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Nāṣir-i Khusraw

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SALIENT ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE QĀ'IM ACCORDING TO NĀṢIR-I KHUSRAW

The Qur'ān outlines certain fundamental elements of the Islamic faith. These include belief in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day (2:177, 285; 4:136). The Last Day, understood to be the Qā'im,¹ is thus among the central beliefs of Islam.

According to the Qur'ān (3:19), Islam is Allāh's religion, also called *fiṭratu'llāh* or Allāh's nature (30:30). He has created humankind on the basis of His nature. A comparison of Allāh's religion with His nature and His nature with humankind demonstrates that His religion is dynamic and progressive, passing through several stages of progress and perfection. In this connection, God further says in several verses: "Verily your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then established the equality (*istawā*) on the throne" (7:54). In verse (50:38), after repeating the above words, He says: "And no weariness touched Us (*wa mā massanā min lughūb*)" and in verse (10:3) He says: "He repeats the command (*yudabbiru'l-amr*)". Furthermore, the verse (3:27) shows that Allāh, through His omnipotence, is creating things from their opposites, such as day from night, night from day, the living from the dead and the dead from the living. All such verses show Allāh's omnipotence in that He creates things from their opposites and His creativeness (*khāliqiyyat*) continues without pause or

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¹ Here by the Qā'im is meant the *Qā'im al-qiyāma*, in whose time there will be great changes both in the physical and the spiritual worlds, as the Qur'ān says: "Soon We will show Our signs to them in the horizons (the universe) and in their souls until it becomes clear to them that he (the *Qā'im al-qiyāma*) is the True" (41:53), otherwise every Imām of the time is the Qā'im of his own time as change continues; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Shish Faṣl or Six Chapters*, ed. and trans. W. Ivanow (Leiden, 1949), pp. 41-42.

hindrance. He creates the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh He establishes equality. These seven days together make a week of religion (*usbū' u' d-dīn* (Arabic), *hafta-yi dīn* (Persian)) and the seventh day is the symbol of Qā'im² in a special sense. About his paramount importance, the Prophet said: "Even if there remains of time but a single day, God will prolong it until there emerges a man from my descendants, who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it is (now) filled with oppression and injustice."³ This *ḥadīth* of the Prophet shows the paramount importance of the Qā'im. Islam would reach true perfection in his time. Allāh's address to His Prophet in verse (5:3): "Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favours upon you and chosen for you Islam as religion," thus implies that Islam achieved potential perfection in the Prophet's lifetime, and would achieve actual perfection at the completion of the cycle. Had this not been the case, the Prophet would not have prophesied that "the earth will be filled with equity and justice as it is (now) filled with oppression and injustice."

Lexically, the word Qā'im derives from the Arabic root *qāma yaqūmu qiyām*, which means "to resurrect," and the present participle, *qā'im*, on the measure of *fā'il*, means the resurrector, the one who causes the resurrection (*qiyāma*) to take place. The function of the Qā'im is explained in the Prophet's own words in the *ḥadīth* quoted above.

The doctrine of the Qā'im or the Saviour to come at the end of time, is found in virtually every religion. Thus, there is the concept of the Messiah in Judaism⁴ and Christianity,⁵ Kalkī or Nakalankī in Hinduism,⁶ Saoshyant in Zoroastrianism,⁷ and others.⁸ Within Islam, in addition to the Qā'im, the term Mahdī is often used synonymously with it. Mahdī is used widely by both the Sunnīs and the Shī'ah. The term Qā'im, or the *Qā'im-i āl-i Muḥammad*, i.e. the Resurrector from the progeny of Prophet Muḥammad, however, is much more specific to

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Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Wajh-i dīn*, ed. Ghulām Riḍā A'avānī (Tehran, 1977), p. 65; hereafter cited as *Wajh*.

³ *Shish Faṣl*, p. 39; Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Islāh*, ed. H. Mīnūchehr (Tehran, 1998), p. 61; Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. H. Corbin (Tehran-Paris, 1949), pp. 81-83.

⁴ Helmer Ringgren, "Messianism: An Overview," *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, pp. 5972-5974; R. J. Zwiwerblowsky, "Jewish Messianism," *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, pp. 5974-5979.

⁵ R. H. Baiton, *Christendom: A Short History of Christianity and Its Impact on Western Civilization* (New York, 1966), I, pp. 25f, 35, 42; J. R. Hinnels (ed.), *Dictionary of Religions* (Harmondsworth, 1994), p. 212.

⁶ Cynthia Salvadori, *Through Open Doors: A View of Asian Cultures in Kenya*, ed. A. Fedders, revised ed. (Nairobi, 1989); Mihr 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq, *Hindū Ṣanamīyyāt* (Multan, 1993), pp. 254-256.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14, 19; *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 127.

⁸ Juan M. Ossio, "South American Messianism," *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, pp. 5983-5986.

Shī'ah Islam. The expression necessitates that the Qā'im be from the Prophet's progeny, whereas this is not the case in Sunnī Islam.⁹

According to the Qur'ān, the knowledge of *qiyāma* is as difficult as it is extensive. The difficulty of having access to the knowledge of *qiyāma* is obvious from the following verses, which show that it is Allāh's prerogative, as He says to His Messenger: "They question you concerning the Hour, when is its fixed time? Say: The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. None shall reveal it at its proper time, but He. It is heavy in the heavens and the earth. It comes not to you save unawares. They question you as though you are well informed of it. Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allāh, but most of humankind know not" (7:187) and "The people question you concerning the Hour. Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allāh. What makes you know? Haply the Hour is nigh" (33:63).

In their *Rasā'il* (Epistles) *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, the Brethren of Purity, write extensively on this subject. They explain that there are approximately one thousand and seven hundred verses in the Qur'ān describing the states and conditions of the *qiyāma*. Expressions referring to this include *yawma'l-qiyāma* (the day of resurrection, 2:85), *yawmi yub'athūn* (the day they are raised up, 7:14), *yawmi'd-dīn* (the day of judgement, 1:4), *yawmu'l-faṣl* (the day of decision, 37:21), *yawma yaqūmu'l-ḥisāb* (the day of reckoning, 14:41), *yawma'l-āzifa* (the day of imminence, 40:18), *yawma't-tanād* (the day of mutual calling, 40:32), *yawmu't-taghābun* (the day of mutual disillusion, 64:9), *yawmu'l-ḥaṣhr* (the day of gathering together, 50:44),¹⁰ *yawma yakhrujūna [mina'l-ajdāth]* (the day they come forth [from the tombs], 70:43), *yawma taqūmu's-sā'a* (the day when the hour comes, 30:12),¹¹ and so on. These and other such verses demonstrate the inevitability of the coming *qiyāma*. God further emphatically says: "The Hour is going to come and there is no doubt about it" (22:7; 40:59) and "We have prepared a blazing fire for those who belie the Hour" (25:11).

Other verses, however, attest to the fact that the *qiyāma* is a spiritual matter. Its coming will be concealed, and people in general will be unaware of it:

⁹ Regarding the differences of opinion about the doctrine of the Mahdī between Sunnī and Shī'ah Islam, differences within their sub-sects, his ethnic origin, the geographical locations of his advent, his features, his rule, his relations with Jesus Christ and his encounter with the Antichrist, etc., and also for the claimants who appeared as Mahdī in history, see the articles: D. B. Macdonald, "al-Mahdī," *EP*, vol. V, pp. 111–115; W. Madelung, "al-Mahdī," *EP*, vol. V, pp. 1230–1238; D. S. Margoliouth, "al-Mahdī," in Hasting's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. VIII, pp. 336–340; Kamran Scot Aghaie, "Messianism in the Muslim Tradition," *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 2nd Edition, pp. 5979–5983. These studies have ignored the Qur'ān and have focused mainly on *ḥadīth* literature, which is mostly self-contradictory and on its own leads to no satisfactory conclusion.

