

Hundred Questions

(Saw Su'āl)



ʿAllāmah
Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr (Ḥubb-i ʿAlī) Hunzai
(Sitārah-yi Imtiyāz)

HUNDRED QUESTIONS

(*Saw Su 'āl*)

Naşır al-Dīn Naşır (Ḥubb-i °Alī) Hunzai
(Sitārah-yi Imtiyāz)

Institute for Spiritual Wisdom

Translated from Urdu into English
by

Faquir Muhammad Hunzai

Edited by

Rashida Noormohamed-Hunzai

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In the tradition of Dānishghah-i Khānah-yi Hikmat we pray for Nizar and Azeem and their two families to continue this meritorious service for *ḥaqīqī* knowledge and to receive the *barakāt* of it physically, spiritually and intellectually, *Āmīn, Yā Rabba’l-‘ālamīn!*

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Important Note

The following symbols have been used in the text with the names of Prophets and Imāms.

(§) = *ṣalla'llāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallam* (May Allah send blessings and peace through him and his progeny).

(c) = *'alayhi's-salām/'alayha's-salām/'alayhuma's-salām/'alayhumu's-salām/'alaynā salāmuhu* (May peace be through him/her/them both/them/may his peace be upon us).

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Dedication

Yasmin Sher Wali Khan has been a very dedicated and devoted member and office-bearer of Khānah-yi Ḥikmat for a long time. She has undergone many trials and tribulations, throughout which she has remained an ideal *mu'minah* with forbearance and gratitude to Khudāwand and a steadfast supporter of Khānah-yi Ḥikmat in imparting and spreading true knowledge.

Yasmin having qualified in Education has taught in both religious and secular institutions of learning. She served as the Co-ordinator of the Karimabad Group for many years. She has been a Lecturer in Government Women's College in Gilgit.

In 1992 on the guidance of Ustād-i Buzurgwār, °Allāmah Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr Hunzai, she rendered meritorious services in the construction of the Jamā'at Khānah in Konodas, Gilgit. She has also served as a member of the Education Board for the Northern Areas.

Her husband Sher Wali Khan has equally rendered great services to the Jamā'at and society at large. He was the first to qualify as an Advocate and the second post-graduate from the area of Ghazar. When the Ismaili Council was established in Gilgit for the first time, he was appointed the Honorary Secretary. He has also served on the Supreme Council for Central Asia and the Regional Council. His contribution in creating awareness of the importance of female education has been very important in accelerating the tempo of female education in that area.

Their son, Salman °Ali Khan is now 17 years old. May Khudāwand keep them and their families in His merciful protection from every evil, grant them all excellent health and greater courage to continue their services for the cause of

removing the darkness of ignorance and spreading the light of knowledge, *Āmīn, Yā Rabba'l-^cālamīn!*

Their sponsorship of the present publication is one of the examples of their continued services.



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Introduction (Part 1)

O my Sustainer! May I be sacrificed for the luminous miracles and great bounties of Your Supreme Name and Remembrance! O True Lord! O the most Just of judges! How full of wonders and marvels are the manifestations of Your power and mercy! What a lofty place Your help causes the weak and the helpless to reach! And how marvellously Your grace and support work within the infirm and the feeble!

Praise belongs to God that the esteemed members of Khānah-yi Hikmat are very pleased, content and satisfied with the services rendered by their sacred institution, and with the progress that has been granted to it in the few months between 1977 and 1978. They humbly want to express their deepest gratitude to their most Holy Lord (*khudāwand-i quddūs*) for His infinite mercies and favours, for whatever service has been rendered for the sake of knowledge during this short span of time has been satisfactorily effective, very useful, highly productive, exceedingly far-reaching and extremely all-embracing.

Thus the present book *Hundred Questions*, which consists of four parts dealing with a hundred questions giving well-grounded and convincing answers, is a link in the chain of this same service. The reason for writing this book is that last year (1977), I was invited by the Eastern Canada Regional Committee of His Highness The Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismā'īliya Association for Canada to go on a tour of the reputed *Jamā'at* there. *Jān-i 'Azīz* Faquir Muhammad Hunzai, as well as Honorary Secretary Dr. Shiraz Ismail received this invitation. Thus in accordance with this auspicious invitation, I arrived in the great country of Canada on 7th December 1977. This excellent chance to render services for the cause of religion, knowledge and spirituality given to this indigent

servant by the bounty and beneficence of the True Lord, will be remembered forever with gratitude and appreciation.

The questions that were asked in the lectures, seminars and in major and minor discussions during this tour, numbered around a thousand altogether. The questions were answered on the spot. However, in addition to this I wanted the answers to selected questions to be presented in a book form. In view of this I have completed the book *Hundred Questions* in four parts, each consisting of 25 questions, and God willing, they will be published consecutively.

I am grateful to the Eastern Regional Committee and to the entire *Jamā'at*, for not only have they availed me a chance to render such a rare *Jamā'atī* service, but they have also co-operated with me in rendering this service to my entire satisfaction. I will never forget the forbearance, sincerity and affection of the leaders of the *Jamā'at*.

I must ever pray, with soul and heart, for all the members of that esteemed and reputed *Jamā'at*, who in order to know the issues of religion and knowledge paid attention to me with increasing confidence. And special prayers, not only mine but also of the entire *Jamā'at*, are for those blessed houses (families) without whose superb residential and office facilities and unprecedented services, it would not have been possible to accomplish any of my and *Jān-i 'Aziz's* work for knowledge. I wish I could describe adequately how profoundly religious, and how staunchly devoted to the True Imām the members of their families are, and how perfect and consummate their faith is.

On this occasion our purpose cannot be achieved without the pleasant mention of *Jān-i 'Aziz* Faquir Muhammad Hunzai. Most of my friends and (*'azizān*) students are aware of the fact that I consider him the angel of mercy for myself, the reasons for which I would have mentioned instantly had there been

only one or two of them, but there are too many. It is due to him that my journey to the West became easy and successful; and it is he who made my tour in a developed country like North America possible. Once again I say that his kindnesses to me are too many.

At the end of this Introduction I humbly pray that may the Sustainer of the world grant the entire *Jamā'at* utmost success and high ambition in advancing in the field of knowledge and practice and in progressing in religious and worldly good deeds. *Āmīn!* O the Sustainer of the worlds!

The servant of the *Jamā'at* for knowledge,
Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr Hunzai
29th May 1978.

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Q1 End of Knowledge:

During your lecture you said that knowledge comes to an end at a certain place. How is it possible?

- A1 If you study verses 16:70 and 22:5 of the Qur'ān deeply and reflectively, you will come to know that upon reaching the extreme end of the old age of knowledge, a faithful servant becomes idle in the spiritual world. That is to say, in crossing the vast and unfathomable ocean of knowledge he reaches at that time a place where nothing remains to be learnt. That is, nothing remains for him to make any new scientific analysis, for during the lengthy period of his spiritual life he has learnt everything and therefore, with respect to him, knowledge, which was an intellectual and reflective journey, has been completed and has thus come to an end.

The other point in this connection is that “Everything except the Divine Essence is perishable, that is to say that it comes to an end” (28:88). Here it is evident that knowledge also comes to an end [as it is included in everything]. However, it is a different matter that God repeatedly creates everything [and it is because of this that they seem to exist continuously]. For example, the succession of day and night, which in fact perish like all other things, seem infinite only because God creates them over and over again. Thus, it is because of this that the chain of day and night and time becomes infinite.

Further, since knowledge means to know things [through their analysis], hence as long as the world survives, things survive and the chain of knowledge continues. However, when according to the

abovementioned verse, the world comes to an end and nothing remains, knowledge will also come to an end, which used to be the result of the analysis of things. For, knowledge (*‘ilm*) is the attribute of the knower (*‘ālim*) and which can be obtained by knowing the knowable, i.e. the universe (*‘ālam*). All this discussion leads to the conclusion that knowledge (*‘ilm*), the knowable (*‘ālam*, i.e. the universe) and the knower (*‘ālim*) come to an end time and again, and also come into existence time and again. This means that with respect to every time knowledge comes to an end, while with respect to the chain of time and again, it never ends.

Further, it is mentioned in the Qur’ān in verse (13:8): “And everything with Him is in a quantity”. This signifies that although today due to lack of knowledge some things seem to be infinite to human beings, when they will reach the heights of spirituality and will begin to see them through the Divine light and observe them with the eye of certainty (*‘aynu’l-yaqīn*) the real state will be revealed to them, which is that things in their entirety – spiritual as well as material – are confined within a specific quantity (13:8). This includes the life of the universe as well as practical knowledge, which is based on this external world (11:107). This is the explanation of the annihilation of everything and the cessation of the duration of the age of space, i.e. the time span of the survival of the world.

Thus, it must be understood properly that the aspect of reality according to which God’s things never come to an end, is that despite their coming to an end they are recreated constantly, or after intervals like the seasons of summer and winter etc., which come again and again alternatively.

Q2 **Return of Soul:**

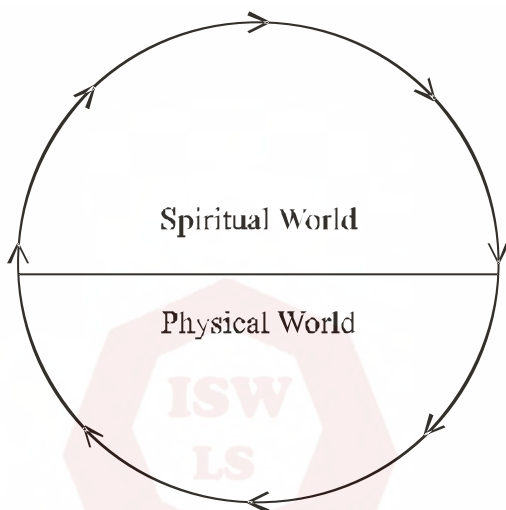
You said in the seminar that the soul comes to this world time and again, in the case of failure as well as in the case of success. In the case of success, the soul of a faithful servant comes to this world to renew its knowledge and action, for the chain of the bounties of knowledge comes to its end when the soul reaches the final stage of the eighth heaven. The question here is, how can it be possible for the eternal salvation and permanent peace of paradise, which has been granted to a *mu'min* by God, to come to an end after a certain time, and the soul of the *mu'min* returns again to this world in search of it?

A2 This is also, in fact, the same question that we have dealt with above. However, we will try to explain it further. When man reaches the final stage of *ma'rifat* (recognition), he is entirely convinced of the fact that his "I" is in two stages or levels. On the higher level it is in the form of Monoreality and in the lower level it is in the form of a human being. Thus, the human "I" [on the one hand] always remains in one position like the sun, and on the other hand comes and goes again and again, like the moon, waxing and waning. For this is what divine wisdom (*hikmat*) and the abundant goodness demands.

The Qur'ānic verse (36:68): "And he whom We grant long life We cause him to turn upside down (from the world of command to the world of creation)" implies that whoever is given a long life in the spiritual world is sent to this world for a very great feat. It should be known that when God grants long life to someone, it is long according to His standard, therefore it is very vast according to the calculation of this world. And the wisdom of the phrase "upside down" is that the world of

command or the spiritual world and the world of creation or the physical world are like two half circles [see the diagram below], which together present the concept of a complete circle, in which the upper half circle is the world of command and the lower half circle is the world of creation. In this example, the one who goes from the physical world to the summit of the spiritual world, his head will be turned upwards and when he comes from there to this world, his head will be turned down.

In this connection it is important to understand whence Adam^(c) came into this world. He came from the world of command, spiritual world or paradise. If he came from paradise, from which one? He came from the final or the supreme paradise. In this descent was Adam^(c) alone or were there other people as well? With Adam^(c), together with Eve^(c) there were many other people as well. If so, is it correct to say that in paradise, the lives of Adam, Eve and their companions had reached the point where it became necessary for them to return to this world [to renew their knowledge and actions]? Yes, this is absolutely true. If Allah's *sunnat* (law) and habit and the law of nature are the same forever without any change, can we say that perfect souls continue to come to this world like Adam and his companions, from the spiritual world? Yes, this is perfectly correct.



In the wise Qur’ān in verse (36:40), it is mentioned: “And everything rotates in an orbit”.

- Q3 The Qur’ān and Aḥādīth (Traditions of the Prophet):** What is the relationship between the Qur’ān and the Traditions of the Prophet? Is it true that the Prophet said: “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 will be redeemed”? (*Tirmidhī*, IV, 530 and *Mishkāṭ*, I, 171; see also *Spirit of Islam* by Sayyid Amīr ‘Alī, p. 183).
- A3** The relationship between the Qur’ān and the Traditions of the Prophet is that the traditions are the explanation and elucidation of the Qur’ān, for they are the sayings of the teacher of the Qur’ān (*mu‘allim-i Qur’ān*), provided that they are sound and not fabricated or forged. That is, they have not been made up by people to serve their own purpose. If they are sound, they are important in religion after the Qur’ān. For, in religion

after the speech of God, the speech of the Prophet is venerable and obligatory to act upon. But how can it be possible for the Prophet, after having pronounced the *ḥadith-i thaqalayn* (i.e. the Tradition about two heavy things – the Qur’ān and his progeny) to let the Muslims depend only on the traditions, notwithstanding that the Prophet knew that it would be extremely difficult for the Muslims to differentiate and discern between correct and incorrect traditions? Further, to say that the traditions, which are mostly related to the time of the Prophet, can solve new problems would cause great amazement.

According to us, obedience to God, the Prophet and *ulu’l-amr* means that we must accept the Imām of the time as the representative and vicegerent of God and His Prophet and try to understand the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the Qur’ān and the Traditions in the light of his command and guidance and put them into practice. It is this [kind of obedience], in which lies the pleasure of God and the Prophet.

Q4 ***Ulu’l-amr:***

What do the other Muslims mean by “*ulu’l-amri minkum* (those who hold the [divine] command) from among you”? Or, to what extent do they accept this principle?

A4 Apart from the *Imāmiyyah* sect, other Muslims mean the [secular] rulers by *ulu’l-amr*. This is not correct in the sense that the *ulu’l-amr* cannot be other than the noble Imāms, because to hold the divine command requires the highest virtues. The first and foremost of these virtues is that he must be appointed by God and the Prophet so that he may be the bearer of the light of

guidance; he should be from the progeny of Abraham^(c) through Muḥammad^(s) and ʿAlī^(c) and their lineage must continue one after the other so that it may be known that the miracle of Divine light is with them. Only the persons of such a pure lineage i.e. the pure Imāms can be the *ulu'l-amr*.

Contrary to this, if we accept that the ruler of the time is the *ulu'l-amr*, this would lead to having several *ulu'l-amr* simultaneously in Islam. Such rulers oppose each other, and sometimes they wage war against each other, which is not for the sake of Islam, rather for personal benefit or for that of their state. Then how can it be possible for such a person who sheds the blood of Muslims, without Islamic and ethical law, to be the vicegerent of God and His Prophet and the *ulu'l-amr*?

Q5 Religion and Science:

What is the relationship between Religion and Science?

A5 It should be known that the religion that is true is the real Islam and the science that is not wrong and is absolutely correct is the law of nature. The wise people know that Islam is the religion of nature. That is, it is not against the law of nature, rather it accords with it. This means that proto-Islam and proto-science is one and the same thing. Just as a stream, which sometimes flows parting itself into two and sometimes mingles, but it is the one and the same in every state and condition.

The gist of this explanation is that the time has now arrived for science and religion to mingle entirely with each other, and as a result of which, many people of the world will undergo resurrection and because of their ignorance of religion, will be despondent. As it is said in

a noble *Ḥadith*: “Islam started as a stranger and will return to being a stranger”. (*Muslim*, Chapter 62, Tradition No. 281).

Q6 *Sūrah-yi Yā-Sīn*:

What is the meaning and *ta’wīl* of *Yā-Sīn*?

A6 My dear! I understand that what you intended to ask was, in fact, very brief, but the way you have written it down makes it a very long discussion. That is, the question was about the name, but you have presented the entire *sūrah* in the form of a question. However, I will answer the question about its name “*Yā-Sīn*”. *Yā-Sīn* is among the disjointed letters (*muqatta‘āt*) and it is unanimously accepted in Islam as one of the appellations of the holy Prophet, such as *Ṭā-Hā*.

As for the *ta’wīl* of *Yā-Sīn*, it consists of two letters *Yā* and *Sīn*. The numerical value of *Yā* is ten, which in *Ismā‘īlī ḥudūd-i dīn* (religious hierarchy) is fixed for the *nātiq* – the last *ḥadd* (rank) of the physical *ḥudūd*, i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad^(s). The numerical values of the other *ḥudūd* are: one – *mustajīb*, two – *ma’dhūn-i aṣghar*, three – *ma’dhūn-i akbar*, four – *dā‘ī-yi makfūf*, five – *dā‘ī-yi muṭlaq*, six – *ḥujjat-i jazīrah*, seven – *ḥujjat-i muqarrab*, eight – the Imām of the time, nine – *asās* (‘Alī) and ten – *nātiq* (i.e. Muḥammad). About these *ḥudūd* the Qur’ān says: “That is complete ten” (2:196), i.e. ten, which stands for the *nātiq*, is the final *ḥadd* of the physical *ḥudūd*.

On the other hand, the numerical value of the letter *Sīn* is sixty. This signifies the periods of the Prophets. Thus the first ten are fixed for Adam^(c), the second ten for Noah^(c), the third for Abraham^(c), the fourth for Moses^(c),

the fifth for Jesus^(c) and the sixth ten for Muḥammad^(s). Thus Prophet Muḥammad^(s), with respect to *ḥudūd-i dīn* of the minor cycle holds the rank ten, and with respect to the major cycle possesses the position of sixth. This is the meaning and *ta'wīl* of *Yā-Sīn*.

Q7 Beginningless and Beginning (*lā-ibtidā' awr ibtidā'*):

It is said that we are from Adam^(c) and Eve^(c) and it is also said that first we were stone, then vegetable etc. Which view is correct?

A7 Both these views are correct, for we are from Adam^(c) and Eve^(c) and they in turn are from dust, etc. In other words, we, in addition to being from Adam^(c) and Eve^(c), are also from minerals, vegetables and animals with respect to the completion of our body. For, our nourishment and those of our parents is prepared from these things, from which our bodies are created.

However, if in this question there is any reference to Darwin's theory of Evolution, then according to me that is not correct, for in the background of this theory lies the concept of atheism, i.e., in it is an attempt to deny the existence of God and to negate His omnipotence, and it is accepted that the universe came into existence as the result of an accident, and man also has continued to be transformed from one form into another, until he transformed into the form of a monkey and then gradually became a human being.

We have no enmity with Darwin. But alas! He closed his eyes and without giving the slightest consideration to the supernatural world and its King, plunged into the ocean of nature and continued to sink in it. Had he gone beyond the boundary where his theory starts he would

have succeeded in understanding that without any beginning and beginningless there has always been a great living power without whose command nothing moves and acts at all.

The basic question should be: do we accept both existence and non-existence or not. If we accept both, then the question arises: does God rule both existence and non-existence or not? If the answer is positive, then we should further ask, if God, the Creator of the earth and heaven, has created existence from non-existence, from what did he create non-existence? This question is so difficult that the entire world is unable to answer it. However, the people of *ta'yid* (divine help) have a correct answer to it, which is that as God created existence from non-existence, similarly, He, the Omnipotent, created non-existence from existence. Thus we see that there are many things, which become non-existent after being existent and many things come into existence after being non-existent.

It is clear without any doubt from the above explanation that just as the chain of the creation of the day from night and of the night from day continues the infinite chain of the creation of existence from non-existence and of non-existence from existence continues. This is the view of Qur'ānic wisdom and not that of anyone else.

It should be known that, in God's kingdom sheer non-existence is impossible. That is, a non-existence, which has no quality at all, is impossible. Rather it is a figurative non-existence and its brightest proof can be found from the Qur'ān itself. As God has said: "Glory be to Him Who created pairs of all things that the earth produces, and themselves, and that which they know

not” (36:36). The point here is that there is nothing that does not have a pair, either vegetable or animal or human or any other thing that is related to the intellect and knowledge. It is obvious from this verse that existence and non-existence are also among those pairs, which are created by God. This means that just as God made existence apparent from non-existence, He extracted non-existence from existence, and kept it hidden. Neither of the two is anterior or posterior, rather they are both on the circle of beginningless without any anteriority or posteriority. However, in view of some expediency, you can present this fact of beginningless as beginning, saying always that God created existence from non-existence. However, not to shed the light of knowledge and wisdom on non-existence, not to try to lift the veil from its reality, not to search for the understanding of “He created life and death” (67:2), that He (God) created life, but how did He create death?; can our partial life and death be a proof of the annihilation and survival of this great universe?; can we or not, from the example of our own life and death, understand the reality of existence and non-existence?; not to ask such questions so that the veil may be lifted from reality would be just a matter of expediency and prudence, but not of reality. This is probably because the world has not reached this level of understanding otherwise it would have been evident that if there is any beginning of time, existent and creature, it is a partial beginning. If we look universally, it would be evident that everything is on a circle, which is created from the alternate coming and going of existence and non-existence, such as the rotation of day and night. It is from this rotation that the concept of beginningless and beginning is established.

Q8 Entrusted Imām (*Imām-i mustawda*^c):

Imām Ḥasan^(c) is accepted as an Imām in several authentic works; in what status should we accept him?

A8 It is absolutely correct to accept Imām Ḥasan^(c) as an Imām. Therefore we accept him as an Imām and so should you. There is no reason not to accept him as an Imām. Imām Ḥasan was *Imām-i mustawda*^c, and in all authentic Ismā'īlī works in which he is mentioned his *Imāmat* is unanimously accepted.

Do you know why this question has arisen for an Ismā'īlī? It is because Imām Ḥasan's name is not mentioned in the genealogy of the Imām of the time. It should be understood that this genealogy belongs to the Imām's forefathers and ancestors and not to various aspects of *Imāmat*. The difference between these two cases is that the former is concerned only with proving the *Imāmat* of the forefathers of the present Imām, and the latter pertains to explaining the various ranks (*marātib*) of *Imāmat*. Thus, if we take the genealogical tree of the present Imām further and further back, we will reach Ḥaẓrat-i Adam^(c) through Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'il^(c) and Ḥaẓrat-i Abraham^(c), in which case there will be no mention of Ḥaẓrat-i Ishāq^(c) and his children's *Imāmat*. The reason for which is quite obvious that here we have to prove the Imām as being the son of the preceding Imām in succession, and not to explain the different kinds of manifestation and ranks of *Imāmat*, which is a different subject.

In Ismā'īlism the subject of the recognition of the Imām is of primary and paramount importance, without which at each and every step we are confronted with difficulties in the field of religion. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to this subject, in which case one has to

make a thorough and penetrating study of the history of *Imāmat*.

There is no doubt that generally *Imāmat* is transferred from father to son, but in special cases there are other possibilities also, as in the case of transference of the *Imāmat* of Imām Hābil to Imām Shīth. This is a proof of the transference of the *Imāmat* from brother to brother, and the same example is also evident in the case of the transference of the *Imāmat* of Imām Ḥasan to Imām Ḥusayn. That is, when the time comes, the luminous virtues of the *imām-i mustawda*^c (the Entrusted Imām) become one with the *imām-i mustaqarr* (the Permanent Imām).

During the present age of scientific revolution in which ever-new problems have been cropping up about religious beliefs, it may also be asked if it is possible for there to be more than one Imām at the same time or not, whereas at present or in future many human beings may live on various planets of the universe? Here we need an answer the proof of which already exists in the true religion. The answer to this question is already in the true religion, i.e. there were [four bearers of light] simultaneously: the holy Prophet Muḥammad^(s) as *nātiq* or speaking Prophet, ^cAlī as *asās* and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn as Imāms. Thus, if several inhabited worlds are found simultaneously in this universe, it is necessary for there to be an Imām in each one of them, because the existence of every world depends on the present Imām's existence. Nonetheless, more than one Imām are like one Single Soul (*naḥs-i wāḥidah*). In this wellgrounded explanation there are many clear examples in establishing the *Imāmat* of Imām Ḥasan^(c).

Q9 Grave and Resurrection:

Will an account of our deeds be taken from our soul on the day of resurrection, or will it be interrogated in the grave? Does the soul enter the grave after death?

A9 With respect to the order [of the question] let us first discuss the grave. Grave is of two kinds: external or physical, and internal or spiritual. As for the external grave, everybody knows about it. However, it is not easy for everyone to know about the internal grave. Thus, it should be understood that the internal or the spiritual grave is the human body itself. The holy Prophet says: “Between my grave and my pulpit there is a garden among the gardens of Paradise”. Explaining the *ta’wīl* of this tradition Pīr Nāṣir-i Khusraw, in his famous book *Wajh-i dīn*, says: “The grave of the Prophet is his *asās*, i.e. [°]Alī^(c), and his pulpit is *qā’imu’l-qiyāmat*, may the most excellent greeting and peace be upon him”.

When according to the Ismā‘īlī point of view, the *ta’wīl* is correct that the grave of the Prophet is his successor, namely [°]Alī-yi Murtaẓā^(c), it implies that for every soul there is a living grave, that is, a living body – one’s own or someone else’s, good or bad, depending on one’s deeds. In any case all religious teachings and instructions regarding the grave, according to *ta’wīl*, pertain to this living grave, not that of dust. This means that the human soul immediately after death is transferred to some living body and then some questions are asked of it consciously or unconsciously. Then, when the time of the rising of souls from graves comes, that is, when an internal and spiritual resurrection occurs, the people are asked for an account of their deeds.

Q10 The Status of Ḥāẓir Imām:

In the spiritual and luminous sense we give paramount importance to the Imām of the age. How should we present the philosophy of the physical holiness of the Imām when non-Isma‘īlīs, particularly Christians, question us?

A10 You are quite right in posing this question for it is the physical aspect of the Prophet and the Imām, which is the greatest problem for people. However, what the common people understand according to their fancies is not true. The truth is attainable in the light of the instructions of God, the Prophet and the guiding Imāms. So, according to these instructions, there is a difference among bodies, just as there is a difference among souls. That is, among souls and bodies some are pure and some are impure. The first and foremost pure are those people whom God has purified in order that they may purify others from all kinds of dirt and impurity. This means that the Prophet and the Imām are themselves pure, and therefore they teach their followers to purify themselves and they purify them in every respect. As it is mentioned in many verses of the Qur’ān how the Prophet used to purify the people, such as verses (2:150-51) in which God says: “His favour will be completed and it will continue in future so there should not be any lack of guidance”, then He says: “This favour is the one that we appointed a messenger from among you, who recites unto you our *āyāt* (signs) [from the physical and spiritual worlds] and thus he purifies you and teaches you the Book (*al-kitāb*) and Wisdom (*al-ḥikmat*), and teaches you that which you knew not”.

In these verses is mentioned that action of the Prophet and the Imām whereby they purify their followers. Since they purify their followers, this necessitates that

they themselves be pure. When it is accepted that they are pure then it is automatically proven that all their physical necessities, such as eating, drinking and marriage etc. are also pure. Thus the Prophet and the Imām are pure not only with respect to their spirit and light but also with respect to their body. It is because of this that they are the locus of manifestation (*mazhar*) of Divine light, and with whatever reverence and greatness you may consider him is correct, for he is the rank of the Divine manifestation.

