh, Namnil, Anil, Sun, San, Nan, Gnan, Noor, Tej etc. one could see a strong symbolism in the choice of these names. The manuscript is half in Khojki script and half in Gujarati script.<sup>12</sup> This happens often in manuscripts written between late 1800s' and early 1900s' when Gujarati script started replacing Khojki in the daily use of the community.

After Adam, the Asal Du'a had many names of Imam-Avatars which are the same as well known biblical persons such as Melchisedek<sup>13</sup>, Aaron<sup>14</sup>, Shamun al-Safa (Simon Peter) and others<sup>15</sup>. The Moto Das Avatar of Pir Shams makes it clear in the few starting lines that the concept is first and foremost of the lineage of the Imam. Pir Shams introduces the name of Imam-Avatar Ahunad (Primordial) , which is an Imam-Avatar from pre-eternity, before Time is created, before Brahma comes to be. Therefore in the Asal Du'a the first names of Imam are not linked to this creation but are very symbolic Avatars names from the spiritual world such as Ahunad (before Time), Alakh, (indescribable) Namnil, (without name) Noor (Light) , Gnan, (Gnosis) etc...

Manuscript hs0004 dated 1896 AD of the Heritage Society starts with the words “*Das Avatar of Mowlana Murtaza Ali*” pointing to the fact that these are 10 manifestations of the same Imam Ali. Ismailis keep the focus of the lineage of Imams and do not take these 10 Avatars as just some individuals in which the Divine manifested from birth. On the contrary, it is only at the demise of an Imam that the successor can become Imam. Each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants, whether they be sons or remoter male issue<sup>16</sup>. Some writers describe the tenth Naklanki (of Kalki) Avatar as one specific Avatar coming at the end of time, this is not the Ismaili concept at all. There is no real individuality to the name, for instance the name Naklanki Avatar is used for all 49 Imams starting from Hazrat Ali up to today. The lineage of the 49 Imams from Hazrat Ali is still part of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the current Dua. Another name Malik us Salam was used as name of the Imam father of Prophet Abraham but was also used as a blanket name for all Imams starting from the progeny of Buddh Avatar to Hazrat Ali. A whole paragraph of the Asal Du’a was dedicated to the supplication to Imam Malik us Salam. The Asal Du’a says in the genealogy of Imams “*Buddh ma thi Shish*” (Imam Shish from Imam Buddh), therefore no Avatar/Imam in Ismailism is cut-off from the previous Imams nor is considered a “reincarnation” of the previous Imam. The *Gavantri* of Pir Sadardin also gives the following line: *Buddh maa thi Shish, Saam, Malkin, Eslaam*, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Further major difference is that Hindus present some “history” of the first 8 Avatars while there is scarce knowledge of the ninth Buddh Avatar, except that some are confusing him with Gautama Buddha. Gautama lived in a completely different era, the era of the biblical Ezekiel, the era of Zoroaster and that of Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps even that of Darius and Confucius. It is common knowledge that Gautama Buddha had no keen affinity for the Vedas<sup>18</sup> unlike Ismailis<sup>19</sup> who considered that the Quran was the 4th Veda<sup>20</sup> but all previous Vedas were acceptable in their time.

The Ismaili Buddh Avatar on the contrary is in the period of Adam, indeed, the Imam of Buddh, Adam’s father, is passed to his grandson the biblical Shish (Seth), a completely different time period. Pir Sadardin, has a whole *Granth* (Epistle) in 522 verses dedicated specifically to events of the time of Buddh Avatar with Buddh Avatar instructing the sacrifice of the cow<sup>21</sup>, putting an end to the Hindu concept of the sanctity of the cow which is still prevalent today, an event that preceded and with other events lead to the start of the Kaliyug. Beside there are many chapters on Buddh Avatars appearing in various ginans and granths such as Anant Akhado and in Ismaili Das Avatar epistles and books. According to an article of Semenov published in 1929<sup>22</sup> Da’l Fidai Khorassani has given a genealogy of 58 Imams before Adam, specifically between Shri Haw and Imam Honeyd<sup>23</sup>. The Qasida Durrye gives names of Imam starting from Imam Seth, the son of Adam and is reproduced in English translation by Al-Waez Bandali Haji (Nooran Allah Noor page 109). Lineage of pre-Ali Imam can also be found in “Ash Shafiya” of Abu Firas.<sup>24</sup> All these Imams are called Ali.

As part of the Asal Gat Pat ji Du’a, long genealogies of the Imam’s Avatars were recited every morning in Jamatkhana and in Ismaili homes and during evening of important religious days when the ceremony of the Holy Water was performed. That genealogy equated Buddh Avatar with Adam’s father, called Imam Honeyd in some Middle Eastern writing. Seth/Shish was therefore first Imam of our cycle after Adam’s grandfather Buddh Avatar moved from India to Middle East starting the Cycle of Adam and the commencement of Kaliyug. The Asal Gat Pat ji

Du'a genealogy says "Buddh ma thi Shish" meaning that the Imam of the Buddh Avatar was passed to the Imam Shish (son of Adam) so obviously a completely different time period. The present Imam being from the progeny of the tenth Naklanki Avatar starting with Hazrat Ali, first Imam of the era starting at the time of Prophet Muhammad. This Ismaili concept of continuity of the Avatars (Imamat) starting long before the first Macch Avatar and continuing long after Buddh Avatar has no equivalent in Hinduism. Of course this does not in any way deprecate the importance of Das Avatar for Ismailis as confirmed by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah the 3<sup>rd</sup> Aga Khan in his hand written affidavit in early 1900s'. In another Farman<sup>25</sup>, he also said:

*"The philosophy of Das Avatar should be taken and explained in the light of Islamic principles; also the understanding of Allah's Noor, whose **lineal descent** is from even before creation, should be given. These principles, Pir Sadardin<sup>26</sup> during the time of Shri Islam Shah has explained, they should be explained in a similar manner. "*

Also lets add that all of the Ismaili manuscript of the Das Avatar start with the expression "Allah tohar" (By the grace of Allah) or with the *Bismillah* (in the name of Allah), clearly showing their Islamic nature. The expression "By the Grace of God" is also found in many medieval European manuscripts. The expression *Allah Tohar* stems from *Allah to Ahaar* in old manuscript and from *Allah tojo Adhar* in even older manuscripts.