¹⁰ Adapted from verse (50:44): *Yawma tashaqqaqu'l-arḍu 'anhum sirā'an dhālika ḥaṣhrun 'alaynā yasīr*: "The day the earth will split asunder they will come out hurriedly. That will be a gathering together."

¹¹ *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, *Rasā'il* (Beirut, 1992), vol. III, pp. 298–299.

“Indeed, the Hour is coming, but I will keep it hidden, that every soul may be rewarded for that for which it strives” (20:15) and “Are they waiting for aught but the Hour, which will come upon them suddenly while they are unaware?” (43:66). This is further testified to in a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet in which he held the index fingers of his right and left hands immediately next to and touching each other, and said: “I and the Hour are sent like these two.” Some Sunnī sources mention the index and the middle fingers.¹² The fact that a physical resurrection has yet to occur makes it difficult to understand this *ḥadīth* in an exoteric sense.

Though it is emphasized that knowledge of resurrection is Allāh's prerogative, there is no absolute despondency, because He grants His chosen servants even those things which are His prerogative. For example, He says: “[He is] the Knower of the unseen (*ghayb*), and He discloses not His unseen to any one, save unto every Messenger with whom He is well-pleased” (72:26–27). In light of such verses, some of the Muslim communities have tried to penetrate the secrets of the Qur'ān, whereas others have contented themselves with the literal meaning of Allāh's message.

The seekers of the meanings of the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* can be broadly divided into two groups: the exotericists (*ahl-i zāhir*, *ahl-i tanzīl*) and the esotericists (*ahl-i bāṭin*, *ahl-i ta'wīl*); the former try to solve their difficulties by recourse to the literal sense, whereas the latter go beyond the literal meaning to seek the inner meanings or dimensions.

This article attempts to present the salient aspects of the doctrine of the Qā'im as expounded by the famous Persian sage, traveller, and poet, Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Nāṣir-i Khusraw belonged to the Ismā'īlī Imāmī Shī'ah, one of the two main branches of the Imāmī Shī'ah. After the demise of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the Imāmī Shī'ah split into the Ismā'īlī Imāmī Shī'ah and Mūsawī Imāmī Shī'ah, named after his sons Ismā'īl al-Mubārak and Mūsā al-Kāzim. After the occultation of their twelfth Imām, the latter group came to be known as the Ithnā 'asharī Imāmī Shī'ah, or Twelvers. The Imamate of the Ismā'īlī Imāmī Shī'ah still continues, and their present Imām is Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī. Ismā'īlīs are sometimes called *Sab'iyya* or Seveners, that is, those who believe in seven Imāms, in contrast to the *Ithnā 'ashariyya* or Twelvers, those who believe in twelve Imāms. This is a grave misunderstanding. While Ismā'īlīs do give importance to the concept of seven Imāms constituting a minor cycle (*dawr ṣaghīr*), they do not believe that there are only seven Imāms. Their present Imām is the 49th in the line of Imām 'Alī in the cycle of Prophet Muḥammad.

Two points are taken into consideration in presenting Nāṣir's exposition of the doctrine of the Qā'im: first, he was the last of the highly learned *dā'īs* of the golden age of learning of the Fāṭimid era before the community split into Nizārī Ismā'īlī and Musta'alawī Ismā'īlī branches after the demise of the Imām

¹² *Wajh*, p. 94; Al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shirāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyyah*, ed. Ḥātim Ḥamīd al-Dīn (Bombay, 1975), I, p. 67; hereafter cited as *al-Majālis*.

Mustanşir bi'llāh (d. 487/1094). Secondly, he was not a born Ismā'īlī, but accepted the faith as a result of a long personal search for the truth. Not only did he accept the Ismā'īlī faith as the truth, but he also became one of its staunchest and most vigorously active *dā'īs*¹³ and rose to the rank of *hujjat*, a lofty rank next to the Imām himself. Nāşir is also an excellent example of those who commit themselves to *tawbatu'n-naşūh* (the sincere repentance referred to in the Qur'ān, 66:8), that is, he sacrificed material luxuries and amenities for the sake of spiritual happiness and intellectual peace, never returning to the former until his dying breath. In his works, he was not ashamed of describing his previous trespasses and shortcomings openly.

This article is divided into three parts: the first will deal with Nāşir's affiliation with the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* and includes a brief life-sketch, the second part will deal with salient aspects of the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Qā'im, and the final part with Nāşir's own exposition of the salient aspects of this doctrine.

1. Nāşir's affiliation with the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* and a brief life-sketch:

Nāşir-i Khusraw was a member of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*, or ecclesia. The Fāţimid Imām, al-Mustanşir bi'llāh I (d. 487/1094), appointed him as the *hujjat-i Khurāsān*, the "proof" of Khurāsān, or the *şāhib-i jazīra-yi Mashriq*, "the lord of the island of the eastern lands." In the *da'wa* terminology, a *hujjat* or *şāhib-i jazīra* is one of twelve dignitaries who oversee the world's twelve *jazā'ir* (islands, sing. *jazīra*). Even today, centuries after his death, his memory is revered in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, China, Chitral, and the Northern Areas of Pakistan, including Gilgit, Puniyal, Ghizr, Yasin, Ishkoman and Hunza. In these areas he is known as Ḥaḍrat-i Pīr or Sayyid Shāh Nāşir-i Khusraw.

His full name was Abū Mu'īn Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāşir b. Khusraw b. Ḥārith-i Qubādiyānī, Marwazī, Māzandarī, Yumgī or Yumgānī. He was born into a family of landowners and officials in 394/1004 in Qubadiyan on the right bank of the Oxus River. There is no dearth of literature about the various aspects of his multi-faceted life. A number of scholars have elucidated the main episodes of his career, such as his education, government service, the visionary experience that led him to change his life and resign from his post, the ensuing seven-year journey from 437/1045 to 444/1052 that was immortalized in his celebrated *Safar-nāma*, his arrival in Cairo and discussions with the senior Ismā'īlī luminary, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), his audience with the Imām al-

¹³ This term is used very widely for God Himself, the Prophet, the Imām and his subordinates, the *hujjats* or *naqībs* and their subordinates the *dā'īs*. In a specific sense, it is used for the last rank of the hierarchy, that is, under the Imām of the time there are twelve *hujjats* and under each of them there are thirty *dā'īs*.

Mustanşir bi'llāh I, his appointment as *hujjat* of Khurasan and return to his native land of Balkh in 444/1052, the beginnings of his *da'wa* activities and initial successes, the opposition of his adversaries, his taking refuge in Yumgan and spreading the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* there and in the surrounding areas, his works and his death.¹⁴

In common with so many other outstanding personalities, over the course of history Nāşir's life has become enveloped in a halo of legends and myths. While it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse this apocryphal material, a brief account of Nāşir's life, as described in his own works, is given here.

Nāşir's writings show that he received a sound education in his youth, which afforded him entry into government service. Despite his success in this coveted position, he felt a certain hollowness. His ethical, spiritual and intellectual dissatisfaction with his earlier life rings clear in his *Dīwān* of poetry, in which he writes:

Ān kardī az fasād ki gar yādat āyad ān
*Rūyat siyāh gardad-ū tīra shawad ḡamūr*¹⁵

You once wrought such mischief that were you to call it to mind

Your face would be blackened [by dishonour], your heart darkened [by disgrace].