As for the Christians, if we study their dogma or if we ask them directly whether they accept the Prophets before Jesus or not, it is not possible for them to say that they do not accept the Prophets before Jesus. If they accept them it leads to the logical conclusion that as there was the continuity of divine guidance prior to him, similarly there must be the continuity of divine guidance after him. But it is not necessary that they should be *darwishes* like Jesus. For instance, ponder on this point that Jesus did not marry. If this attribute is necessary and obligatory, Christians should put this attribute into practice as a tradition. It is obvious that they cannot follow it, for this will result in the cessation of humankind. Nor do they as a whole want to be hermits and *darwishes* like Jesus. This leads to the conclusion that there is no doubt about Jesus' being a true Prophet, but it is not necessary that the birth, death and life of all Prophets and Imāms be like that of Jesus.

Q11 God, may He be exalted:

- (a) What is the reason for there being a God for the universe and existents?
- (b) Is it possible to create a universe in six days?
- (c) Why does God not appear to us?

(d) Why are there such people who deny the existence of God?

A11 There are four questions here, which are wonderful and interesting, for they reflect the background and environment of the questioner. There are thousands of reasons and proofs for God's existence. However, here we will discuss whatever is possible space permitting.

(a) The first question implies that the universe and the existents came into existence by themselves and everything is subsistent and surviving by itself, therefore, what is the need of God's existence, whereas this concept is utterly wrong. For had it been true, then in accordance with this principle the manufactures (*maṣnū^cāt*) would have automatically come into existence without a maker (*ṣāni^c*). But we all see that no manufacture comes into existence without a maker. This establishes the concept of the world coming into existence without a creator as basically false and absurd. Thus the correct concept is that God granted existence to the universe and He brought into existence everything in it. The concept of the autogenous of this orderly and complete universe is so baseless and absurd that even an individual of ordinary intellect dislikes it, because it is based neither on proven scientific research nor on any sound logic; it is rather the imagination of those who are blind with respect to their inner intellect.

(b) As for the answer to the second question: "Is it possible to create a universe in six days?" it is not impossible for God to create this huge universe in six days while He created it only by the command of "*kun* (Be)" in the twinkle of an eye. By the six days are meant the cycles of the six great Prophets, in which the world of religion (*‘ālam-i dīn*) is created as a whole.

The six great prophets are Adam^(c), Noah^(c), Abraham^(c), Moses^(c), Jesus^(c) and Muḥammad^(s) whose six cycles are the duration of God's six days in which He completed the world of religion. These days of God started from Sunday and ended on Friday, and Saturday is that day of God in which He manifested Himself on the throne of knowledge and recognition.

(c) The answer to the third question: "Why God does not appear to us", is that either you should create in yourself the eye which can see God, or you should rely on the words of such *mu'mins* who can see God everywhere with the eye of intellect; just as with respect to science, either you do research yourself and propound a theory, or you accept someone else's theory.

You cannot properly see the sun, which is apparent in the sky. If you want to see it, look at its reflection in the water, or look at it through such glasses, which reduce its intense light. Also if you want to see those stars that are very far and high, you have to use a powerful telescope. Similarly, there is the need of a special eye to see God.

Knowledge for a united humanity

The human eye opens the day he is born, but despite this he cannot see with it, for as yet he is still a baby who, with respect to recognition, is weaker than even an animal's child. The animal child is stronger in recognition than the human child, in the sense that it has been endowed naturally and innately with its limited power, whereas in the human child the capacity for knowledge and recognition is such that it can become limitless and infinite by education. If proper religious education is not given to the human child, or it has been neglected to a great extent, he remains inferior to the animal, just as he was at the time of birth.

(d) Regarding the fourth question: “Why are there such people who deny the existence of God?” the answer is why should there not be such people, whereas in contrast to faith there is disbelief and in contrast to the day there is the night, and it is necessary to have the opposite of everything in this world so that people may be tried in the recognition of God.

If according to you the existence of infidels is the proof of the non-existence of God, why do not the entire people of the world deny and reject the existence of God, as there are many who believe in God?

Further, if the question implies: “Had God existed, the infidels would have no name or trace, and the faith would have had sway everywhere”, such a view also, is not correct, because human beings are given free will, due to which they are divided into two groups, that is, in this world there are believers as well as infidels.

Q12 Light upon Light:

When one Imām succeeds another Imām, is there any difference in the soul of the following Imām, or is he a part of the light of *Imāmat*? If it is accepted that the following Imām is different from the preceding Imām, is there any relation between the soul of the following Imām and the light of *Imāmat*, or is his soul like the *mu'min's* soul?

A12 The answer to this question is mentioned in verse (24:35) in the language of wisdom. It is said in this verse that if we look at the light from an internal and spiritual point of view, it is the one and the same forever, and is sufficient for the entire world; and if we

look at it from an external and physical point of view, it is light upon light, that is, there is an Imām after the preceding Imām. This shows that the spirit, i.e. the light of the present Imām continues to be shed on the succeeding Imām, just as one lamp is lit from another lamp, or as the moon receives light from the sun. Suppose that the moon, on reaching completion, becomes one with the sun as mentioned in the Qur’ān (75:9), it is obvious that the sun and the moon of this world cannot become one, it is the present Imām and his successor who become one.

As for the reality of souls, they were one in *azal* and they will be one in *abad* also, as the Qur’ān says: “Your first birth and your last resurrection is like one soul” (31:28). When the state of the unity of ordinary souls is such that they were one in the beginning and they will be one in the end, how is it possible for the souls of one Imām and another Imām to be different from each other? This shows that the light of all Imāms is one and by the soul of the Imām is meant light.

This answer suffices the remaining portion of the question. Nonetheless, let us elaborate further that the bodies of Imāms are different, but their light is one and the same. The body is not a part of the light, nonetheless, sometimes, because of the light the body is also called light and this sense is implied in “Light upon Light”.

The relation of one Imām to another Imām is such that their light is one and the same. The soul of the Imām is not like that of a *mu’min* rather it is far more exalted. Yes, it is true that the soul of a *mu’min*, after ultimate progress merges in the light of the Imām and becomes like the Imām’s soul.

Q13 *Ṣalawāt:*

If the Prophet and the Imām are light, what does it mean to seek mercy for them in the *ṣalawāt*?

A13 This question has arisen from the popular meaning of the *ṣalawāt*, but its *ta'wīl* is different from the popular meaning. In connection with its *ta'wīl* you should see *Wajh-i dīn, guftār* 50; (Urdu translation), *kalām* 50; *Falsafah-i du'ā*, pp. 61-69 and *Panj Maqālah* IV, pp. 27-29. If you ponder on the *ta'wīl* of *ṣalawāt* in these sources you will come to know that according to *ta'wīl*, “*ṣalawāt* on Muḥammad^(s) and progeny of Muḥammad^(s)” means to seek blessings for ourselves through Muḥammad^(s) and the progeny of Muḥammad^(s) and to follow them in the true sense.

Further, it should be known that the meaning and *ta'wīl* of *ṣalawāt* has various aspects: See for details the following Qur'ānic verses:

(a) The *ṣalawāt* of God, the angels and the *mu'mins* upon the holy Prophet (33:56);

(b) The *ṣalawāt* of God upon *mu'mins* (2:157; 33:43) the *ṣalawāt* of angels upon *mu'mins* (33:43) and the *ṣalawāt* of the Prophet upon *mu'mins* (9:99,103). Thus various wisdoms of *ta'wīl* are hidden in the *ṣalawāt*. However, your question has been answered in this explanation.

Q14 *Zikr-ū Bandagī:*

°Allāmah Ṣāhib, I shall be most grateful if you could kindly discourse to some extent upon *bandagī*: such as its necessity and importance, procedure, concentration

on *zīkr* (*ism-i a'ẓam*), harmony of breathing with *zīkr* and diet.

- A14 You have not asked a single question, rather you have asked for a lengthy lecture. However, in order to understand this subject thoroughly you should study my book “*Zīkr-i ilāhī*” which I have written as a guide on the subject of *zīkr-ū ʿibādat*. In addition, you should listen to the cassettes of lectures delivered during my visit to Canada. Also read the exegesis and *taʿwīl* of the chapter “*Muzzammil (73)*” in my book *Panj Maqālah*, II.

Zīkr-i ilāhī has been translated from Urdu into English by *Jān-i ʿAzīz* Faquir Muhammad Hunzai and Miss Zayn Rahim Qasim.

Q15 Jesus^(c) and Muḥammad^(s):

If Muḥammad^(s) was already chosen for prophethood why was he so perplexed when Gabriel brought revelation to him? Why was Muḥammad^(s) not born like Jesus^(c), at whose birth a shooting star appeared? Why did Prophet Muḥammad^(s) have to suffer so much?

- A15 These three questions of yours are illogical and unrealistic and obviously they are in the context of Christian misperceptions. However, I will try to analyse them, as every question arises in a context. In the first question, it has been accepted that the Prophet received revelation and then, an objection is made against someone who is accepted as a Prophet. Further there is no logic in attempting to deny the prophecy of the Prophet on the grounds of revelation brought by Gabriel. For, after accepting the holy Prophet as an apostle and messenger, this question automatically ceases to exist.

On the other hand, this question implies that, according to the questioner, if the Prophet knew about his being chosen for prophethood, he would not have been perplexed by revelation. Can this be an argument to refute the holy Prophet's prophethood? Even if we accept the holy Prophet's perplexity, it only implies that the Prophet was not aware that he was chosen for prophethood and messengership.

If we look at the question in the light of spiritual knowledge and recognition, it becomes unbelievable that the Prophet was perplexed when Gabriel brought the revelation to him. For spirituality is not such that the stage of revelation appears before you all of a sudden in one day. The stage of revelation comes after numerous spiritual wonders and experiences, for which one is well prepared.

It is a great ignorance to try to understand the reality of revelation on the basis of the exoteric version and popular historical stories, and such is the background to this question.

Further, it is not a minor mistake to consider a shooting star as a great miracle and a sign of the birth of every prophet. Can someone prove that during the birth of all the prophets prior to Jesus^(c) a shooting star had appeared? Or can someone prove that the appearance of a shooting star implies the appearance of a prophet? According to wise people such questions are quite childish, for such questions have neither a religious philosophy nor a scientific explanation.

The same is true of the question where it is asked why Prophet Muḥammad^(s) had to suffer so much. The

answer to this question is that the prophets have to present the model of humanity and it is for this reason that as a whole their lives are full of difficulties and sufferings. If we ponder on the life of the Prophet Jesus^(c) himself, we will come to know how he was living the life of *darwīshī*. Further, his physical death too, is not as they think, rather it was complete martyrdom on the cross.

Q16 Where did Light come from:

How did the beginning of light come about? Where did it come from?

A16 It is not necessary that everything should have a beginning and should come into being in a specific time, and should then start working; for there are many things that have no beginning at all. That is, they always exist without any beginning. Man always thinks and questions according to the environment in which he has been brought up and according to the habit that is formed under the influence of the limited space and time of this external world. Through the traditions pertaining to the rudimentary education of religion, or through the exoteric aspect of the parables, which need *ta'wīl*, he has come to know that in the very beginning there was none except God, the exalted, and considers such a priority as His supreme attribute. In reality however, such an attribute is against His sacred essence and exalted glory that we should include Him in the category of creatures and describe Him with a common creaturely attribute, such as saying "God was the first". If you reflect upon this statement seriously you will realize that in this statement, by associating the concept of God with the concept of existents and creatures, is created the problem of the inclusion and participation of

God with the creatures, and then by a comparative concept, temporal priority is given to His Essence. This is an example of how the common people consider insignificant creaturely attributes to be the attributes of God.

In the light of the above explanation it is necessary to know that according to the fundamental divisions [of existence] there are two worlds: the world of creation and the world of command (7:54). The world of creation is contingent and the world of command is eternal. Contingent is that which does not exist always, rather it comes into existence within the limit of time; and eternal is that which, contrary to the contingent, always exists. According to these definitions, light is not contingent rather it is eternal. Therefore, it always exists. And the question of its beginning does not arise for a thing which always exists.

Now as for the question: “Where did light come from?”, the answer is that it is from the world of command, i.e. the spiritual world, which is eternal. Another name of light is spirit, which was breathed into Adam^(c), the fountainhead of which is the world of command, as mentioned in the Qur’ān: “And (O! Prophet) they ask you concerning the Spirit. Say: Spirit (is not from the world of creation, but) from (the world of) command of my Lord, and of knowledge you have been vouchsafed but little, (therefore, you cannot understand the reality of Spirit)” (17:85). This Qur’ānic description of the spirit is that of the perfect Spirit, i.e. the Holy Spirit, due to which the angels had prostrated to Adam^(c) (15:29). It is this Spirit which is called the Spirit of God and it is because of this Spirit that Jesus^(c) is regarded as the Spirit of God (*rūḥu’llāh*) (4:171) and it was this Divine Spirit which was working in the pure personality of the

holy Prophet as the spirit of the Qur'ān (*rūḥ-i Qur'ān*) and the Divine Light (*nūr-i Yazdān*) (42:52). Thus, the Spirit and the Light are one and the same reality, which is eternal. It has neither a beginning nor an end, for it is from the world of command.

Q17 *Jinn:*

You discuss about the *Jinn*. Could you kindly tell us something about them, whether they have a separate world where they dwell and live as we do?

A17 There are various verses in the Qur'ān regarding *jinns*. The *jinns* are mentioned in the Qur'ān under these captions: *jānn* (seven times), *al-jinn* (twenty-two times) and *jinnah* (ten times), [which reveal sufficient information about *jinns*]. In addition, the subject is elaborated here to some extent. The word *jinn* in Arabic means 'to hide' and 'to be hidden'. Thus *jinn* means the creature that is hidden from our sight. The *jinns* who live on the planet earth co-exist with human beings and do not have their own separate world. The only thing is that mostly they prefer to live in uninhabited places, such as mountains, deserts etc., for perhaps they receive their food from fresh air or ether.

They also have their own separate worlds. That is, they also live on those planets, which are free from human beings like us. When the planet earth was uninhabited by human beings, it used to abound with *jinns*. For it is a natural law that no vessel should remain empty. If it is empty of milk or water, air takes their place automatically. This spacious and great universe is immersed in the ocean of the Universal Soul, therefore the question does not arise where so many souls come from that all the planets and stars are full of them in one form or the other.

Jinn is also called *parī* and both have the same meaning. In Arabic it is called *jinn* and in Persian *parī*. In shape and form *jinns* are like human beings, for their essence is the same. They move on the same circle, that is, between the two worlds [the physical and the spiritual].

Among *jinns* there are *mu'mins* as well as infidels, as there are good as well as bad people among human beings. To say that *jinns* are created out of fire means that they are in subtle body, also called astral body.

Q18 U.F.Os. or Flying Saucers:

There are many controversies about spaceships and flying saucers. Does this mean that some [other] kind of people live on different stars as well?

A18 This question is extremely difficult for scientists, because in addition to their unbounded advancement in material science, if they knew who was coming from the heaven they would not have any difficulty in [conquering] space, but for the true religion (*dīn-i ḥaqq*) it is not difficult. In this connection, for details see my book *Mizānu 'l-ḥaqā'iq*. Here we will discourse about it briefly. As we have said in the answer to question No. 17, in connection with *jinns*, that no star or planet is without creatures. Thus, it has been seen that flying saucers are coming, but nobody knows who they are. So, it should be known that they are human beings with astral bodies, who live on a star or many stars. Their religious and scientific progress is very advanced, to the extent that they are capable of joining the particles of the subtle body to make and present various shapes. They can appear and also disappear.

U.F.Os. are the signs of the beginning of the spiritual cycle. In future, man is going to benefit from the heavenly forces, but without confessing God's Godhead and His power, it is not only difficult, but impossible to subjugate these spiritual forces.

God willing, we will write a booklet on U.F.Os, on the basis of spiritual experiences and Qur'ānic teachings, so that it may be acceptable not only from the religious point of view, but also be beneficial from the scientific point of view. In this connection see also the answer to question No. 42.

Q19 Resurrection (*qiyāmat*):

Please throw some light on the 'Day of Resurrection'. Is there a particular day fixed for *qiyāmat*?

A19 It should be known that in the Qur'ān and Islam the "knowledge of Resurrection (*'ilmu'l-qiyāmat*)" is the most secret science. In Ismā'īlism also, the Resurrector of Resurrection (*qā'imū'l-qiyāmat*) and Resurrection (*qiyāmat*) are among the secrets of spirituality. And in their being so there is great expediency and wisdom of God. It is for this reason that the religious events and conditions before Adam^(c), who was the vicegerent of the then *qā'im*, are hidden in the Qur'ān. Had the *qā'imū'l-qiyāmat* and *qiyāmat* of the previous cycle been mentioned, the secrets of the future *qā'im* and his *qiyāmat* would have been divulged and would have not remained secrets. God, therefore, did not bring the events of Adam^(c) and prior to Adam^(c), before human beings, or He mentioned them in such a way that only the wise people would understand and they may remain a secret from the common people.

This means that the knowledge of *qiyāmat* is among the *ta'wils*, and the practical *ta'wīl* of *qiyāmat* is that a true *mu'min* may observe the event of *qiyāmat* within himself through the purification of his soul and spiritual progress. However, even if a fortunate person achieves this purpose, still there is the fear of whether he is able to explain to others or not.

In any case *qiyāmat* continues forever internally and spiritually. And in this sense the Qur'ān has said to the people of all times that the *qiyāmat* is very close, both with respect to spirituality as well as death. Thus if we accept “*man māta faqad qāmat qiyāmatuh*” (whoever dies, his *qiyāmat* takes place) as a principle, it would lead to the conclusion that whoever dies with respect to his carnal soul before his physical death and purifies his heart/soul, his resurrection also takes place. Also when the people of a country or of the entire world are overwhelmed by a great fear their spiritual *qiyāmat* takes place as well, and they will confront the scene of *qiyāmat*. This explanation shows that *qiyāmat* is ever continuous as well as having specific times. For details see my book *Mizānu'l-ḥaqā'iq*.

Q20 **Why did we come to this world?:**

For what purpose are we created? Or, why are we sent to this world?

A20 It should be known that in creating us and sending us to this world, there is not only one purpose, but there are many purposes, of which each is important in its own place. However, among them there is one supreme purpose which comprises all worldly and religious purposes, and which is *‘ibādat-ū ma‘rifat*. Here *‘ibādat* implies all those good deeds without which a *mu'min*

cannot attain the rank of perfection in religion and in faith; and *maʿrifat* or recognition also comprises all recognitions beyond which there is no other recognition.

Knowledge and deeds and *ʿibādat-ū maʿrifat* are possible only after coming to this world, and without coming to this world they are not possible. It is a fact that this world is the tillage of the hereafter. Therefore, the hereafter cannot prosper without this world. Had it been possible for the hereafter to prosper, we would never have come to this world at all. Thus, it is obvious that it was necessary for us to come to this world, therefore we are sent here.

Q21 Paradise and Hell:

What is our (*Ismāʿīlī*) concept pertaining to heaven and hell as described in the holy Qurʾān?

- Q21 Whatever is said in the holy Qurʾān regarding paradise and hell is true, but we are more and more satisfied with wisdom and *taʿwīl*. Thus [according to *taʿwīl*] paradise exists as the inner aspect (*bāṭin*) of the universe and the existents. That is, according to the Qurʾān, it is in the length and width of the heavens and the earth (3:133; 57:21) and where according to verse (50:35), “There they have all that they desire, and there is more with Us”. That is, in paradise there are all those bounties which men desire and also those for which desire has yet not been created in them, such as the desire for Divine vision (*didār-i ilāhī*), union with the origin, (*aṣl mēØ wāṣil honā*), eternal kingdom (*azalī wa abadī saltanat*) etc.

Since the bounties of paradise are based on desire, let us see how many kinds of desire we have. If we have true

love, it is the highest element of our existence and thus we can say that there are: desires of true love (*‘ishq-i haqīqī*), desires of intellect (*‘aql*), desires of spirit (*rūh*) and desires of the carnal soul (*naḥs*). Thus, there are four kinds of desires upon which the bounties of paradise are based and their classification shows that the highest comes in the form of Divine vision, then in the form of intellect and knowledge, then in the form of spiritual pleasures, and the last are in the form of carnal soul, which again are not in dense form but in subtle form. This paradise is internal (*bāṭinī*) and spiritual, and therefore, a *mu’min* can enter it not only after death, but he can also observe it partially in this life. Thus, it is a fact that those *mu’mins* who have progressed to the higher stage of spirituality through the special *bandagī* can [partially] see paradise with the eye of the heart, and when they sever their relationship with this world they will continue to observe it completely.

According to verse (29:64) of the Qur’ān, the home of the hereafter is living, and it is obvious the living are human beings and animals. This shows that the palaces of paradise, which have intellect and soul are the Prophet, the Imām and the true *mu’mins*, within whom can be seen the abovementioned paradise of spirituality if their *bāṭin* (inner aspect) is observed in the illumination of divine light. Contrary to this, the narrow houses of hell are animals and also those people who according to the decision of the Qur’ānic verse (7:179): “These are as the cattle – nay, but they are worse” have been included among animals.

Here, it would not be out of place, if I mention some of my spiritual observations and experiences. When I was in China and was undergoing the full course of spirituality, I saw a dog in front of the gate of my house.

The dog was passing by slowly and there were innumerable mean souls attached to it. They were additional to its' own soul. When I was observing this state in front of me, my physical eye and spiritual eye had become one. Another time, I observed a similar thing in a cat, from which souls were coming out on extremely minute particles and again entering it, as if they were trying to escape from the narrow house of hell unsuccessfully, but a Divine power was bringing them back into it.

When I was in prison the last time, I saw with the heart's eye that there were some horses in a stable near or far from the prison and I observed similarly the ingress and egress of countless souls, although I was in the enclosure of the prison and there was no way for me to observe physically other than what was in front of me.

It should be noted that there are two kinds of souls in human beings and animals. One kind is of their own, which keep them alive and the other, those which use these human beings and animals as their temporary or permanent houses. Thus, when a righteous person performs spiritual exercises through knowledge and good deeds in accordance with the pleasure of God, the Prophet and the *ulu'l-amr*, as a result his own soul improves and also good souls come into him and he can see those souls. This is his spirituality, in which there is not only the *ma^crifat* of God, but also the observation of paradise and hell.

Q22 **System of Guidance:**

It is said that in each era messengers of God guided human beings. However, it is incomprehensible that the

different continents of the world benefitted equally from Divine guidance?

- Q22 This question is very important and its answer can cover many important points of the recognition of religion. Thus it should be understood that religion and science in origin are one, like a river or a stream, which in the course of time sometimes divides into two branches also, one is called religion and the other science. Sometimes religion gains prominence and sometimes science, but it should always be kept in mind that where religion and science are one and the same, the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) too are one, and where they are different, religion is the esoteric and spiritual aspect of human progress and science the exoteric and material aspect of it. This logic leads to the conclusion that whatever man can do through the materiality of science he can also do through the spirituality of religion. For instance, if it is possible today for human beings to converse with each other across distances of thousands of miles on the strength of science, why then should we not believe that guidance from the light of the Prophet used to reach all the countries of the world, for without this the Prophet cannot be a mercy for all the worlds. There used to be 24 *ḥujjats* of the Prophet in twelve islands (*jazā'ir*) around the world and four were in his presence. However, it is not necessary to know the names of all these *ḥujjats*, just as it is not necessary to know the names of 124,000 prophets, except his *ḥujjat-i a'zam* (the supreme *ḥujjat*) who was Imām ^cAlī.

The number of 124,000 prophets does not mean that they came successively one after the other in this world, rather, there used to be one prophet as the centre of guidance in each time and the rest used to work in different parts of the world as his *ḥujjats* and *dā'is*,

receiving guidance from the centre according to their spiritual status.

According to the Sunnis, on the occasion of *mi^crāj*, God talked to the Prophet in the voice of Ḥazrat-i Abū Bakr. *Shi^cahs* say that the divine conversation was in the voice of Imām ^cAlī. What I want to say in this connection is on three levels. Reserving two levels, on the preliminary level both are correct. For it is a divine law that when revelation comes it comes through the language and voice of a prophet, or a *walī* because God has no similitude. This implies that each great prophet used to receive divine guidance in the voice of his minister (*wazīr*).

When it is accepted by the people of all religions of the world that Satan whispers discourses in the carnal soul of the human being with evil, is it against Divine justice to accept that the true Guide inspires the human intellect with good? For, if Satan has this evil power from the Lord, then the Prophet and the Imām should have greater power of good. Further, if Satan can reach all corners of the world [in his astral body] and has his army there, then indeed the true Guide of the time can also reach all corners of the world in his *ibdā^ci* body (*juththah-yi ibdā^ciyyah*) and has his army in the astral body (*jism-i falakī*). This army is called [spiritual] *hudūd-i dīn* (religious hierarchy) and is entrusted with the work of guidance.

Today attempts continue to communicate through telepathy. One day this will be successful and will be considered a common thing between religion and science. Then those who are intelligent will come to know that this has always been there with the Prophets and Imāms.

This is a detailed answer to your question, in which it was asked that since in the past there were not the means of communication we have today, how did the whole world become aware of the guidance of the Prophet who is sent to a country. It was explained in the answer that the net of *ḥudūd-i dīn* was spread all over the world under one great prophet, who used to guide people according to their understanding and they themselves used to receive spiritual teaching from the centre of guidance. There are many wisdoms for the true *mu'mins* in this explanation.

Q23 Procedure of *‘Ibādat*:

I would like to request *‘Allāmah Ṣāḥib* to give us a lecture on the procedure of *‘ibādat*.

A23 See the answer to question No. 14.

Q24 The Problem of Children's Birth:

How will this world come to an end, while thousands of children are born every minute?

Q24 My dear! Your question is most interesting and your logic too is very wonderful. Somebody might have said that the world is going to come to an end and you thought what would happen to those young children who continue to be born in thousands every minute. As if, according to you, the birth of children is the guarantee of the subsistence and survival of this world. I think that is what you meant!

My dear, how kind and simple you are! May I be sacrificed for your simplicity! Here is a simple answer to your question. But the amazing thing is that there is

knowledge even in this simplicity. It is alluded in verse (22:55) that the Hour, i.e. the Resurrection will come hiddenly, but its consequences will appear gradually. One of these consequences is that at one time women will be sterile and no child will be born. This is regarded in the Qur'ān as “a Sterile day”. Now, let us be grateful to God that if the world comes to an end there will be no children in front of us.

Q25 Jesus Christ^(c):

Was Jesus^(c) crucified or not? (Proofs must be from the Qur'ān). Where did the light come from?

Q25 I have an article regarding Jesus^(c) that is published in my *Panj Maqālah* II, please read it. It is our principle that if we have already answered a question, then we do not write on it again and when necessary, we refer to it. However, we will try to discuss briefly some important points here too.

First of all, it should be noted that if God provides for His friends – the Prophets and Imāms – the means of fleeing from the battlefield instead of granting them the courage to have patience and endurance during the severest difficulties of the world and to sacrifice themselves for the sake of upholding the truth, then the enthusiasm for sacrifice and yearning for martyrdom will cease to exist, and nobody will be ready to suffer in the path of God. It is clear from this logic that the blessed body of Jesus^(c) was sacrificed for the sake of religion.