All of the differences between the Hindu concepts of Das Avatar and the Ismaili concept of Das Avatar are major differences. Be it the fact that in Hinduism the Avatar is an incarnation, that it is an Avatar from birth, be it that it appears only in a punctual manner, be it that it is restricted to the four Yugs, be it that it only appears when evil thrives, all these are fundamentally opposite to the concept of Das Avatar as bearer of the Noor in Ismailism. Though Ismailism spread in the subcontinent because it adapted to the context of the place and adopted the Indian vocabulary, it never compromised in the tenets of the Ismaili faith brought through the daily prayers and through the Ginans.

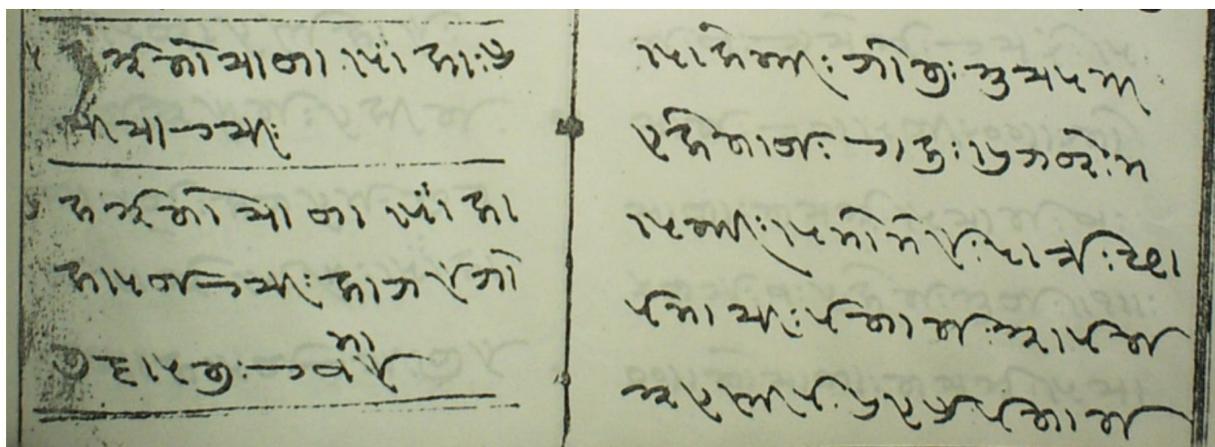
#### **4. Names of Das Avatar and lineage of Imams in Ismailism:**

It is noteworthy that in fact there are many names of Imams in between the 10 Avatars as can be seen in the table below. From the lineage in the Asal Dua, this is more than evident that the Ismaili interpretation is much more inclusive. We have reproduced the lineage where we can see not only names of the 77 Imams but also confirm that all the Imam from Hazrat Ali *Dasmo Avatar* (10<sup>th</sup> Manifestation) are considered as Naklanki Avatar and all Imams are the same Noor of Hazrat Ali (Light).<sup>27</sup> During the standing Tasbih between the 2 prayers of the night, Ismailis still use the supplication of "Ya Ali, Ya Noor Mowlana Shah Karim". The expression means "O Ali, O Light of Mowlana Shah Karim. In manuscript hs0040 copied in 1882 C.E. we find a Das Avatar Moto of Syed Imamshah in 1465 verses. The last verse of that Das Avatar ends with "Ya Ali Mowla Ali".<sup>28</sup>

The concept of Imam as bearer of the Noor (Light) makes the lineage of Imams easy to understand. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah, the Aga Khan III made a Farman as follow in Bombay on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1885:

“You should be rest assured that the Light (Noor) of Murtaza Ali is in me, present and apparent before you. We put on the (bodily) dress (jama) and put off in the world, but our Light (Noor) is descended since eternity, therefore, you must see it as One Light. There was One Light of Ali in Aga Ali Shah and my grandfather... The Light (Noor) is present and apparent all the times, only the names are different.”

In sacred Satpanth Ismaili sources such as the centuries old special prayers of the ceremony of Holy Water called *Asal Gat Pat ji Dua*, the same was reiterated during ceremonies from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century up to 1956. So whereas a manuscript containing that prayer from the time of Imam Nizar II would say “Satoter Patra (77<sup>th</sup> vessel) Imam Chalis (40<sup>th</sup> Imam) Das Avatar (10<sup>th</sup> Manifestation)”, the same will be said of each Imam after Hazrat Ali. A ginan of Sayed Abdul Nabi from that period of Imam Nizar II repeats the same!<sup>29</sup> And a manuscript from the time of Imam Abul Hassan Shah will say the same except to recite the name of the present Imam: “*Satoter Patra, Khand Erak, Das Avatar, Haq Mowlana Shah Abul Hassanali, Ware kero purakh*”. This makes it abundantly clear that each Imam after Hazrat Ali are the same 77<sup>th</sup> Patra and are the *Dasmo Naklanki Avatar* - Tenth Naklanki Manifestation of their time. In Zawahir’s catalogue, there is manuscript Kh96 in which we found the following sentence: *Haq Mowlana Shaha Hassan Ali Hajar Jomu Dasmo Avatar* [True Imam Shah Hassanali Shah, present form, Das Avatar] in left column and as can be seen in the right column below a reference to *Sitoter Patra*.



