



Eight Questions Answered

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EIGHT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

By

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PREFACE

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds: and the End belongs to the righteous; and blessing and peace be upon His Messenger and his pure progeny.

For sensible and wise people it is as clear as broad daylight that with regards to knowledge, all subjects are contained in the gnosis or understanding of religion (*din-shināsi*) and in the gnosis or recognition of Imām (*imām-shināsi*). Hence in Ismā^cīlism the gnosis of religion and Imām is extremely necessary, without which no Ismā^cīlī can attain real satisfaction.

It is through knowledge and gnosis (*ilm-ū mārifat*) that problems are solved, doubts and uncertainties are removed, the illumination of faith (*īmān kī roshni*) is increased, and the heart and soul attain satisfaction. It is knowledge and gnosis which generate qualities of ambition and high-aspiration in true believers (*mu'min*). In short, everything is contained in knowledge and gnosis.

When does a question arise? A question arises at a time when there is no mutual acquaintance, when there is no knowledge and understanding (gnosis) of religion and when there is no literature available and no attention is given to understanding the religion.

However, if there are questions, it does not mean that answers to them are not possible. In fact an answer for every question can be availed. But the important thing is that the answer should be based on reality and truthfulness, for otherwise no benefit will be availed from the answer.

Thus an attempt is made within this book to answer eight such questions which were posed by one of our students. Since the student has placed his confidence in us, it is our duty to try and solve them and to ask Allāh, the Most High, for success and help in this task.

According to me it is not difficult to reply any question with regard

to the truthfulness of Ismāʿīlism. In fact it is very easy, to the extent that even if there are thousands of questions it is not a problem, for we can prove and show that whatever questions arise pertaining to Ismāʿīlism, they all together take the form of a huge tree; thus by discussing the trunk and bigger branches of the tree we can reply to all the questions relating to the tree. In the same way, by discussing the fundamentals of Ismāʿīlism, we can reply all questions pertaining to Ismāʿīlism and show that Ismāʿīlism and the Imām of the age are indeed the real truth. That is to say, for those who are able to understand, this fundamental question alone is sufficient to their enquiry: "What proof is there of the Imām being the real truth?" For, all other relevant questions come under this focal question. But have the common people ever kept this in mind? They ask whatever questions they like and whatever question that occurs to their minds.

It is without any doubt that Ismāʿīlīs should look to their true Imām; to know what is his implicit guidance (*manshāʿ*) or what is his explicit guidance, for in establishing this principle (of looking to the true Imām for guidance) religious knowledge can be disseminated.

It should be kept in mind that a question can be answered directly or indirectly, and it is important to reply in the way the question has been asked, for otherwise in some circles of the *jamāʿat* (community) there may spread doubt about their faith and furthermore, this may affect the belief particularly of the new generation. If God will grant us help and success in this task, we will continue our efforts in the future and try to remove doubts (concerning Ismāʿīlism) in one way or another.

For Knowledge,
The servant of the *Jamāʿat*
Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr Hunzai, 24 December 1976

QUESTIONS

1. Why do women sometimes lead the prayers in *jamā'at-khānah*, while there is no such precedent in the *sharī'at* (revealed law)?
2. Why is money collected in *jamā'at-khānah* under the name of different assemblies (*majālis*) and on different occasions? For since *jamā'at-khānah* is the house of God, surely only prayers should be performed there.
3. When any other Muslim brother wants to come to *jamā'at-khānah*, why should he not be allowed to come?
4. How can Shāh Karīm, the Imām of the Ismā'īlīs in truth be the true Imām, while in Europe he leads a western way of life?
5. Why is your *zakāt* (religious tax) different from the *shar'ī zakāt* (religious tax according to *sharī'at*) ? Why is it not distributed among the poor and needy directly?
6. To what extent are your religious rites correct and valid? Tell me about *nāndī* in particular.
7. How far do the Ismā'īlīs follow the *ṣalāt* (ritual prayer)? What do they mean by *ṣalāt*?
8. Why do men and women pray together in the *jamā'at-khānah*?