It should be known that God considers those martyrs, who are slain in the path of God as alive (3:169) and considers as dead some people who are as yet alive

(16:21). Do such events not have two aspects? Does not this mean that martyrs are dead with respect to body, but with respect to soul they are alive, and those who are considered dead by God are alive physically but are dead spiritually. Thus it should be understood that Jesus^(c) was martyred physically on the cross, but spiritually he was alive in the presence of God. For he was the Spirit of God and all the Prophets and Imāms are in the same position. Then who can harm the Spirit of God? This is the gist of the Qur'ānic verses regarding Jesus^(c). For further details see the article referred to above.

At the end of the question it is asked: "Where did light come from?" This question is conceived in the background that where the light exists today, it did not exist before. This idea indeed is not correct. The light is always in the same glory, as the Qur'ān (24:35) says: "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth".

If Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth (i.e. the universe and its existents), this means that the entire universe and all these things, which exist today were immersed in the light of God in their luminous form in *azal* (timeless state) and then He gave them the material form.

This also means that the Universal Soul is a light, which comes into existence from the spiritual dissolution of the universe and the existents, and this fact is not outside the explanation of the abovementioned verse.

Introduction (Part 2)

By the blessed and holy supreme Name of the Sustainer of the world, which is living and speaking and which is the fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom and rectitude and guidance and is the source of success and help, by duly remembering which one attains the tranquillity of heart and peace of soul and in which is hidden the light of the certainty of the eye and the rank of the certainty of truth.

Manifold feelings of pleasure and gratitude are arising in my heart while writing the introduction to the second part of the *Hundred Questions*. This is perhaps because of the fact that our humble endeavour [in comparison to His favours], is next to nothing, whereas the favours and gifts of the true Lord are stupendous.

By the favour and grace of God, may He be exalted, the book *Hundred Questions* will prove to be of immense importance and benefit, for in it we have given satisfactory answers to the important questions of the great *jamā'at* of the great country of Canada.

Obviously an individual question may be easy as well as difficult, but a collective question is always difficult. For, it comes forth after having passed through many stages of thinking and reflection. Nevertheless, the success and help that are received from the Lord of the worlds through the true Imām, are extremely great.

Here one needs to ask: When and on what occasion does a question arise? Or why does a question arise? A question arises when we encounter an obstacle while walking on the path of knowledge and wisdom, or when a doubt occurs in connection

with the recognition of the Imām and religion, or its necessity is felt as a result of some discussion. In any case, wisdom necessitates that the question be answered, otherwise neither can there be proof of knowledge and wisdom, nor can someone be helped in knowledge.

There are various ways of presenting knowledge to one's own people and to others, but the most systematic one is to employ the principles of question and answer so that the important aspects of knowledge may be discussed and the desired objectives understood easily.

How excellent is the method of discussing problems of knowledge among ourselves in the form of questions and answers and solving them, instead of being asked the same questions by others with whom we are then entangled in discussions.

God willing, the book *Hundred Questions*, which is being prepared in four separate parts, will prove to be very useful and beneficial, particularly when it will be translated into other languages.

On this occasion, it will be ingratitude on my part to neglect the honourable mention of the intelligent staff and diligent members of *Khānah-yi Hikmat*. It is obvious that in presenting knowledge to the public in the form of a book, numerous difficulties are confronted and in order to overcome which, an organization is needed, whose members are endowed with manifold faculties and multiple capacities. Praise belongs to God that these qualities are found *par excellence* in the members of *Khānah-yi Hikmat*.

It is an undeniable fact that in order to disseminate knowledge, the organization of our students is working quite tirelessly.

This has produced satisfactory results and God willing, we expect much more progress in it.

Whenever service of knowledge is mentioned, it is appropriate to make the pleasant mention of *Jān-i ʿAzīz* Faquir Muhammad, without which neither my students nor I, are happy. When I mention his name, by it I mean a world of knowledge, in which in addition to there being everything of knowledge and wisdom, there are also numerous individuals of the East and West who yearn for knowledge. Thus, through *Jān-i ʿAzīz* I remember all of them together.

Here I also remember all those dignitaries, friends and *ʿazizān* (i.e. students) who live in various cities and Northern Areas of Pakistan, who are interested in my books. Looking at their taste and enthusiasm for knowledge, I am encouraged to work [more]. They are indeed endowed with the attributes of yearning and appreciation for knowledge, and are earnestly desirous and zealous to spread its light.

I wish I could have duly expressed my sincere gratitude to the virtuous *Jamāʿat* of Canada, who trusting me for the spiritual knowledge of the exalted Imām, asked me these important questions. Otherwise, an important book such as *Hundred Questions* would not have come into existence. Not only this, but also through this great *Jamāʿat* our domain of activity has extended from East to West; for which I am particularly indebted and grateful to the friends and *ʿazizān* (students) of Canada.

Finally, I pray humbly that may the Lord of the worlds grant peace and success in both worlds to those who serve spiritual knowledge and those who take interest in it. May the Lord of honour always be pleased with these devoted *mu'mins* who continue to offer all kinds of sacrifices for the glory and

advancement of religious knowledge! *Āmīn*, O the Lord of the worlds!

A humble servant,
Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr Hunzai

Friday, 28th Sha^cbān 1398/4th August 1978 / Year of Horse.



**Institute for
Spiritual Wisdom
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Q26 Manifestations of Spirit:

What is the Ismā'īlī belief about the coming of the soul to this world again and again? Does the soul always appear in different manifestations?

A26 Before dealing with this question it is necessary to understand that Islam consists of *shari'at*, *ṭariqat*, *ḥaqīqat* and *ma'rifat*. Thus the period between the time of the Prophet and *qiyāmat* is divided into these four stages. Thus, in the beginning, emphasis is laid on *shari'at*, then if not all, some of them enter the *ṭariqat*, fewer reach the *ḥaqīqat* and a very few reach the *ma'rifat*. This means that the exoteric teachings of Islam come first and then its esoteric teachings. Thus according to the esoteric teachings (*ḥaqīqat* and *ma'rifat*) the soul comes to this world again and again. However, this question alone is not enough about the soul, we need to know further: Why does the soul come to this world? When does it come? How does it come? Does it come in the case of failure, or in the case of success? Does it come in both cases? If so, what is the difference between the two cases? And so on and so forth.

If the manifestation of the soul in this world is a Divine mercy, why should it not be given again and again as Divine mercy is infinite?

God has compared the concept of the existence and subsistence of all creatures to a circle by saying: "Everything moves on a circle" (36:40).

The holy Prophet has said: "The believers [of all communities] are indeed brothers and the prophets are like one soul". If all the prophets are like one soul, their

coming to this world is like the numerous manifestations of one prophet. If this is the case, then from the *ḥaqīqatī* (esoteric) point of view, why should we not say that the manifestations of all these prophets were in fact, the different manifestations of the *Nūr-i Muḥammadi* (the light of Muḥammad^(s)), and the Imāms also are the different manifestations of the same light. Thus, it is evident that the soul also has numerous manifestations.

All our problems can be solved only in the light of Qur'ānic wisdom. Thus, in Qur'ānic wisdom it is said that the creation of the universe is [according to] the nature of God; and God has created people according to the same nature. This means that the shape and movement of the universe and the things therein are round and circular. There is nothing in it which by its form, shape and movement, does not show perpetual circulation, such as the heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the air, the water, the earth etc. This shows that man also comes and goes. [However, the journey through this circle, which as explained in the answer to Question No. 2 consists of two semi-circles of the spiritual world and the physical world, is extremely long]. According to one estimation, it takes a man hundred lac, hundred lac and hundred lac (i.e. thirty million) years to go through one semi-circle, and hundred lac, hundred lac and hundred lac (i.e. thirty million) years to come through the other semi-circle. Thus the distance of the whole circle can be completed in the duration of sixty million years. For proper comprehension of the theme of the answer see also the answers to Questions 1 and 2.

Q27 Children of Adam^(c):

Are all human beings from Adam^(c) and Eve^(c), or are they the product of an evolution as conceived by Mawlā-yi Rūmī? That is, by evolution are minerals transformed into vegetatives and the vegetatives into animals, and finally into human beings?

A27 In this question the two different views of Darwin and Rūmī are presented in a muddled way. There is no difference at all between Rūmī's view and the Islamic view. In other words, when has Rūmī said that human beings are not the children of Adam^(c)? This will be quite evident from his works if you study them carefully.

However, it is necessary to understand what Rūmī has said and the way he has said it. Rūmī has mentioned the different stages of human creation in the light of the holy Qur'ān. In the Qur'ān it is said everywhere that man is created out of clay, which is undoubtedly from among the minerals. Then it is said: "And Allah has caused you to grow as a growth from the earth." (71:17). It is also mentioned in the Qur'ān that men drink the milk of lawful animals (16:66) and eat their flesh (35:12). This shows that man's body, and his animal soul, are created from minerals, vegetables and animals. It is in this sense Rūmī has said about himself that first he was [in the form] of a mineral, then vegetable, then animal, and then was transformed into man. The sense in which men are Adam^(c)'s children is that the human soul comes from Adam^(c) and Eve^(c) and continues from generation to generation.

Why are there so many different aspects of human creation? Because human existence becomes complete from many elements. In fact, man is the epitome and

quintessence of the entire universe and the existents in it. For man has become complete after undergoing numerous creations and thus encompasses everything. For further elaboration and comprehension, refer to the answer to Question No. 7.

Q28 Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c):

Who is Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c)? And how true is what is said about his perpetual living in this world?

A28 Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c) was a prophet, and when the time came he departed from this world. However, a story about him has continued to be told that he had drunk the water of life and is therefore ever living. In this connection people thought that in some corner of the world there was a place called *ẓulumāt* (darknesses) where the spring of the water of life is found. If someone drinks from it once in his life he never dies and becomes ever living. It is said that Alexander tried to obtain it, but he could not. All this is based on fiction and thus there is no truth in it.

Nonetheless, it is true that *ta'wīl* is presented by mostly using this famous tradition as an example. According to *ta'wīl*, *ẓulumāt* stands for ignorance and because recognition is hidden within ignorance the water of life stands for recognition (*ma'rifat*) and Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c) stands for the true guide (i.e. Imām) who is always present in this world to guide man to the water of recognition. Thus, in reality, it is recognition that is the water of life by obtaining which a *mu'min* becomes ever living spiritually, but not physically.

The wise Qur'ān vehemently rejects that anyone can live without tasting death (29:57), or that one can live

forever physically (21:34), how then is it possible for Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c), Ḥaẓrat-i ʿĪsā^(c) or anybody else to live forever physically?

Today science and technology have greatly facilitated us to understand the realities of religion. Nevertheless, they have not been able to find such a water of life on the surface of the earth that enables one to live forever physically. Thus the tradition of the eternal physical life of Ḥaẓrat-i Khizr^(c) cannot be true without *ta'wīl*.

Q29 Nubuwwat and Imāmat (Prophethood and Imāmat):

What is the difference between a Prophet and an Imām?

A29 Prophethood and *Imāmat* are two aspects of the same reality, or two faces of the same light. Therefore in the interior of interiors there is no difference between the two. However, apparently there is a difference between the two and that again is not forever but for specific times. That is, time is divided into two periods, one is called *dawr-i nubuwwat* (the cycle of prophethood) and the other is called *dawr-i Imāmat* (the cycle of *Imāmat*). If it is the cycle of prophethood, then the Imām may be in the status of a prominent prophet, or in the person of a prophet who is not well known, or in the form of a hidden perfect man. If it is the cycle of *Imāmat* then the Imām is the vicegerent of the prophet, as is in the present time. This means that during the cycle of prophethood the status of the Imām as a whole remains hidden, and in the cycle of *Imāmat*, it becomes apparent.

The permanent miracle of the Prophet is that he receives a heavenly scripture and explains its *tanzīl* (exoteric aspect), and that of the Imām is that he teaches its spirituality and *ta'wīl* (esoteric aspect). The Prophet in

his time guides those people who have entered the circle of those who have accepted him as a Prophet and entrusts future guidance to the Imām. The Imām in his time guides only those people who have come into the circle of the confession of *Imāmat*.

As the Prophet has brought a wisdom-filled book, which contains the teachings of *sharīʿat*, *ṭarīqat*, *ḥaqīqat* and *maʿrifat* in its exoteric and esoteric aspects; similarly the Imām guides people to progress in the teachings of the Qurʾān and Islam along with progress and changing times on the straight path (*ṣirāt-i mustaqīm*), from one destination to the other.

Q30 Ḥaẓrat-i Ḥasan^(c):

It is universally accepted that Ḥaẓrat-i Ḥasan^(c) is a member of the Five Holy Persons (*panj-tan-i pāk*). What, in addition to this, is the Ismāʿīlī point of view regarding his status?

A30 As we have already discussed in detail in the answer to Question No. 8, and will also briefly do so in the answer to Question No. 32, Imām Ḥasan^(c) was an *imām-i mustawdaʿ* (Entrusted Imām), because the light of *Imāmat* manifests itself in different ranks according to the demands of time and place. For instance, there are *imām-i muqīm* (Resurrector Imām), *imām-i asās* (Foundation Imām), *imām-i mutimm* (Completer Imām), *imām-i mustaqarr* (Permanent Imām) and *imām-i mustawdaʿ* (Entrusted Imām). (see *al-Imāmatu fī'l-Islām*, p. 143).

Imām-i mustawdaʿ is simultaneously [present] with the *imām-i mustaqarr*, and whose *Imāmat* returns to the latter after a generation or more. As in the case of

Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c), Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā‘īl was *imām-i mustaqarr* after him, and Ḥaẓrat-i Ishāq was *imām-i mustawda‘*, whose *Imāmat* returned to the *imām-i mustaqarr* after several generations during the time of the holy Prophet Muḥammad^(s) (*Ibid*: pp. 149, 151, 153, 155).

Q31 Heir to the Prophet:

If the Sunnīs refuse (*inkār*) to accept the event of *Ghadir-i Khumm*, how can the Shī‘ah prove that Ḥaẓrat-i ‘Alī was the only true heir and worthy successor to the Prophet?

A31 This is by no means a new issue. Various books have been written on this basic and important subject. Therefore, in order to understand the problem thoroughly you should study these books. However, in response to your request, we will also explain some of the important points here.

The true heir of the Prophet is Imām ‘Alī^(c) and his progeny, whom God has chosen to inherit His heavenly Book according to the Qur’ānic verse (35:32), so that after the demise of the Prophet they may live and be present in this world [as] a practical example of the Divine will and guide deserving Muslims and *mu’mins* on the straight path.

By chance you have used the word “refuse” in the question, which implies the rejection of well-grounded proofs. This is such a logic by which the question comes to an end automatically and no more room remains for further questioning.

The greatest and the most obvious proof of Imām ‘Alī^(c)

and his progeny being the true heirs to the Prophet and the rightful inheritors of the holy divine inheritance is the continuation of the chain of *Imāmat* and of guidance in the lineage of the Imāms from the very beginning. For it is the Divine will that the system of divine guidance should continue forever as it was during the time of the Prophet.

Other than the chain of Imām ^cAli^(c) and his progeny, who else can be symbolized by the Rope of God (*ḥablu'llāh*) which is never broken (3:103); who else can be called the Light of God which is never extinguished (9:32; 61:8); who else can be called the Pure Tree (*shajarah-yi tayyibah*), which is evergreen and which gives fruit in all seasons and whose root is firm in the earth and branch reaches the heaven (14:24-5); and who else can represent God and his Prophet as the possessors of the divine command (*wali-yi amr*) so that the centre of religious guidance may continue forever (4:59); and through whom the greatness and eminence of the progeny of Ḥaẓrat-i Abraham^(c) and the progeny of Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(s) may continue? It is this family upon which God has conferred the excellence of inheritance of the heavenly Book, wisdom and the great kingdom (spiritual kingdom) until the day of Resurrection (4:54).

Q32 Imām Ismā^cīl^(c):

On such and such a page of such and such book the author has written that Imām Ismā^cīl^(c) expired in the lifetime of his father Imām Ja^cfar al-Ṣādiq^(c), and thus Ḥaẓrat-i Mūsā al-Kāẓim succeeded Imām Ja^cfar al-Ṣādiq^(c). Can you prove that Imām Ismā^cīl was alive after Imām Ja^cfar al- Ṣādiq's^(c) demise and he alone was the true heir to the *Imāmat* after him?

A32 It is a great weakness to give undue importance to hostile literature, but it is necessary to ask such a question for the sake of knowledge. However, it should be understood that a law, whether religious or secular, is a sum or collection of general rules, which always remain the same and on the other hand, there is always room for particular events and exceptions, so that there should not be any hardship at the time of an exigency. Thus Pīr Nāṣir-i Khusraw in his book *Wajh-i dīn* (chapter 11) says that Imām Ismāʿīl's^(c) *Imāmat* was transferred to his son Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(c) during his father's lifetime. This means that Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq^(c) had long ago entrusted the *Imāmat* to Imām Ismāʿīl^(c) and similarly, Imām Ismāʿīl^(c) entrusted his son Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(c) with the *Imāmat* during his illustrious father's lifetime. This brings [the importance of the historical aspect of] the question to an end about whether Imām Ismāʿīl^(c) expired during the lifetime of his father or after him! In any case, the succession to *Imāmat* continued through him and not through his brother. And since the *Imāmat* has continued until today in Imām Ismāʿīl^(c)'s progeny, we have to accept that he was the true heir to the *Imāmat*.

It is true that *Imāmat* is mostly transferred on the last day or at the last moments of the Imām's physical life. This is only a matter of the transference of authority (*ikhtiyār*); otherwise the succeeding Imām long before passes through the stages of spirituality and luminosity (*nūrāniyyat*). For light is not like a material thing to be confined only within one person, rather it can be in several persons at the same time. Take for example the *panj-tan-i pāk* (Five Holy Persons). Is it not true that they all possessed the light? But who had the authority? Only one person had it and that was the holy Prophet. This shows that the light of *Imāmat*, in addition to being

in the father, can also reach the son and grandson. For, as we have explained, the light cannot be transferred in one day; what is transferred instantly [at the last moment] is the authority of religious guidance.

It is mentioned in the Qur'ān, that nobody can extinguish the light of God. But this never means that no Prophet or Imām can be martyred. Rather, this means that on such occasions [i.e. the physical danger to the Prophets and Imāms] the way or plan by which God transfers His light to another person are secrets to which everyone does not have access. Thus in view of the dangers of the time, Imām Ismā'īl's^(c) *Imāmat* was transferred miraculously to his son, Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl^(c).

Sayyidnā Qāẓi Nu'mān and Sayyidnā Pīr Nāṣir-i Khusraw, in *Asāsu't-ta'wīl* and *Wajh-i dīn* respectively, say that Ḥaẓrat-i Ya'qūb's^(c) *Imāmat* had long ago been transferred to Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf^(c). The reason for this transference was the enmity of Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf's brothers, for they did not wish their father to select him above them.

Also, before the martyrdom of Imām 'Alī^(c) both Ḥaẓrat-i Ḥasan^(c) and Ḥaẓrat-i Ḥusayn^(c) had received the capacity of light (luminosity) and *Imāmat*, as the Prophet had said: "Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are Imāms standing or sitting [whether in power or otherwise], and their father is superior to them both."

Similarly Imām Zaynu'l-Ābidīn^(c) had already received the *Imāmat* before the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn^(c). For the divine power (*qudrat*) works according to the exigency of the time. Thus it becomes clear that Imām Ismā'īl's^(c) *Imāmat* had already been transferred to his

son Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(c) in view of the exigency of the time, as mentioned above.

Q33 Spiritual Progress:

What are the pre-requisites or basic conditions of spiritual progress? What can be the reason of not being able to progress in *‘ibādat*, despite practising it regularly for a long time?

- A33 The basic conditions for spiritual progress are the true and absolute obedience of the Imām of the time, which consists of knowledge and action. That is, one basic condition of spiritual progress is religious knowledge and the other is good deeds. By religious knowledge is meant the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilmu’l-yaqīn*), that is, the knowledge by which all doubts and suspicions are removed and questions cease to exist automatically. And by good deeds are meant those deeds, which are in accordance with the pleasure of the Imām of the time.

If a *mu’min* regularly continues to do *‘ibādat* for a long time, he should have definitely progressed spiritually. However, the difficulty here is that the standard by which you assessed the *mu’min* is entirely an ordinary standard. This means that the *‘ibādat* that one considers to be regular might not be regular; because there is in it a lack of *‘ilmu’l-yaqīn* and also a defect in his good deeds. Further, it is possible that there may be some defect in the procedure of *ẓikr* (remembrance).

In this connection refer to one of my books *Ẓikr-i ilāhī*, which has been translated from Urdu into English by *Jān-i ‘Azīz* Faquir Muhammad Hunzai and Zayn Rahim Qasim.

Q34 Hazrat-i Adam^(c):

Would you tell us how many Adams have lived in this world?

A34 If we take into consideration popular tradition and exoteric knowledge, it will seem that only one Adam has come to this world. However, when a true *mu'min* is granted wisdom (*hikmat*) by God he knows what the problem and reality of Adam's creation is. He knows that Adam is not only one, but numerous, nay countless. For, by Adam is meant that perfect man who begins a new cycle of humanity and religion. The chains of such cycles ever continue in God's kingdom, which is eternal. That is, in this vast and wide universe many worlds like the planet earth come into existence and become extinct, and during the life of each of them elapse the cycles of numerous Adams.

Q35 Amendment and Change:

Why are amendments and changes made in our holy *Du'ā*, particularly in some of the basic words?

A35 Islam is the religion of nature. Therefore, it has, both in its exoteric and esoteric aspects, capacity and room to make amendments in view of the changing conditions and needs of the people, so that the people may not face any hardship in putting its teachings into practice. As God, may He be exalted, says: "God desires for you ease and He does not desire hardship for you" (2:185).

It is quite clear from this holy divine command that God, the most Merciful, does not like people to face any unnecessary difficulty and rigidity in religion. Therefore, He in His infinite mercy has granted the true Guide (i.e. Imām) the authority to make the appropriate amendments in religious matters where and when they

are needed.

In this connection it is very useful to discuss since when is the true religion – Islam? It is from the time of the holy Prophet, in fact from pre-eternity. Is it true that the essential characteristic of Islam, from the time of Adam to the blessed time of the holy Prophet is that amendments have always been made according to the changes of the time? Yes, this is true. If this is true, how were these amendments made? They were made in the sense that religion consists of two kinds of commandments. In one kind there is room for amendments and renewal, but in the other there is no room for any amendments and renewal. Amendments and changes were made only in those commandments in which there was room for amendments and changes.

How may one know that the time has arrived to change and amend certain matters of religion? In the cycle of prophethood when one prophet comes after another prophet, and in the cycle of *Imāmat* when an Imām is appointed after the previous Imām, it becomes known that now it is possible to gradually amend some of the matters of religion. There are numerous wisdoms in this principle of God.

Q36 Conditions and Manners of *‘ibādat*:

How should one do *‘ibādat* and *ẓikr* so that one can be successful?

A36 The conditions and manners of *‘ibādat* are as follows:-

(a) In order to progress spiritually the true and sincere servant should do the general and special *‘ibādat* enraptured with the feelings and sentiments of true love.

Goodwill and the service of the *jamā'at* are also compulsory conditions.

(b) That the true *mu'min* should repent practically for all his sins, by performing *giryah-ū zāri* in the morning and the evening. For *ibādat* cannot progress if the slightest particle of the rust of sin is left in the heart. Further, without religious knowledge spiritual progress is impossible.

(c) That the faithful servant (*bandah-yi mu'min*) should be in constant remembrance (*dā'imu 'z-zikr*) of God, so that his heart may gradually be purified and his *ibādat* may be successful. Righteousness (*taqwā*) is very essential.

(d) If you are keen on progressing spiritually through special *ibādat* you should wake up early at night and perform *munājāt* (supplication to God) and *giryah-ū zāri* (shedding tears and crying); prostrate again and again with absolute humility and pray.

(e) That you must be completely righteous. That is, you must act upon the commands and abstain from the prohibitions of religion. And the easiest way to be righteous is to use all the internal and external senses in accordance with the commands and prohibitions of God.

Note. In this connection the study of *Zikr-i ilāhī*, which is one of my books may be useful.

Q37 Time of Luminosity:

Why is the time from four to five chosen for the *zikr* of *ism-i a'zam* (the supreme Name of God) instead of any other time?

A37 This time is chosen because it has at least four virtues:

(i) This time of the morning is the last part of the night, and the night is more suitable and appropriate than the day to practise peaceful and successful *‘ibādat*.

(ii) The morning time is better than the evening time, for the heart and mind of a *mu’min* become completely fresh and ready for *‘ibādat* by waking up after having slept.

(iii) In rising early in the morning there is a test by the real beloved of the extent of the *mu’min*’s yearning for *didār*.

(iv) In choosing this time also lies the philosophy of saving time and the excellence of work, that it (special *‘ibādat*) is kept at the last end of the night that it may be closer to the general *‘ibādat*. By doing so not only will the night-time be saved for rest and the day-time for work, but the business of the day can be begun immediately after attaining spiritual strength through the special and the general *‘ibādat* so that this spiritual strength may enhance performance in business.

Q38 **Oneness of God (*tawhīd*):**

In *Sūrah-yi Ikhlās* God says that He, may He be exalted, has not descended to this material world. Would you kindly explain what this means?

A38 Whatever has been said about the ipseity (*huwwiyyat*) of God, may He be exalted in *Sūrah-yi Ikhlās*, is not in these words that you have used. However, your question is about the oneness of God, that is, you want to know the essential points regarding the knowledge of God’s oneness (*‘ilmu’-t-tawhīd*). The complete answer to this

question is given in one of my books called *Panj Maqālah*, IV, in the last twenty-four pages. Please study this book carefully.

There are many bright realities of the recognition of self and the recognition of God in the holy *farmāns* of the exalted Imām Ḥaẓrat-i Mawlānā Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh^(c). In this connection the final and supreme teaching is the concept of monoreality, by understanding which not only do all questions pertaining to *tawḥīd* come to an end, but all the other highest sublime realities also become evident and clear, and total satisfaction is attained.

If the concept of monoreality is correct, it has to be applied first of all not to oneself but to the Perfect Man [of the time]. For it is he who is the example of the unity of all realities, pre-eternally and post-eternally. That is, it is the Perfect Man, namely the true Guide, who is the example of the perpetual unity and monoreality of all the souls and it is he who represents it (monoreality) and guides people towards it.

In the Qur'ān and Islam, the great ancestor of the holy Prophet^(s), Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c)'s recognition of God and *tawḥīd* is regarded as the best example to understand, explain and to follow it practically. (6:76-9). He accepted the star, the moon and the sun respectively as Lord (*rabb*) and as a result he achieved the recognition of the Creator of the universe. Here there is an allusion to reaching the unity of God or monoreality through the religious hierarchy (*ḥudūd-i dīn*).

If you study the history of the religions of the world and Islam itself, it will be evident that although the oneness of God, as such, is always the same, in its interpretation

and explanation there has been progress and gradually it has been purified. This exactly resembles the example of Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c), because religion as a whole is not like an ordinary person, but like Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c). Thus it is necessary that *ḥaqīqat* and *maʿrifat* should progress with the passage of the life of religion.