Similarly, at the beginning of his *Safar-nāma*, his travelogue, citing the Prophetic tradition "Speak the truth, though it be against yourself,"¹⁶ he ruefully admits to his former addiction to drink. His internal turmoil precipitated a crisis. One night, at the age of 43, he had a dream that was to transform his life forever. He writes:

One night I was approached in a dream by someone who chided me, "How long will you drink this brew that destroys human intellect? 'Tis better to be sober!" I responded, "The sages have failed to find a better elixir to drive away the sorrows of the world." He said, "Never has drunkenness brought peace of mind.

¹⁴ See Sayyid Ḥasan Taqīzāda, "Introduction" to Nāşir's *Dīwān*, ed. Sayyid Naşr Allāh Taqawī (Tehran, 1304–1307/1925–1928), hereafter cited as (Taqawī edition); E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1977), II, pp. 160, 162, 169, 200–201, 211, 218–246; Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, *Yād-nāma-yi Nāşir-i Khusraw* (Mashhad, 1976). Other sources for his life and works are given in I. K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, California, 1977), pp. 111–125, 430–436; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 215–220, 639–640, note 138; 'Alī Mīr Anşārī, *Kitāb-shināsī-yi Ḥakīm Nāşir-i Khusraw-i Qubādiyānī* (Tehran, 1993); A. C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhshan* (London, 2000); A. Nanji, "Nāşir-i Khusraw", *EP*, vol. VII, pp. 1006–1007.

¹⁵ Nāşir-i Khusraw, *Dīwān*, ed. M. Mīnuwī and M. Muḥaqqiq (Tehran, 1974), p. 102; hereafter cited as *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition).

¹⁶ Nāşir-i Khusraw, *Safar-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr-i Siyāqī (Tehran, 1984), p. 2; hereafter cited as *Safar-nāma*.

Can one who leads people to stupor be called a sage? Seek that which increases intellect and wisdom!" I asked, "Where can I find such a thing?" He replied, "He who seeks, finds." And then, pointing in the direction of the *qibla*, he fell silent.¹⁷

Nāṣir rose, the vision still vivid in his mind. He lamented to himself: "I have woken up from last night's dream. But now I must awaken from a dream that has lasted forty years!"¹⁸ He resolved to forswear his self-harming ways, knowing that he would never attain true happiness until he did so. Resigning from government service, on Saturday, 6 Jumādā II, 437/19 December, 1045¹⁹ he set out on his famous journey, returning only seven years later, on Tuesday, 26 Jumādā II/23 October, 1052.²⁰

The oracle had pointed him in the direction of the *qibla*, which was also the direction of Cairo, the capital of the Fāṭimid Caliphate and centre of the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*. After his arrival on Sunday, 1 Ṣafar 439/28 July, 1047, he met many Ismā'īlī *dā'īs*, including al-Mu'ayyad fī'l-Dīn Shīrāzī, the *hujjat* of Fars, who was the head of the *da'wa* at the time. Nāṣir was duly impressed with al-Mu'ayyad, whom he regarded as *riḍwān*,²¹ the warden of paradise.

Nāṣir describes Cairo in glowing terms in his *Dīwān* and *Safar-nāma*, not only as a splendid metropolis, but even more so as the spiritual city *par excellence*; the city of knowledge and wisdom of the Imām. He writes in his *Dīwān*:

One day I reached a city to which the heavenly bodies and spheres themselves were subservient. Its plains were embroidered like brocade, its walls made of emerald and its water pure and sweet like the spring of *kawthar* in paradise. In this city there are no mansions save excellence, no fir trees in its gardens save intellect. It is a city in which the sages wear brocade that is neither spun by women nor woven by men. Upon my arrival my intellect intimated to me, "Go no further! Seek here what you need." I went to the warden of the city and told him my tale. He said, "Fear not, for your mine has now transformed into gems." His discourse, so sweet and pregnant with meaning, convinced me that he was none other than *riḍwān*, the warden of paradise. According to the *ta'wīl*, paradise is naught but the *da'wa* of the Prophet's progeny. I told him of my soul's grief and frailty, urging him not to look at the strength of my body, or the redness of my cheeks. Never would I touch a medicine without proof and demonstration, said I. He reassured me that he was a physician of that city and encouraged me to describe my illness to him.²²

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

²¹ *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 511.

²² Ibid., pp. 511–512; *Safar-nāma*, pp. 88–101.

I then posed all the questions that ailed me, causing my intellectual sickness. He said he would give me medicine with proof and demonstration, but first would place a mighty seal on my lips. I consented to this and so he sealed my lips. He presented two witnesses from the external and the internal worlds (*āfāq* and *anfus*), for my nourishment.²³ Thus my treatment began gradually. Lo! My illness vanished. He removed the seal from my lips and allowed me to speak. Finally, he took me to the Imām of the time, [al-Mustansir bi'llāh] to perform the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*).²⁴

In the *Dīwān*, evoking imagery of the oath sworn by the Prophet's companions centuries earlier, Nāṣir describes his own experience:

Dastam ba kaf-i dast-i nabī dād ba bay'at
*Zīr-i shajar-i 'ālī-yi pur-sāya-yi muthmar*²⁵
 He placed my hand in that of the Prophet,
 A pledge made under the lofty tree, shady and fruitful.

It suffices here to say that the course of his life changed forever. Henceforth he devoted himself to the service of the Imām of his time. He expresses his gratitude for the Imām's favours in the following words:

Har jā ki buwam tā bi-ziyam man gah-ū bigāh
*Bar shukr-i tū rānam qalam-ū miḥbar-ū daftar*²⁶
 Wherever I may be, so long as I live, time and again,
 My pen, inkpot and parchment will bespeak my gratitude to you.

Nāṣir rapidly climbed the ladder of the religious hierarchy (*hudūd-i dīn*) until he was appointed the *hujjat* of Khurāsān. He left Cairo on Tuesday, 14 Dhu'l-ḥijja 441/9 May, 1050,²⁷ arriving back in Balkh in 444/1052. Here and in the surrounding regions he began to preach the *Ismā'īlī da'wa*. Both his *Dīwān* and Abu'l-Ma'ālī's *Bayān al-adyān*²⁸ reveal his initial successes. However, this soon drew the attention of adversaries who instigated the mobs against him. They persecuted him and burned his house down. Fleeing Balkh he took refuge in Yumgan, which was then ruled by an *Ismā'īlī* prince, 'Alī b. al-Asad.²⁹ From his new-found home he actively and peacefully spread the *Ismā'īlī da'wa*. As he says:

Har sāl yakī kitāb-i da'wat

²³ Literally food and water, which symbolize *tanzīl* and *ta'wīl*, *Wajh*, p. 250.

²⁴ *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), pp. 512–513.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 513. Here the rhyme requires *muthmīr* to be *muthmar*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 515.

²⁷ *Safar-nāma*, p. 109.

²⁸ Abū'l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh, *Bayān al-adyān*, ed. 'A. I. Āshṭiyānī and M. T. Dānish-pazhūh (Tehran, 1997), pp. 55–56.

²⁹ Nāṣir Khusraw, *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Mu'in (Tehran–Paris, 1953), pp. 15–18, 100, 314–316, hereafter cited as *Jāmi'*.

*Ba-atrāf-i jahān hamī firistam*³⁰

Every year a book of *da'wat*

I send to the corners of the world

He lavishes praise on Yumgan for giving him refuge and as a centre of the *da'wa*:

Garchi zindān-i Sulaymān-i nabī būda ast

*Nīst zindān bal bāghīst marā Yumgān*³¹

Though Yumgan was Solomon's prison

'Tis not so for me—it is a garden.