Note: These questions were posed by an Ismā'īlī student in the month of December 1976.

QUESTIONS REPLIED

1. Women Leading the Prayers

Why do women sometimes lead the prayers in *jamā^cat-khānah*, while there is no such precedent in the *shari^cat*?

(a) Islam is the right path. It has been ordained to lead towards God. When, as according to this example, true religion is likened to a path, then it also has stations which are called *shari^cat*, *ṭariqat* (Sūfic path), *ḥaqīqat* (truth) and *ma^crifat* (gnosis or the recognition of God). Just as Sūfism is a clear proof of development within Islam from one station to the next, so are the manners and rites of the *jamā^cat-khānah* a living example of following and spiritually advancing along the same straight path of Islam, and progressing to a higher station. And it is quite clear that in Sūfism there are thousands of things which do not exist in *shari^cat*, for how can it be possible for such things to be in *shari^cat* while they pertain to *ṭariqat*? Likewise, the things pertaining to *jamā^cat-khānah*, i.e. the manners and rites therein belong to *ḥaqīqat* and to judge them on a criterion other than of *ḥaqīqat* is nothing but a proof of oversight and ignorance.

(b) Furthermore, if on the level or stage of *shari^cat* a woman cannot lead men in *shar^ci namāz* (ritual prayer according to *shari^cat*), then there is no other apparent reason for this except that this prohibition has a *ta'wil* (esoteric interpretation or de-allegorization). Contrary to this, whatever *ibādat-ū bandagī* (devotional prayers) is performed in the *jamā^cat-khānah* has no *ta'wil*; in fact, it is itself a *ta'wil*. Therefore in *jamā^cat-khānah* a woman may lead the prayers.

If the question is then asked what the *ta'wil* is of not allowing women to lead *shar^ci namāz*, then the answer is that in religion the Prophet is in the position of a man and all the individuals within the entire community are in the position of a woman. Likewise, the Imām (may peace of God be upon him) is in the position of a man and all his followers are in the position of a woman, and similarly, the teacher is like a man and the student is like a woman. Thus according to *shari^cat* if a woman leads men in *shar^ci namāz* then

according to *ta'wīl* it implies that (God forbidding) the Prophet should leave his position and become a follower and the community should take the position of the Prophet and lead him; or, that the Imām should become a follower and the followers should become the Imām, and that the teacher should become the student and vice-versa. So this *ta'wīl* shows how the fact of a woman leading the men in *shar'ī namāz* indicates an impossible matter, i.e. that the Prophet, playing the role of a man, should assume the role of a woman, which is the community; and for this reason women are not allowed to lead men in *shar'ī namāz* only on the level of *sharī'at*.

c) Islam, in fact, comprises of the teachings and instructions of both the Qur'ān and the teacher of the Qur'ān, and to travel along the different stages of these teachings and instruction means to walk on the straight path (*ṣirāṭ-i mustaqīm*), and to advance from one station to the next station. In the same context, we can also say that Islam, with respect to its stages of knowledge and practice, is like a university which has various progressive degrees of learning. Now it is clear from this example that just as each of the various university degrees has its own criteria, similarly for all these different degrees of knowledge and practice in Islam there are ordained different criteria. Thus we say that to judge Ismā'īlī rites on a criterion other than the Ismā'īlī criterion is not logical.

d) If Islam is the straight path, then one has to accept that Muslim sects or groups are like the travelers who are spread on the various stations of the path, on which some travelers are following the others. Further, if the true religion, as the Qur'ān says, is the rope of God, the Most High, and this rope is between God and His servants, then it also implies that the servants are each holding the rope in various ascending degrees, one behind the other. Further still, where ascension towards the heights of gnosis of God (according to 52:3,4) is compared with a staircase, there it can be inferred likewise that the people of different religions are each on different stairs. Just as the manifest religion (*dīn-i mubīn*), i.e. Islam, can be likened to a university, where the students of the university are in different grades similarly the believers in Islam with respect to knowledge and practice (*'ilm-ū 'amal*) can be seen to be in different stages. The religion of Nature (i.e. Islam) has been compared with human creation and the different stages of life, such as the child in

mother's womb, the new-born, the sucking-babe, the tyro, youth, the middle-aged, and the old, and similarly there are different stages in religion. This example shows that Islam is the religion of Nature and it has to reach to its perfection just as a human-being gradually reaches to perfection. In short, the teachings of Islam are in degrees and as such its instructions are also in gradual form. Thus the objection of one against the other is nothing but ignorance of the stages of the Islamic teachings.