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## The lineage of Imams from Machh Avatar to Naklanki Avatar is given below

### Shri Maccha

1. Manaek
2. Ajamil
3. Agarsen
4. Ochhaut
5. Bharespat
6. Asvamar
7. Pautar
8. Padwir

### Shri Korabh

9. Bhisriyat
10. Dikhiyat
11. Prajapat
12. Agarsen
13. Kadim
14. Doel

### Shri Varah

15. Keshav
16. Khatrivash
17. Asaaw
18. Unas
19. Khalifat
20. Gotam
21. Anta
22. Haritak

### Shri Narshinha

23. Manaek
24. Kauchak
25. Repak
26. Keshvadhan
27. Keshvarukh

### Shri Vaeman

28. Maandhata
29. Prathmijay
30. Jaesrin
31. Javlagan

### Shri Farsiram

32. Roog
33. Noog
34. Jujeaat

35. Kumbha
36. Alif
37. Ajepaal
38. Dashrath

### Shri Ram

39. Padam
40. Jashvadhan
41. Virpaar
42. Vaasudev

### Shri Krishna

43. Parikhshat
44. Janmejay
45. Shesanand
46. Satanand
47. Swasthan
48. Budhsthan
49. Vinvachhraaj

### Shri Budha (Adam's Father)

50. Shish (Seth)
51. Sham
52. Salaam
53. Malkaan
54. Eslaam
55. Haroon
56. Shamunsaffa (Simon Peter)
57. Adnaan
58. Maa'd
59. Nizar
60. Mudar
61. Eliaas
62. Mudrak
63. Khuzema
64. Kinan
65. Nazar
66. Maalek
67. Fahar
68. Gaaleb
69. Luve
70. Ka'ab
71. Mure
72. Kilaab
73. Kuse
74. Abdul Munaaf
75. Abu Hasham
76. Abdul Mutalib
77. Abu Taleb

### Murtaza Ali Shri Naklanki Avatar

1. Mowlana Ali
2. Hussein
3. Zainu ' L -Abidin
4. Muhammad Baqir
5. Ja'far As-Sadiq
6. Isma'il
7. Muhammad Bin Isma'il
8. Wafi Ahmad
9. Taqi Muhammad
10. Razi Abdullah
11. Mahdi Muhammad
12. Our True Lord Shah Qa'im
13. Mansur
14. Mu'izz
15. Aziz
16. Hakim Abu Ali
17. Zahir Ali
18. Mustansir Bi'llah
19. Nizar
20. Hadi
21. Muhtadi
22. Qahir
23. (Hasan) Ala Zikir - Hi's Salam
24. Ala Muhammad
25. Khud Jalalu'ddin Hasan
26. Alau' Ddin Muhammad
27. Ruknu'ddin Khurshah
28. Shamsu'ddin Muhammad
29. Qasim Shah
30. Islam Shah
31. Muhammad Bin Islam Shah
32. Shah Mustansir Bi'llah
33. Abdu'ssalam
34. Gharib Mirza
35. Abu Zarr Ali
36. Murad Mirza
37. Zu'l -Fiqar Ali
38. Nuru'ddin Ali
39. Sayyid Khalilu'llah
40. Nizar li
41. Sayyid Ali
42. Hassan Ali
43. Qasim Ali
44. Abu'l Hasan Ali
45. Khalilu'llah Ali
46. Hasan Ali (li)
47. Ali Shah
48. Sultan Muhammad Shah
49. Shah Karim Al Huseini

## 6. Known Ismaili Das Avatars works in manuscripts and books.

We find several works, published (by the Ismaili Printing Press) or even unpublished under this name. Usually there is a “Nano” (shorter, small) version that is typically few pages and the “Moto” (larger) version which is a whole book on the subject. One in ten Khojki manuscripts has a version of the Das Avatar. The aim of this paper is not to make a critical analysis but to inventories the available material and the newly found unknown material pertaining to the topic:

### 5.1 List of books and manuscripts of known Das Avatar

Attributed to	Title	support	# of verse	Source online
Syed Imamshah	Moto Das Avatar	Book	1613 verses	<a href="http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/20328">http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/20328</a>
Syed Imamshah	Moto Dasmu Avatar	Book	541 verses	<a href="http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/30598">http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/30598</a>
Pir Sadardin	Buddh Avatar	Book	522 verses	<a href="http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/22999">http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/22999</a>
Pir Sadardin	Nano Das Avatar	Book	prose 11 pages	<a href="http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/30588">http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/30588</a>
Pir Shams	Nano Das Avatar	Article	Few pages	<a href="http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/22959">http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/22959</a>

#### 6.1 The Das Avatar of Pir Sadardin<sup>30</sup>:

This is the classical version and the most known among the Ismailis of the subcontinent. Its last tenth part<sup>31</sup> was recited up to recently in Jamatkhana and to death bed or to very sick people as it says that those who will listen to it will attain salvation (Moksh) and vision of the Divine (Didar). Both maternal and paternal grand-father of the author gave their last breath while listening to the recitation of the last Dasmu Avatar of Pir Sadardin. It has 10 chapters, each devoted to one of the 10 Avatars followed by few verses of conclusion and total few pages only. In hs0374<sup>32</sup> of 1873 C.E. , the Das Avatar of Pir Sadardin has about 50 smaller pages out of a total of 400 pages in Khojki script. The manuscripts belonged to Sewji Khyate Keliya, the custodian of Pir Hassan Dargah and was written by Noormohamed Dossani. It contains several important works including the Das Avatar, Janajo, Sloko, Noor Namu, Khasiyat Noor Namu, and several others.