Kān-i 'ilm-ū khirad-ū hikmat Yumgān ast

*Tā man-i mard-i khiradmand ba Yumgānam*³²

So long as a sage like me is here

Yumgan is the mine of knowledge, intellect and wisdom.

Īn jāst ba Yumgān turā dabistān

*Dar Balkh majūsh na dar Bukhārā*³³

Right here in Yumgan is the school [of wisdom] for you

Seek it not in Balkh, nor Bukhara.

Nāṣir wrote most of his works in Yumgan and passed away there after 469/1076. Among his extant works are his *Dīwān* (Collection of Poems), *Zād al-musāfirīn* (Provision of Travellers), *Wajh al-dīn*³⁴ (Face of the Religion), *Jāmi' al-hikmatayn* (Compiler of the Two Wisdoms), *Khwān al-ikhwān* (The Brethren's Dining Table), *Gushāyish wa rahāyish* (Opening and Relieving), *Rawshanā'ī-nāma* (The Book of Illumination), *Safar-nāma* (The Book of Travels) and *Gharā'ib al-ḥisāb wa 'ajā'ib al-ḥussāb* (The Wonders of Arithmetic and Marvels of Mathematicians).

2. Salient aspects of the Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Qā'im:

Ismā'īlī Imāmī Shī'ism belongs to the esoteric branch of Islam. In fact, one of the titles given to the community by its opponents is *al-Bāṭiniyyah*³⁵ or the Esotericists, because of the emphasis on the *bāṭinī* or esoteric aspects of Islam. Shī'ah Islam, and Ismā'īlism in particular, has certain characteristics in its interpretation of faith that permeate all its teachings and particularly its concept of the

³⁰ *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 221.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

³⁴ For this title see my new edition and translation to be published by the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

³⁵ 'Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-al-niḥal*, ed. M. F. Badrān (Cairo, 1956), p. 172.

Qā'im and the *qiyāma*. Thus, in order to understand the doctrine of the Qā'im, it is important to have a clear idea of these characteristics. Among these, the most important are the perennial need for the innate human intellect's ('*aql-i gharīzī*) nurture with true knowledge and the continuity of a Divinely illumined and designated Teacher to fulfil this need. Just as the human body requires fresh physical food for its growth and health, in the same way the innate human intellect requires fresh spiritual and intellectual knowledge and guidance for its spiritual and intellectual growth and health. These two characteristics are based on the obvious fact that the God-given innate intellect is not self-sufficient in the knowledge of God. It is capable of learning and has some rudimentary knowledge, but is itself not learned ('*ālim*). One of the eminent *dā'īs*, Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī (d. after 360/970), many of whose works survive, considers the innate intellect the Creator's first messenger to human beings. However, its knowledge is insufficient for the true recognition of the Creator. Therefore the Creator sends another Messenger blessed with perfect knowledge to teach and perfect it.³⁶

Another eminent *dā'ī*, Hibatu'llāh al-Mu'ayyad fī'd-Dīn Shīrāzī, (470/1078) referring to this insufficiency of the innate intellect on its own, says:

Kam nāzirin bi-'aynihi lā yubširu
Wa-mubširin bi'l-qalbi lā yastabširu
Wa-nazaru'l-mar'i lahu sharā'itu
Tārikuhā fī'z-zulumāti khābiṭu
Wa-tilka an yūjada shamsun aw qamarun
Aw shu'alun aw lā fa-lā yughni'n-nazaru
Ka-dhālika'l-'aqlu lada't-tabaṣṣuri
Bi-dhātihī fī ḥayyizi't-taḥayyuri
Illā bi-nūrin 'ādīdin min khāriji
*Fa-'indahū ya'ruju fī'l-ma'āriji*³⁷

Many are the observers who cannot see with their eyes;
 Many are the reflectors who cannot reflect with their intellects.
 Because man's eyes have certain requirements
 He who abandons them, fumbles in the darkness(es).
 And those [requirements] are to find a sun or moon
 Or flames, otherwise the eyesight does not suffice.
 Similarly, while reflecting by itself,
 The intellect is bound by perplexity,
 Except when it [reflects] with a helping light from outside
 Then it ascends the ladders [of reflection].

³⁶ Sijistānī, *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt*, ed. 'A. Tamīr (Beirut, 1982), pp. 49–53.

³⁷ Al-Mu'ayyad, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad K. Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1949), p. 191.

In the above verses, the innate intellect is compared with human eyes, which have the capacity to see. However, no matter how sound and healthy the eyes may be, they cannot see without external light. In the same way, although a human being may be very intelligent, his intellect cannot duly recognise the Creator on its own. Equally, even if there is abundant sunlight, it is useless for someone who does not have sound eyesight. Therefore God has sent His Messengers only to those who have a sound intellect. The Divine message does not apply to human beings who do not have a sound rational faculty, such as children, the unconscious (like people asleep), or the insane. That is, the first messenger and the last Messenger have to work in tandem. Although the last Messenger is superior in status, he cannot work with those who are not granted the innate intellect as the first messenger. Thus, God has addressed only those who have a sound rational faculty or the innate intellect. There is no doubt that the innate intellect, by receiving true knowledge from the perfect intellect, which the last Messenger embodies, eventually becomes like the perfect intellect, but without his upbringing it remains imperfect. The last Messenger in the *Ismā'īlī da'wa* is described as *Kāmilun fī dhātīhi wa-mukammilun lī-ghayrihi* ("He within himself is perfect and he perfects others").³⁸

Thus, from the very inception of creation, in view of the perennial need of the innate intellect, God appointed Adam as His *khalīfa* (vicegerent) by breathing into him His own Spirit (15:29–31; 38:72–74), and gave him His own knowledge by teaching him His names (2:31).³⁹ Thus, his knowledge is the source of every kind of knowledge. Al-Mu'ayyad writes: "As far as the belief of the people of truth (*al-muḥiqqīn*) is concerned, all sciences, including the intellectual ones (*al-'aqliyyāt*), which they (the philosophers) claim, are gathered together in the sciences of the Prophets, from which they have branched out and ramified."⁴⁰

Adam's appointment as *khalīfa* and Divinely illumined Teacher (*mu'allim*) was not confined to his time. Rather, in view of the perennial need of nurturing human intellects, God continued to appoint both Prophets and Imāms⁴¹ in the cycle of Prophethood (*dāwr-i nubuwwat*) and Imāms in the cycle of Imamate (*dāwr-i imāmat*) throughout human history till the cycle of Resurrection (*dāwr-i qiyāmat*). Thus, this chain of Divine appointments continues from Adam till to-

³⁸ Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Rawḍa-yi taslīm*, ed. and trans. S. J. Badakhchani (London, 2005), p. 106.

³⁹ These and other such Qur'ānic verses relevant to the continuity of Divine guidance can be found in the works of Qāḍī Nu'mān's *Da'ā'im al-Islām*, Ja'far bin Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's *Sarā'ir al-nuṣṣaqā'* and *al-Shawāhid wa-al-bayān*, Sijistānī's *al-Iftikhār*, al-Mu'ayyad's *al-Majālis* and Naṣīr's *Wajh al-dīn*, etc.

⁴⁰ *Al-Majālis*, vol. I, pp. 3–4.