2. Material Sacrifice (*Mālī Ourbānī*) in *Jamā'at-khānah*

Why is money collected in *Jamā'at-khānah* under the name of different assemblies (*majālis*) and on different occasions? For since *Jamā'at-khānah* is the house of God, surely only prayers should be performed there.

a) It is true that business pertaining to worldly matters cannot be conducted either in the *Jamā'at-khānah* or in the mosque. On the other hand, *zakāt* (religious tax) *ṣadaqah* (alms), and every other type of material sacrifice, and in addition, many other good deeds, are such that they are more rewarding if they are performed in the house of God. As God says:

"(O Prophet! Remind the people that) when We made the house (of God) a place of reward for mankind and a sanctuary." (2:125)

It is quite obvious that the house of God is a place for all kinds of reward. The house of God is foremost the *Kā'bah*, and then the mosque and the *Jamā'at-khānah*. Thus since the centre of reward is the house of God then why should most of the deeds not be performed therein? Since these good deeds are performed for the sake of God, they should be done in the house of God; and since these deeds, these material sacrifices and good deeds are included in religious services (*ibādāt*) then why should they not be performed in the house of God?

In this way the doers of the good deeds will benefit from the prayers of all and at the same time this is a kind of practical teaching, for in observing these deeds, the members of the *jamā'at* are able to

create within themselves the spirit of offering material sacrifices and performing such good deeds. This is the reason why even in the time of the Prophet, most material sacrifices were received in the mosque.

3. Jamā^cat-khānah and Non-Ismā^cilis

When any other Muslim brother wants to come to *Jamā^cat-khānah*, why should he not be allowed to come?

a) For a detailed answer to this question see also my article entitled "*Islām ki Bunyādī Haqīqatayn* (The Fundamental Realities of Islam)" which is going to be published in "*Panj Maqālah* (Five Articles) No. I" Further, the question arises that will the person who wants to come to *jamā^cat-khānah* accepts all the conditions, manners and rites of the *jamā^cat-khānah* as an Ismā^cli does? If it is not possible for him to do so, then there is no benefit in his coming to the *jamā^cat-khānah*. So in this case it is better for him not to come to the *jamā^cat-khānah*.

b) In Islam there are certain holy buildings which are common among the Muslims, and there are some which are private. Among the holy places or buildings which are common, first comes the *Ka^cbah*, and then comes the mosque, for these buildings belong to the period when all Muslims were one. However, in some places there are certain mosques, which owing to either different views or different sects are private. Similarly, in fact more stringently, *khānqāh*, *imām bārah*, and *jamā^cat-khānah* are private places, for these places are respected only by those who are basically attached to them in faith and thus no other people may share in these holy places.

c) 'Mosque', which in Arabic is called '*masjid*', means the place of prostration or place of worship. Therefore this word invites all the Muslims to go there and bow before God and worship Him. But in the word *jamā^cat-khānah*, *ibādat* or worship, is not apparent, as *jamā^cat-khānah*, in Persian, means the house of a group, which belongs only to a particular group and not to all. Such is the philosophy intrinsic in the meaning of *khānqāh*. *Khānqāh* is the Arabicised form of *khāngāh* or *khānah-gāh*, which means the place where Ṣūfis and dervishes live. Here also the meaning 'worship' is