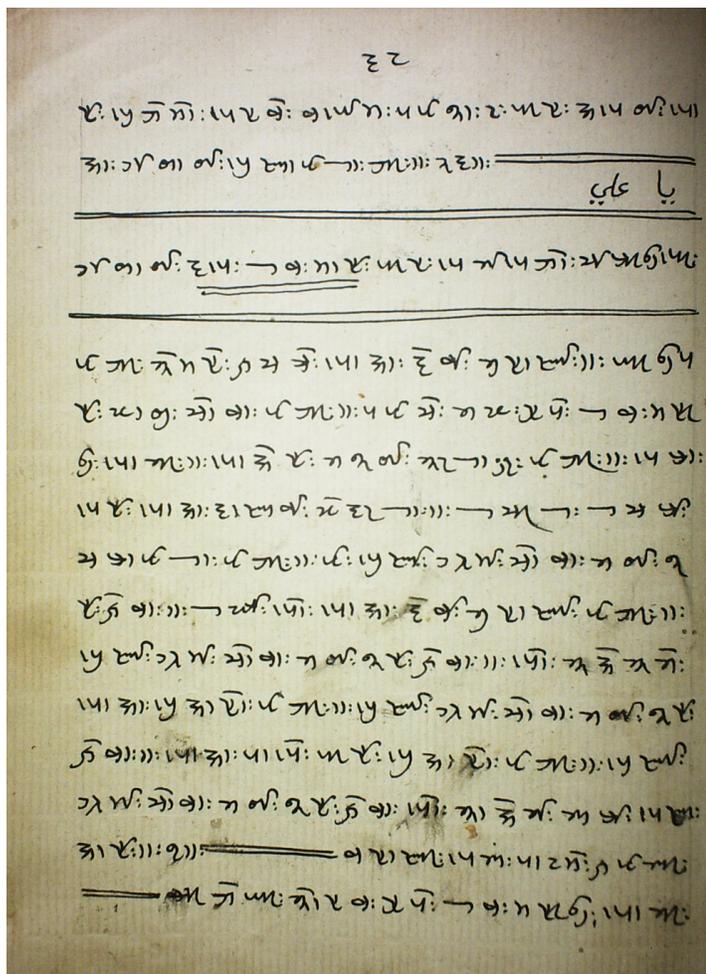
#### 6.2 The Das Avatar of Syed Imamshah:

Though less known, the Das Avatar Moto also has 541 verses in its published version (Manuscript hs0198 of 1841 C.E. has the same in 527 verses) . Manuscript hs0290 has 419 verses of the Das Avatar Vado of Syed Imam Shah (v.943 to v.1362)<sup>33</sup>. Gulshan Khakee wrote her PhD. thesis at Harvard in 1972. This thesis contains a transliteration and a translation of the Das Avatara of Imamshah. Gulshan Khakee collected most of the manuscripts and books now in the Khojki collection of Harvard University (A catalogued was later meticulously completed by Ali Asani) While on a research tour in 1988, the Mota Kaka of Pirana told me that he remembered when she came to visit Pirana and confirmed that they gave her the

manuscript of Das Avatar she had taken to Harvard. "The `Das Avatara' of Satpanthi Ismailis and Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1972. [It contains a transliteration and translation of the Das Avatara of Syed Imamshah from a manuscript dated 1736AD.] She offered a copy of her Thesis to The Heritage Society on 20th January 1991 with request to publicize it. The dissertation is now available on the web<sup>34</sup>.

### 6.3 The Nano Das Avatar of Pir Shams:

This is an unpublished small version which can be found in manuscript hs0202 of the Heritage Society dated AD 1871. It has 4 pages and 10 chapters. Again, this work was first discovered by late Gulshan Khakee who wrote an article around 1972 and made a presentation<sup>35</sup> on this topic during the SOS Khojki Conference organized by The Heritage Society in Toronto in 1991. Zawahir Moir (née Nooraly) prepared a manuscript catalogue for the Ismailia Association of Pakistan<sup>36</sup>. She found the smaller version of the Das Avatar of Pir Shams while cataloguing the collection of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan in 1972. In the Heritage Society collection there is one occurrence of the unpublished Das Avatar Nano of Pir Shams. It is in manuscript hs0202. p.163 and last page give date 1927 of Samvat calendar (1871 CE) in red ink, it contains several Ginans and 3 Granths: Pandve jo Parab, the unpublished Das Avatar of Pir Shams and Putla. Hs0202 is in Khojki script and contains 197 pages.



hs0202-tnk6-pic-0036-left.jpg

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## 7. The many Orphan Chapters of the Das Avatar:

What are the orphan chapters of the Das Avatar? Several works contains only verses pertaining to one specific avatar, I have coined them “orphan”. For example the Buddh Avatar of Pir Sadardin which has been accepted as being a complete *granth* by itself and even has been printed as such. The question is that may it have been part of a more complete work of ten parts? We see that in the manuscript hs0022 the total of 524 verses is only the last chapter of possibly some bigger work by Pir Hassan Kabirdin.

A quick survey of manuscript hs0383 of the Heritage Society indicates that it contains among other works, Moto Match Avatar<sup>37</sup> of Pir Sadardin of almost hundred pages (starting at folio 64), Moto Budh Avatar of Pir Sadardin<sup>38</sup> (starting at folio 114) and Shri Naklanki Moto Dasm Avatar<sup>39</sup> of Syed Imamshah in 104 pages (starting at folio 170) with verses describing how the KalYug started on the Shukarvari Beej of the month of Vaisakh. The manuscript has 524 pages.

What prompted the scribe to write the first part and the ninth part of this work from Pir Sadardin but the tenth part from Syed Imamshah is a mystery but it shows that he was not necessarily looking to copy all of the ten Avatars from the same author. We can safely conclude that the source of these “Orphan Avatars” found in various manuscripts may be worth pursuing and may bring some really important unknown knowledge to the attention of the reader.

In manuscript hs0200 which gives the 8<sup>th</sup> Avatar, the scribe clearly writes: *Dasma Avatar mathi athmu avatar lakhiya che shri satgur Vidhurviyas wacha*. This means the scribe confirms that this text of the 8<sup>th</sup> Avatar which he has copied is from a much larger text of the complete *Das Avatar*. This 8<sup>th</sup> Avatar text by itself has 519 verses. One can imagine the total length of that 10 Avatars. The Khojki manuscript of 130 pages also contains the complete Manhar Granth in black ink and color, Fatmabai Jivraj’s name seems to have been subsequently added in Gujarati, she may have been one of the later owner of this manuscript. Vazir Kamadia Qurban Sadiwalla of Mumbai gave it to the Heritage Society in 1988. At the end of that manuscript on page 125, the scribe has put a note in 3 lines with red ink to say that he copied word to word (actually *akshar ma thi akshar* means letter to letter) and he added the usual declaration: “here ends the (8th) Athmu Avatar.”<sup>40</sup> Another manuscript found in Mumbai and numbered hs0327 has also the Athmu Avatar from Moto Das Avatar of “*Satgur VidhurVyas*” in 519 verses (about 64 pages). It is not within the scope of this paper to compare if it is the same work but we can confirm that it has the same numbers of verses.