⁴¹ "Both" in the sense that, in the cycle of Prophethood, the Prophets need to share their burden of giving esoteric interpretation or *ta'wīl* of the Divine message, which they bring in an exoteric or *tanzīlī* form. See Qur'ānic verses (20:25–32).

day in an unbroken line, as He says: "Verily, Allāh chose Adam and Noah, and the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of 'Imrān above (all His) creatures. Offspring one of another" (3:33-34).⁴² Further, with reference to the presence of the Imām in every time, He says: "The day We will invite every people with their Imām" (17:71). More emphatically still, God says: "They intend to extinguish the light of Allāh with their mouths, and Allāh refuses but to perfect His light, though the infidels may detest it. He it is Who sent His Messengers with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions" (9:32-33). The last two verses are extremely important and relevant to the Shī'ah understanding of the doctrine of the Qā'im, as the perfection of God's light and making His religion prevail over all religions, belong to the time of the Qā'im, as we will see later on. The preceding verses, which the Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* quote in their works, establish the necessity and continuity of a Divinely illumined Teacher.

Regarding the teaching of the innate intellect, the fact that people are diverse and have different capacities demands that the Teacher not impart knowledge to all of them in a simple, monolithic way, but in a comprehensive manner that, on the one hand is inclusive of all of them and, on the other gradually reveals the realities to deserving individuals until the advent of the Qā'im, in whose time all the realities will be divulged. In order to do this, when a *nāṭiq* comes, by God's command he uses two processes to convey His message: the *tanzīl* and the *ta'wīl*.

Tanzīl literally means "sending down" or "bringing down." It is the process by which intelligible spiritual realities are explained in the form of perceptible material parables and allegories. *Ta'wīl* literally means "to take something back to its origin." It is the process by which the veils of parables and allegories are gradually removed from the realities until the time of the Qā'im when they will be divulged completely. *Tanzīl* is the transformation of the subtle (*laṭīf*) into dense (*kathīf*), and *ta'wīl* is the reverse process. The former gives a physical form to spiritual realities while the latter gives spiritual meaning to physical parables and allegories.⁴³ Each requires the other for the fulfilment of its purpose. Nonetheless, *tanzīl* is likened to the husk, body or brackish water, whereas *ta'wīl* is compared to grain, soul and lustrous, precious pearls in the ocean's depths.

Describing these aspects of the Qur'an, Nāṣir says in his *Dīwān*:

Daryā-yi sukhānhā sukhān-i khūb-i khudā'yst
Pur gawhar-i bā-qīmat-ū pur lu'lu'-yi lālā

⁴² For the names of the Imāms from Adam, God's Vicegerent up to Imām Abū Ṭālib, the father of Imām 'Alī, see Ja'far bin Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's *Sarā'ir al-nuṭaqā'*, particularly pp. 27-87; See also Shahrastānī's *al-Mīlāl*, pp. 189-195, where he mentions how the light that descended to Imām Ismā'īl from Prophet Ibrāhīm continued in his progeny secretly.

⁴³ Imām al-Mu'izz li-Dīni'llah, *Ta'wīl al-sharī'a*, Ms in my private collection, fols. 113-115; 'Allāmah Naṣir Hunzai, *Qurratu'l-'ayn* (Karachi, 1991) pp. 81-86; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Gushāyish wa rahāyish*, ed. and trans. F. M. Hunzai (London, 1998), p. 65.

Shūrast chū daryā ba-mathal zāhir-i tanzīl
Ta 'wīl chū lu 'lu 'st sū-yi mardūm-i dānā
Andar bun-i daryāst hama gawhar-ū lu 'lu '
Ghawwāş ṭalab kun chi dawī bar lab-i daryā
Ma 'ni ṭalab az zāhir-i tanzīl chū mardum
Khursand ma-shaw hamchū khar az qawl ba-āwā

God's Word is the Ocean of Words,
 Brimful with precious, lustrous pearls.
 Its *tanzīl* is like the ocean's brackish waters
 While its *ta 'wīl* is like pearls for the wise.
 As the pearls lie scattered in the ocean's depths
 Why do you scamper along its shores? Seek a diver!
 When you are searching for the meaning of revelation,
 Do not be content with speech like a donkey braying aloud.⁴⁴

Elsewhere in his *Dīwān*, he again says:

Dīn rā tanast zāhir-ū ta 'wīl rūh-i ūst
Tan zinda juz ba-rūh ba-gītī kujā shudast

The [Qur'ān's] exoteric aspect is religion's body, the *ta 'wīl* its soul
 Where in the world is a body alive without the soul?⁴⁵ *Ta 'wīl*

is necessitated not only by the different strata of people, but also by the very nature of God's speech, where some verses are related to the world of command (*'ālam-i amr*) and some to the world of creation (*'ālam-i khalq*), some to the perfect men like Prophets as in verses (53:3–4; 8:17; 48:10) Allāh considers the Prophet's speech, action and hand as His own, and some to ordinary people. However, if these subtleties are disregarded they lead to preposterous consequences. For instance, if verses such as (76:30): "And you do not will except that which Allāh wills," which refer to great souls liberated from the interference of carnal desires, are applied to ordinary people who are prone to perpetrate all kinds of wrong and evil acts, then God Himself will be responsible for their actions and His ordinances will be meaningless. Nāşir referring to such consequences says:

'Uqūbat muḥālast agar but-parast
Ba-farmān-i īzid parastad şanam
Sitam-gār zī tū Khudā 'yst agar
Ba-dast-i tū ū kard bar man sitam

It is preposterous to punish an idol-worshipper
 If he worships the idol by God's command.

⁴⁴ Nāşir-i Khusraw, *Dīwān*, ed. Naşr Allāh Taqawī (Tehran, 1367), pp. 3–4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

If I am oppressed by your hand,
According to you, the oppressor is God Himself!⁴⁶

In addition to the Qur'ān there are certain *aḥādīth* of the Prophet, which also do not make sense without *ta'wīl*, as al-Mu'ayyad referring to a *ḥadīth* about the blessings of the *Laylatu'l-Qadr* shows the difficulties and absurdities of its literal meaning. The *ḥadīth* states: "On this night the devils are in fetters and in prison and every harmful thing is prevented." He says: "If this is understood in a literal sense, as people tend to do, it has no meaning (*ḥaqīqa*), because on that night the infidels, who are the followers of the devils, neither refrain from their disbelief, nor do they abandon their harm, just as the vicious and poisonous beasts and reptiles do not cease their stinging nor their harming. Thus, the reality of this is with respect to its meaning or *ta'wīl*, not with respect to its exoteric words, because it is only those who are attached to that noble *ḥadd* [i.e., the *bāb* of the Qā'im as we will see later on] who are secure and protected from the insinuations of the devils who slander and harm the souls, just as the poisonous animals harm the bodies."⁴⁷

The impulse to seek a deeper, esoteric meaning in the Qur'an is further spurred by the holy Book's own words, such as, "Verily, We have struck for humankind in this Qur'ān every kind of parable" (30:58); "And those parables We strike for humankind so that they may reflect" (59:21). Further, the holy Prophet had also said of the nature of the Qur'ān, "Indeed, the Qur'ān has a *zāhir* (exoteric form) and a *bāṭin* (esoteric meaning), and every *bāṭin* has seven *bāṭīns*";⁴⁸ according to another version of this *ḥadīth*, "seventy *bāṭīns*."⁴⁹

The preceding examples prove the necessity of the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān. In Shī'ā Islam, in particular, the Qur'ān itself emphasizes not only the necessity of *ta'wīl*, but also the incumbency of turning to those who are authorized to execute it, identified in verse (3:7) as the *rāsikhūn fī'l-'ilm*, those firmly grounded in knowledge. According to Shī'ā Islam, this verse establishes not only the *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān, but also the *rāsikhūn fī'l-'ilm* who know it.⁵⁰

Having a clear idea of *tanzīl* and *ta'wīl* from the Ismā'īlī Shī'ī point of view, let us examine how they interpret the Qā'im and the *qiyāma*. We have already seen how difficult the knowledge of *qiyāma* is. However, Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* assert that by duly obeying the Imāms of their time, who are the *rāsikhūn fī'l-'ilm*, and to whom God has vouchsafed the knowledge of the unseen (*'ilm al-ghayb*,

⁴⁶ *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 62.