kept in secret, for otherwise the Şūfis would have chosen a word which would have immediately and openly denoted worship (i.e. would have meant a place of worship). But this was done intentionally for there they had to instruct the teaching of Islam in a specific way. Also, each *khānqāh* was confined to the disciples of a particular *pīr* or *shaykh* (spiritual guide). This same example may be applied to the *jamā'at-khānah* for the *jamā'at-khānah* in the beginning was the *khānqāh* itself. We come across the *jamā'at-khānah* of *Bakhtyār-i Kākī* in the biographies of the Şūfis, and this is later adopted in Ismā'īlism. This historical event is a clear proof of the fact that *ṭarīqat* comes from the depth (*bāṭin*) of *shari'at* and *ḥaqīqat* emerges from the depth of *ṭarīqat*, This whole discussion leads to the conclusion that the Ismā'īlis belong only to the followers of the *Hāzīr* (i.e. present) Imām.

4. Dwelling Place of the Imām

How can *Shāh Karīm*, the Imām of the Ismā'īlis, truly be the true Imām when in Europe he leads a western way of life?

a) This question should be your fundamental question about Ismā'īlism, for through a single answer proving or disproving the right of the Imām the whole discussion can be ended. If it is proved that he is indeed the true Imām, then no one has the right, inspite of accepting him as the true Imām, of raising any objections against him; and if it is proved that he is not the true Imām then there is no need to take the trouble of asking any further questions. But nonetheless, the questions have been repeated here. However, isn't the purport of your question such that if we prove that the residence of the Imām in Europe is permissible and lawful, then you will accept *Shāh Karīm al-Husaynī* as the true Imām?

b) If according to you the western way of living is un-Islamic, and it is for this reason that you have posed this question, then it is necessary for you to have referred to the Qur'ānic ordinance in the light of which you could have justified your asking of this question. We therefore ask you: 'Is there in the Qur'ān any such verse which ordains the present-day Islamic society and its requirements in a fixed form?' If there is no such verse, then can anyone prove from the

Qur'an that Muslims should eat, dress and live in houses or tents in the manner which Muslims used to during the time of the Holy Prophet? It is obvious that even an ordinary person cannot accept such a notion, let alone to have proven such a notion from the Qur'an.

c) It seems that there is no particular logic underlying your question except that your reasoning is based on the material condition of the Muslims during the time of the Prophet, despite the fact that it was only the beginning of the religion of God; for how would it have been possible to have materialized all the potential economic and social development within Islam of the entire period, i.e: *dawr-i Muḥammadi* (Muḥammadan Period) in the short time of only twenty-three years? In short, you think that the present-day economical condition of Islam should be the same as it was at the advent of Islam. But alas! this mode of your thought is opposed first by the Arab Muslims, for their economical condition is far better now than it was previously. Apart from that, the very mode of your thinking is very dangerous, for you do not like the worldly and material progress of Muslims, to the extent that in the present Islamic world none among the emperors, kings, governors, leaders, heads or rich and well-to-do people can escape your objection. Nor do you leave any hope of progress in the future. In any case, let us look at what the Holy Qur'an says as regards this matter.

Spiritual Wisdom and Luminous Science

The Qur'an says:

"Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allāh which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, and purely for them on the Day of Judgement (i.e. the period of *qiyāmat*)".(7-32)

This Qur'anic ordinance clearly shows the fact: that your question is baseless. For Allāh, the Most High, has created the good things of adornment and sustenance for His servants, and in the period of *qiyāmat* these things will be in a special form for the believers. Thus this fact is proved, that our Lord *Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī* is the true Imām, for he through his way of living announces the glad tidings that very soon the promise of God mentioned above, which

He has made for His faithful servants is going to be fulfilled.

d) Our Lord *Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī* is the true Imām, and in proof of this most important fact we have thousands of arguments which no truth-loving person can reject. You should study the subjects regarding the proof of Imāmat in Ismā'īlī literature. In Islam the concept of caliphate is a well-accepted fact. And it is our belief that the vicegerent of God and His Messenger are ever-existent in this world and during our time that vicegerent of God and His Messenger is our Lord *Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī*. If it is possible to refute this fact then one should say: "No! The vicegerent of God is such and such a person from such and such a family, and who is living not in Europe, but in such and such a place." Or he should say that there is no caliphate as such in Islam, or he should say, well in Islam the caliphate was there in the beginning, but later on according to such and such an ordinance God took it back into His own hands or abrogated it. Such a refutation is impossible, however, and therefore one has to accept the fact that *Shāh Karīm* is the true Imām.