## 8. Unknown manuscripts of Das Avatar:

### 8.1 The newly discovered manuscript of the Das Avatar Moto of Pir Shams:

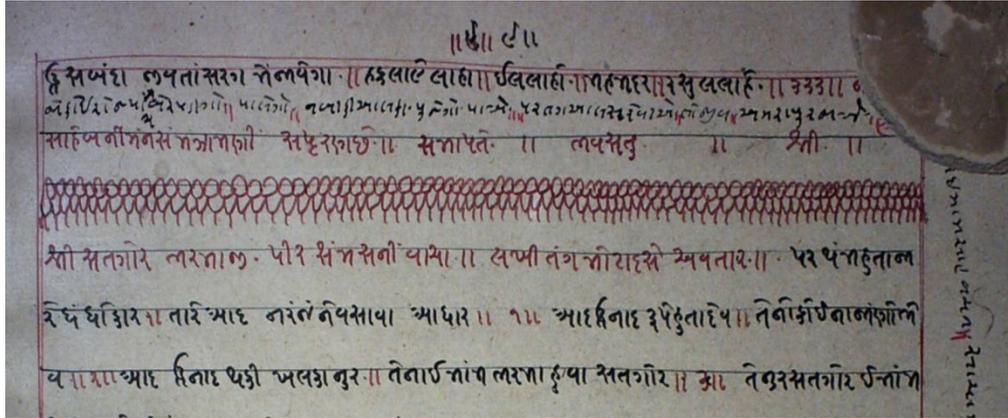
Gulshan Khakee had mentioned the small Das Avatar of Pir Shams. Pir Shams also wrote a much larger version called Das Avatar Moto. This is a completely unknown work. There is only one such manuscript surviving today in the collection of the Heritage Society. If there are other copies, they are not catalogued or available or mentioned in any study to date.

While it is not the aim of the author to make any kind of critical edition in these few pages, a short description of the discovery is in order:

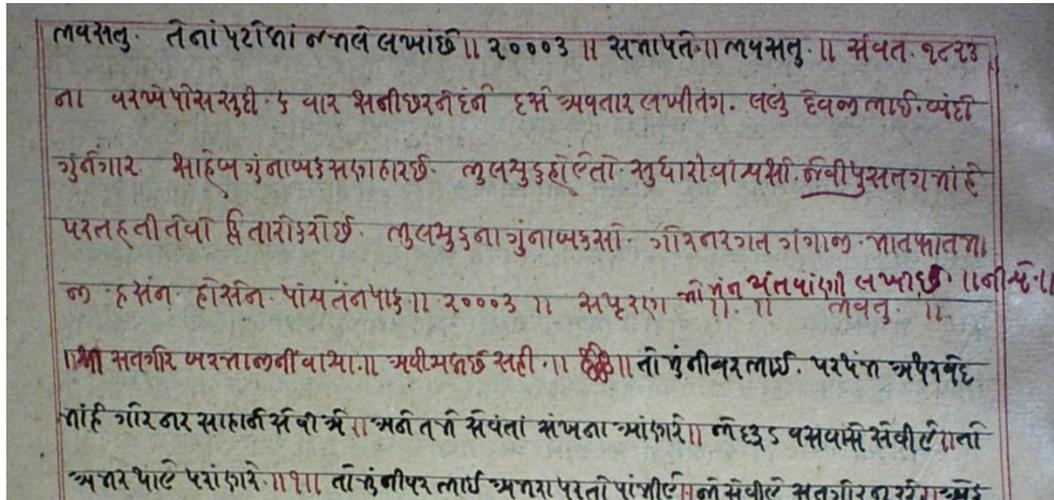
Manuscript hs0375 was found in Ahmadabad area, Gujrat in 2006. Its dimension is 28 x 30cm and it belonged to the then collection of Bawa Ehmud Ali of Pirana near Ahmedabad. It was copied by Lalou Devji from an older ms dated 1767 AD (Samvat 1823). The manuscript of 171 folio (342 pages) was copied in Savant 1960 (1904 C.E.) in the month of Vaysakh Soud 15<sup>th</sup>, a Friday. It contains several important *Granth*s such as Man Samjani nani, Moman Chetwanri, Surja Rani, Satveni Surbhanr and Satveni Chandrabanr, Manhar Granth and many other ginans. The manuscript has been written originally in Khojki script and now transcribed in Gujarati script.

The manuscript starts with the invocation of *Bismillah hir Rahmanir Rahim*. The table of content is in the first two pages. Usually some pages are kept blank either at the beginning or at the end by the scribe who uses it for the table of content when he completes the manuscript. It was not uncommon for the Imamshahis Bawas to pay some scribes to transcribe Ismaili Khojki manuscripts into Gujarati. Lalou Devji was one of those scribes. Though he may have disagreed with the Ismaili texts, there is no reason to believe that he was not transcribing honestly and accurately. For copying this particular manuscript, he was paid a total of 18 Rupees. The first few pages are partly eaten by bugs but otherwise it is in excellent legible condition

Moto Das Avatar of Pir Shams has 583 verses . It start with the words “*Shri Satgor Brahma nu Pir Shamas ni wacha lakhitang Mota Dase Avatar.*” (The words of Shri Brahma, the words of Pir Shams written (in) the Mota Das Avatar)



A note was added in red ink at the end after the end of the Moto Das Avatar *granth*. It gives the date of the 6<sup>th</sup> in the month of Warkhe Posh 1823 of the Samvat calendar, i.e. January 1767 C.E. it says that it was copied by Lalou Dewji Bhay “bando gunegar” (the sinner) may the Lord forgive. He continues by writing that If there is any mistake, please correct while reading. GurNar is the mother and father of the Gat Ganga (Pure Gange – the Jamat), in the name of Hassan Hussain Panj Tan Pak!