Q39 Picture or Photograph of the Imām:

Since the Imām is present and existing why is his photograph kept in the *Jamāʿat Khānah*? Is this not idolatry?

A39 The first part of this question is illogical, and its second part is correct. However, the answer to this question is that [to revere] the blessed picture of the Imām is never idolatry, for the Imām is the living supreme Name of God, which is “*al-Ḥayy al-Qayyūm*” (the Everliving and the Everlasting). The picture is a symbol and sign of this supreme Name, just as Allah is the name of God, the letters of which *alif*, *lām*, *lām* and *hā* are by no means God Himself, but are only symbols and signs through which the name of God is determined and recognised. Therefore, neither the letters nor the word “Allāh” is meaningless. Thus, the sense in which the blessed personality of the true Imām is the supreme Name of God, in the same sense, his picture is the supreme *naqsh* (the written form) of God.

The obligatory pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) is one of the seven pillars of Islam. If its rites are looked at from the exoteric point of view, many of them seem to be like idolatry.

But in reality they are not so, because God and the Prophet have kept numerous *taʿwīlī* wisdoms in them.

In the wise Qur'ān in verses (2:158; 5:2; 22:32, 36) are mentioned the symbols of God (*sha'ā'iru'llāh*), the respect and reverence to which is regarded as the righteousness of the heart. It is crystal clear that the personality of the Prophet and the Imām is itself from among the symbols of God. Had it not been so, then the Prophet would not have said: "Whosoever saw me, saw God." Further, the Prophet would not have said: "To look at the countenance of 'Alī is worship (*'ibādat*)"; "To look at the Qur'ān is worship"; and "To look at the Imām is worship." From all these sayings it is evident that the personality of the Prophet and the Imām is from among the symbols of God, and therefore the picture of the Imām of the time is worthy of respect and veneration.

Q40 Purpose of Creation:

For what purpose did God, may He be exalted, create a human being? What purpose does he fulfil in this world?

A40 This question has already come in number 20 in the first part, and it is answered there briefly. Here we will also try to elaborate it further. The recognition of spirit and spirituality, which is the means of the recognition of God, the Lord of honour, is like a unique and everlasting hidden treasure, the access to and the recognition of which is extremely necessary. Therefore, he has come to this world to accomplish this magnificent purpose. Thus, if he recognises God in the recognition of his own self, then it is given to him, otherwise not. Thus, this is the supreme purpose of his coming to this world.

If the sacred Tradition (*ḥadīth-i qudsī*) (i.e. “I was a hidden treasure (*kānz-i makhfī*)”, which is alluded to here, is reflected upon with intelligence and wisdom, then as a result, the hidden secret will appear from the veil of secrecy that the greatest of the secrets, which God has made for the *mu'mins* is the one which relates to His recognition (*ma'rifat*). Whosoever duly recognises God, will find Him as an unprecedented and unique spiritual treasure. From this can be estimated the paramount importance of His recognition and it also becomes clear that the supreme purpose of creation is the recognition of God.

Q41 Resurrection and the Hereafter:

What is the day of Resurrection? If there is life after death what kind of life will it be?

A41 We have sufficiently dealt with this subject in answers to questions 9, 19 and 21 and here we will also try to elaborate it further. In this world man lives two kinds of life, one is the mental and the other is external. Mental life consists of three branches or three worlds: the world of thinking and imagination, the world of dream and the world of spirituality. On the other hand, in comparison to these three worlds is the external life, which is apparent.

The example of how a human being experiences life in the world of thinking and imagination is that you should stop using the external senses and concentrate on the internal world (*bāṭin*) and absorb yourself in some good thoughts. That is, you should not use the external faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking (tasting) and touching, rather you should activate the faculties of the heart and mind and confine yourself to the world of

thinking and imagination. Then after duly reflecting, tell us: is this state not life, which is different and separate from the external life? If you accept that this state is a kind of mental life then this is the proof of the fact that a human being can survive in some way even after leaving this body.

Similarly, take the example of a dream, which is also a kind of life but different and separate from the external life and is a vivid proof of spiritual life after physical death. Thus, an intelligent person should ponder well that when a human being goes into the world of dream, in what kind of existence does he find himself, the external existence or the internal (mental)? With which eye does he see the physical or the spiritual? The physical eye is asleep. With which ear does he hear? It is obvious that his physical ears do not work in the dream state. With what means does he speak in the dream, while this (physical) tongue is silent. Likewise wherever he walks in the dream, he does not walk with his physical feet, rather he walks spiritually. From all these [examples] it is evident that people have a spiritual world also, which is known as the Hereafter, in which they live not only after leaving the physical body, but they can also partially observe and experiment with in this very life.

Now, as far as the question of the Resurrection (*qiyāmat*) is concerned, it is in the form of a revolution and spiritual war of the true religion for spiritual progress, the details of which are referred to at the beginning of this answer.

Q42 Transformation of Bodies (*tabaddul-i ajsām*):

Is there any life after death? Is it possible for the soul to

live in many successive bodies?

A42 Regarding life after death there is sufficient discussion under Question 41, therefore, only the second part of the question is answered here, which is about the transformation of bodies. In this connection, first I am answering positively, then some clear proofs are presented for it.

(a) First proof: It should be known that the Spirit of God and the Light of God is one and the same thing. When the Qur'ān used to reveal to the holy Prophet, God proclaimed that His Light was never going to be extinguished (9:32; 61:8). This means that the Spirit, which God had breathed into Ādam (15:29; 38:72) has continued in the chain of succession of the Prophets and Imāms from one body to another. This is a proof that human souls also change one body for another. For the Spirit of God in its practical guidance has presented this model.

(b) Second proof: According to the Qur'ān we are the children of Ādam^(c) and when Noah's^(c) Ark was floating in the deluge we were in the loins of his companions in the form of small spiritual particles (17:3) and we have appeared here having passed through generation after generation. So it is a fact that the soul continues to change its body.

(c) Third proof: According to the Qur'ānic verse (29:64) the abode of the hereafter is alive, and that which is alive is first and foremost the human being and then the animal. This shows that before appearing in this world, the human being was in a body and will be transferred to a body after leaving the present body; whether the body is subtle (*laṭīf*) or dense (*kathīf*), whether human or

animal. Thus, it is a valid proof that the soul always uses bodies like garments.

(d) Fourth proof: Our body decays completely in forty days, wearing itself out in the form of atoms. At the same time in the same span of time it is re-constituted completely by means of new atoms. According to this calculation our body changes nine times in the year. An assessment of how the body continues to be constituted from one side and wears out from the other can be made from the growth of hair and nails. It is evident from this that the human body always continues to change. That is, the soul continues to change bodies, one after the other.

(e) Fifth proof: It is mentioned in several places of the Qur'ān and particularly in the chapter *Yā-Sīn* (36:36) that God has created all things in pairs in such a way that they cannot subsist without being pairs, such as the body and soul. This means that without the body the soul cannot stay and without the soul the body perishes, as is clear from the [decayed] body, which the soul has left. The cause of the subsistence of this universe is that it has a great soul that is called the Universal Soul. This shows that the soul cannot stay without the body rather it transfers from one body to another.

(f) Sixth proof: Our soul has three kinds of body; one is physical (*khākī*) which is the present body, the second is luminous (*nūrānī*) and the third is originated (*ibdā'ī*). Their knowledge is related to spiritual experience as well as to Qur'ānic wisdom (16:81). Thus, the soul always has a link with these bodies.

Q43 Speaking Book and Silent Book:

If the prophets conveyed God's message to the people from the time of Ādam^(c) to the blessed time of the holy Prophet Muḥammad^(s), and thereafter the chain of the *Imāmat* had to begin for the guidance of the people, why did God send the Silent Books with the Prophets, such as the Taurah, the Psalms, the Gospel and the Qur'ān?

A43 It should be known that the heavenly Book, the Prophet and the Imām together form one institution of God. They are not contrary to one another that a question may arise of "either it should be this or that". The Book is God's message, the Prophet is His messenger and the Imām is his successor.

It is necessary for God's message that is revealed to a Prophet, and conveyed to the people, to continue to be for the future in the form of a Silent Book. This would not only provide proof for the people that the one who had brought this message was a true messenger but it would also be a source of admonition and a means of guidance for the people. The Imām, as the light and *walī-yi amr* (one who has Divine authority) has the right and the choice to guide the people, either through shedding light upon the heavenly Book (i.e. interpreting it) or giving them luminous guidance personally.

It is mentioned in the Qur'ān in verse (4:54) that God has given to the progeny of Ibrāhīm^(c) the Book and Wisdom and has conferred upon them a great (spiritual) kingdom. This means that whether it is the Prophet or the Imām (who are the progeny of Ibrāhīm^(c)), the heavenly Book, Wisdom, and the great spiritual kingdom always remain with them.

If there had not been the Silent Book (the Qur'ān), through which speech of God would it have been possible to define and describe the Speaking Book (the Imām)? Since there is the Qur'ān, therefore there is the light of the Qur'ān; since there is the Qur'ān therefore there is the Teacher (*mu'allim*) of the Qur'ān; since there is the Qur'ān, therefore the status of those who understand its meaning (*bāṭin*) i.e. the wisdom of *ta'wil*, is high.

Q44 *Ism-i a'zam* (Supreme Name) and Prophethood:

If we believe that Ḥaẓrat-i Abū Ṭālib^(c) granted the Prophet *ism-i a'zam*, through which the Prophet performed special *ẓikr*, and as a result of which he received prophethood, does this not imply that the Prophet acquired prophethood through his own efforts of the special *ẓikr-ū 'ibādat*? Was it not possible for God to grant him prophethood without such special *'ibādat*?

- A44 (a) Although the complete manifestation of the religion of Islam took place in the time of the holy Prophet, this however does not mean that the true religion did not exist before him. In fact all the prophets invited the people to the same path of the One God and that was the religion of nature, namely Islam. If you reflect a while on the Qur'ānic verses regarding the religion of Ḥaẓrat-i Nūḥ^(c) (42:13) and Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) (22:78), you will come to know clearly that the great status of the light of *Imāmat* was continuing in the chain of the ancestors of the holy Prophet. As God says: “But indeed We have given the progeny of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom” (4:54). It should be known that the progeny of Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) has two branches. One stems from Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c),

and the other from Ḥaẓrat-i Ishāq^(c), and whatever is said in this verse applies to both families.

(b) From the above description it becomes evident and clear that according to the prayers of Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) and Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'il^(c) God had chosen the special people from both branches of his progeny (2:127-8). Thus Ismā'ilīs believe that Ḥaẓrat-i Abū Ṭālib^(c) was in the position of the *imām-i muqīm* (the Resurrector Imām) in his time and it was for this reason that he protected the holy Prophet in every respect. (See *al-Imāmatu fi'l-Islām*, p. 155).

(c) Now the question arises whether or not the holy Prophet before receiving prophethood used to do the *ẓikr-u 'ibādat*. If the answer is “Yes”, then according to which religion did the revelation start to come to him in his very childhood or in his youth, or did someone also teach him externally? If it is said that before the beginning of prophethood he neither received revelation nor was there someone to teach him, rather he began to worship God of his own accord, then following his *uswah-yi ḥasanah* (the best example and *sunnat-i muṭahharah* (the sacred Tradition) it would imply that everyone should follow [a religion] without the guidance of a guide. Consequently this will be an ideology, which will prove the futility of the purpose of the coming of all the prophets to this world.

(d) If we think with intellect and wisdom, for your whole question there is no better answer than whatever has been said about the entire life of the Prophet and his being the best example for conduct: “You have indeed in the messenger of God a best example for conduct for anyone whose hope is in God and the final Day and who engages much in the remembrance of God” (33:21).

This blessed verse means that the Prophet made his pure life the best example for the *ummah* to follow not only during prophethood, but also before it his life was full of the virtues and the perfections of humanity and piety. Why not, while he was the chief of the prophets, the possessor of the exalted standard of character (68:4) and the best example for conduct.

(e) Would it have been possible for the pure life of the Prophet to be a beautiful pattern, excellent model and the best example for conduct for the people, had he not actualised and made conspicuous his life as much as possible with religious virtues in addition to human and moral qualities till his fortieth year, had he not practically passed through all the stages of religion and spirituality before receiving it and was he honoured with prophethood suddenly? Or is it the correct ideology to say that the prophet followed the religion of Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) from the very beginning and had faith in God and in the final Day and was remembering God abundantly? If we say that the Prophet received this supreme and greatest honour as a result of the *ẓikr-ū 'ibādat*, this does not negate Divine mercy, while all the means of the spiritual elevation of the Prophet fall under His mercy. Our saying so is an incidental and implicit reality. Without such an ideology how can we follow the pure life of the Prophet as an example and expect that spiritual progress is due to *ẓikr-ū bandagī*?

Q45 **Why Two:**

It is difficult to understand which one of these two ideologies should be followed, monoreality or one light, while you yourself say that there is only one light. Further, according to this logic, the question arises why two sacred books – Silent and Speaking are needed,

while it is accepted that not two but only one book is sufficient?

- A45 Yes, the absolute light is only one and the same is one light and one reality or monoreality, because the light which is perfect and universal is only one and the reality of realities or monoreality is not separate from it. Thus, the question, which had arisen because of considering “monoreality” and “one light” separate from one another, comes to an end.

Further, the purpose of one light and monoreality is one and they are one ideology, not two, in the sense that reality means the light of intellect, understanding, knowledge and wisdom; therefore, no wise person can say that reality and light are two contrary things.

The second question is about two books. It is asked: “Where the existence of the Speaking book is possible, what is the need of the Silent book”? And it is also said that the logic of the first and second questions is the same, which is not correct, because in the first question there are two different names of the one thing, whereas in the second question there are two different things. In any case, the short answer to this question is that both are necessary, one as the true guide and the divine light and the other as the book, as the Qur’ān says (5:15). Furthermore, they appear to be two only externally, but internally they are one and the same.

Q46 Religious Assemblies:

Is it true to say that a simple Ismā‘īlī who is faithful can amply benefit from religion on the basis of sheer faith if he participates in the various religious assemblies?

A46 Yes, it is true that if a simple Ismā^cīlī has complete faith in his religion and follows its commandments, he deserves salvation. In addition, if he also acquires *‘ilmu’l-yaqīn* (the knowledge of certainty) he can also become an angel. Here participation in various religious assemblies means to follow all the commandments of religion.

In the background of this question appears to be one thing, which is that now-a-days material sciences are in abundance and after acquiring these sciences some of our youths tend to criticise some religious rites and rituals. This tendency is not healthy, for the beliefs cannot be examined only on the standard and norm of external and material sciences. Rather, it is necessary to acquire religious sciences in order to understand the wisdoms of beliefs.

Q47 **I (khudī or anā):**

You have said that there are innumerable souls dwelling in the human body. In this case what does it mean when we say “I”? Is it a separate soul or a compendium (*majmū^cah*) of all the souls?

A47 This is a useful question, for in connection with this question can be discussed many important points of “self” and “self-recognition”. Thus it should be known that “*khudī* (Persian) or *anā* (Arabic)” which a human being uses for his “I” is a unique and unprecedented reality in his existence. Therefore, it is neither a separate soul, nor is it a compendium of all the souls. It is rather the oneness (*wahdat*) of all those souls and faculties that are in the existence of man. This oneness, which is like the “I” of a human being, is like the oneness of God. In other words it is like monoreality.

Just as in a successful government, individuals come and go, but the law and the government continue to remain the same. Similarly, in a human being souls and faculties continue to come and go but his “I”, that is, the oneness of the particles or atoms of existence (entity), continues to remain the same as it used to be, and knowledge and consciousness always continue to be transferred to the particles of the soul.

Q48 Free Will and Predetermination:

How does the holy Qur’ān solve the question of human beings’ free will or predetermination?

A48 In the light of the Qur’ān it should be understood that the creatures are of three kinds: angel, man and animal. The angel possesses only *‘aql* (intellect); the animal, *nafs* (carnal soul) and man possesses both.

When the angel is given only the intellect, this means that he is compelled to do good, and where the animal is given only the carnal soul, it is obvious that it is compelled to do bad, and the way a human being is given both it means that he is between the angel and the animal. Therefore, according to the demand of the intellect he can do good and according to the desire of the carnal soul he can also do bad. Thus to choose one of the two things is called free will (*ikhtiyār*). This shows that man is free.

Man is free, but in a limited domain. He can exercise his free will only to those faculties, which are given to him. It is also possible that his domain of free will may expand to the extent that his free will may join with and become one with the will of God. This is called

tawakkul.

It is said in the Qur'ān that: "God does not impose on any soul a duty but to the extent of its capacity" (2:286). Further, it is said: "And We have shown him the two paths [of good and bad]" (90:10). Furthermore, it is said: "Nay man sees himself [on every level]" (75:14). From these verses it is evident that man is not predetermined, rather he is free. For the capacity or the expansion indicates the domain of free will of [using] the faculties of the carnal soul and the intellect, and "imposing a duty (*taklīf*)" implies God's commandments and prohibitions. This means that the domain of choice or free will of each human being is according to the capacity of his intellect and knowledge, and the responsibility also becomes incumbent upon him accordingly. If both the paths of good and bad are before him, it also means that he has choice and free will, not predetermination and compulsion. Had there been the latter, there would have been fixed only one path as in the case of the angels and animals, who have been shown only one path. Further, if man is capable of seeing himself and he does do so practically, it shows that he knows well both the beginning and end of the good and bad, and choosing one of the two can put it into practice, which is called free will (*ikhtiyār*).

On the other hand, there are the terms predestination and fate etc., which are not Qur'ānic terms. However, the belief that whatever is in one's fate and is a divine decree will take place is not correct, as through clear proofs it has been shown that man is not predestined and compelled, but that rather he is free and independent in the specific and limited domain of the moral and religious commandments and prohibitions. Thus, the question of fate and predestination ceases to exist

automatically.

Q49 Ṣalawāt (Benedictions):

Please tell us the true meaning or the *ta'wīl* of the *ṣalawāt*. Since according to the Qur'ānic verse (21:107) the Prophet himself is the source of blessings, how can the intercession of sending mercy on him be appropriate?

A49 This question was previously asked by some students, and I have answered it in *Panj Maqālah* IV, on pp. 27-9. See also *Wajh-i dīn*, (Urdu translation) Part II, *kalām*, 50, *Falsafah-yi Du'ā*, pp. 61-9, and also the answer to Question 13, in the first part of this book.

Q50 Ḥāẓir Imām:

What is Ḥāẓir Imām? What is his supreme status? And what does the Qur'ān say in this connection?

A50 Ḥāẓir Imām is the supreme Name of God, may He be exalted. He is God's face, His light and His locus of manifestation (*mazhar*). He is His vicegerent and representative. His title is the Commander of the Faithful, his status is *walī-yi amr* (one who is entrusted with divine authority), his glory is Everliving and Everlasting (*al-Hayyu'l-Qayyūm*), his great kingdom is the inner world (*‘ālam-i bāṭin*) and spirituality, his kindness is knowledge and wisdom, his favour is true love, his miracle is spiritual light. The proof of his being true is his ever-presence and ever-existence, his manifest light is his successful guidance, his path is the straight path, his religion is the religion of nature, the reward of following his guidance is the kingdom of *malakūt* (angelic world), and the reward of his recognition is the crown of recognition (*ma'rifat*).

Regarding Ḥāẓir Imām you should also read the answer to Question 10 and the three parts of *Imām-shināsi* (Recognition of Imām, Parts 1, 2 & 3).



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Preface (Part 3)

O the True Lord! O the Omnipotent! From Your infinite mercy grant this most humble servant success and courage to recognise Your favours and to thank You for them, so that he may be able to thank You to some extent in letter, spirit and practice for the external and internal favours of Your holy religion. O Sustainer! How wondrous is the rain of Your favours which pours day and night upon the souls of *mu'mins*! And how miraculous is Your alchemic glance!

O my Lord! Enrich me with the hidden wealth of humility and submission! Grant me a peaceful and comfortable place in the destination of merging (*manzil-i fanā*) of Your delightful love and open the door of the treasure of the secrets of recognition (*ma'rifat*) for me so that I may completely forget the torments of the world being engaged in thanking You for Your everlasting favours.

Praise belongs to Allah that the third part of *Hundred Questions* has now been completed and is ready to be calligraphed and printed, and God willing, the fourth part is also about to be completed very soon.

I am sure that *Hundred Questions* will be of great importance among my books, for it contains well grounded and satisfactory answers to selected questions of the great *jamā'at* of a vast country like North America.

The sound and golden principle of true knowledge should be ever remembered that, if a question is answered correctly and it contains the full light of valid logic, knowledge, wisdom (*ḥikmat*) and *ta'wil* (i.e. esoteric meaning), and is in accordance with spiritual guidance, it solves not only the desired question,

but in its light a wise person can also solve numerous other questions. Thus, it can be justifiably claimed, without the slightest exaggeration, that *Hundred Questions* in reality contains solutions to thousands of questions. For the concept of true knowledge is like that of a tree, which has a trunk and a few thick branches, and then by ramification of these branches, spreads into numerous other branches. Knowledge has the same order and constitution as a tree. Like the trunk and the thick branches, if the answer of a question is provided with sound and substantial knowledge, [in its light] the innumerable branches of the questions are solved automatically.

Another example of this reality that according to a wise man questions are basically interlinked, is that when an ordinary person presents a list of several questions you will realise, if you look carefully, that because of ignorance he has repeated the one basic question several times in different ways.

In any case, whatever virtues of knowledge and wisdom are contained in *Hundred Questions*, they belong to my Lord and Master, the Imām of the time, *ṣalawātu'llāhi ʿalayhi wa-salāmuhu*, who is the fountainhead of the light of guidance and the source of knowledge and wisdom; and if there are any shortcomings in it, they belong to me. For, without his kindness, I am nothing.

Khānah-yi Hikmat and the organization of my *ʿazīzān* are my Lord's precious gift to me. Hundreds of thousands of thanks are due to the Sustainer of the world, that we are endeavouring to perform the sacred and pure service of spreading knowledge with the assistance of this sacred organization. God willing, our well being in both worlds lies in this service.

Our esteemed and wise members are aware of the fact that in this world no wealth except knowledge, can reach all without

paucity; and in spending it there is ever increasing reward. Indeed, it is only the wealth of knowledge, which is ever reaching as well as everlasting.

In spreading the light of knowledge, not only do *mu'mins* and Muslims benefit but the mental confusions of the entire humankind can also be removed, in pursuit of which the great nations of the world are conducting research. In the future this research is going to be conducted on a higher level.

Now as a result of scientific progress, distances on the terrestrial globe have shrunk next to nothing, far-flung countries have come very close to each other, and the people of the world wish to know one another in a new light. Should we sit silent in such a situation?

Each nation of the world has certain useful and specific material things, such as gold, silver, etc., and utilise them for worldly gains considering them their national capital. However, the special and tremendous thing or capital, which our *jamā'at* has is not material, it is rather spiritual; that is, the true knowledge which is also called luminous guidance. This knowledge and guidance is our greatest capital. Therefore, it is necessary that we pay greater and greater attention to this wealth and try to gain benefit from it and let others benefit from it too.

I pray that the Omnipotent Lord, the Provider of desires, may grant success in their virtuous religious and worldly aims to all those who participate in the service of knowledge. This prayer is not confined only to the words coined by the tongue, but is also in the subtle aspirations of the heart and soul. I pray that each subject, paragraph, sentence, word and letter of this book may pray with silent language: "O God, in Your infinite mercy grant the success and eminence of both worlds to these *‘azizān*

who have participated in the cultivation of this evergreen rose garden! *Āmīn*, O the Sustainer of the worlds!”

A humble servant,

The Author.

August 5, 1978.



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Q51 The Beads of *Tasbiḥ* (rosary):

Why do we have 99 beads in our *tasbiḥ*? Why is it divided into three parts of thirty-three beads each?

A51 In fact, there are a hundred beads in the *tasbiḥ*. The reason for dividing into three parts of thirty-three beads each is that in Islam the *tasbiḥ* of *Fāṭimah*^(c) is very important. It is: 33 times ‘*Allāhu Akbar*’ (God is great), 33 times ‘*al-ḥamdu li’llāh*’ (praise be to God), and 33 times ‘*subḥāna’llāh*’ (God is free from all attributes), and once ‘*lā ilāha illa’llāh*’ (there is no God except God). Thus the numbers of beads are arranged according to this blessed *tasbiḥ*. (see the well-known book on Ismā‘īlī jurisprudence, *Da‘ā’imu’l-Islām*, by Qāzī Nu‘mān, part I, page 203, 1st Edition, (Cairo, 1951/1370).

Q52 *Ism-i a‘zam* (the Supreme Name):

Is it possible to attain salvation without *ism-i a‘zam*? Is it compulsory to take *ism-i a‘zam*?

A52 Where *ism-i a‘zam* means the Imām of the time himself, salvation is impossible without this living and supreme name of God. Where it means a verbal name, salvation can be obtained even without it. For to practice with such a verbal *ism-i a‘zam* and to achieve success with it is only a virtue, i.e. an additional merit.

If it were not possible to attain salvation without the *ism-i a‘zam*, the Imām would have enjoined it upon all his followers as being obligatory and compulsory. All know that such is not the case, and rather, this special *‘ibādat* is for additional spiritual progress.

Kār-i buzurg (the great work, i.e. to practise *ism-i*

a'zam) is necessary for those Ismā'īlis who want to see the spiritual miracles of the Imām of the time, or it should be undertaken by those *mu'allims* or teachers who have been able to acquire spiritual knowledge.

Q53 Religion and Science:

Regarding science and religion:

(a) If someone lives according to science completely, is it possible for him to achieve the same *ma'rifat* that can be achieved through living according to religion?

(b) Why are so many laborious experiments, both in science and in religion necessary in order to reach the desired destination?

A53 If a person abandons religion completely and lives totally according to science, he cannot succeed in attaining *ma'rifat*. He can be successful only in science. For *ma'rifat* is the final stage of religion, which is the recognition of the spirit and of God, whereas science is that wisdom, which pertains to the investigation and recognition of matter. Had it been possible to achieve the recognition of God and to attain *ma'rifat* through science, all the materialist nations of the world who are quite successful and quite advanced in the field of science would have believed in God and worshipped Him. However, it is well known that such is not the case.

Yes, it is true that proto-religion and proto-science do not disagree with each other. This means that through the true religion one must recognize spirit and God and through the true science one must observe and study the realities of matter and body, so that he may be

successful in gaining all the bounties of both the worlds. The main purpose of the unity of religion and science is that when a fortunate person achieves insight and complete recognition of religion, he finds that real science is in accord with the religion of nature, and there are in it the clear evidences and bright proofs of the true religion. However, the discovery of all these realities is possible only through the recognition of religion.

As for the second question, why so many laborious experiments are necessary in order to reach the desired destination, the answer is that the latter, which you have already accepted, is very far. Therefore it requires extremely laborious work. However, the final destination in both cases is so comfort-giving that whatever laborious experiments may be conducted to reach there, they are nonetheless minimal, for the desired destination is an extremely magnificent thing.

Q54 True *Mu'min*:

What are the characteristics of a true *mu'min*?

- A54** The characteristics of a true *mu'min* are not outside the Qur'ān, and these are perfect faith and good deeds. Perfect faith means believing in God and the Prophet, and after them, in the living and present Imām, and to affirm him with heart and soul. Good deeds mean to follow the commandments of these three ranks (i.e. the commandments of God, the Prophet and the Imām of the time).