e) We say that our Lord *Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī* is the true Imām, for he is the light of guidance from God. If it is possible to refute this fact, then one should say that at present the light of guidance and beacon of divine authority is such and such a person, who for the sake of the spreading and propagation of Islam has chosen the way of poverty and privation and is running away from worldly progress; whose genealogy goes back to the Messenger of God, and whose ancestors were for their times the light of guidance from God. I am sure that such a refutation cannot possibly be made. Hence it is evident that at present, only *Shāh Karīm* is the real successor of the chain of Imāmat, and he is the true imām and no one other than he is in this position.

f) In this world there is no scarcity of people who falsely claim a grand religious position and some even succeed in holding this claim for some time. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that falsehood cannot stand for a long time and vanishes away while the truth stands for ever. As the Qur'ān says:

"And say (O Messenger!): Truth has come and falsehood has

vanished away and falsehood is ever bound to vanish."

In this verse, in the language of wisdom, it is said that the divine vicegerency (*khilāfat-i ilāhiyyah*) and supreme leadership (*imāmat-i ʿaliyyah*) which the Prophet possessed, was the real truth and therefore it will continue to be in this world for ever.

Similarly the Prophet was the light of guidance from God. Since the light from God is itself the truth (*nūr-i ḥāqq ḥi ḥaqq hay*) and the Truth stands for ever, then now where is that Truth (light of guidance) if it is not the true Imām who is *Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī* (peace be upon him)? It is said therefore that the divine light despite the attempts of the opponents to extinguish it never becomes extinguished; for it is Truth and not falsehood. If it is proved that my Imām is the source of guidance on behalf of God and of His Messenger, then what more illuminating argument than this one is needed in proof of his being the Truth itself; and it is in Islam a truth for such a source and centre of guidance to exist, as it existed in the time of the Prophet and continued to exist after him.

5. Zakāt

Why is your *zakāt* (religious tax) different from the *sharʿī zakāt*? Why is it not distributed among the poor and needy directly?

a) I have argued at the beginning of this booklet in the first answer that there is a difference between *sharīʿat*, *ṭarīqat*, *ḥaqīqat* and *maʿrifat*, but that their supreme goal (*maqṣad-i ʿlā*) is the same. Thus if a sensible person will observe for a while he will come to know clearly that the spirit and the ultimate purpose of *zakāt* which should be accomplished in Islam, has continued to exist perfectly in Ismāʿīlīs.

b) I have said that according to our faith (i.e. Ismāʿīlism) the way of *zakāt* is exactly in accordance with the requisite of the Islamic spirit and its ultimate purpose, and none benefit elsewhere as much as the poor and needy and helpless benefit here. The Imām from one aspect takes *zakāt* and from another aspect he does not take *zakāt*. Thus the greatest merit of the *zakāt* system of the Ismāʿīlīs is that it changes according to the changing circumstances of time; that

is to say that the system adjusts itself according to the requirements of the time. The best way of providing for the needy the benefit of *zakāt* is to make an attempt to eradicate the curse of ignorance and poverty entirely and enrich them with the wealth of knowledge and skill forever instead of giving them one meal or giving them a pair of clothes or distributing among them some cash or kind. To achieve this goal the establishment of various institutions of education, health, etc., is a must, and in order to actualize this goal *zakāt* is collected under the supervision and guidance of the Imām of the age. In this sense I have said that on one aspect the Imām takes *zakāt* while on the other he does not. That is to say that the Imām takes *zakāt* from the *jamā'at* only in the sense that he supervises the above-mentioned system, gives blessings, and approves and gives guidance regarding the expenses in establishing and running the community institutions.

c) The philosophy of unanimity, harmony and unity is such that the strength of *zakāt* should be guarded from being scattered. It should be collected in one place and should be used according to the guidance of the true Guide.