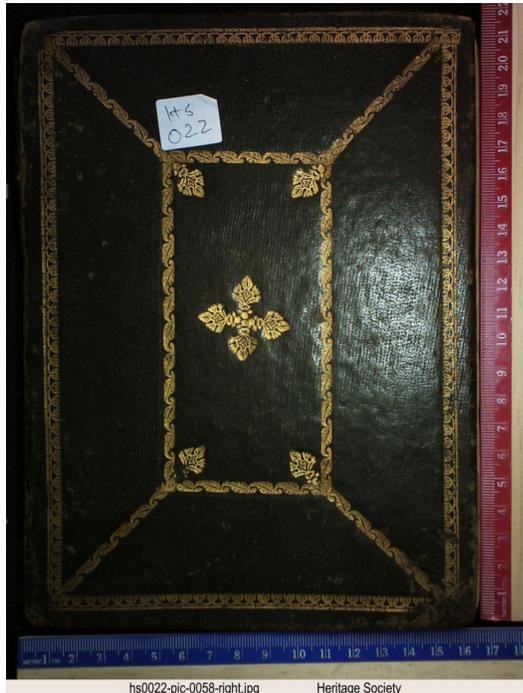


## 8.2 The newly discovered Das Avatar Moto of Pir Hassan Kabirdin

The manuscript hs0022 containing the last part of the Das Avatar Vado of Pir Hassan Kabirdin. It start with the words Allah Toahar and the scribe adds that he starts with the help of Panj Tan Pak. It has a note dated 1908 when it came into the hand of Hakimali the son of Mukhi Ismail Peshawari who is named. It was copied from a manuscript of Mukhi Alarakhia Samji of Bombay in 1875. It also contains some recent notes in empty pages and is in several handwritings, it has many ginans including the *Abadu* ginans and the *venti Adam Aaj Nirijan*. The leather golden binding is truly beautiful. It contains 470 pages and the manuscript is in Khojki script.

The work of Pir Hassan Kabirdin start on page 124 immediately after the usual “Allah Tohar” (By the Grace of God). Notably, the page numbering for this work does not continue from previous number but it restart from page 1 up to 76. The scribe says that he started to write the Das Avatar Wado by the grace of Panj tan Pak one after the other. Usually this means either one verse after the other or one chapter after the other. The work however start directly with the tenth Avatar and ends in 524 verses. It looks like the author intended to copy the whole Das Avatar Moto of Pir Hassan Kabirdin but instead wrote only the last tenth part. At the end in the last 524th verse, we can read “Pir Hassan Shah Gur boliya waccha” (thus spoke Gur (Pir) Hassan Shah followed by the Kalimah as recited phonetically by the scribe: “*La illah ha illallah Mahamad Rassullillah he, Mahmad Ali Allah.*” (See below)

Here below is the unusual cover binding of the manuscript followed by two extracts of the first and last page of the Das Avatar of Pir Hassan Kabirdin.



hs0022-pic-0058-right.jpg Heritage Society

५  
 ॥ ॐ ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥

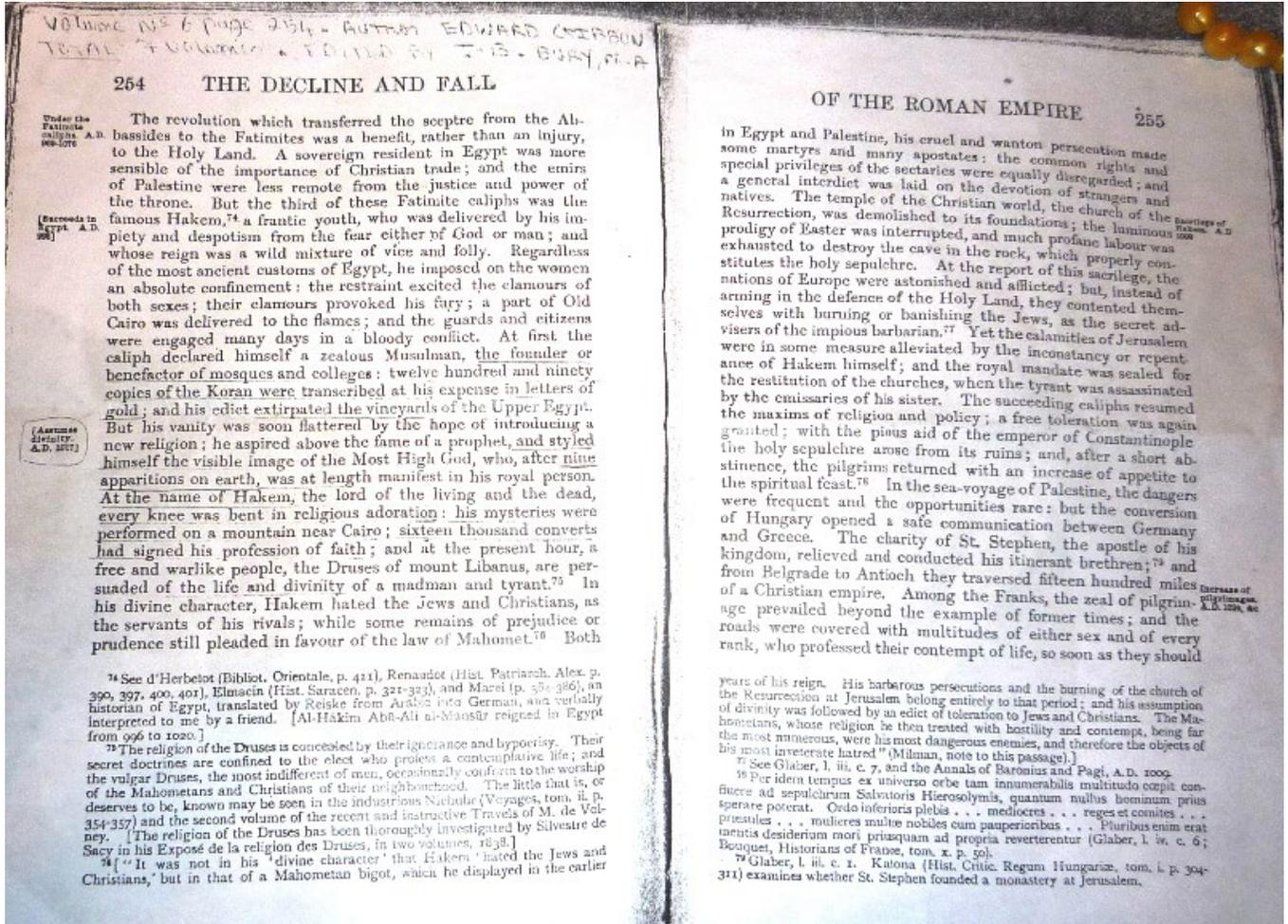
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥  
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीगणेशाय नमः ॥