If you want to see the characteristics of a true *mu'min* in detail, read the book *Pir Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī*, for there are many ways of expressing a thing, but their

meaning is the same.

We can also say that the characteristics of a true *mu'min* are the love for and obedience to the Imām of the time, for they include all the virtues of religion and nothing is left out from them.

Q55 Hinduism:

Here, a close friend of mine mentioned the names of some Hindu religious leaders and then asked me for my opinion of their philosophy.

A55 My dear friend! Why are you so impressed by Hinduism? Why have you not first studied the great philosophy of Ismā'īlism deeply? Then, why have you not made a comparative study of the schools of Islam, and finally, the religions of the world? Then the importance of asking such an unnecessary question would not have remained and the truth and reality of Ismā'īlism would have been clear to you.

By this I do not mean that questions should not be asked, but I mean that if a question has to be asked about a faith other than Ismā'īlism, one should [first] take into consideration either the different schools of Islam, or all the religions of the world: for why should so much importance be given only to the philosophy of Hindu religious leaders?

Q56 Straight Path:

If our faith is true and makes us walk on the straight path and unites us with God, why are people not invited towards it, so that it facilitates the ending of religious differences and quarrels and accomplishes the duty of

well-being?

A56 (a) The *da'wat* (invitation) of the Qur'ān and Islam, in the language of wisdom (*ḥikmat*), is the *da'wat* of Ismā'īlism, which continues from the time of the Prophet to the time of Resurrection. Now, it is the responsibility of the people to accept this practical *da'wat* of the true religion, Islam, and to have recourse to the Teacher of the Qur'ān, the Imām.

(b) When Islam and Ismā'īlism are not hidden from the eyes of the people, and they make it the subject of their discussion, if this is not *da'wat* then what is it? If today, despite having made it the subject of their discussion, people consider it a farce, would it be possible for them on the Day of Resurrection to offer the excuse that they were not aware of this faith in the world?

(c) In addition to this, our *pīrs* and *dā'īs* in accordance with the commands and *fārmāns* of the Imām of their times, have done their best to spread the true knowledge. That is, they introduced the true religion to many people, the main purpose of which was to protect and strengthen the faith from the attacks of the opponents, and not the fulfilment of the argument (*itmām-i ḥujjat*) regarding the conveying of the true faith.

(d) There is a Prophetic Tradition: "The door of repentance (*bābu't-tawbah*) will not close till the sun rises from the West (i.e. the time of Resurrection)". It should be known that the door of repentance is the true *da'wat*, which will be closed near the time of the Resurrection.

(e) If this question implies, for what reason have the entire virtues of Ismā'īlism not been revealed through knowledge and action, so that the true guidance of Islam may be evident to all, the answer is that the epitome of all the virtues of the true religion is the Imām of the time and he is manifest and apparent before the people of the world: what, after this, is left hidden?

Q57 The Wisdom of *Nāndī*:

Why do we bring *Nāndī* to *Jamā'at Khānah*? Would it not be better to present cash instead of kind?

A57 Although cash can also be presented instead of *nāndī*, the wisdom of bringing *nāndī* to the house of God is that it is an expression of respect, reverence and humility by the *mu'min*. It is a proof of sincere servitude, and it also fulfils the need of some members of the *jamā'at* who are in need. Therefore in it (i.e. bringing *nāndī* to *jamā'at khānah*) not only are religious virtues hidden with respect to the individuals, but it is also a source of blessings with respect to the *jamā'at*.

Why do some of the educated youngsters of the modern age feel ashamed of rites such as *nāndī*? Is it because they do not like to perform the transactions of buying and selling in the house of God? Whereas, the *bay'at* (oath of allegiance itself) is also a transaction of the buying and selling of the lives of *mu'mins* and in the Qur'ān mention is made of the transaction of the lives and wealth of *mu'mins* with God (9:111). Thus, if such a pure and sacred transaction, which pertains to religion and to the other world, cannot be performed in the house of God, where else should it be performed?

Q58 ***Nādi °Alī:***

What is the meaning of “*Nādi °Alī*”?

A58 *Nādi °Aliyyan mazhara ’l-°ajā ’ibi*
Tajidhu °awnan laka fi ’n-nawā ’ibi

Kullu hammin wa-ghammin sayanjali
Bi-walāyatika Yā °Alī, Yā °Alī, Yā °Alī

Invoke °Alī, who is the locus of manifestation of
[Divine] wonders,
You will find him helpful in all calamities.
Every sorrow and grief will vanish,
Through your *walāyat* (authority, love),
O °Alī, O °Alī, O °Alī.

Q59 **Amazing!**

Why is there God?

A59 There is no doubt that there are different kinds of questions: good, bad, favourable and unfavourable, odd, strange, and unusual: but this question is the most amazing one. The amazement does not lie in that the existence of God is denied rather, it lies in saying: ‘There is God, but why’?

The main reason for our amazement at this question is that when one accepts the existence of God, then He is necessarily accepted with all those attributes mentioned about Him. Therefore, the question: ‘Why is there God?’ should cease to exist, while there is a complete answer in every attribute of God as to why He is there. For instance, God is there because He is the Creator, God is there because He is the Sustainer (*rāziq*), God is there because He is the King: God is there because He is the Cherisher (*rabb*): God is there because He is the

Beneficent (*rahmān*), etc. etc.

In short, each of the hundred names of God is a clear proof of the necessity and importance of God's existence. Those who believe in God's existence, first clearly understand the philosophy: "Why there must be God".

Q60 Human Reality:

Why did we separate from God in the beginning? What was its cause and purpose?

A60 In this connection whatever has come to your knowledge belongs to the rudimentary teaching of religion. In fact, with respect to our real 'I' we have never separated from God, and this is the greatest secret of God, that man's highest reality, the "higher I" (*anā-yi 'ulwī*) never comes down from its original place; rather, only a shadow of it (i.e. of the "higher I") has descended here. It is called the "lower I" (*anā-yi suflī*).

First of all it is important to see what man is: Man in the world of multiplicity is a body, in the world of spirits is a spirit, in the world of intellects is an intellect, in the world of realities is a reality. We can also call the world of realities the world of unity (*'ālam-i waḥdat*). This demonstrates that the highest reality of man is still the same as it was in pre-eternity (*azal*); for unity cannot be separated from the Unity, nor can reality be separated from the Reality.

This means that the concept of one reality or monoreality is correct. According to it the human 'I' is at least on two levels: one is on the lower level, which is the external and physical existence, and the other is on a

higher level, which is the higher ‘I’ and monoreality (*ḥaqīqat-i wāḥidah*), which always subsists in its original place. Thus man with respect to his external personality has come to this world, but with respect to his reality is in the world of unity.

Q61 *Niyāz* and Angels:

Is the belief correct that during the ceremony of *niyāz*, i.e. *āb-i shifā*, (spiritually healing water) some angels are present?

A61 Yes, it is absolutely correct. If you come to understand the reality of the existence and functions of angels in the light of the knowledge of certainty, you will come to know that wherever *‘ibādat-ū bandagī* is performed and beliefs are put into practice, the angels of divine mercy always become present. Angels are also present where there is the divine light.

Q62 *Taqiyyah* (Religious Secrecy):

If Christians can openly practice all their religious beliefs, why cannot we openly practice our religious beliefs?

A62 (a) Why should it be necessary for us to follow what Christians follow, and not to observe the fundamental principles of Islam?

(b) In some of our beliefs, it is necessary for us to practice *taqiyyah*. *Taqiyyah* is our religion, the religion of our Imāms, and the religion of the true Messenger of God, which is Islam.

(c) If you reflect for a while on the Qur’ān, the traditions and the exemplary life of the pure Imāms, you

will come to know that in many matters of the religion of Islam, the principle of *taqiyyah* has remained dominant. Therefore, it is better to practice *taqiyyah*, for it embraces all kinds of security.

(d) Islam is the religion of nature. Therefore, its law is the law of the universe and the existents. That is, this law has been contrived to protect everything and every creature from dangers that occur from time to time. Thus in religion, *taqiyyah* means to keep secret those matters, which could cause *mu'mins* to be in danger and could cause the followers of the Imām to face unnecessary troubles and hardship.

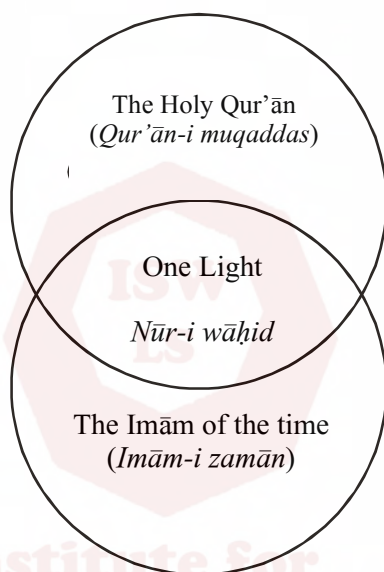
(e) We should try to mould all our words and deeds in accordance with the holy commands and *farmāns* of the Imām of the time and we should not take recourse to blindly imitating others, while we have the light of guidance (*nūr-i hidāyat*), which no one else has.

(f) From the beginning [of these questions] to this point, all such questions, which hold non-Ismaʿīlī beliefs as their benchmark, and which have been asked by our brothers and sisters, are wrong in their very basis. It is not correct to look at the beliefs of others and ask: Such and such a thing exists in such and such a religion; why don't we have it in our religion? It is an illogical way to pose questions and the reason for this is mentioned above.

Q63 **One Light (*nūr-i wāḥid*):**

The holy Qurʾān is the light of God, and Ḥāẓir Imām too; but the light is indivisible, then how do we have two lights?

A63 The answer to this question is in accordance with the following diagram:



This is a miraculous diagram, which is among the special gifts, in looking at which many basic principles of knowledge and wisdom are revealed. Thus from it the reality is clearly revealed that light is forever one, and that it is between the holy Qur'ān and the Imām of the time^(c). Therefore, it is common to both of them, the Qur'ān and the Imām.

Further, although on the one hand the light is common to the holy Qur'ān and the true Imām, on the other hand it is related more and more to the living and present Imām. For the light speaks and it is a living spirit, which is the spirit of *Imāmat* and the light of the Imām. As God says: "There has come to you a light and a plain Book" (5:15). This divine commandment shows that in reality the light is the Prophet and the Imām, and the

plain book is the Qur'ān. If the Qur'ān itself were the light, then in mentioning it (i.e. the Qur'ān) as the “plain book” there would not have been a separate mention of “light”.

To sum up, the Qur'ān is the plain book and the Imām of the time is the light. For there is only one light and not two. If we want to say that the Qur'ān is also light, it is correct only in the sense that the living spirit of the Qur'ān dwells in the Imām and can speak in the Imām, otherwise not. Study the diagram carefully and try to understand this meaning.

Q64 **The Status of an 'Ārif:**

When a person reaches the ultimate stage in *ma'rifat*, attains the light and becomes like a *pīr*, a Prophet and the Qur'ān, can he at this time say: '*ana'l-ḥaqq*' (I am the Truth; I am God) or not? If he can reach that ultimate stage, what is his relation to the Imām? Despite having the same divine light which is in the Imām he cannot proclaim himself as an Imām but with respect to light he has the same status as that which an Imām or Prophet has. Then why can he not proclaim his *Imāmat*? Is this merely for the reason that he was not born in the *nūrānī* family? If so, what kind of justice is this? If God is Pure, Beneficent, Merciful and Just, why is there this preferential treatment between these two *maẓāhir* (loci of manifestation)?

A64 It is true that a true *mu'min* in the light of the guidance of the true guide reaches the perfection of *ma'rifat*, and it is also true that he attains the light. However, in this he merges in the source of light, not that he attains a light separate from this. For light is indivisible, as shown in the diagram given in A. 63. It is also a fact

that a *pīr* in following the spirituality of the Prophet, advances farther and farther, and there is no doubt that during this he also achieves the complete spirituality of the Qur'ān. However, how can you say that crying '*ana'l-ḥaqq*' is also a necessary miracle in this connection, whereas in fact it was the result of the personal emotion of Maṣṣūr-i Ḥallāj? You should not try to examine the *ma'rifat* of every *ʿarīf* on the standard and norm of this '*ana'l-ḥaqq*' only; rather you should try to assess his position on the basis of knowledge and *ma'rifat* as a whole.

The relation of the *ʿarīf* with the Imām is that he merges in the light of the Imām. Here the divine light (which he receives) is not something separate from the Imāms; rather he merges in the divine light (which is in the Imām) through the Imām himself. Thus where did another light come from, or when did the original light divide into two parts that the *ʿarīf* would claim on that basis that he has also become an Imām? This part of the question is simplistic. Think carefully, if a piece of iron is able to be fire while living in the fire, this does not mean that it can also claim to be fire once it is separated from the fire. If it does, this claim is not right, for if the iron is fire it is because of and by means of the fire, and its claim of being fire is correct only while it is in the fire.

Another example of an *ʿarīf* is that of a poor man who becomes a king's friend. The king gradually divulges all the secrets of the kingdom to him, the purpose of which is to make him a confidant, not to enthrone him immediately. In this case if the poor man wants to be a separate king, it is wrong. However, if he thinks that he has become so close to the king that he has become his soul and is his other guise, the poor person can think

that he, being merged in the king's soul, has become the king. Otherwise not, when being separated from the king.

Q65 Why this Difference?

It is said that on the right path (*ṣirāt-i mustaqīm*) some people are ahead and some are left behind. Since to God all children are equal, why are there some who are left behind?

Religious beliefs (*‘aqā'id*) form in childhood. A person accepts religion prior to the age of 18 to 25 years without examining its depth. Then the time and opportunity pass and he cannot change his religion. He is convinced that the religion he is following is the only true religion. In this case why should he receive spiritual punishment while he followed people who were convinced that they were right?

A65 Yes, it is true that in the view of the Qur'ān, the Traditions, reason and logic, some people are ahead on the straight path (*ṣirāt-i mustaqīm*) and some are left behind. For if religion is the path one walks to become close to Allah and to reach the destination of salvation, then this necessarily leads to the conclusion that some may go ahead, some may remain behind and some may even go astray.

When you accept that the example of the true religion is likened to a straight path, you cannot ignore its accessories, results and consequences, which are that the people of all religions are travelling on this path. Since they are not alike and equal with respect to the recognition of and obedience to the true guide, or with respect to provisions for the journey and other

preparations, some of them have reached the destination, some are left behind, and some have even gone astray.

It should be known that the angel is given intellect (*‘aql*) and not *nafs* (animal faculty) and the animal is given only *nafs* and not *‘aql* whereas man, in order that he may be tried, has been placed between the two creatures, and is given both faculties. That is, man has *‘aql* as well as *nafs*. This is such a self-evident fact that nobody can deny it.

When man was meant to be tried in the field of knowledge and action, and was given the two opposing faculties of *‘aql* and *nafs*, divine mercy necessitated to grant him a third faculty so that he may thereby govern the two opposing faculties of *‘aql* and *nafs*. That was the faculty of will (*irādah*) i.e. choice (*ikhtiyār*). Here, will or choice means to like and choose between the commands of *‘aql* and *nafs*. If man had no choice in his knowledge and action, the question of trial would have ceased to exist and the presence of two opposing faculties in him would have been meaningless.

When the choice and trial of a human being are established, then their consequences also become inevitable. All this is for the reason that a human being may rule not only over the animals, but also excel over the angels in excellence and eminence. From the worldly point of view as well, the purpose of trying someone over and over again is to elevate him more and more in excellence and rank. However, it is true that many people also fail in this trial.

The example of all human beings as the children of God is correct only in the sense that God wills the well-being

and betterment of the people as does a father, rather, far more than a father. Now, since you yourself have accepted the principle of the father-children relationship, you must not deviate from this principle. That is, all the children of a father are not equal in knowledge and skill and in obedience to his command and order; some are obedient and some are disobedient. Thus, it is natural that the father is pleased with some children and displeased with some others. Similarly, God, like a kind and well-wishing father, does not like people to transgress the law of nature, He is not happy with the punishment of their misdeeds, but natural law, which is automatic, is such that it automatically requites all kinds of deeds.

For you to say: 'Religious beliefs form in one's childhood', is wrong, because belief means elementary faith (*īmān*) whereas mature or firm belief means perfect faith (*īmān-i kāmīl*). This means that respite for the improvement of belief and the correction and perfection of faith continues until the time of death. For belief in childhood is based on imitation and conformation (*taqlīd*), but after the maturity of reason and understanding, it (belief) requires investigation. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān has emphasized thinking and reflection upon every matter and every action pertaining to religion. This is the wisdom-filled *da'wat* (invitation) of Islam, ordained to move towards investigation (*tahqīq*) from imitation and conformity (*taqlīd*).

In this question one meaning has been repeated in different words and due to the lack of knowledge or simplicity, the questioner has tried to argue on the basis of illogical premises, for instance, saying that: 'He followed the people who were convinced that they were

right'. Reflect yourself for a while on this statement: Should one consider such a statement a reality or a common habit of people to say that all the people of the world think that their views are correct? If such a statement of the people can be a proof (of the truthfulness of their religion), then all the religions of the world are true. But this is not possible.

Q66 Why are there Difficulties in the World?

If God, the Holy, is Beneficent, Merciful, Bountiful and Generous, why are there so many difficulties in this world? Why are there poverty, destitution and sickness among children? Why are there wars?

A66 (a) No matter how much we praise the attributive names of God, it is not enough. For they encompass the entire divine knowledge and wisdom, and the entire law of nature as described in detail in the Qur'ān. Regardless of the difficulties found in the world of humanity, they do not negate the beauties of His essence and attributes, nor are they contrary to Qur'ānic wisdom.

(b) Leaving adults aside you have raised the question of the poverty, destitution and sickness of innocent children, lest we evade answering the question concerning the suffering of adults that is the punishment of their sins. Your question is valid, but it should be remembered that suffering does not always come because of sin, but because of some other expedience also. Think of the pure lives of the Prophets. Were they not more pure and innocent than children? Were they (God forbid) being punished for their misdeeds committed in their previous birth? Why did they suffer more than other human beings? You should think carefully in this respect.

(c) It should also be remembered that according to Qur'ānic wisdom one thing has several names. For instance, from the worldly point of view, when some cash or kind is taken from someone, it can be a fine or a penalty as well as a gift. Whether it was a gift or a fine is known to the individuals or parties concerned. Similarly, suffering or affliction is not necessarily a punishment, but can also be a *bandagī* or a sacrifice in some cases.

(d) There is a king of both the worlds, Who is [called] God. There is and has to be everything in His Kingdom and Godhead. If we observe with the eye of wisdom we will come to know that neither suffering nor sickness are meaningless, nor are all those wars which take place naturally. This does not mean that sickness should not be cured or we should not use reason and wisdom to avoid suffering. Nor should we consider wars *‘ibādat* in all cases. On the contrary, it is necessary to continue to try to eradicate suffering and tribulation. If this is not possible we should regard them as natural calamities, and believe that [divine] wisdom and expedience lie in them.

(e) Human life is a wonderful and marvellous thing. It has very many aspects. For the human being lives not only within himself but also in others. In a limited sense he lives a personal and individual life and has a somewhat small separate world of his imagination, thoughts, words and deeds, whose account, in a way, is separate and personal. However, it is an undeniable fact that he also has a homely and family life, the condition of which is such that sometimes he suffers because of his family members and sometimes they give him great joy. Why should there be wonder in this, for this is the

unity and integrity of the family and the members of the family are like the limbs and parts of each other. In wise people's view this same example is applicable to that life which he lives with the people of a town, city and country. This means that he cannot remain indifferent to and disinterested in the problems of the collective life of any stratum, nor can he remain isolated from the results and consequences of the collective good or bad of his country and nation.

(f) Similarly, every follower of a faith also has a communal and a religious life, and the final and greatest life of all kinds of people is the one towards which they have to return, willingly or unwillingly (3:83), which is such a universal life that in it all the souls of the people found from pre-eternity to post-eternity live as a single soul (31:28). As God says: "Your creation (in pre-eternity) and your resurrection (in post-eternity) are but as one soul (i.e. the Universal Soul)". That is, all of you are one in the Universal Soul. If you create the eye of certainty in yourself you will see how, despite your being a single drop of soul, you are one in the ocean of the Universal Soul.

To sum up the above elaboration, both from the worldly and the religious points of view, the meritorious deeds of the individual and all sorts of the collective lives of man cannot be accomplished without difficulties. For the greatest happiness and the greatest pride for man in this world and in the hereafter is in enduring the hardest difficulties and sufferings in the path of God and in offering the greatest sacrifices for the sake of His creatures. Therefore, although the heavy punishment of not recognising God is valid in its own place, yet finally a time has to come in which the people of all religions have to gather together in God's infinite mercy.

Q67 *Shari'at:*

Is it true that when one reaches the stage of *ṭariqat* or *ḥaqīqat*, he dispenses with the *shari'at*?

A67 No, not at all. This [statement] is not true. *Shari'at* cannot be completely dispensed with, because everything in religion consists of the four elements of *shari'at*, *ṭariqat*, *ḥaqīqat* and *ma'rifat*. However, it is certainly true that if in one thing *shari'at* is dominant, in another *ṭariqat* and in a third *ḥaqīqat* and in a fourth thing *ma'rifat* is dominant [without excluding any of them]. For further elaboration, see the end of one of my books, *Eight Questions Answered*.

Q68 *Imāmat and Women:*

What is the reason or *ta'wīl* that the Prophets and Imāms have always been men, and women have never been exalted to the rank of Prophethood or *Imāmat*?

A68 Prior to answering this question definitively let us make some allusions to the position of a woman in Islam. It is a self-evident and undeniable fact that it was a woman who gave birth to the noble Prophets and the great Imāms, it was she who continued to perform the sacred duty of their physical and moral upbringing, and it was she who as the noblest mother in the entire world took those perfect men, who were to guide and hold the hand of people in the future, in her holy lap and embraced them with utmost affection and love.

How lucky and exalted were those great and revered mothers from whose children there arose a Prophet or an Imām of the time. How fortunate and auspicious were those women, chosen by God, who had the

greatest honour of being the companions of Prophets and Imāms.

How great were the favour, grace and kindness of the Lord of the world upon the sisters and daughters of Prophets and Imāms that they were living very close to the fountainhead of heavenly knowledge and wisdom.

In this respect one useful suggestion is that you must study carefully the Qur'ānic verses about the noble mother of Moses^(c) and the affectionate mother of Jesus^(c), how revelation became possible for them, and how the angels conversed with them, so that you will be able to assess the position of a woman and her spiritual progress in the religion of nature, Islam.

In the world of Islam the glory, magnanimity, purity and holiness of the pure *ahl-i bayt*, i.e. the *panj-tan-i pāk* (Five Holy Persons' grandeur and sanctity) is a universally accepted fact in which no righteous Muslim has the slightest doubt. It is an evident fact that one noble person among them was a lady, whose blessed name was *Fāṭimah-yi Zahrā'*^(c), and whose title was *Khātūn-i Jannat* (the Lady of Paradise). She was that glorious example of the manifestation of the light of the sacred world (*'ālam-i quds*) and the cleanest mirror of the beauty of divine manners, which were possible only in the corporeality and humanity of a miraculous lady who is in the rank of a *walī*. By recognising her, religious and pious ladies with angelic characters may have ample encouragement [in their spiritual progress and elevation].

It is true that despite having all these above-mentioned excellences and exalted attributes, no chosen lady has been able to succeed to the sublime office of

Prophethood or *Imāmat*. The reason for this is not exoteric, rather, it is esoteric (*ta'wīl*), which follows as under:

The Prophet, Imām and teacher are man spiritually, whereas the community, follower and student are woman spiritually. Thus if a woman despite the presence of men would have been a Prophet or an Imām, the *ta'wīl* allusion of this would be that (God forbid) the Prophet should obey the community, the Imām should obey the commandment of his follower and the teacher should learn from the student. This would have been against the law of nature, and therefore, no woman has ever been a Prophet or an Imām. (See also the answer to Q. 97 in the 4th part of this book, *Hundred Questions*).

Q69 The Station of *Ma'rifat*:

When does a person reach the station of *ma'rifat*? During his lifetime or after death?

A69 (a) The supreme purpose of man's coming to this world is *'ibādat* and *ma'rifat* (God's worship and His recognition), therefore this should be accomplished in this world and in this life, not after death in the next world. For, in this field of action the primary test is the evaluation and assessment of his *'ibādat* and *ma'rifat*.

(b) According to the wise Qur'ān, "Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, yet more astray from the path". (17:72). This allusion is to the recognition of God and the recognition of the soul, called *ma'rifat*. This also shows clearly that the attainment of the basic *ma'rifat* is possible in the very life of this world.

Q70 Ismā'īlī Jamā'at:

How should we explain our faith to others when the need arises? Why do we not allow non-Ismā'īlīs to come into our congregation (*Jamā'at*) while others do not do so?

A70 Until we have sufficient literature, to how many people and to what extent would we be able to explain our faith solely on a verbal basis? Therefore, it is necessary to have a considerable stock of books on a variety of subjects, so that our faith may gradually be introduced to others, questions may cease to exist and doubts and suspicions be removed. It is obvious that the work that we can achieve through literature cannot be achieved verbally.

Further, even a better verbal introduction to our faith is possible only in the light of books, without which we cannot do much.

As for the answer to the second question, why we do not allow non-Ismā'īlīs to our special circle (*jamā'at*), it is because our faith is esoteric, spiritual and based on *ta'wil*. Therefore, it is not possible for every individual to comprehend it. All its virtues are hidden in secrets, for most of its teachings are the secrets of *ḥaqīqat* and *ma'rifat*. Therefore, non-Ismā'īlīs will not benefit from participating in our beliefs and rites and rituals, nor would we benefit from their attendance.

Other faiths are not esoteric, spiritual, and based on *ta'wil*. They are exoteric faiths. Whatever is exoteric is open to everybody's view and therefore it is not difficult to understand, however the reality and wisdom of Ismā'īlism, which are hidden, are very difficult to understand.

One bright proof in this connection is that the confession of God's existence and His Oneness (*waḥdāniyyat*) is easy for people, but believing in the holy Prophet Muḥammed^(s)'s messengership is comparatively difficult. Again it is easy to accept the holy Prophet Muḥammad^(s)'s messengership, but to accept ʿAlī^(c)'s *walāyat* and *Imāmat* is extremely difficult. Likewise, regarding *Imāmat* and Ismāʿīlism the more we move from the past to the present, the more difficult it becomes for people to accept, for which there are several reasons.

Q71 Clothes for the Deceased:

What is the *ta'wīl* of the clothes and *sufrās*, which are presented for the sake of the deceased? Can a deceased soul meet those of his relatives who had passed away before him?

- A71 The presentation of clothes and *sufrās* is a belief and ritual and a way of conveying reward to the deceased. This however, does not mean that the deceased soul needs clothes and food. It is a sacrifice (*ṣadaqah*), which is given from available and ready things and prayers are offered for reward to the soul of the deceased *mu'min*.

Indeed, the deceased soul in the case of achieving salvation can see his relatives whether alive or deceased. For, in the hereafter, there is spirituality, and in spirituality everything is possible because the soul of everyone is present everywhere.