In earlier times those virtuous deeds which were preferred were necessary according to that time; for instance, to purchase male and female slaves and set them free, to feed and clothe orphans, the poor, and the needy. Now the greatest reward lies in enriching the needy with the eternal wealth of knowledge and skill and establishing institutions of religious and worldly prosperity and welfare so that it will increase the progress and prosperity of the country and the nation and strengthen and help the universal spirit of Islam. The Imām employs *zakāt* according to this object of Islam.

6. Religious Rites and Rituals

To what extent are your religious rites correct and valid? Tell me about *nāndī* in particular.

a) Much can be said in proof of the genuineness and rightness of

our religious rites. However, here it will suffice to mention just a few points. Prior to dealing with religious rites, first of all, it is necessary to understand that in both the religious and material worlds most of the real and valuable things are such that their existence and subsistence lie in insignificant things. For instance, the trunk and branches of a tree are protected by the bark. Similarly flowers, fruits and grains have also a husk of their own kind, or a hull in which the main and real thing will remain protected, and if some ignorant person will peel the bark and throw it away considering it to be useless, it is obvious that the tree will dry out very soon. Similarly, there is no doubt that religious rites in the eyes of an ignorant person might seem to be unimportant and ordinary, but a wise man knows how well the tree of beliefs and faith is protected by the bark of religious rites and how important the husk is for the ripeness and protection of the fruits on the tree. This example shows that if there were no religious rites the creed would cease to exist.

b) Our religious rites are perfectly right and true and are based on truth for they all are in accordance with the commands of the Imām of the age or are verified by him, since the Imām is invested with religious authority by God and His Messenger; for he not only executes the commands of God and His Messenger, but also gives guidance, since he himself as *ulu al-amr* (the one who is invested with divine authority) is the divine Guide. Hence there is not an iota of doubt that our religious rites are true and right.

c) It is a fact that the basis and foundation of *tashrīc* (making *sharīc* or law) is the permissible and suitable customs and manners of a country and nation, and thus this very same principle was kept in view when Islamic law was made. That is to say that useful pre-Islamic customs and usages were retained in Islam. And when any change is made in a corner of *sharīc*, it is because of a corresponding change in customs and usages.

(See : “*Islām - Dīn-i Āsān*” awr “*Ijtihādī Masā’il*”, “Islam-Religion of Simplicity” and “Problems of Individual Interpretation”, by *Mawlānā Jāfar Shāh Phulwārī*).

d) *Nāndī* (or *Munādi*) means the proclamation of taking part in a good deed. This custom is exactly in accordance with the concept of contest (*musābaqah*) in Islam. As it is said in the Qur'an:

"And they hasten (in contest) in good works" (3:114) i. e. they try to excel in goodness. It is also said: "It is these who hasten in good works and they are foremost in them" (23:61)

"So compete in good works" (5:48)

To compete in good works, to demonstrate in altruism and sacrifice, and to induce others to do good through the example of one's own good work, are all among the Qur'anic teachings. Therefore some of these good works are demonstrated in the *jamā'at-khānah*, so that the practical aspect of religion will always be present in the eyes of the *jamā'at*; just as the Prophet quite often used to announce in the mosque that such and such a project needs material sacrifice and the companions (may God be pleased with them) used to take part in that project with zeal and enthusiasm.

7. Salāt

How far do the Ismā'īlīs follow the *ṣalāt*? What do they mean by *ṣalāt*?