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A

**NNEXE 1:**

A page from Edward Gibbon: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1848 - Vol 6) page 254.



The page can be searched online from the following link by searching for "Hakem"

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25717/25717-h/25717-h.htm>

**ANNEXE 2:** Name of the Imams from Imam Shri  
Haw to Imam Hunaid ( Budh Avatar ) from the book  
of **Dai Fidai Khurasani**

- 01 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Rajab
- 02 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Maj
- 03 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Dharam
- 04 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Tritu
- 05 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Lulu
- 06 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Aatu
- 07 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Hiri Tukwa
- 08 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shiritu
- 09 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Aatitu
- 10 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sher Anja
- 11 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Jee Maro
- 12 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Okra Yatu
- 13 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Jahatu
- 14 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Basheertu
- 15 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Barsutu
- 16 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sam Tarao
- 17 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Yatu
- 18 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Ram Kahee
- 19 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sarangwanatu
- 20 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Baritu
- 21 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Kahatu
- 22 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sarha Yatu
- 23 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Karsiyatu
- 24 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Khadatu
- 25 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sahil Rakhee
- 26 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sarda Mahoo
- 27 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Kiyou

- 28 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Tukiyou
- 29 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Kahetar Tuwas
- 30 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Yasoowa Nahee
- 31 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Tartiku
- 32 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Anskheel
- 33 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Tutumoo
- 34 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shiri Shang
- 35 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Matfoo
- 36 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Maskhajak
- 37 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Kobadan
- 38 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shiri Bajan
- 39 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Madjan
- 40 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Bartai
- 41 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sherituwan
- 42 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Khotuwan
- 43 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Bar Saram
- 44 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Byed Turuko
- 45 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Makutu
- 46 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Ajmapaal
- 47 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Jasraat
- 48 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shiri Ram
- 49 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Byedtu
- 50 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Jyeotu
- 51 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Dirtu
- 52 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shiri Kahetu
- 53 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Bari Kahetu
- 54 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Jee Meetu
- 55 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Sataku
- 56 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Timarjoo
- 57 Hazrat Mowlana Imam Shirita Badku
- 58 Hazrat Mowlana Hunaid - Qayam Al Qiyamah  
(9th Manifestation)

<https://forum.ismaili.net/viewtopic.php?p=62841#p62841>

## **ENDNOTES:**

The digital paper points directly to primary and secondary sources available on the web. In case you cannot click on a link, please copy-paste it in your browser. All links are active on the web as of the date of this paper. All **hs0\*\*\*** manuscripts reference are for Heritage Society manuscripts collection which can be accessed also under library.ismaili.net since 11 July 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Aga Khan Case 1866 - Justice Arnould, *Bombay High Court Reports*, #358—360 (Judgement of November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1866: <http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/29458> )

<sup>2</sup> Prof. P.C. Jain and Dr Daljeet: *Concept Of Incarnation And Vishnu's Ten Avataras*, Jul. 2009 - <https://www.exoticindiaart.com/article/dasavatar/>

<sup>3</sup> *The Declaration of the Great Resurrection in Alamut on 8 August 1164*. <https://www.ismaili.net/source/1164-08-08-alamut-declaration-eng.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Aga Khan III: *Memoirs*. <http://heritage.ismaili.net/files/The%20Memoirs%20of%20AGA%20KHAN-1.pdf> see p. 25

<sup>5</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Aad to alakh agiyaa ramiyo tame juvo juvo ved puraann -"* bhg1-063 - 600 Ginans published by: Recreation Club Institute, Bombay, Khoja Sindhi Printing Press, 1934 Verse 4 gives the duration. <https://forum.ismaili.net/viewtopic.php?p=72897#p72897>

<sup>6</sup> Dominique-sila khan: *The coming of Nikalank Avatar: a messianic theme in some sectarian traditions of north-western India* - *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (August 1997), pp. 401-426 (26 pages) Published By: Springer - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23448508>

<sup>7</sup> Edward Gibbon: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1848 - Vol 6) page 254.

<sup>8</sup> Affidavit of H.H. The Aga Khan III dated Daressalam 29 Sept 1899 quoted in Alwaez Shamsuddin Bandali Haji: *"The Noor En Allah Noor"* [http://heritage.ismaili.net/files/NoorEnAllahNoor-1980-1.pdf?fbclid=IwAR21RSQ8Ut-6HPKzggEG2ObFyFZ\\_Y5KIGipSHyUfN-3paps2fwpXrVKu-KQ](http://heritage.ismaili.net/files/NoorEnAllahNoor-1980-1.pdf?fbclid=IwAR21RSQ8Ut-6HPKzggEG2ObFyFZ_Y5KIGipSHyUfN-3paps2fwpXrVKu-KQ)

<sup>9</sup> Pir Sadardin: *"Aad to alakh aagiyo ramiyo"* bhg1-063 - 600 Ginans published by: Recreation Club Institute, Bombay, Khoja Sindhi Printing Press, 1934 verse 9 – Link: <http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/4070>