⁴⁷ *Al-Majālis*, vol. III, p. 11.

⁴⁸ Badī'u'z-Zamān Firūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran, 1347 Sh.H.), p. 83.

⁴⁹ Qāḍī Nu'mān, *Asās al-ta'wīl*, ed. 'A. Tāmīr (Beirut, 1960), p. 27.

⁵⁰ See my article "Ta'wīl of the Qur'ān and the *Sharī'ā* according to Ḥakīm Nāṣir-i Khusrāw" in *Nasir-i Khusrāw: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, ed. S. Niyozov and R. Nazariyev (Khujand, 2005), pp. 165–171.

72:26–27)⁵¹ they can receive the knowledge of the secrets of God's Book. Thus, Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, who has already been mentioned, says in his *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* (Book of Pride): "Among the greatest of matters in which the people of realities (*ahl al-ḥaqā'iq*) take pride is the recognition of *qiyāma*, its causes, and the tokens and signs that follow these, about which the people of the exoteric (*ahl al-zāhir*) are in the dark."⁵² Many other *dā'īs* have written extensively about the *qiyāma* and the Qā'im. To mention a few, Sijistānī in his *Ithbāt al-nubū'āt* (The Proof of Prophecies), *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Unveiling of the Veiled), *al-Bāhira* (The Dazzling), Qādī Nu'mān (d. 363/973) in his *Ta'wīl al-Da'ā'im* (Esoteric Interpretation of the *Da'ā'im*) and *Asās al-ta'wīl* (The Foundation of Esoteric Interpretation), Ja'far bin Maṣṣūr al-Yaman (d. 380/990) in his *Sarā'ir wa-asrār al-nuṣṣaqā'* (Innermost Realities and Secrets of the *nāṭiqs*), Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad Kirmānī (d. after 411/1021) in his *Rāḥat al-'aql* (The Peace of the Intellect) and *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* (The Book of Meadows), al-Mu'ayyad in his eight volumes of *Majālis*, Nāṣir in his *Wajh al-dīn* and others have all written about it. The gist and central theme of these works is that the *qiyāma* is like the "Recompense of action" (*pādāsh-i 'amal*) and the Qā'im is going to compensate the people justly according to their deeds, good or bad.

In Ismā'īlī interpretation, creation, as Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī says: "The creation according to Islam is not a unique act in a given time, but a perpetual and constant event"⁵³ is continuous and accordingly resurrection as the recompense of action also continues. Further, as in creation there are small and big changes, in resurrection too there are similar changes. These resurrections are represented in diverse spans of time in the Qur'ān, such the "twinkling of an eye" (16:77), "a day equal to a thousand years" (32:5) and "a day equal to fifty thousand years" (70:4). However, as already mentioned above, it is not an open, physical event. It is a hidden, spiritual event and therefore its portents (*ashrāt al-sā'a*) and all its catastrophic and pleasant consequences mentioned in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* are spiritual events. Therefore, the aforementioned literature does not discuss the physical aspect of the Qā'im, such as his features, his appearance in the east or the west, his wars, his period of rule, etc., as is commonly found in non-Ismā'īlī literature. If such matters are mentioned at all, they are taken in an esoteric *ta'wīlī* sense. There is no doubt that one thing is emphasised: that he is going to be one from the continuing line of Imāms from the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, as prophesied by him. He will establish equality and fill the earth with justice and equity. He will do the work of resurrection on God's behalf, just as many of His chosen servants have done and do His work, such as the Prophets, Imāms and angels.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Al-Majālis*, vol. I, pp. 355–356.

⁵² Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Iftikhār*, ed. I. K. Poonawala (Beirut, 2000), p. 181.

⁵³ Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, *Memoirs of Aga Khan* (London, 1954), p. 175.

⁵⁴ *Al-Iftikhār*, pp. 189–190.

To elaborate further, among all the synonyms of the *qiyāma* in the Qur'an, the term *sā'a*⁵⁵ (Hour) perhaps explains its nature most vividly. The *sā'a* conveys the concept of time from a moment faster than the twinkling of an eye (16:77) to countless spans of time. This suggests that there is one kind of *qiyāma* that constantly continues in this world. The combination of these short *qiyāmas* creates other *qiyāmas*, such as the *qiyāma* of a minute, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year, a century, a millennium and so on. It is on this basis that Ismā'īlī *dā'īs* have expounded the doctrine of *qiyāma* and the Qā'im. According to them, this is not a single event, but rather a continuation of events, which are called cycles, divided into major and minor ones. A major cycle consists of the six *nāṭiqs* and the Qā'im, each having a span of a thousand years approximately, totalling seven thousand years. A minor cycle is the cycle of one *nāṭiq* of one thousand years consisting of six Imāms, with the exception of the sixth *nāṭiq's* cycle. The *nāṭiqs* and the Qā'im are each called "lord of the cycle" (*ṣāhib al-dawr*).⁵⁶

The best explanation of the *qiyāma* is exemplified by the *ta'wīl* of the six days of creation and the seventh day of establishing the *musāwāt* (equality) on the Throne (*istawā 'alā'l-'arsh*), as mentioned in several verses, such as: "Verily, your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established *musāwāt* on the Throne" (7:54). Al-Mu'ayyad argues that, if this verse is taken literally, on the one hand, it removes omnipotence from God Who has the power to create a thing by simply saying "Be," and, on the other, leads to the inconceivability of measuring days without the existence of the sun and the earth! Therefore, this verse is not related to the origination of the external world, which He created by the power of *Kun* ("Be!"). These are not physical days, they are the parables for the six *nāṭiqs* and the Qā'im of the world of religion. Each of the six *nāṭiqs* brings a *sharī'a* (law) according to the needs and exigencies of his time and the people act according to it. Then comes the Qā'im, who takes account of the peoples' deeds and recompenses them justly and establishes justice and equity.

Having established the Qā'im as the seventh day of the week of religion, al-Mu'ayyad further elucidates his relationship with the Prophet and his sublime and mighty status in the true *da'wa*. Explaining that the seven days of the week symbolise the seven lords of the cycles, he says that Friday (*al-jumu'a*) symbolises Muḥammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and Saturday (*al-sabt*) symbolises the Qā'im (peace be upon his mention) from his descendants. The Qā'im receives all their powers and completes all their shares of *ta'yīd*. He is the

⁵⁵ For a profound explanation of the various kinds of *qiyāma*, see 'Allāmah Naṣīr Hunzai's *Mizān al-ḥaqā'iq* (Balance of Realities), trans. F. M. Hunzai & R. N. Hunzai (Karachi, 2001), pp. 10–22.