Q72 The Meaning of Imām:

What is the meaning of Imām while in our literature, it means religious guide?

A72 Literally, Imām means chief, leader, guide, i.e. the one who is followed. Imām also means a path, which you can see in verse 15:79 of the holy Qur’ān. If the Imām is a path, which path is he? He is the straight path, (*ṣirāṭ-i mustaqīm*). As Qāzī Nuḥmān explains *ṣirāṭ* literally means the path. Here the Imām is likened to a path because he who follows the path never goes astray similarly he who follows the Imām never goes astray. Thus, here by path is meant the Imām, not the trodden path on the earth (*Asāsu ’t-ta ’wīl*, pp. 61-2).

Q73 Spiritual Guide (*pīr-ū murshid*):

Is there a need for an external *gurū* (*pīr-ū murshid*)?

A73 You have posed an incomplete and ambiguous question. It is not clear whether the question is about the necessity and importance of the Imām or a *pīr* or a *muḥallim* (teacher). Whatever it may be, we will discuss it on both levels. If by *gurū* you mean the Imām, then the existence of the Imām is extremely necessary always and in every condition, for guidance on *ṣirāṭ-i mustaqīm* is impossible without the Imām of the time. If by *gurū* you mean a rank below the Imām, then that too is necessary.

The importance and necessity of the Imām of the time and the bounties and blessings which the religion continues to receive from him are mentioned everywhere in this book. Regarding this, true Ismāʿīlīs have no doubts at all. However, it is important to ask at the present time, after the Imām, i.e. under the Imām, is there a need for teachers, *wāʿizīn* and scholars or not?

And in order to attain this goal, do any large institutions run in the world of Ismā'īlism on behalf of the Imām or not? The answer is definitely positive. This means that these institutions and these personnel are successors to the *hujjats*, *dā'is* and *pīrs* of our past. Whatever maybe their names and titles, the duty of work and the service of knowledge are the same as they used to be in the past. The doors of progress in knowledge and spirituality are still as completely open as they used to be in the past.

If you keep in view all those blessed *farmāns* of Mawlānā Imām Sulṭān Muḥammed Shāh^(c) pertaining to the progress of the true *mu'mins* in knowledge and spirituality, the full enthusiasm of progressing and working like *pīrs* will be created in your heart even without a title.

Q74 Synonym of the Word Imām:

Is there a synonym for Imām in the Vedānta philosophy?

A74 It should be understood that words and terms are different. Thus synonyms for the literal meaning of the word Imām are found, not only in Vedic philosophy, but in all religions and all languages. But as a technical term, Imām is found nowhere except in the true religion, the reason for which is the existence of the light of *Imāmat* in the eternal religion (*dīn-i qadīm*) of God. That is, this specific term has been coined where the Imām existed. If other people do not have the concept of *Imāmat*, then how can they accept such a term in its technical sense? It is possible for this term to exist only where there is the existence of the Imām.

Take the word *rasūl* for instance. It has two meanings, literal and technical. Literally it means messenger, envoy and ambassador; and technically it means that perfect man who has been sent by God, and who also brings a book from God. Now the word *rasūl* in the literal sense is used in every nation and every country, but technically it is used only among those nations to which God has at some time sent a messenger. Contrary to this, for those who deny God's existence and who do not accept any messenger and religion, this word cannot be found in the technical sense.

Similarly, the term Imām in its technical sense exists only in that community in which an Imām actually continues to come. Therefore, we have to accept that such a term does not exist in Vedic philosophy. It is however true that, in accordance with the system of the universal hidden guidance of the true Imām, there has been a guide in every religion, who guides the people according to the level of that religion. For there are twenty-four *ḥujjats* of the night and the day who are appointed by the exalted Imām in the twelve islands (*jazā'ir*, pl. of *jazīrah*) of the world.

Q75 Non-Ismā'īlī:

If a non-Ismā'īlī can attain the highest spiritual rank, what is the need for an Imām?

A75 You have not presented an example or proof of the possibility mentioned in your question. Also your question has the logical defect that for salvation or spiritual elevation you have alluded to only one non-Ismā'īlī, and that one too is unknown.

If by this allusion you mean a person like Manṣūr-i

Ḥallāj, you need to investigate historically whether or not he was an Ismāʿīlī. Even if he is considered to be only a *Ṣūfī*, he cannot dispense with the Imām's universal guidance, for there are in this world twelve *ḥujjats* of the night and twelve *ḥujjats* of the day on behalf of the Imām, through whom the people of the world receive the Imām's guidance according to their status. As for the *Ṣūfīs*, they are very close to the Ismāʿīlīs.

When we accept that the true Imām is the vicegerent and representative of God and the Prophet in connection with guiding [the people], we have to also accept that just as God is the Sustainer of the worlds, and the Prophet is a mercy for the worlds, the Imām of the time is the fountainhead of guidance for all the people of the world. However, religions as well as the people of the religions of the world are in different grades, therefore, every religion and each individual receives the guidance of the Imām according to their status.

It is necessary to try to see, listen and understand everything from its root or basis. Thus if it is understood that there is no creature without the Creator, and there is no religion without a Prophet, there cannot be guidance without the Imām of the time. Had it been possible to have guidance without the Imām, there would have been no need for a successor after the Prophet. However, since it is true that the Prophet had a successor by necessity, then we have to search for his whereabouts and his identity. It is obvious that such a true successor is only the Imām of the time, for it is he who is living and present with all the virtues of the *Imāmat* and caliphate in every age.

Words Worth Saying (Part 4)

Expression of Gratitude

By the grace and providence of God, the Sustainer of the worlds, the book *Hundred Questions* has been completed. With utmost gratitude for these blessings and bounties I feel immense pleasure and happiness in writing an introduction to the fourth part of the book. However, the heart exclaims: Alas! If only this humble, indigent servant were able to duly thank his generous Lord for His magnificent favours and bounties!

Guidance and help

O my True Sovereign! O my Master and Lord! The truth of my condition is never hidden from Your knowledge! Were it not for Your holy guidance that guides and helps us reach the destination of the recognition of religion, and were it not for the mercy which You have granted to this humble entity, what a great distance there would have been between this feeble and destitute servant and the attainment of the goal! Without Your help, footsteps stumble along this difficult path and without Your spiritual aid the heart and mind are stricken with consternation.

Yearning for Inquiry and Zeal for Investigation

My [‘]*azīzān*! Have you ever wondered why the yearning for inquiry and zeal for investigation is always found in human nature? Why does man always want to observe and understand one by one the marvels and wonders of the earth and heaven? Why is man invited to reflect upon the signs of the external world (*āfāq*) and the internal world (*anfūs*) in addition to the Qur’ān? What is the main reason for his interest and delight in recreation, excursion and perambulation? What is the secret in feeling charm and joy when observing natural phenomena? What is its spiritual background or what is the wisdom in his

delight and happiness in the scenes of meadows and gardens? What is that power, which prompts not only small children but also elders to ask, question, investigate and understand? And in view of all these conditions why does it seem that man is in search of regaining his lost wealth through whatever means?

Answer to these questions

The comprehensive and single answer to all these questions is that behind the curtain of the numerous capacities, faculties and aspirations of this kind there is the divine power itself, which controls all. It is the divine power, which always continues to awaken in man a desire to attain the inner realities of the natural phenomena and things in the universe, and the secrets of the divine essence hidden in them, so that thereby he may attain the *ma^crifat* of God, the Lord of Honour. For in His *ma^crifat* are permanent life and eternal salvation, and the everlasting kingdom of the world of spacelessness (*‘ālam-i lā-makān*). The world of spacelessness is where the pre-eternal and post-eternal favours and bounties are ever present without past and future. It is true that without the luminous guidance of the true guide no one can understand these great secrets.

Means of Guidance

The explanation of these implications is that from the everlasting wealth of intellect, understanding, knowledge and wisdom, only those people can be enriched who seek the means through whom to understand the secrets of nature and the mysteries of creation. This means is the holy Prophet's successor who is the fountainhead of both the esoteric and exoteric guidance. It is in following this guide of the straight path that the mysteries of life and the universe and the secrets of the heavenly scripture are revealed. The invaluable treasures of the recognition of one's own self and God are hidden in these secrets, so that those who are chosen by God (*khāṣṣān-i Khudā*), may attain them and recognise the pre-eternal and post-eternal reality of their "higher I (*anā-yi ‘ulwī*)". That

reality is so unique and incomparable that it has never been, nor can it ever be separated, from the “Reality of realities (*ḥaqīqatu’l-ḥaqā’iq*)” at any time.

Recognition of One’s Own Soul and Recognition of God

Yes, it is true that the knowledge of the recognition of one’s own soul (*khudā-shināsi*) and that of God (*Khudā-shināsi*) is the supreme knowledge, which is hidden in the secrets of the heavenly scripture and in the book of the universe. Among these books, one is in the form of a compendium (*mujmal*) and the other is in an elaborate form (*mufaṣṣal*). There is a third book, which is living and speaking, known as the book of self (*kitāb-i zāt*) or the book of soul (*kitāb-i naḥs*), which is also called the book of spirit (*kitāb-i rūḥ*). About this book it is said in the Qur’ān: “He is indeed successful who purifies it (soul) (91:9)”. The purification of the soul or the spirit is necessary for, in its original state it is a miraculous mirror, which one should call “*ā’īnah-yi ḥaqā’iq-numā* (the mirror which shows the realities)”, for in it are reflected the signs of the Compassionate (*āyāt-i Raḥmān*) in their full splendour and brilliance and in real theophanies, whether they are those of the Qur’ān or those of the physical world.

Expression of Gratitude to the ‘Azizān

Finally, I would like to thank the kind and esteemed office-bearers and members of *Khānah-yi Hikmat* with utmost appreciation, for they have endured various troubles and difficulties in order to advance the cause of knowledge of this organization and to render a lasting service to the beloved *Jam‘at*. Further, with great zeal and willingness they have sacrificed a great deal of time to serve the cause of knowledge, for which they have willingly expended many precious hours of their life. They are those of my *‘azizān*, who are working hard day and night, in the form of a well-tended organization. In addition, there are many *‘azizān* in Karachi, Rawalpindi, Chitral, Gilgit and Hunza, who not only have great yearning for

the acquisition of knowledge, but are also interested in serving the cause of knowledge.

For his gems-like suggestions, kindnesses like a shower of pearls and mountain-like support, whatever thanks are rendered to Dr. Faquir Muhammad Hunzai are insufficient. I do not have appropriate words to do justice to, and to duly thank him for his great favours.

In the words of utmost sincerity and love and with appreciation and approbation, I would like to thank the honourable Eastern Canada Regional Committee of the Ismā'īlī Association for Canada, and the beloved *Jamā'at*, for having granted me a rare golden chance to render the service of knowledge to them. In this connection it is especially incumbent upon us to thank those angel-like families for their sincere hospitality and unprecedented services. They provided for us in their blessed homes not only an excellent place for rest, but also office space and meeting rooms, so that before going on tour to the surrounding *Jamā'ats* we could prepare ourselves well and at other times we could hold discussions at home concerning religion with the desirous members of the *Jamā'at*. God willing, we will remain grateful, obliged and indebted to them and ever pray for them, and we never forget their moral heights, religious virtues and angelic qualities.

Now I would like to allude to that literary co-operation which we received in the form of rendering some of my books into English and French and in the form of typing. In this connection I remember time and again those angels on the surface of the earth in my good thoughts, spiritual imagination and in the prayers of humility and submission. Their literary co-operation has been a source of encouragement for this *darwish*.

Thus, it is my most humble prayer: O the Lord of Honour! Accept the efficacious prayers of your favourite and chosen servants for all these real devotees! O Lord! Grant them peace, felicity and success in both the worlds; grant them the courage to spend the precious wealth of their life and age in more and more services of knowledge and religion, and fulfil all their good wishes! *Āmīn*, O the Sustainer of the worlds!

The humble servant,
Naşir Hunzai.

Saturday, 21/9/1398 A.H. - 26/8/1978 A.D. - Year of the Horse.



**Institute for
Spiritual Wisdom
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Knowledge for a united humanity

Q76 Reality of *Mi^crāj* (Ascent):

Had the *mi^crāj* of the Prophet taken place physically or in a spiritual state? Please also tell us why it became necessary for God to carry him to the *masjid-i aqṣā* (Farthest Mosque)? Why were the miracles which were to be shown to him by God, not shown in the *masjid-i ḥarām* (Sacred Mosque, i.e. *Ka^cbah*), but were shown in *masjid-i aqṣā*?

A76 (a) *Mi^crāj* is the name of the inner unveiling and the spiritual ascension, which is the result of *zīkr-ū^c ibādat*. Divine proximity and closeness is in an internal and spiritual way, not in a physical way. By the higher world (*‘ālam-i ‘ulwī*) is meant the world of spirituality, which is found in a non-spatial state.

(b) When God is not contained in the heaven and earth and is contained only in the heart of the faithful servant (*bandah-yi mu’min*), then after the preference of this throne of the heart, the question of any other throne cannot arise and all those verses in which there is the mention of God’s establishing equality on the throne (*istawā ‘ala’l-‘arsh*), need *ta’wīl*. From this it necessarily follows that in Islam, it was the Prophet who observed the miracles and wonders of the throne of the heart first and in the brightest light, and the *mi^crāj* had taken place in this way.

Your second question is related to the verse, which is in the beginning of the chapter “The Children of Isrā’īl” (17) in which the carrying of the Prophet from the *masjid-i ḥarām* to the *masjid-i aqṣā* is mentioned. It should be known that according to the Qur’ān, *masjid* has two meanings: one is the place of prostration, which means a mosque and a house of worship, and the other

is *zīkr-ū* ^c*ibādat* as mentioned in verse (7:31). Therefore, *masjid-i ḥarām* means that sacred supreme Name (*ism-i a^czam*) which was given to the Prophet in the beginning, and *masjid-i aqṣā* means that miraculous *ism-i a^czam* of spiritual height and farthest [spiritual] elevation which was given to him later on, i.e. at the time of spiritual *mī^crāj*. In this sense, this *zīkr-i ilāhī* i.e. *ism-i a^czam* is called *masjid-i aqṣā*, or the farthest mosque, in which were hidden abundant spiritual and luminous miracles.

In the *ta'wīlī* background of *ism-i a^czam* are hidden the ranks of Prophethood and *Imāmat*. Thus in the depth of meaning (*ma^cnawīyyat*) all *Ismā'īlī ta'wīls* gather together and in which the wise find no contrariety. That is, the *ta'wīl* of *masjid-i ḥarām*, which is mentioned in *Wajh-i dīn*, does not differ fundamentally from this *ta'wīl* (See Discourse 18, verse 28:57).

Note: For more details, read my article “Mī^crāj-i rūḥ (Ascent of the Soul)”, translated from Urdu into English by Jān-i ^cAzīz Faquir Muhammad Hunzai.

Knowledge for a united humanity

Q77 The Book:

It is certain that God is one, but please explain how His religion and book are also one.

- A77 (a) When you have accepted the reality that God is one, it is also certain that His religion and Book also have to be one. For His habit or tradition or law is one and the same thing. Religion is another name for His Divine Law. This is also the case with the heavenly Book, because it is the spiritual and written form of the true religion. Therefore, it is not separate from His one religion.

(b) It is mentioned in the Qur'ān everywhere that the heavenly Book, in its origin, is one. Similarly, the religion of nature – Islām – is also one from the beginning to the end and the Prophets and Imāms are also one as a Single Soul.

(c) It is said in the Qur'ān: “(In the beginning) all people were one community, then God sent (unto them) Prophets as the bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Book with the truth that it might judge between humankind concerning that wherein they differed (2:213)”. Seen in the light of this verse it becomes clear that although apparently there are many heavenly books, but in its origin there is only one book, which is in different forms in different languages. With respect to the exoteric (*tanzīl*) and esoteric (*ta'wīl*) the same one book is common among all Prophets and Imāms. It is quite clear that when the book of God, in reality, is one, and the goal of all the Prophets and Imāms is one, the true religion too is also one, from the beginning to the end.

Knowledge for a united humanity

Q78 Mortal Sin:

What is the mortal or greatest sin, which cannot be forgiven? Please explain in detail.

A78 The mortal or greatest sin, which cannot be forgiven, is *shirk* (associating someone with God), as God says in the Qur'ān: “God forgives not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He forgives all save that to whom He wills. Whoso ascribes partners unto God has wandered far astray (4:116)”. It should be well understood that as *shirk* is the greatest sin, to escape from this and to choose the path of *tawhīd* (believing in

one God alone) and His recognition is the greatest rewarding deed. However, if *shirk* and *tawhīd* had been ordinary and comprehensible as the common people think, and they did not have some secrets, all people would have easily attained salvation and none would have gone astray. Obviously this is not the case, rather they contain some secrets.

Through investigating this verse we come to know that *shirk* results in going very far astray. In this connection the concept of the straight path and the true guide comes before us, because going astray is that state and condition of a person who has fallen away from the straight path and the true guide. This on the one hand shows that *shirk* and going astray have the same meaning and on the other hand that *tawhīd* and guidance are not separate from the straight path and the Imām of the time.

Now, we have to see whether in religion, the *maʿrifat* (recognition) of God is universally accepted, or not. It is obvious that no Muslim can deny this fact. For, Islam is the straight path i.e. the path leading to the presence of God, which has four stages: *shariʿat*, *ṭariqat*, *ḥaqīqat*, and *maʿrifat*. Among these stages *maʿrifat* is the final stage in the sense that the *maʿrifat* or recognition of God is attained after having passed through all the distances on the path of religion. Only when God is recognized in this way does one get rid of *shirk*, which is the greatest sin and going the farthest away from the path of religion, otherwise not. It is because of this that in the beginning I said that *shirk* and *tawhīd* are not what the common people think.

While it is true that *maʿrifat* is attainable in the light of the guidance of the guide appointed by God and the

Prophet, and that the real *tawḥīd* comes after *maʿrifat*, it is obligatory upon *muʿmins* to endeavour always for the knowledge of the recognition of God.

In addition to this, regarding *shirk*, see the well-known book, *Wajh-i dīn*, Discourse 43, by the renowned Ḥakīm Nāṣir-i Khusraw (may God sanctify his secret). The summary of his discussion is that according to *taʿwīl*, *shirk* means to accept any other Imām in place of the true Imām, otherwise, after accepting God as such, none can conceive the association of any other entity with Him.

Q79 **Angels:**

What kind of creatures are angels? What are their characteristic qualities?

(a) Angels are the name of spiritual and luminous creatures. They are in the position of the pure souls of the perfect men and true *muʿmins*. Owing to this, the Qurʾān has also called some of the exalted human beings angels. In connection with this, study verses: 6:9; 17:95; 43:60.

(b) The main characteristics of angels are: they do not disdain to worship, i.e. they have the state of utmost humility and submissiveness, they do not tire of *zīkr-ū ʿibādat*, they continue to do the *tasbiḥ* of God day and night and are not lazy. In addition to the spiritual angels, it is also possible to find these qualities in the physical angels (21:19-20). Further, another characteristic of angels is obedience and fear of God (16:50).

(c) One special characteristic of great angels is knowledge and recognition. It is because of this that

they have attained the rank of the bearers of the Throne (*ḥāmilān-i ʿarsh*), for the Supreme Throne of the Lord of honour is only of intellect and wisdom and knowledge and recognition. Thus, those angels who bear the Throne, say: “Our Lord! Your mercy and knowledge encompass all things (40:7)”. This means that the bearers of the Throne, in the light of knowledge and recognition, personally observe this reality that nothing in the exterior and interior is beyond the compass of mercy and knowledge. This shows the superiority and eminence of these great angels in knowledge that, with a single glance, they are able to see all the things in both the worlds.

(d) It is a fact that by the bearers of the Throne are meant the holy Prophet and after him, his legatees (*awṣiyā*), i.e., the pure Imāms. For further details on the subject of “Throne” see the translations, footnotes and exegeses of the Qur’ān according to the Shīʿah.

Q80 *Walāyat* of ʿAlī^(c):

Why is the *Walāyat* of ʿAlī^(c) obligatory on a *muʾmin*? Is there any proof for it in the Qur’ān and Tradition?

A80 (a) The importance and necessity of our Mawlā ʿAlī’s^(c) *walāyat* is because of the fact that his *walāyat* is that of God and the Messenger, because by God’s command, he is *walī-yi amr* (the one entrusted with Divine authority) after the Prophet.

(b) Since Ḥaẓrat-i ʿAlī^(c) is the true successor to the Prophet and the true Imām, therefore, his *walāyat*, love, friendship and obedience are obligatory.

(c) It is said in the wise Qur’ān “(O Prophet! Say to

these people) if you love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins” (3:31). According to this verse, God’s obedience and love are not possible directly but only indirectly. That is, they are possible through the mediation of the Prophet. If that is the case, then how can there be any doubt that in the same way, the Prophet’s obedience and love are possible through ‘Alī’s^(c) mediation?

(d) God, may He be exalted, says: “Indeed your guardian is Allāh, and His messenger and those who believe, who establish prayers and pay *zakāt* (religious tax) while they are bowing down (in prayers). (5:55)”. In this verse the three stages of *walāyat* are mentioned in one place with the purpose that, in fact, those three stages are one. That is, the *walāyat* of God is through the Prophet, and that of the Prophet is through ‘Alī^(c), as obedience is in three stages: obedience to God, obedience to the Prophet and obedience to the *ulu’l-amr* (4:59), but these three obediences are, in reality, one.

(e) The authentic tradition is well-known that this verse was revealed about Imām ‘Alī^(c), for it was he who gave *zakāt* to a beggar in the state of *rukū‘* (bowing in prayers). In this respect see the books pertaining to this subject. Now if someone asks: if the above-mentioned verse was about Ḥaẓrat-i ‘Alī^(c), after the mention of God and the Prophet’s *walāyat*, why not mention the *walāyat* of one person, why mention persons in the plural? That is, if the *walāyat* was in regard to Imām ‘Alī^(c), why is it not mentioned in the singular form?

The first answer to this question is that those who are taught the *walāyat* in this verse are general Muslims and *mu’mīns*; but those whose *walāyat* is obligatory after that of God and the Messenger, are selected and

distinguished from the rest of Muslims and *mu'mins*. Thus from this Qur'ānic teaching, on the one hand, we know that the *walāyat* of those which is mentioned here is not the ordinary love and friendship which one Muslim should have for another. On the other hand we came to know that on the perfect level of faith, there are certain chosen people whose *walāyat* is obligatory on all the people of Islam.

The second answer is that in the state of *rukū'*, none except ^(c)Alī from among the companions of the Prophet has given *zakāt* to a beggar. This is a wisdom-filled coincidence. Thus, it is established that this verse is about Ḥaẓrat-i ^(c)Alī and his *walāyat* after that of the Prophet, which is universally accepted. In fact, it is not only this one verse which mentions ^(c)Alī's being *wali-yi amr*, rather there are numerous other verses and traditions regarding this. Therefore, here the question should be framed in this way: What is the wisdom in mentioning Ḥaẓrat-i ^(c)Alī as a group and not as a single individual? The answer may be given as follows:

(1) It is a special miracle of Qur'ānic wisdom that in an appropriate place many people are mentioned in the mention of one individual. Thus God, in His profound wisdom, included in Ḥaẓrat-i ^(c)Alī's action the actions of all the true Imāms in his progeny, may peace be upon them, so that it may be evident to wise people that all pure Imāms are united like one single soul, not only in the rank of *walāyat*, but also in the function of guidance. So this is the reason that Imām ^(c)Alī's attributes are mentioned in the plural form.

(2) It is mentioned in the Qur'ān: "Verily! Abraham was a nation (*ummat*) obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists" (16:120). So here too, is the same

reality. The action of Abraham^(c) is regarded as the action of all the Prophets and Imāms from his progeny, for he was their progenitor and his status and rank had to continue in their succession till the Resurrection as mentioned in the Qur'ān (4:54).

(3) Let us have a look at a common example of how the Qur'ān considers infidels, both of the past and the present, as one community, as if the way of their disbelief and disobedience is the same. Such as: “Say (unto them, O Prophet): Why then slew you the Prophets of Allah in previous times, if you are indeed believers?”(2:91).

It is obvious that those who slew the Prophets of God in previous times did not exist during the time of Prophet, because they had long since passed away from this world. However, in Prophet Muḥammad's^(s) time, there were people who thought like them and continued their ideology. Therefore, God, considering the past and present infidels as one community, said: “Why did you slay the Prophets?”

After these Qur'ānic proofs, attention is drawn to the Prophetic Traditions regarding the *walāyat* of ^cAlī^(c) and his progeny. There are numerous Traditions, which establish the *walāyat* of ^cAlī^(c). However, in connection with *Hundred Questions*, as we do not like to prolong one answer, it will suffice to quote only one important Tradition, which is: “I am from ^cAlī and ^cAlī is from me”.

If we try to understand this Tradition in the light of reason and wisdom, we will come to know the vivid fact that this tradition has great spiritual comprehensiveness. That is, ^cAlī's^(c) being from the Prophet means that

‘Alī^(c) received all the treasures of intellect and understanding, knowledge, wisdom, rectitude and guidance from the Prophet, and the Prophet’s being from ‘Alī^(c) means that the holy light of the Prophet was transferred into Mawlā ‘Alī^(c), and thenceforth it continues living and shining in the succession of the *Imāmat* of the progeny of Muḥammad^(s) and the children of ‘Alī^(c).

Q81 Spacelessness (*lā-makān*):

Where is spacelessness? What is it and what are its quality and reality? Please explain in detail.

A81 The first part of your question is incorrect, because spacelessness means there is no space, and if there is no space, the question of “where” is inapplicable. It is in a non-spatial state. It is spaceless in the sense that its attributes are contrary to space. That is, its attributes are spiritual.

With respect to the rest of the question: “What is it and what are its quality and reality?” it should be known that just as matter and body are in space, in fact they themselves are space, similarly, non-matter, i.e. the spirit and its concept are spaceless or non-spatial. Thus the spiritual world is spaceless or non-spatial, which can be observed not only after death, but even in this life.

Just as space cannot be separate from body, rather, they are one and the same thing, time is also not separate from the body rather it is produced by the rotation of the body. Therefore, when this universe will be extinct not only the body, but time and space will also be extinct. This shows that time and space are linked to the body. Thus, as the soul is spaceless, it is also timeless.

In order to understand the reality of *lā-makān* or spacelessness, an easily intelligible example is that of the world of dreams. When a person sees a dream, he does not go anywhere, he is only in a non-spatial state. He turns to his soul, which itself is non-spatial, therefore whatever he experiences in that non-spatial state is found without matter. This shows that the things in the spiritual world, namely the real, non-spatial world, are not like material things in this world. There is found their essence, i.e. their spiritual forms, just as in a dream everything leaves its body and appears in its spiritual form.

By the real, non-spatial world (*aṣl lā-makān*) is meant the all-embracing spirit, which is called the Universal Soul. The same is the spiritual world and the world hereafter. In this world all things are of a spiritual nature. Paradise is also in it. It is living and knowing.

We have said earlier that as the soul is non-spatial so also it is non-temporal. This means that everything of the world is beyond the confines of time. There is neither past nor future, the state or quality of time is like that of the present. Therefore, it should be said that there it is immovable time, which is called *dahr*.