Ṣalāt means *namāz* (ritual prayer), *du'ā* (prayers), *raḥmat* (blessings), and *durūd* (benediction). However, wherever, the word *ṣalāt* is used in the sense of *du'ā*, *raḥmat* and *durūd*, there arises no question as to its sense; but wherever it is used in the sense of *namāz* it also means the kind of *namāz* in which there is no *rukū'* (genuflexion) and *sujūd* (prostration), such as *namāz-i jināzah* (funeral prayer – 9:84) and the prayer of the birds (24:41), Thus where *ṣalāt* means *namāz* we have established it not only in the past, but also in the present; its practical example, fruit and wisdom of *ta'wīl* (esoteric interpretation) exist in our faith; and where *ṣalāt* is used in the sense of *du'ā*, this we always recite in the *jamā'at-khānah*. In other words, *ṣalāt* means *namāz* as well as *du'ā*, in the same way that the worship and devotion (*ibādat-ū bandagī*) which we practise in the *jamā'at-khānah* is on the one hand *du'ā* and on the

other hand *namāz*. For *‘ibādat-ū bandagi* contains the spirit and ultimate purpose of *namāz* perfectly.

(For further information see *Gulistān-i Ḥadīs* (The Garden of Traditions), by *Mawlānā Ja‘far Shāh Phulwārwi*)

b) For how long can the spirit and purpose of *namāz* be maintained? To understand this one should study the Qur’ānic verse (2:239):

“If you fear, then pray standing (i.e. walking) or riding.” Now in this form of *namāz* it is obvious that the originality, reality and purpose of *namāz* remain the same, albeit almost all the formal manners of *namāz* are done away with, for in praying standing or riding, neither the condition of *qiblah* (direction of the *ka‘bah*) is fulfilled nor are the conditions of genuflection and prostration, etc. fulfilled. Yes, indeed there is no doubt that this is *namāz-i khawf* (prayer of fear), of which it can be said that this is in the case of compulsion. But in fact it is not compulsion, but rather, a form of ease in the practice of religion. Further, it is also a proof of the fact that *namāz* is of various kinds and the main part in all these kinds is *du‘ā* and *zīkr-i ilāhī* (remembrance of God), wherein lies the spirit of worship and the essence of the attainment of the goal. This is the reason for which in the *namāz-i khawf* all those things without which the spirit and purpose of *namāz* can be maintained, are removed. Now the form of such a *namāz* is almost just like *du‘ā*, *tasbih* (glorification of God) and *zīkr-i ilāhī* (remembrance of God), and therefore I have said that worship (*‘ibādat*) in *jamā‘at-khānah* is not only *du‘ā* but is also a kind of *namāz*.

The fact should always be kept in mind that Allāh, the Most High, desires for Muslims ease and facility and not hardship and difficulty. As He says: “Allāh desires for you ease; He does not desire hardship for you” (2:185). But then arises the question that if God, the Most High, desires for us ease and facility and does not like any difficulty in religious matters (*dīnī aḥkāṃ*) then what can hinder the actualization (*zuhūr-i fi‘l*) of His will and power (*mash‘iyyat-ū qudrat*)? And what should His servants do to receive

such a great mercy? The answer for this question can also be found in the Qur'ān, in this command of God:

"And whosoever fears Allāh, He will make his course easy for him" (65:4).

You should not forget, that this guidance was given during the time of prophethood (*zamānah-yi nubuwwat*), and there are glad tidings in it that those who in complying with religious commands observe the fear of God will be provided in the future with ease and facility in religion: for the purpose of the difficulty, austerity and hardship which accompanies *'ibādāt* (religious services) and *mu'āmalāt* (transactions) is nothing but the fear of God (*taqwā*), and the fear of God is everything. In connection with the explanation and illustration of this purpose it is said:

"Allāh will vouchsafe after hardship, ease" (65:7).

That is to say that God will reveal *ṭarīqat* from the depth (*bāṭin*) of *sharī'at*, and *ḥaqīqat* from the depth of *ṭarīqat*, and He will introduce the wisdom of *ta'wil* (esoteric interpretation) after *tanzīl* (revelation). For, this is the greatest ease and facility, and proof of this greater facility is those minor facilities which every pious Muslim can experience in his daily life, such as to feel ease after difficulty in fulfillment and regularity of every kind of devotion (*'ibādāt*), austerity (*riyāzat*) by the help of God, and to remain gradually more attentive towards goodness and fear of God and so on.