⁵⁶ Al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shirāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyyah*, ed. Ḥātim Ḥamid al-Dīn (Oxford, 1407 A.H.) vol. II, pp. 447–448; hereafter cited as *al-Majālis*.

lord of conspicuous, pure intellectual *da'wa*, and his cycle is the cycle of comfort, bliss and mercy.⁵⁷ Also in the *ta'wīl* of Ramaḍān and the Laylatu'l-Qadr which falls on the odd nights of the last ten nights, he says that by the Ramaḍān in which is revealed the Qur'ān, a guidance for humankind, clear proofs of guidance and the criterion, is the Prophet's *waṣī* (legatee) and in Laylatu'l-Qadr by *Qadr* (Power) is meant the *Qā'im-i āl-i Muḥammad*, who is the lord of reward and punishment (*ṣāhib al-thawāb wa'l-'iqāb*). During his time the worth of those who do good and those who do evil will be identified, and by the night (*Layl*) of *Qadr* is meant his *bāb* (threshold) and *ḥujjat* (proof), who will precede him. The revelation of the Qur'ān in it refers to its reality and the knowledge of its *ta'wīl*. Thus, the *bāb* of the Qā'im is the lord of the universal explanation and the real unveiling (*ṣāhib al-bayān al-kullī wa-al-kashf al-ḥaqīqī*).⁵⁸

3. Nāṣir's Exposition of the Salient Aspects of the Doctrine of the Qā'im:

It has already been pointed out that the Imām is the ultimate source of perfect knowledge. For any *ḥadd* under the Imām to claim knowledge as his own is a grave transgression of his bounds,⁵⁹ since the *ḥudūd* receive it from the Imām of their time. Thus, all the elements contained in the works of Nāṣir's predecessors are also to be found in his. Among his predecessors he particularly praises al-Mu'ayyad in his *Dīwān* and it may appear as though he has taken everything from him and others. However, in the Ismā'īlī *ḥudūd*, when someone reaches the level of a *ḥujjat*, he receives knowledge directly from the Imām. This is known as *ta'yīd* or spiritual help. In such cases, the similarity of ideas does not mean appropriating them from others, but that they are from the same source of knowledge. Since Nāṣir had reached the rank of a *ḥujjat*, his knowledge was *ta'yīdī* knowledge, as can be assessed from his experience with the Imām, about which he writes:

Bar jān-i man chū nūr-i imām-i zamān bi-tāft
Laylu's-sarār būdam-ū shamsu'd-ḥuḥā shudam
Nām-i buzurg imām-i zamānast zīn qibal
*Man az zamān chū zuhra badū bar samā shudam*⁶⁰

When the light of the Imam of the time shone upon my soul,
 Even though I was dark as night, I became the glorious sun.
 The Supreme Name is the Imam of the time;
 By which I ascended, Venus-like, from the earth to heaven.

⁵⁷ *Al-Majālis*, vol. II, pp. 447–448.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 611–612, see also p. 580; vol. I, pp. 359–360.

⁵⁹ *Wajh*, pp. 141–142.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

He also alludes to the opening of his inner eye and says:

Gar man darīn sarāy na-bīnam darān sarāy

Imrūz jā-yi khwīsh chi bāyad bašar marā⁶¹

If in this world I cannot see my place in that world

What use have I of these eyes?

Nāšir's writings contain all those essential characteristics of Ismā'īlī Shī'ism, such as the position of the innate intellect as a special gift from God to humankind and its need of upbringing with the true knowledge by a Divinely appointed Teacher, first given to Adam and continuing in his descendants, the Prophets and the Imāms. As Imām 'Alī says: "The knowledge which Adam brought and all that by which the Prophets were distinguished is in Muḥammad, the Seal of Prophets, and in his pure progeny. Where then are you misled, rather where do you go?"⁶²

As far as the innate intellect is concerned, Nāšir also considers it the first *hujjat* or messenger, which requires the help of the second *hujjat*⁶³ or Messenger. Thus, he says:

Chashm-i sar bī āftāb-i āsmān bī-kār gasht

Chashm-i dīl bī āftāb-i dīn chirā bī-kār nīst?⁶⁴

If the head's eye becomes useless without heaven's sun;

Why not the heart's eye without religion's sun?

Having established the indispensability of Divine guidance, he emphasises the need to search personally and to submit to the Divine Guide in order to attain his light, as he says:

"Know that when I realized that I had dominion over other animals and that their lives were protected because of my oversight, such that the benefit of their creation was not lost by being destroyed by rapacious beasts, I came to know that the Creator has appointed someone to protect me so that the benefit of my creation would not be lost so long as I remained in his protection. Therefore, I searched for my sovereign and sought from him relief from the agony of ignorance and eternal perdition, like an animal that runs to its owner's house to escape the torture of cold, heat and the fear of rapacious beasts. I found him; in relation to him I am as cattle in relation to humankind. He relieved me from the pain of ignorance and enabled me to reach the breeze of spring from the *simoom* (hot wind) of the speeches of deceivers. He liberated my soul from the venom of the

⁶¹ *Dīwān* (Mīnuwī edition), p. 12.

⁶² *Da'ā'im*, vol. I, p. 98.

⁶³ Nāšir-i Khusraw, *Khawān al-Ikhwān*, ed. 'A. Qawīm (Tehran, 1959), p. 29.

⁶⁴ *Dīwān* (Taḡawī edition), p. 78.

people of *taqlīd* (blind conformity), *ta'fīl*⁶⁵ and *tashbīh*⁶⁶ and quenched and satiated my soul with soul-nourishing food and drink.”⁶⁷

More vigorously still, he says about the indispensability of the Divine Guide, the Imām:

Har ki nūr-i āftāb-i dīn judā gashtah azū

*Rūzhā-yi ū hamīsha juz shabān-i tār nīst*⁶⁸

He from whom the sun of religion's light is separated,

His days are always nothing but dark nights.

Nāṣir also emphasises that the Qā'im is not separate from the line of Imamate, he culminates a great cycle as intended by God. As for the culmination of a cycle, the numerous examples of the number seven in the Qur'ān show that He completes things in seven stages, for instance the physical creation of humankind is described in (23:12–14) as: “Verily We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him of a [drop of] sperm, in a firm resting place; then We made it into a clot, then We made the clot into a lump, then We made the lump flesh, then We clothed the bones with flesh, thereafter We caused it to grow into another creation.” In the same way, the creation of the world of religion is completed in the cycles of the six *nāṭiqs*, while recompense takes place in the seventh cycle, that of the Qā'im. It is important to note that “another creation” (*khalq ākhar*) does not occur separately from the previous stages of the extract of clay (*sulāla*), sperm (*nuffa*), clot (*'alaqa*), lump (*mudgha*), bones (*'izām*) and flesh (*lahm*). Nonetheless, “another creation” is the end and the rest are the means. Similarly, the chain of Prophets and Imāms is important, but the Qā'im is the completion of a Divine programme. His cycle is the seventh day of the week of religion.

We have seen earlier in this paper that, whereas the literalists consider the *qiyāma* or resurrection as a single cosmic event that will occur in the future, Ismā'īlīs consider it a continuous chain of small and great events, which they call minor and major cycles. A major cycle consists of six *nāṭiqs* and the Qā'im, and a minor cycle consists of six Imāms between one *nāṭiq* and another, with the exception of the sixth *nāṭiq*. Thus, countless resurrections have taken place already and they will continue to occur in the future. As Nāṣir says:

⁶⁵ *Ta'fīl*: A concept that upholds the belief that the world is eternal (*qadīm*) and has no creator, rather the creator of its generated beings (*mawālid*) are the heavens and the stars, which have always existed.

⁶⁶ *Tashbīh*: A concept which maintains that God possesses in a true sense all those human attributes mentioned in the Qur'ān.

⁶⁷ *Khawān al-ikhwān*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Dīwān* (Taḳawī edition), p. 78.