Q82 *Asās and Ṣāmit:*

What is the meaning of *Asās* and *Ṣāmit*? How many have there been? Please explain.

- A82 *Asās* literally means foundation, and according to Ismā'īlī terminology he is the Imām who becomes the legatee to a *nāṭiq* (a speaking) Prophet and successor to him. From *asās* starts a new cycle of *Imāmat*. The same *asās* is also called *ṣāmit* (silent) in relation to the *nāṭiq*

Prophet, when he himself interprets the Book and the *shari^cah* (law). However, with respect to the silent book, i.e. the Qur’ān, the same *ṣāmit* [*asās*] later on becomes the speaking book (*kitāb-i nāṭiq*).

There have been six *Asāses*, who are as under:

The first *asās* of Ḥaẓrat-i Adam^(c) was Mawlānā Hābīl^(c), but when Qābīl martyred him, Mawlānā Shīth^(c) was appointed. Ḥaẓrat-i Nūh’s^(c) *asās* was Mawlānā Sām^(c), Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm’s^(c) *asās* was Mawlānā Ismā‘īl^(c), Ḥaẓrat-i Mūsā’s first *asās* was Mawlānā Hārūn^(c) and when he expired in his lifetime, he appointed Mawlānā Yūshī^c bin Nūn^(c), Ḥaẓrat-i ‘Īsā’s^(c) *asās* was Mawlānā Sham^cūn^(c) and Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad’s^(s) *asās* was Mawlānā ‘Alī^(c).

These are the six *asāses* of the six *nāṭiqs*.

Q83 Ḥaẓrat-i ‘Imrān^(c):

Since there are many ‘Imrāns, who is the one, the choice of whose progeny is mentioned in the holy Qur’ān? Please explain in detail.

- A83 Your question is related to the verse of “*iṣṭafā* (choice)” which is: “Indeed, God has chosen Adam and Noah and the progeny of Abraham and the progeny of ‘Imrān above [all His] creatures” (3:33). Your question is a good and important one. It is true that there are many ‘Imrāns and there is a difference of opinion in determining the one mentioned in the Qur’ān, such as: (1) ‘Imrān the father of Ḥaẓrat-i Mūsā^(c), (2) ‘Imrān bin Māthān, who was the sixth Imām in the cycle of Ḥaẓrat-i Mūsā^(c), (3) ‘Imrān (the father of Mary), (4) ‘Imrān (Hāshim), the son of ‘Abd Manāf, and (5) ‘Imrān i.e.

Ḥaẓrat-i Abū Ṭālib^(c).

Since in this verse the choice of the succession of the guidance of the Prophets and Imāms is mentioned, it is obvious that the need for guidance remains until the resurrection. Therefore, dividing the entire period into four parts, it is said that this world and the time never remained nor will remain devoid of divine guidance. Thus first of all, God chose Adam^(c) and his successors from his progeny to guide the people in their own cycle, then Noah^(c) and his successors, then Abraham^(c) and his progeny and finally, Ḥaẓrat-i ʿImrān^(c), i.e. Abū Ṭālib^(c) and his progeny, so that the world may not remain devoid of the grace of guidance and this succession of guidance may continue till the resurrection.

Contrary to this, if we hold that the ʿImrān mentioned in this verse is the father of Mūsā^(c) or the maternal grandfather of ʿĪsā^(c), then it does not fit the context for two reasons. One reason is that the succession of the choice for guidance and its story would have been separated long before from the holy family of the Prophet and ended, whereas the last of these four chosen personalities has to be from the family of the Prophet Muḥammad^(s). The other reason is that it is clear from this divine programme of the work of guidance that the entire cycle is divided into four parts. Similarly, the succession of guidance, in this period, which continues until resurrection, is also divided into four parts, and at the beginning of each part, a great personality is referred to. Then how is it possible that the fourth and the last part of the succession of guidance be confined to the prophets of the children of Isrāʾil and no mention of the family of the holy Prophet be made in this comprehensive verse?

If somebody says that the honourable mention of the selection of the holy Prophet and his pure family is already included in the progeny of Abraham^(c), I would say that if this is your decisive proof then no ^cImrān from among the children of Isrā'il can be the ^cImrān whose choice is mentioned in this verse, [for they are also included in the progeny of Abraham^(c)]. It is obvious that the objector's question is not correct. There is not the slightest doubt that the holy Prophet and his progeny are included in the progeny of Abraham^(c), but here it is selection upon selection.

Now it is appropriate to say something about the augustness and eminence of Ḥaẓrat-i Abū Ṭālib^(c). It should be understood that according to Ismā'īlism, the manifestation of the light of *Imāmat* is in various ranks according to the needs and requirements of the time and place, such as *Imām-i muqīm*, (the Resurrector Imām), *Imām-i asās* (the Foundation Imām), *Imām-i mutimm* (the Imām who completes a cycle), *Imām-i mustaqarr*, (the Permanent Imām), and *Imām-i mustawda^c* (the Entrusted Imām). The greatest among these ranks is that of *Imām-i muqīm*.

For details you can see *al-Imāmatu fi'l-Islām* by ^cĀrif Tāmir, pp. 143-44 and also *Kanzu'l-Walad* by Ibrāhīm bin Ḥusayn al-Ḥāmidī, p. 206 where he writes that *Imām-i muqīm* in the time of Adam^(c) was Mawlānā Hunayd^(c), in the time of Noah^(c) Mawlānā Hūd^(c), in the time of Abraham^(c) Mawlānā Ṣāliḥ^(c), in the time of Mūsā^(c) Mawlānā Udd^(c), in the time of ^cĪsā^(c) Mawlānā Khuzaymah^(c) and in the time of the holy Prophet he was Mawlānā ^cImrān^(c), i.e. Abū Ṭālib^(c). Each of them in his cycle prepared a speaking Prophet by adorning him with spiritual teachings. (See *al-Imāmatu fi'l-Islām* pp. 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153 and 155). One should

reflect on the meaning of *Imām-i muqīm*.

Q84 The Prophet Sulaymān^(c):

It is said that Ḥaẓrat-i Sulaymān^(c) was given a miraculous ring, by which he used to rule over men, *jinns*, beasts and birds and his throne was flying in the air. How far are such statements correct?

A84 (a) All these sayings are true, but in the esoteric (*ta'wīlī*) sense. The esoteric sense of “ring” is *ism-i a'ẓam*, which was given not only to Ḥaẓrat-i Sulaymān^(c) but also to every Prophet and Imām. His rule over men and *jinns* etc. and the flying of his throne in the air was in spirituality, not in the external world. The spirituality of all Prophets and Imāms is full of such wonders and marvels.

(b) The Qur'ānic verse (2:285) alludes that there is no difference in the spirituality of the great Prophets and Imāms. Their spirituality is common. Had it not been so, they would have been unaware of each other's status and *ma'rifat* would have been portioned into parts and nobody's *ma'rifat* and spirituality would have been perfect.

(c) Prophets and Imāms are the kings of spirituality, and no wise person can doubt their perfect and complete spirituality. Here we will mention only the spirituality of a real *mu'min*, who is neither a Prophet nor an Imām, but only a traveller along the straight path. This *mu'min* has attained perfect *ma'rifat* as it is also dedicated to *mu'mins* after the Prophets and Imāms. Now assess for yourself, what is the meaning of the perfect and complete *ma'rifat* of this *mu'min*? *Ma'rifat* means recognition and recognition is the result of observations.

Again the question is: What is the domain of the *ma^crifat* of that *‘arīf* and which *ma^crifat* is included and which is left out of this domain? It is obvious that if this *ma^crifat* is perfect then no *ma^crifat* is left out of it.

(d) This explanation indicates that the spirituality of the Prophets and Imāms is nowhere else but on the *ṣirāṭ-i mustaqīm*. Therefore, those *mu’mins* who follow them perfectly can see with the eye of their heart all those spiritual events, which are related to their status. This is the meaning of perfect *ma^crifat*.

This principle should be kept in mind that spirituality in its comprehensiveness is in reality only one, however as wisdom requires, in order to make the same miracles of the Prophets prominent, different explanations are given. Owing to that, apparently it seems that they had separate and different miracles, such as it was only Adam^(c) to whom the angels prostrated, the Ark belonged only to Noah^(c), the fire was turned into a garden only for Abraham^(c); the miraculous rod was given only to Mūsā^(c), none could raise the dead except ‘Isā^(c) and *mi^crāj* belonged only to the holy Prophet^(s), whereas it is not so. Spirituality, in fact, is a common thing and all miracles in reality are one, but their interpretations are different.

Q85 **Scriptures:**

What are the literal and esoteric meanings of these scriptures: *Ṣuḥuf*, *Tawrāt*, *Zabūr* and *Injil*?

A85 (a) *Ṣuḥuf* is the plural of *ṣaḥīfah*, and its primary meanings are found in these words: *aṣ-ṣaḥīf* (the surface of the earth); *aṣ-ṣaḥīfah* (anything extended); *ṣaḥīfatu’l-wajh* (spread of the face); *aṣ-ṣaḥīfah* (an extended wide

bowl). It is because of this spaciousness and expansion that *ṣaḥīfah*'s [secondary meaning] is a written thing, i.e. paper, leaf, page, and thus *ṣuḥuf* means written pages, leaves.

The *ta'wil* of *ṣuḥuf* (with respect to an extended thing and written pages) is *kalimāt-i tammāt* (the perfect words) of the spirit and spirituality, each of which is a great and pure spiritual leaf, whose expansion of meaning and *ta'wil* is very great.

(b) *Tawrāt*: There are two versions of the literal meaning of *tawrāt*. According to one, it is the plural of the Arabicised form *tawrah*, which in Hebrew means law and commandment. Thus, *Tawrāt* means commandments and laws.

According to the other version it is derived from “wary”, which means both ‘hiding’ and ‘appearing’, as the words show: “*ḥattā tawārat bi'l-ḥijāb* (Until the sun was hidden in the veil) (38:32); “*yuwārī*” (He hides) (5:31); “*an-nārā'llatī tūrūna* (The fire which you kindle)” (56:71); “*fa'l-mūriyāti qadḥan* (And strike sparks of fire)” (100:2). Also in the traditions: “*Inna'n-nabiyya ṣalla'llāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallama kāna iẓā arāda ghazwan warrā bi-ghayrihi* (When the Prophet wanted to go on a *ghazwa* (military expedition), he was using *tawriyah*. *Tawriyah* means wishing something and pretending something else in such a way that it is not a lie. *Warra' z-zand* (The fire came out of the flint).

From the above examples it is clear that *Tawrāt* means both external and internal. That is, the Scripture revealed to Mūsā^(c) was not only in an external form but also in an internal form, and that aspect which was

internal and spiritual contained guidance and light, as God says: “Verily! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and light” (5:44).

(c) *Zabūr* means a book, as is clear from these examples, such as *az-zabr*, to write; *mizbar*, pen, writing reed; *zabīr*, writing: *zibr* (pl. *zubūr*), book, intellect; *zabūr* (pl. *zibur*), *mazbūr*, anything written, book. According to some, *Zabūr* among the scriptures means that book whose comprehension is difficult. Some others say it means the book, which contains only intellectual wisdoms and not the legal commandments, and *al-kitāb* means the one which contains both commandments and wisdoms. The proof of this is that the *Zabūr* of David^(c), does not contain any commandment of law (*Mufradāt* by Rāghib Iṣfahānī (Beirut, 1972), pp. 215-16).

This shows that *Zabūr* is the scripture whose comprehension is difficult, for in it are emphasised intellectual wisdoms. Its most fundamental wisdom is that in it are hidden the great secrets of ‘self (*khPudī*)’ and ‘Godhead (*Khudā’i*)’. God, may He be exalted, by His perfect power used David^(c)’s heart and mind under the influence of spiritual and luminous powers and caused it to be expressed by his tongue and called it a heavenly Book. In this work are hidden many secrets of *ma^crīfat*. Regarding this reality, the Qur’ān says: “Those of the children of Isrā’īl who went astray were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they rebelled and used to transgress.” (5:78) This divine command reveals various wisdoms. First of all, it reveals that David^(c) was the speaking tongue of God in his own time. Thus, for such a tongue of God it is not appropriate that it should be appointed only to curse the disobedient ones.

Rather, on the other side, His mercy to the obedient ones should also come through him. Indeed, the true guide who holds the great rank of *lisānu'llāh* (i.e. the tongue of God) is certainly in such a position. Thus it is obvious that *Zabūr* was caused to be spoken through the tongue of David^(c).

(d) *Injil*: According to some lexicographers, *Injil* is the Arabicised form of the Greek word 'evangelion' meaning good news, gospel. According to some others, it is derived from the Arabic root of '*najala*'. *Najala* has various meanings, but according to some it is in the sense of '*najaltu'sh-shay*', (i.e. I revealed the thing). According to this it also gives the same meaning of the *Tawrāt*. That is, the heavenly Book has an exoteric and an esoteric aspect, as the Qur'ān says: "And He has completed His favours, both apparent and hidden, upon you." (31:20). Thus, as long as the *Injil* as a heavenly Book, was in its original form without any alteration and distortion, no faithful person can doubt its having divine favours in its exoteric and esoteric aspects, as the greatest favours of God are certainly in the form of knowledge and wisdom.

It is also said: "And (O Mary!) God will teach him the Book and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel" (3:48). Here it is clear, that Jesus^(c) received all these teachings from God only esoterically and spiritually, because he used to receive the aid of the Holy Spirit through spirituality.

Q86 ***Dīdār* (Vision) of Imām:**

Why is the physical *dīdār* of the Imām of the time so important in the Ismā'īlī faith? What is the reward in it?

A86 (a) Since the true Prophet is the vicegerent of God and the Imām of the time is vicegerent of the Prophet, hence the *didār* of the Imām is the *didār* of the Prophet and the *didār* of the Prophet is the *didār* of God.

(b) Those whose obedience is God's obedience, their *didār* also represents God's *didār*. Study the subject of command and obedience carefully in the Qur'ān.

(c) Sayyidnā Qāzī Nu'mān in his book *al-Himmah fī ādābi atbā'ī'l-a'imma* on page 46 quotes this Tradition: "*Inna'n-nazaru ilā wajhi'l-imāmi 'ibādah, wa'n-nazaru ila'l-maṣḥaf 'ibādah*" (To look at the face of the Imām is worship and to look at the Qur'ān is worship). It is clear that to look at the Imām and the Qur'ān with love and devotion is worship.

(d) According to the Qur'ān, on the day of Resurrection *mu'mins* will have the *didār* of God. The question then arises, how will this *didār* take place, while God as such is incomparable and invisible? The answer is that this glorious *didār* will be in the form of the Prophet or the Imām, for the form of the Perfect Man is considered to be the form of God (*ṣūrat-i Raḥmān*).

(e) It is well known that Adam^(c) (who was the Perfect Man of his time) was created in God's image. This means that Adam^(c)'s form and that of the previous Perfect Man were given the status of God's form. It does not mean that God had any specific form like a human being, according to which Adam^(c) was created.

(f) According to the Qur'ān, God breathed His spirit into Adam^(c). This does not mean at all that God has a spirit of His own, for He is above and free from everything. This rather means that the spirit of the

Prophet or the Imām before Adam^(c), as God's vicegerent, was considered as the spirit of God, and was breathed into Adam^(c).

(g) Jesus Christ^(c) is regarded as the 'spirit of God' (*rūḥu'llāh*), but it is necessary to know that every Prophet and every Imām is also the Spirit of God. Similarly every Prophet and every Imām is also God's face and their *didār* is God's *didār*.

(h) From the above explanation, it is clear that the physical *didār* of the *mazhar* of the Divine light, that is the Imām of the time, is very important in the Ismā'īlī faith and very great reward lies in it. Therefore, greatly blessed are those who have great yearning and enthusiasm for the physical and spiritual *didār* of the Imām of the time.

Q87 **The *Ka'bah* = The House of God:**

In what sense is the *Ka'bah* regarded as the House of God, while it is a material building and God is above and free from space and spacelessness? What is the *ta'wil* of the turning of the face towards the *Qiblah*, i.e., the direction of the *Ka'bah*?

A87 (a) The *Ka'bah* is the House of God in the sense that in the Qur'ān God Himself has said about it: "My House" (2:125; 22:26). Therefore, there is no doubt in its being the House of God.

(b) Certainly God as such is above and free from space and spacelessness, however, the wisdoms of God's recognition, which are hidden in the example of "the House of God", are so great and lofty that in knowing them a *mu'min* finds God. To know these secrets of

God's recognition is to truly enter the House of God. Therefore, in this sense, this holy place is the House of God.

(c) The greatest secret, the main symbol and the fundamental beauty of the *Ka'bah* is that it is the symbol of God's real and prosperous House, which is living and is the fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom and the centre of rectitude and guidance, in which the divine light actually kindles. It is from here that God's recognition and all those things related to God's House are available. Such a House of God during the time of the holy Prophet was the Prophet himself and after him the Imām of the time in every age.

(d) It is said in a sacred Tradition: "I am not contained by the heaven or by the earth, I am contained only by the heart of a *mu'min*". This tradition presents two realities to us: clearly one is that since the heaven and the earth cannot contain God, then the Throne and the *Ka'bah* cannot contain Him either. The second is, if a true *mu'min*'s heart can contain Him then first of all, He must necessarily and certainly be contained by the pure and purified heart of the Commander of the faithful and the Perfect Man, i.e. the true Imām. This means that in the true sense it is the Perfect Man who is the House of God that contains everything which belongs to God.

(e) When the *Ka'bah*, in this sense, is the *ta'wili* symbol of the Imām and the Imām is its symbolised (*mamthul*), this means that in the *shari'at* the House of God is the physical *qiblah*, in the *haqiqat* the House of God is the spiritual *qiblah*. Thus the *ta'wil* of facing the *Ka'bah* in the matters of *shari'at* is to face the spiritual *qiblah* in the matters of *haqiqat*. The spiritual *qiblah* is the Imām of the time, *ṣalawātu'llāhi 'alayhi*.

Q88 The Shirt of Yūsuf^(c):

Please tell us some useful points regarding Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf's^(c) shirt. What was it? Was it really a physical shirt or was it a garment of Paradise?

A88 It should be known that Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf^(c) was an *Imām-i mustawda^c* in his time. As is clear from the Qur'ānic story, Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf^(c), as a child, dreamt that the eleven stars, the sun and the moon were prostrating before him. The *ta'wīl* of this dream is that he was to receive the status of *Imāmat* soon and before the expected time, i.e. in the very lifetime of his esteemed father. For the prostration of the eleven stars means that among the twelve *ḥujjats*, one was himself, therefore the remaining eleven obeyed him, that is, he excelled all of them in rank. The prostration of the sun means that the previous Imām, giving the light of *Imāmat* to his son, accepted his (son's) authority and finally the prostration of the moon means that the *bāb* (gate) or *ḥujjat-i a'ẓam* (the supreme *ḥujjat*) followed him. This is the *ta'wīl* related to the prostration of the eleven stars, the sun and the moon to Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf^(c).

It should be remembered that the shirt of Yūsuf means the subtle body (*jism-i laṭīf*). We have mentioned the subtle body everywhere in our writings. The subtle body, in fact, belongs only to the Imām of the time. It is the centre of all physical and spiritual miracles. It consists of innumerable small luminous atoms or particles, each of which is a living and speaking soul. This miraculous shirt, if it wants, can appear in the form of the Perfect Man, otherwise it mostly remains scattered in the form of atoms.

The subtle body has many names and one of them is

juththah-yi ibdā' iyyah. *Juththah* means body and *ibdā'* means an instantaneous creation, which does not take any time as in temporal creation (*takhliq*), for it is the place of “*kun fa-yakūn*” (“Be! and it is”). *Ibdā'* takes place only by *amr* (command). Thus, the subtle body is the *ibdā'i* body full of every kind of miraculous capability, i.e. it is full of the capacities for all kinds of miracles.

From the language of Qur'ānic wisdom it is evident that Ḥaẓrat-i Ya'qūb^(c) used to weep for a long time for the luminous *didār* of the Imām of the time, and thereby his eyes had turned white. The *ta'wīl* of this is that for a long time there was only white light without *didār*. But when the shirt of Ḥaẓrat-i Yūsuf^(c) was laid upon his face he regained his sight. The *ta'wīl* of this is that when the luminous or subtle body of the Imām of the time appeared before him, he did his *didār*.

If we take this story and the tradition for granted without this *ta'wīl* wisdom, it would mean that (God forbid) even the Prophets and Imāms, like ordinary people, lose their eyesight weeping for the physical separation of their children. If this is true, how can it be possible for them to guide and lead human beings. This shows that the real fact is hidden in the *ta'wīl*, which we have explained above.

Q89 **Manners of *Du'ā'*:**

Would you kindly explain the different gestures during the recitation of the *Du'ā'*?

A89 During the recitation of the *Du'ā'* the way we raise the hands with open palms is the sign of the expression of our dependence and indigence in the presence of God.

To prostrate at the end of each part of the *Duʿāʾ* implies that the faithful servant is very humble. It also means that he is created from dust and physically he is going to go back to dust. It also means that in the Prophet's time it was obligatory to obey the Prophet, whereas in the Imām's time it is obligatory to obey the Imām of the time, because the *taʿwīl* of prostration is obedience to the Prophet and to the Imām in their respective times. (See *Wajh-i dīn*, Discourse 19).

When the holy *Duʿāʾ* is completed with all its parts, before the last prostration the hands are clasped whilst saying "*shāh-didār*". The *taʿwīl* of this is that the *didār* of the Imām of the time, which is the *mazhar* of the divine *didār* and which is done with the companions on both right and left sides, is that the concept of the holy *didār* of the king of religion existed in the time of Prophethood and is also in the time of *Imāmat*, for the *taʿwīl* of the right is the Prophet and that of the left is the Imām. Also, in saying *shāh-didār* to both sides, it is said in the language of wisdom that you should accept and attain both the physical and spiritual *didār* of the king of religion. The *taʿwīl* of the right is the *bāṭin* (esoteric aspect), which is the rank of the Prophet, and the *taʿwīl* of the left is the *ẓāhir* (exoteric aspect), which is the rank of the Imām.

After this, while reciting *kalimah-yi shahādat*, the *muʿmin* indicates that may both *āfāq* (the physical world) and *anfus* (the spiritual world) remain witness that he testifies to the divinity of God, may He be exalted, the Prophethood and the messengership of Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(s) and the *walāyat* and *imāmat* of Ḥaẓrat-i ʿAlī^(c); for to touch the earth in this manner means to call to witness the physical world and to touch

the face means to call to witness the spiritual world, as it is alluded in the Qur'ān in verse (18:51).

Also another *ta'wil* of this is that the *mu'min* coming to this world bore witness to God, the Prophet and the true Imām. Then acting accordingly, he sought the favours and blessings of both religion and the world, because touching the earth means to come to this world and passing the hand over the face, means to seek favours and blessings.

Finally, “*Ḥayy-ū zindah*” and “*Qayyūm-ū pāyindah*” are recited to the right and left sides. The supreme wisdom in this action is about the two supreme Names of God “*al-Ḥayy*” (Everliving) and “*al-Qayyūm*” (Everlasting) mentioned in the Qur'ān, in verse 2:255, in which in the language of wisdom it is said that God's supreme Name, “*al-Ḥayy*” is alive, present and living in this world and His supreme Name “*al-Qayyūm*” is also ever lasting in this world. And these two wisdom-filled indications are to the Imām of the time.

Q90 **Hunzai Ginān:**

Here we recite the *gināns* of the *Pirs*, but I want to know in what language *gināns* are recited in Hunza? Are the *gināns* there recited in the language of Hunza?

A90 Previously, all the *gināns*, *manqabat* (praise of the Prophet and the Imāms), *qaṣidah* (eulogy of the Prophet and the Imāms) etc., used to be recited in Persian but nowadays they are mostly recited in the Hunza language. This practice continues not only in Hunza but also in those places of Gilgit where Ismā'īlis from Hunza have settled.

It has remained a wonderful and successful tradition among the *Jamā'ats* affiliated to the *Ismā'īlī da'wat* of ancient India to recite only the poetry of *Pirs* as *gināns*. In the countries where the *da'wat* of *Pīr Nāṣir-i Khusraw* (may God sanctify his secret) has flourished, such a distinction or preference does not exist. Rather, any fine and intelligible poetry in the glorification of the *Imām* and religion is recited as *manqabat* and *ginān* in the *Jamā'at Khānah*.

I am fully convinced that both these above-mentioned traditions are approved and accepted in the eyes of the true *Imām*, and numerous wisdoms are hidden in them, the explanation of which is beyond the scope of this question.

Q91 Concept of *Imāmat*:

Would you kindly explain the concept of *Imāmat* and the role of the *Imām* from the *Ismā'īlī* point of view? Please also explain what is meant generally to be an *Ismā'īlī*?

A91 (a) It is apparent that three questions are being asked here. However, their basis is the same. So, it should be known that in Islam *Imāmat* is another name of the *khilāfat-i ilāhiyyah* (the Divine Vicegerency). Therefore, the concept of *Imāmat* is the concept of *khilāfat*, which is mentioned prominently in the Qur'ān. Thus the very *khilāfat* of Ḥaẓrat-i Adam^(c) was *Imāmat*, for the technical sense of these two terms is the same and so is their aim and object. That is, in reality, only the one who is the vicegerent of God (*khalīfah*) is able to be the leader and guide (*Imām*) of the people.

(b) Ḥaẓrat-i Adam^(c) in his time was the vicegerent

(*khalīfah*) of God and the guide (Imām) of the people, and both these terms have the same sense. Similarly, Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) in his time was the guide (Imām) of people and the vicegerent of God. Do you not see in the Qur’ān that Adam^(c) is called *khalīfah* and Ibrāhīm^(c) Imām? This signifies that as in Ibrāhīm^(c) the vicegerency (*khilāfat*) of God and the guidance (*Imāmat*) of the people is the same thing, similarly they (i.e. *khilāfat* and *Imāmat*) are the same in Adam^(c).

(c) If in the eyes of God, Adam^(c) and Noah^(c) were not the guide (Imām) of the people in their time, then God, as is mentioned in the Qur’ān (3:33) would not have chosen them. It should be understood that the one whom God chooses from among the people, becomes the guide (*Imām*) of the people, for the guide means leader, and in reality, the leader is the one who must be chosen on the basis of his qualifications [such as the breathing of the Divine Spirit into him (15:29) and granting him Divine knowledge (2:31)].

(d) Do you not think that when we generally consider the Imām as the vicegerent of the Prophet, and *Imāmat* as the vicegerency of the Prophet, then according to the same logic if the Imām is the vicegerent of the Prophet and the Prophet is the vicegerent of God, then, the Imām through the mediation of the Prophet became the vicegerent of God and *Imāmat* the vicegerency of God. Thus, it is a reality that the concept of *Imāmat* is the concept of Divine Vicegerency.