c) I like most of *Mawlānā Muḥammad Jā'far Shāh Phulwārwi's* views. In his book, "*Gulistān-i Ḥadīṣ* (The Garden of Traditions)" he says, on p. 5 under the caption, '*Chand kalimāt-i Namāz* (A few words on *Namāz*)', that:

"We usually understand that *namāz* is a cut-and-dried (*bandhī takī*) thing whose words are determined and movements are fixed. There is no doubt that the best way for the performance of *namāz* is that which the Prophet has taught, but it is not right to say that the other ways are wrong, for not only from Ādam until Jesus Christ (peace be upon them) but until Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), all those prophets who used to perform *namāz*, differed in their

ways, but they said the same *namāz*".

That is to say that the form of the *namāz* they said was different, but the spirit of all of them was the same, and in fact, the main aim and object of the *namāz* is the spirit and not the form. When this *namāz* is performed in a congregational form, then the order and discipline requires necessarily that there should be uniformity in the *namāz* of all, but if in an individual *namāz* ecstasy and rapture overcome the usual way (formal way) of the performance of *namāz*, it is not harmful; in fact, sometimes a minor difference is not harmful even in the congregational *namāz*.

8. Women in the Congregation

Why do men and women pray together in the *jamā'at-khānah*?

a) You should either show or recite that Qur'ānic verse in which congregational prayers including both men and women are unlawful or prohibited or disliked. Or you should prove that during the blessed time of the Prophet, Muslim women were not going to the Mosque.

b) The manners and pillars (*ādāb-ū arkān*) of Islam are not only for men, but apply to women also. Those who want to keep women away from the place of worship on the grounds that because of their presence carnal soul (*nafs-i ammārah*) becomes more arrogant, then such people should, becoming hermits, abandon society and go to some jungle. For the interruption in prayer is not due only to the presence of women, but there are so many other causes, whose overall remedy is called *mujāhadah-yi nafs* (struggle against the carnal soul) and *taqwā* (fear of God). That means that one should fight against the carnal soul and choose piety and does not mean that one should expel or exclude one or more things from the world and society.



STAGES OR GRADES OF ISLAM

The Religion of Islam is *ṣirāt-i mustaqīm* i.e. the straight path. It is obvious that there are certain stations in every long path. Thus there are four stations in the path of Islam, viz : *sharīʿat*, *ṭarīqat*, *ḥaqīqat*, and *maʿrifat*. We can also conceive of these four stations as four stages. But the principle should always be remembered that in every stage, more or less, parts of the other stages are also included. For instance, the station regarded as *ḥaqīqat* cannot consist purely of *ḥaqīqat*; there is 20% *sharīʿat*, 25% *ṭarīqat*, 30% *ḥaqīqat*, and 25% *maʿrifat*. This is also the case in the remaining three stages as demonstrated in the following table.

Table of Fourfold Parts

NO	Station	Sharīʿat %	Ṭarīqat %	Ḥaqīqat %	Maʿrifat %	Total
1	Sharīʿat	40	25	20	15	100
2	Ṭarīqat.	25	30	25	20	100
3	Ḥaqīqat	20	25	30	25	100
4	Maʿrifat	15	20	25	40	100



‘Allāmah Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr Hunzai

He is the author of over a hundred books related to the esoteric interpretation of the holy Qur’ān. He writes both prose as well as poetry. He is the first person to have a Dīwān of poetry in Burushaski, his mother tongue, and is known as “Bābā-yi Burushaskī” (Father of Burushaski) for his service to that language. He also composes poetry in three other languages: Urdu, Persian and Turkish. His contribution to spiritual science has been widely recognised. His works include “Qur’ānic Healing”, “Practical Ṣūfism and Spiritual Science”, “Balance of Realities”, “Du‘ā – Essence of ‘Ibādat”, “What is Soul?” and “Recognition of Imam”. He is the co-author of a German-Burushaski dictionary published by Heidelberg University, Germany and “Hunza Proverbs” published by Calgary University of Canada. He is a recipient of “Sitārah-yi Imtiyāz” awarded by the Government of Pakistan for his contribution to Literature.



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