<sup>10</sup> Nagib Tajdin: *Evolution and re-evaluation of the Du'a (Prayer) of the Nizari Ismailis in the subcontinent following the Declaration of the Great Resurrection in Alamut*. 2021 <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/37399>

<sup>11</sup> Nagib Tajdin: *La continuité de l'Imamat et le concept du 'Das Avatar' chez les Ismaéliens Sat-Panthi*. Montréal, (1982) <http://ismaili.net/source/books/imamat-et-das-avatar-nagib-7.jpg>

<sup>12</sup> <http://ismaili.net/source/hs0004-tnk50-sad1-pic-0008-right.jpg>

<sup>13</sup> Nagib Tajdin : *Réflexion Sur L'Imâmat De Melchisédech et Tèrah*. Montréal, 1984. <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/28568>

<sup>14</sup> Nagib Tajdin : *Réflexion sur l'Imâmat de Aaron, Eléazar et Pihées.* , Montréal, (1985) <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/27952>

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- <sup>15</sup> Nargis Mawjee: *The Genealogy of the Imams since Creation based on the Ghat Pat-ni Dua written by Pir Sadardin (1300-1400 AD)* - <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/37307>
- <sup>16</sup> Aga Khan III : *From the Will of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah, Section 8* - <https://www.ismaili.net/amyn/will.html>
- <sup>17</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Das Avatar* <http://ismaili.net/source/hs0059-tnk22-pic-0084-left.jpg>
- <sup>18</sup> Tracy Coleman: *Avatāra: An Overview of Scholarly Sources* (Journal of Vaishnava Studies 26.1, Fall 2017 - [https://www.academia.edu/35372382/Avat%C4%81ra\\_An\\_Overview\\_of\\_Scholarly\\_Sources\\_Journal\\_of\\_Vaishnava\\_Studies\\_26\\_1\\_Fall\\_2017](https://www.academia.edu/35372382/Avat%C4%81ra_An_Overview_of_Scholarly_Sources_Journal_of_Vaishnava_Studies_26_1_Fall_2017)
- <sup>19</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Eji Dul dul ghode Ali chadd-se Shaah*, 600 Ginaans - Bhaag 4 : Ginaan # 26 verse 3 - <https://ismaili.net/ginans/transcription/part4/bhg4-026.html> and Dr Gulshan Khakee: *The Vedas as source of Satpanthi Ismaili Ginan Literature*. (unedited) <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/30526>
- <sup>20</sup> Cemil Kutluturk: *Has Kalki already appeared as Ali* - 2017, Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies, p.46 - [https://www.academia.edu/38731899/Has\\_Kalki\\_Already\\_Appeared\\_as\\_%CA%BA%AB\\_The\\_Influence\\_of\\_Hindu\\_Beliefs\\_on\\_the\\_Niz%C4%81r%C4%AB\\_Ismaili\\_Khojas\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_the\\_Ginans?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/38731899/Has_Kalki_Already_Appeared_as_%CA%BA%AB_The_Influence_of_Hindu_Beliefs_on_the_Niz%C4%81r%C4%AB_Ismaili_Khojas_A_Case_Study_of_the_Ginans?email_work_card=title)
- <sup>21</sup> Pir Sadardin : *Buddh Avatar Granth*: <https://library.ismaili.net/documents/buddh-avatar>
- <sup>22</sup> <https://www.ismaili.net/se0568.html>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://forum.ismaili.net/viewtopic.php?p=62841#p62841>
- <sup>24</sup> Makarem Sami Nasib: *Abu Firas "Ash-Shafiya"-- An Isma'ili Treatise*. Edited and translated with an introduction and commentary. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1966. 260 pp.
- <sup>25</sup> Aga Khan III : *Kalam-e Imam-e Mubin*, Farmans part II, p.473."
- <sup>26</sup> Ismaili Heroes – Pir Sadardin. Prince Aly Khan Religious Night School, Karachi 1973 <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/8212>
- <sup>27</sup> Bandali Haji: *The Noor en Allah Noor* - <http://heritage.ismaili.net/files/The%20Noor%20En%20Allah%20Noor.pdf> p. 109
- <sup>28</sup> Manuscript hs0040 <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0040-pic-0010-left>
- <sup>29</sup> Nagib Tajdin: *Evolution and re-evaluation of the Du'a (Prayer) of the Nizari Ismailis in the subcontinent following the Declaration of the Great Resurrection in Alamut*. 2021 - <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/37401>
- <sup>30</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Transcription of Das Avatar* - <http://ismaili.net/heritage/node/30588>
- <sup>31</sup> V N. Hooda : *Tenth Avatar* [Shorter Version translated] -: <https://www.ismaili.net/Source/0723/07232e.html>
- <sup>32</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Das Avatar* in manuscript hs0374- <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0374-pic-0144-right>
- <sup>33</sup> Syed Imam Shah: *Das Avatar Moto*, v.943 to 1362) - <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0290-pun14-pic-0135-right>
- <sup>34</sup> Gulshan Khakee: "*The 'Das Avatara' of Satpanthi Ismailis and Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan*." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1972: <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/29102>

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<sup>35</sup> Dr Gulshan Khakee: *A Sindhi version of Pir Shams' Das Avatar* - <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/22959>

<sup>36</sup> Nooraly, Zawahir. *Catalogue of Khojki Manuscripts in the Collection of the Ismailia Association for Pakistan, Karachi, 1971* <http://heritage.ismaili.net/node/28862>

<sup>37</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Moto Macch Avatar* <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0383-pic-0074-right>

<sup>38</sup> Pir Sadardin: *Navmu Buddh Avatar* <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0383-pic-0123-right>

<sup>39</sup> Syed Imamshah: *Moto Dasmu Avatar* <https://library.ismaili.net/books/hs0383-pic-0179-right>

Nagib Tajdin : *Notes on some newly discovered manuscripts of the Das Avatar of the Satpanthi Nizari Ismailis in the collection of the Heritage Society.*

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