*Huwa 'l-awwal, huwa 'l-ākhir, huwa 'z-zāhir, huwa 'l-bātin,
Munazzah māliki 'l-mulkī ki bi-pāyān ḥashr dārad*⁶⁹

He is the first, He is the last, He is the manifest, He is the hidden.

He, the pure Sovereign of the Kingdom, has endless resurrections.

In these endless *qiyāmas*, the cycle of the Qā'im is the most important as the Divine programme culminates in his cycle and he is granted extraordinary power, as testified to in the Qur'ān: "A day when no soul has power at all for any (other) soul. The command on that day shall belong to Allāh" (82:19); "Whose is the sovereignty this day? It is Allāh's, the One, the Overwhelming" (40:16). Nāṣir writes in his *Shish Faṣl* that all the previous Messengers came to give people the glad news of the Qā'im's glorious and blissful advent and warn them of his overwhelming power and strength. The great news (*al-naba' al-'azīm*) mentioned in the Qur'ān (78:1–3) belongs to him, which was emphatically prophesied by the Prophet as well.⁷⁰

In his *Jāmi'*, Nāṣir argues that the advent of the Qā'im is an inevitable and necessary consequence of the creation of religion mentioned in numerous verses, such as: "God is He that created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days and then He established equality on the Throne (*istawā 'alā-l-'arsh*)."⁷¹ In his *Wajh*, he also emphasises the finality of the Prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad. He says that, since human beings have six sides, God sent six *nāṭiqs* representing each of these sides, i.e. Adam for the top, Noah for the left side, Abraham the back, Moses the bottom, Jesus the right side and Muḥammad the front. Each of them told the people to work and promised them that one day they would be recompensed for their work. Nāṣir continues that, since human beings have six sides with which to perform work and for every side a commander (*kār-farmā*) came to teach them to work, logically it entails that no other commander, or prophet, will come [to command them to work]. Once it is established that the sixth *nāṭiq*, i.e. Prophet Muḥammad has come and completed the purpose of Prophethood, the expectation of another *nāṭiq* becomes meaningless. Now, since it is the habit of people to demand recompense for their work, justice necessitates that someone must come to compensate them. This will be the Qā'im, not as the lord of a *sharī'a*, but the lord of reckoning.⁷² That is, he will reckon the deeds of the people, good or bad, and recompense them accordingly.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 134.

⁷⁰ See Footnote 3.

⁷¹ *Jāmi'*, pp. 163–165; here Nāṣir takes to task the exoteric commentators for their ridiculous exegesis, particularly reading *istawla* instead of *istawā*—see Shafique N. Virani's article "The Days of Creation in the Thought of Nasir Khusraw" in *Nasir Khusraw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Khujand, 2005), pp. 74–83.

⁷² *Wajh*, pp. 62–63.

In his *Jāmi'* Nāṣir further emphasises that the meaning of *istawā 'alā-l-'arsh* is the execution of God's command by the Qā'im, as he is God's Throne. After the six days of creation elapse, his day will appear and the command of God will be applied to the people by force, as he says: "This will be the day of establishing the truth and the people of intellect will be in bliss in every respect and the darkness of ignorance will vanish by the light of his knowledge",⁷³ as God says: "And the earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord" (39:69). However, the blessings on the day of *qiyāma* will be for the believers only, while for the disbelievers it will be equally tortuous. There will be "magnanimity (*karāmat*) for the believers, but for the disbelievers there will be indemnity (*gharāmat*)."⁷⁴ In another example, he compares the Qā'im to fire, which has both light and smoke—light is the share of the believers and smoke that of the disbelievers.⁷⁵ To show the stark difference between the souls of the believers and the polytheists before and after the Qā'im's advent, Nāṣir gives an example of two trees, one fresh and green and the other dead with its roots shrivelled up. During winter, it is difficult to see the difference between them. However the one that is fresh and green looks forward to the spring, when it will sprout green leaves and fragrant colourful flowers and finally delicious fruit, whereas the one that is dried up will become darker and drier by the day until it completely shrivels up.⁷⁶

With respect to religious practices, the intellectual *sharī'a* (*sharī'at-i 'aqlī*) will continue and the conventional *sharī'a* (*sharī'at-i waq'ī*) will become superfluous. That is, the realities (*haqā'iq*), which were previously protected by the layers of allegories, will be accessible. There will no longer be a need for allegories and parables, and the *ta'wīl* will be given in its utterly pure form (*ta'wīl-i mujarrad-i maḥd*). Thus, very few practices will remain, and the *ta'wīlī* knowledge will be available in its sublime form. The Prophet had prophesied such a time in saying: "You are in an age in which anyone of you who abandons one-tenth of what is ordered (to do), will perish. Then, a time will come when anyone of them who shall observe one-tenth of what is now ordered to do will be redeemed."⁷⁷

Finally, with respect to recognition of the Qā'im, on the basis of the *ta'wīl* of Ramaḍān and Laylatu'l-Qadr occurring as one of the oddly numbered nights of its last ten nights,⁷⁸ and of some other practices,⁷⁹ Nāṣir writes in his *Wajh* that

⁷³ *Jāmi'*, pp. 165–166.

⁷⁴ *Wajh*, p. 176.

⁷⁵ *Shish Faṣl*, p. 43.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ Muḥammad b. 'Īsā Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī* (Riyād, 1999), p. 521, *ḥadīth* 2267; Waliyyu'd-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd, *Mishkātu'l-maṣābiḥ*, trans. Faḍlu'l-Karīm (Lahore, 1938) I, p. 171; Sayyid Amir 'Alī, *Spirit of Islam* (Karachi, 1991), p. 183.

⁷⁸ *Wajh*, pp. 260–261.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

the Qā'im is one of the direct descendants of the Prophet's *asās* and his time will be the most glorious with respect to knowledge. The believers will be so spiritually advanced that they will be able to communicate with spiritual entities.⁸⁰

Nāṣir describes another difference between the previous Imāms and the Qā'im. An Imam's son becomes his *bāb* or the supreme *ḥujjat*, but in the case of the *Qā'im al-qiyāma*, his father will act as his *bāb*. The Qā'im will not act openly, rather he will work through his father and his recognition will be extremely difficult, because he can be recognized only through the *asās*, Imām, *bāb*, *ḥujjat* and *dā'ī*. His father will apparently be the most glorious Imām among the Imāms throughout the cycle. His position will be like the Laylatu'l-Qadr or the night of power, which is better than a thousand months. That is, the *bāb* or the supreme *ḥujjat* of the Qā'im will be superior to a thousand Imāms in knowledge.

To conclude, the doctrine of the Qā'im is an universal doctrine couched in different terms and expressed in varied forms. However, within the Islamic context, according to Ismā'īlī Shī'ism, he is one of the Imāms in the chain of Prophets and Imāms in whose time the Divine light becomes perfect, as promised by God Himself in verses (9:32; 61:8). Indeed, the Divine light never increases or decreases as such, therefore its perfection is in relation to people's receptivity of it. Just as the light of the physical sun does not increase or decrease, but changes with respect to the earth's position relative to it. The Ismā'īlī doctrine of the Qā'im can be likened to the analogy of the sun and its effect on the planet earth in different seasons from 21st December to 21st March and 21st June. Although the sun is the same, its effect on the earth's surface is different on these days, in terms of the length of days and the heat generated by it. It is thus obvious that Nāṣir-i Khusraw's doctrine of the Qā'im differs profoundly from those who follow the Book and the *sharī'a* literally.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 193.