(e) The objection, which the angels had raised in predicting mischief and bloodshed, was an indication of the battle and conflict between right and wrong, i.e., the vicegerent of God and his opponent, which had to continue until the resurrection. It is obvious that, behind

the veil of this objection it is said, in the language of wisdom that the rank of the *khilāfat* and *Imāmat* of Adam^(c) will continue and last in this world till the resurrection. Thus, in connection with the question of *khilāfat* and *Imāmat*, the first event of mischief and bloodshed took place during the time of Adam^(c) himself. In this connection you should read the story of Hābīl and Qābīl in verses (5:27-32) in the Qur'ān. In this battle between right and wrong, Imām Hābīl was on the right and Qābīl was wrong. Qābīl martyred Ḥaẓrat-i Hābīl^(c), however despite all that, the right won the battle and the wrong met with defeat. That is, 'right (*ḥaqq*)' means that light which was in Imām Hābīl^(c) transferred to Imām Shīth^(c) and continued to live and survive forever, and Qābīl, who was the embodiment of darkness, could not seize the holy light of Imām Hābīl^(c), nor could he extinguish it. Rather, he was driven out from the Divine court and became accursed.

(f) Now, we will try to explain the role of the exalted Imām briefly. The Imām has different ranks according to the time and changing conditions of the world, such as *Imām-i muqīm*, *Imām-i asās*, *Imām-i mutimm*, *Imām-i mustaqarr* and *Imām-i mustawda*^c, and thus in each of these ranks his role differs apparently, the details of which are beyond the scope of this answer. In short, if it is the cycle of prophethood, sometimes the Imām also has the rank of prophethood in his lineage, but in the cycle of *Imāmat*, i.e. after the Seal of Prophets it is not so, his rank is only the vicegerent of the Prophet. However, whether directly or through the Prophet, as mentioned above, the Imām holds the great rank of the vicegerent of God. That is, the Imām as the *ṣāḥib-i amr* (the owner of Divine command or authority) continues to be the plenipotentiary and the guardian in the exoteric and esoteric guidance of religious matters.

As for the answer to the last part of the question “What does it mean to be an Ismā‘īlī in a general sense?” is that an Ismā‘īlī is such a *muslim* and a *mu’min* who acts upon the Qur’ān and Islam according to the commands of God, the Prophet and the *ulu’l-amr* i.e., the pure Imāms (4:59). The *mu’min* is convinced that the vicegerent of the Prophet, i.e., the Imām of the time, who is the light of guidance, is always present and existent in this world and without his blessed existence the affairs of religion cannot be managed (57:28). The *mu’min* absolutely believes that the position of the Imām of the time is not only as the light (5:15) and the Teacher (*mu‘allim*) of the Qur’ān (2:150-1) but is also the speaking Qur’ān (45:29).

Q92 **Some Symbols:**

What is the *ta’wil* of these things: (a) To do *shah-didār*, (b) To pass the hand over the face after touching the ground with it, (c) To say “*ḥayy-ū zindah*” and “*qayyūm-ū pāyindah*” to the right and left sides, (d) To burn an aloe stick, (e) To keep a candle kindled?

A92 The *ta’wil* of parts (a), (b) and (c) of your question have been explained in the answer to question No. 89; therefore, here we will try to explain only the *ta’wil* of burning an aloe stick and kindling a candle. The physical purpose of burning an aloe stick is that the environment of the *Jamā‘at* and the spiritual assembly should be made pleasant from its fragrance and the atmosphere of the House of God, which may have been disturbed and be displeasing should be turned into a pure, desirable and pleasant atmosphere. Its *ta’wili* wisdom is that the faithful servant should sacrifice his financial, physical and mental powers and provide ease

and happiness for others, just as the aloe stick sacrifices its existence and refreshes and mellows the heart and mind of the people in the assembly.

Fragrance is a nice, useful and pleasant thing, which everybody likes. Most importantly the holy Prophet himself used to like it very much, because it implies sublime allusions of wisdom in addition to having physical comfort and pleasure. One of them is that although the substance of fragrance is not much, nonetheless it pleases many people. Similarly, a little good word and good deed of a *mu'min* pleases many people and their fragrance spreads and remains all over the world and never comes to an end.

Excellent work, progress and service, whether it is from a *Jamā'at* or from individual members of the *Jamā'at*, are like the fragrances of a garden and those who spread its fame are like the breeze, which carries and spreads them to the surroundings and perfumes the minds of those living there.

How many people can benefit from the little sacrifice of an insignificant aloe stick! The aloe stick becomes *fanā* (annihilated) by burning down gradually, but the feeling and effect of its fragrance remain in many minds. The lesson of wisdom contained in this is that the annihilation (*fanā*) of things does not mean that they absolutely become extinct and naught. Rather, it means that in the process of *fanā* or annihilation, things change from one state into another state.

Similar allusions are also found in the burning and transforming of a candle into light. One of them is that just as only a few things can give fragrance or light in burning, in the same way it is only the true *mu'mins*

whose sacrifices can prove to be acceptable and useful religiously and spiritually; and it is only such *mu'mins* who can annihilate their egos and transform them into luminosity, just as the candle annihilates and transforms itself into light.

Q93 Seven Heavens and Seven Earths:

What are the meanings of seven heavens and seven earths?

A93 Your question is related to the verse (65:12) in the Qur'ān. It should be known that according to new research in spiritual and physical science, the sun is situated in the very centre of the great globe of this universe, and surrounding it are fixed fourteen hypothetical circles which are larger and larger towards the outside and smaller and smaller towards the inside, like the layers of an onion. Among these, the outer seven circles are regarded as heavens and the inner seven circles as earths and these should be termed universal heavens and universal earths.

The other heavens and earths are stellar. That is, all the planets and stars, which are in the universe are divided into fourteen categories with respect to matter, body, soul and evolution of life. Among these categories the higher seven are heavens and the lower seven are earths.

In addition, the seven *nāṭiqs* are the seven heavens and their seven *asāses* are the seven earths of spirituality. For the details of this meaning see the books on *ta'wil*. From another aspect seven Imāms and their seven *ḥujjats* are the seven heavens and the seven earths of spirituality.

Furthermore, there are fourteen stages of individual spirituality among which the seven beginning ones are like the seven earths and the seven later stages are like the seven heavens.

Q94 Faith of ‘Alī^(c):

In some books it is written that Ḥaẓrat-i ‘Alī^(c) accepted the faith of Islam. What does this mean? Does this mean (God forbid) that in the beginning he was a non-Muslim? If so, does this mean that a Prophet or an Imām can be a non-Muslim in the beginning?

A94 Your question is very important and very useful because in answering it the fundamental points of faith, the rank of Prophethood and the rank of *Imāmat* can be discussed. Thus it should be understood that there are different forms of accepting faith, such as the acceptance of faith by an infidel owing to fear or urge for worldly advantages, or through understanding the truth, or the acceptance of faith by someone who was already faithful (*mu’min*). In other words the states and degrees of those who accept faith (*īmān*) are not alike, for faith has various meanings, such as to believe, to confess and to confirm etc., God says in the Qur’ān: “When Allah made (His covenant) with the Prophets, (He said): Behold that which I have given you of the Book and wisdom, and afterward there will come unto you a messenger, confirming that which you possess. You shall believe in him and you shall help him. He said: Do you agree, and will you take up My burden (which I lay upon you) in this (matter)? They answered: We agree. He said: Then bear your witness. I will be a witness with you” (3:81).

It is clear from this Qur’ānic teaching that according to

the command of God all the Prophets believe in one another, but this never means that they in their own time or in their own right are not faithful, and personally they are not able to attain religion and faith. It rather means that every Prophet believes in the coming Prophet to be true and confirms the previous Prophet, so that thereby the *da^cwat* of the Prophets may be strengthened and the people may have proper guidance, for the ignorant people go astray when one Prophet succeeds another Prophet.

There is an excellent example of the compliance of the above-mentioned divine command in the Qur'ān (61:6) in which Jesus Christ addressing the Children of Isrā'il says: "O Children of Isrā'il! Verily! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bring good tidings of a messenger who comes after me, whose name shall be Ahmad (the Praised One)" (61:6).

A true *mu'min* can understand many realities of the pure Imāms in the light of the events and states of the Prophets. Thus it is a fact that the way Mawlā 'Alī^(c) believed in the holy Prophet, was on the highest level of faith. That is, he accepted the Prophet to be true and confirmed his Prophethood and messengership, for the lamp of the religion of Abraham^(c) was lit in the house of Ḥaẓrat-i Imām Abū Ṭālib^(c).

Further when God praising His light says that it is "Light upon Light", that is, one lamp is lit from another, the question arises, which was the nearest lamp with which the lamp of the blessed personality of the Prophet was lit? The only incontrovertible answer we have is that it was lit by the lamp of Ḥaẓrat-i Abū Ṭālib^(c), who was the *Imām-i muqīm* of his time.

Study verse (4:136) carefully in which, even after believing in Islam, God is addressing the Muslims: “O you who believe! Believe”. It is obvious that this belief is not like that of unbelievers, in that it is an affirmation after negation. Contrary to this, here “to believe”, means to believe after believing. In this Divine command although the word “belief” (*īmān*) is the same, the meaning and interpretation cannot be the same, for those people who are yearning to progress in faith are at different stages on the straight path. Thus, the explanation of the command “O you who believe! Believe” will not be alike, rather it would be according to the different stages of faith, for with respect to faith, people cannot be alike. *Īmān* continues to increase step by step from the beginning to the end of the straight path and where *maʿrifat* reaches its climax, faith (*īmān*) also does so.

In short, the way Ḥaẓrat-i ʿAlī^(c) believed in the holy Prophet was in the light of *maʿrifat*. He accepted him as the true Prophet, and supported him and confirmed his *daʿwat*, just as Ḥaẓrat-i Hārūn^(c) accepted Ḥaẓrat-i Mūsā^(c) and supported and confirmed his prophethood and messengership, which we have already discussed.

Q95 **Sprinkling water (*ChhāḤā*) on the Dead Body**

(a) Is there resurrection after death? (b) Do Paradise and Hell actually exist? (c) If, when Mukhī Ṣāhib gives you *chhāḤā* after you die all your sins are forgiven, what is the need of doing good deeds during your lifetime?

A95 (a) Yes, resurrection after death is a Qurʾānic reality, in which every Muslim must believe.

(b) Yes, they do exist, and he who does not believe in it is an infidel.

(c) If in some places Mukhī Šāhib gives *chhāQā* to the dead body, it is a popular belief and an ordinary ritual, not that it is among the fundamentals of religion. Had it been so, there would have been an emphatic command among the commands of God, the Prophet and the pure Imāms, but there is no such thing.

There is no doubt that even in [popular] belief and religious rituals there is some expedience and wisdom, nonetheless their benefits are available only to those who are faithful, pious and righteous. As for the rest, the popular belief and rituals cannot grant them any salvation after death.

ChhāQā is a nice ritual in our faith. However, the pleasant and fruitful effect is more and more useful during the lifetime of a *mu'min*, not after death. He is not able to awaken from the sleep of negligence by it as he was able to do in his lifetime. However, the only benefit is that when many *mu'mins* believe and hope that this act of *chhāQā* will be beneficial for the deceased *mu'min*, it turns into a form of prayer for him.

Q96 **People of Salvation:**

Is it possible for a non-Isma'īlī to attain salvation and union with God? If not, why is the right of salvation granted to a small minority, leaving aside so many people in the world, while the divine law is full of the virtues of justice and equity?

A96 In order to facilitate understanding we will divide this question into three parts:

- (a) What is the source of salvation in the religion of Islam?
- (b) As a result of the true *da'wat*, which the Prophets preached, did all the people attain salvation, or only a minority?
- (c) What is the reality of divine justice and equity?

The answer to the first question is that in the religion of Islam, the means of salvation is the holy Prophet and after him his pure *ahl-i bayt* hold this position. By *ahl-i bayt* are meant the Imāms of guidance, as the Prophet has said: "My *ahl-i bayt* are like Noah's Ark, the one who embarked therein attained salvation and the one who lagged behind was drowned." (*Aḥādith-i Mathnawī*, p.166).

Now, when the means of salvation after the Prophet are his *ahl-i bayt*, it is obvious that as a result of obedience, salvation is assigned only to those who recognize the Imām of the time. By *ahl-i bayt*, as we have seen above, is meant the Imām of the time. For the Prophet's house, which was prosperous with knowledge and wisdom, is now prosperous only due to the *ta'wīl* and guidance of the living and present Imām. For the meanings, which the wisdom-filled word '*ahl-i bayt*' embraces are that the spiritual and luminous relatives of the Prophet are his representatives, successors and holders of authority (*ulu'l-amr*) in knowledge and wisdom and rectitude and guidance, and obedience to them is obligatory after obedience to God and to the Prophet.

The answer to the second part of the question: "As a result of the true *da'wat* which the Prophets preached, did all the people attain salvation, or only a minority?" is that obviously and clearly only a few people have

attained salvation and many people became deprived of the means of salvation, because they did not accept the true *da'wat*, the details of which are mentioned in the Qur'ān. Now from this it becomes easy to understand the answer to the main question that, in every age the people of salvation can be only those people who obey the true guide (i.e. Imām).

The answer to the third and last part of the question: "What is the reality of divine justice and equity?" is that the divine law is full of the virtues of justice and equity in the beginning as well as in the end. According to this law, God has never left this world devoid of the light of guidance. In other words, God has neither deprived the world of guidance in the cycle of prophethood nor in the cycle of *Imāmat*. Therefore those who recognize this fountainhead of guidance obtained a place in the Ark of guidance (*safinah-yi hidāyat*) and became the people of salvation, but those who rejected the true guide, were deprived of the Ark of salvation, and were drowned in the deluge of deviation.

When [it is established that] Islam is the religion of nature, whatever happens in it would always be in accordance with the very law of nature. That is, whatever is superior and loftier in this world is fewer in number and quantity, and contrary to this, whatever is inferior and lower is greater in number and quantity and examples of this can be found on every level in the law of nature. Thus if you reflect on the composition and order of minerals, vegetables, animals and men among the creatures, [you will come to know] how vegetables are formed from minerals, and animals from vegetables, and finally men. If we observe the chain of this physical creation, we will come to know that as we go lower and lower down the chain, things are found in greater and

greater quantity, and as we go higher and higher up the chain, they become lesser and lesser in quantity. This implies that if the people of salvation are in a minority in comparison to others, it is not against the law of nature rather it is exactly in accordance with it.

Another example of ascension and evolution in the creatures is that if grass is grown in a field or garden, this does not mean that the entire soil of the earth will be transformed into grass. Similarly it is also not possible that the quantity of grass that a cow eats will cause milk to be produced in the same quantity. Again it is far from just for the owner of the cow to take all the milk and leave nothing for the poor calf. Furthermore not all the milk is turned into cream. It is also obvious that [the quantity of] butter is less than the cream. Further it is known to everyone that when butter is transformed into pure oil, it becomes lesser; when something is fried in the oil, still another portion of it burns or evaporates. When man eats the food fried in the oil, very little energy is formed out of it and from this (energy) very little energy can prove to be useful. This is the law of nature and the same law operates in religion. That is, (in religion also), there are stages fixed according to the access of the people to beliefs and views and knowledge and guidance, and in ascending these stages higher and higher, the number of people becomes smaller and smaller.

Q97 Woman and *Imāmat*:

Why can a woman not be the Imām?

A97 In connection with *Hundred Questions* we have been asked this question twice. Since this question is very interesting and fruitful, therefore, we will answer it

twice also.

An *‘azīz* has asked this question with very strange logic. God knows whether he has asked it deliberately or accidentally. For according to every wise person, there is ample difference between these two questions: “Why can a woman not be the Imām?” which means why cannot a woman, whether ordinary or from the elite, obtain the *Imāmat*, and why is it always conferred upon men only? This implies that it is possible for every man to be the Imām, while in comparison to him all women are deprived of this exalted status, while it is not correct to pose the question in this way.

The other question is “Why can a daughter of the Imām not be the Imām?” Or, in other words, why can a woman from the family of *Imāmat* not obtain *Imāmat*? The question should be posed in this way, for the exalted office of *Imāmat* is not such that everybody can achieve it. Rather it is in a chosen family, and that is only the Prophet’s family.

Thus here we will answer the latter question from the two kinds of questions presented above:

(a) According to Qur’ānic law, the son inherits two portions from his father and the daughter inherits one (see section (f) below). This shows that man is superior to woman and therefore only the son of the Imām inherits the throne of *Imāmat*, not the daughter of the Imām.

(b) It is also one of the greatest miracles of God in proof of the veracity of the glory of *Imāmat* that, in addition to the chapter “*Kawthar*”, many other Qur’ānic verses confirm that a son has to be born in the house of the

Imāms from the progeny of Muḥammad^(s) to inherit the throne of *Imāmat*. Thus it is absolutely impossible that in the presence of male issue of the true Imām, the *Imāmat* be given to the daughter.

(c) The law of *Imāmat* in many matters is like the law of prophethood. Thus, just as no lady among the ladies has become a prophet, no daughter of the Imām can be an Imām.

(d) Islam is the religion of nature and according to the law of nature, the woman in comparison to the man is weak and compelled in many respects, such as her menstrual cycle, pregnancy, maternity etc. These conditions are such that the scope of the woman's activities becomes very limited, and therefore, physically the woman cannot succeed to the office of *Imāmat*.

(e) If there is a group of women and there is no man to lead them in *shar'ī namāz*, in such a state, according to *shari'at* a capable woman should lead them in such a way that she should remain in the front line, but should not stand in front of them separately like a male *pesh-namāz* (a man who leads prayers). The *ta'wili* allusion of this is that, although the daughters of the family of prophethood and *Imāmat* cannot succeed to the physical rank of prophethood and *Imāmat*, in *bāṭin* or spiritually they are linked with the centre of the light of guidance.

(f) Among men and women, all those who are followers of the Imām are like his daughters, for they receive only one portion of the inheritance of religion, to reach his light spiritually, being his spiritual children only. But the son of the Imām of the time who is going to inherit the *Imāmat* is his son in every aspect. Therefore, he

receives two portions of the inheritance of the religion. He inherits the light of the Imām externally as well as internally, for he is his son both physically and spiritually. So this is the reason that the *imāmat* of a woman in *sharʿī namāz* is hidden and confined in the (first) row and is not prominent like the *imāmat* of a man standing in front of them. This is an allusion to the spiritual rank of the light of *Imāmat*, which all the followers of the Imām can attain spiritually according to their capacity.

(g) It is said in verse (4:34): “Men are rulers of women, because God has made the one of them to excel the other”. From this Qurʾānic principle it is clear that physically it is impossible for a woman to become an Imām, for the Imām has to be the ruler and more excellent (*afḡal*) and not a subject and less excellent (*mafḡūl*).

Q98 **Marriage of Imām:**

Is it correct that some people say that the true Imām does not marry Ismāʿīlī girls because being his followers, they are his spiritual daughters and an Imām should not marry his spiritual daughters?

A98 No. It is absolutely wrong. To believe that it is not lawful for the Imām to marry an Ismāʿīlī girl has nothing to do with reality. If someone is interested in understanding this problem in detail, he should see the chapter on marriage in *Daʿāʾimuʾl-Islām*, the famous book on Ismāʿīlī jurisprudence, and also the *sunnat* of the holy Prophet, and the collective conduct of the pure Imāms, so that he may have proper knowledge of the fundamental points in this connection.

Here first of all it is important to know that in Islam there is a scope for marriage and the lawful wife, in which all those [categories] of women are mentioned from whom a Muslim can choose one for his marriage. Now from this scope of legitimacy, if somebody chooses a woman for marriage according to his discretion and expediency, how can one think that whoever he chose for marriage was the only one lawful for him?

Thus if the Imām marries a girl from other than an Ismā‘īlī family, this wisdom-filled choice is within the scope ordained by the Islamic law mentioned above.

God knows how this wrong notion has come about that the “Imām cannot marry a daughter of his followers for she is his spiritual daughter”, despite the fact that such a marriage is never prohibited for a prophet, an *Imām*, *Pir* or *murshid*. For becoming a follower is a spiritual relationship, whereas marriage is a physical relationship, and they are two different things.

Except for the wives of Ḥaẓrat-i Nūḥ^(c) and Ḥaẓrat-i Lūṭ^(c), the rest of the wives of the Prophets were pious Muslims as well as the spiritual daughters of their husbands. The wives of all the Imāms are in the same position and so is the honourable Begum of the present Imām, our Lord Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī^(c).

Further, the marriage that we are discussing here is physical and the sense in which Ismā‘īlī girls are Imām’s daughters belongs to the spirit and spirituality. Then how can physical marriage be unlawful and prohibited with a spiritual daughter, while in the spiritual sense the wife of the Imām herself automatically becomes his spiritual daughter and while

the wives of all of us are our spiritual sisters?

Probably some people have wrongly thought that when the Imām marries a girl from a non-Isma‘īlī family, it is done with the purpose that she will remain non-Isma‘īlī. But this notion is glaringly based on falsehood, for the Imām’s honourable Begum before or after the marriage accepts Isma‘īlism and automatically becomes his spiritual daughter. And truly speaking we should believe in this way about the honourable Begum Salimah Ṣāhibah, for according to Isma‘īlism, she is included in the luminous family of the Imām of the time.

The holy Prophet said to Imām ‘Alī^(c): “O ‘Alī! I and you are the parents of the faithful men [and faithful women]”. This shows that the Prophet’s honourable wives were like his spiritual daughters and Ḥaẓrat-i Fāṭimah^(c) with Imām ‘Alī^(c) had the same position spiritually. Similarly, the *Imām* and *Bāb*, i.e. the supreme *Hujjat* in every age are the parents of the faithful men and women. This is indeed in a spiritual sense and not in any physical sense.

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From the above discussion it becomes vividly clear that when the Imām marries a girl from a non-Isma‘īlī family, it does not mean that he cannot marry a daughter of one of his followers according to *shari‘at*. Rather, in his wisdom-filled act there are numerous expediciencies hidden for the world of Islam and humanity, in addition to his followers, which nobody except the people of wisdom understand. Their explanation however, is not necessary in this answer.

Q99 **Sacrifice:**

Which son of Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) was sacrificed

according to the story of the Qur'ān? Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c) or Ḥaẓrat-i Ishāq^(c)? Further please tell us what is the *ta'wīl* in it?

A99 In the Qur'ān (37:99-107) the sacrifice of Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c) is mentioned. This is only the exoteric aspect of the story. However, in the *ta'wīl* of the great trial of sacrifice both Ismā'īl^(c) and Ishāq^(c) are included, the explanation of which follows as under:

(a) God had commanded Ḥaẓrat-i Ibrāhīm^(c) to sacrifice his son Ismā'īl^(c) in His path. The great father and son prepared willingly to comply with His command, and the sharp knife of the father began to move along the blessed throat of Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c), but God turned this unique physical sacrifice into a spiritual sacrifice.

(b) God says: “And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice (*zibhin 'azīm*)” (37:107). That is, the sacrifice of his personality was transformed into a spiritual sacrifice. For the tremendous sacrifice means the spiritual sacrifice which is vastly greater than the physical sacrifice. The gist of the meaning of the spiritual sacrifice of Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c) is that the covenant for the office of *Imāmat* was taken from him, and its detail is that he underwent various difficult spiritual trials and offered a sacrifice one after the other in all the stations of spirituality, so that the meaning of patience may be true from every aspect in the function of the *Imāmat*, as the Qur'ān says: “And We appointed from among them Imāms who guided by Our command when they persevered with patience.” (32:24).

(c) It is said that the lamb, which was sacrificed instead of Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl^(c) was the ‘tremendous sacrifice’, but according to the intellect and wisdom how can it be

possible for the lamb to be greater than Ḥaẓrat-i Ismāʿīl^(c)? Therefore, by the 'tremendous sacrifice' is meant the spiritual sacrifice, which was offered by Ishāq^(c) also, because they were *Imām-i mustaqarr* and *Imām-i mustawda*^c respectively. Each Imām whether *mustaqarr* or *mustawda*^c succeeds to the rank of *Imāmat* after this tremendous spiritual sacrifice.

(d) The spiritual sacrifice of Ḥaẓrat-i Ismāʿīl^(c) was tremendously greater than his physical sacrifice in the sense that the chief of the prophets, Ḥaẓrat-i Muḥammad^(s), was born in his pure progeny and by virtue of his physical and spiritual sacrifices the religion of Islām became manifest and firm.

(e) Had the sacrifice of Ismāʿīl^(c) been confined to his physical personality, that is, he was sacrificed at the time when he was prepared, none of those spiritual sacrifices which he offered later on during his life, and those which were offered by the true Imāms from his progeny and which continue with the *Imāmat* until the resurrection, would have taken place. Therefore, God in transforming the physical sacrifice into a spiritual one, not only favoured the great father and son, but also abundantly increased their reward. Thus in this sense the spiritual sacrifice is the 'tremendous sacrifice'.

(f) It should be remembered that for the common people, physical sacrifice i.e. martyrdom is extremely great, for they cannot reach the spiritual sacrifice which is confined to the prophets, the Imāms and the true *mu'mins* of higher rank. However, according to the chosen ones, spiritual sacrifice is exceedingly great.

(g) The word *qurbānī* (sacrifice) is derived from *qurbān*, which is in turn from *qurb*, (closeness). Thus,

qurbānī implies a means, which brings a person closer to God. Thus the exoteric and esoteric guidance of the true guide is the greatest sacrifice by which the servants of God become closer to Him.

(h) If you see the *ta'wīl* of the word “*zabḥ* (to slaughter)” and “*qurbānī* (sacrifice)” in *Wajh-i dīn*, the famous book on *ta'wīl* by *Pīr Nāṣir Khusraw*, it will be clear to you what the *ta'wīl* of these two words is and in what sense the sacrifice of the *nāṭiq* is *asās*, that of the *asās* is the Imām, and that of the Imām the *ḥujjat*, and that of the *ḥujjat* is the *dā'ī*.

(i) It should be known that each *nāṭiq* takes the covenant from one of his close relatives, who becomes the *asās*, which from the *ta'wīlī* point of view is like slaughtering a sacrificial animal, and appoints him as his successor so that he may bring the *mu'mins* of the community closer to God. Similarly the *asās* takes the covenant of *Imāmat* from his heir and makes him the means of divine proximity. The Imām offers the sacrifice of the *ḥujjat*, taking the covenant from him and enriching him with spiritual wealth, makes him the fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom, so that he may be the means of *ma'rifat* for the servants of God. Similarly the *ḥujjat* offers the sacrifice of *dā'ī* according to his rank. These are the sacrifices of the *ḥudūd-i dīn* (spiritual hierarchy) and the sacrifice of each superior *ḥadd* is the one under him.

(j) The story of the sacrifice of Ḥazrat-i Ismā'īl^(c) also contains the wisdom that although the spiritual sacrifice is superior and more excellent in every respect, it is impossible for someone to reach the great rank of spiritual sacrifice without material sacrifices. Therefore, every wise *mu'min* forms a habit of physical

and material sacrifices prior to great spiritual sacrifices, so that thereby he may be able to offer the greatest sacrifice.

Q Imām and Sacrifice:

100 You have mentioned the sacrifice of the Imām in an answer to a question, but how can sacrifice be applicable to the Imām while he is the *mazhar* of Divine light? Is the Divine light not free from such a sacrifice? Is there room in the Divine light for progress and increase?

A (a) It should be understood that in the Imām and *Imāmat* 100 two things are special, and they are personality and light. Now, you should understand well that the personality has two aspects, the external (*zāhir*) and the internal (*bāṭin*) or physical and spiritual. Similarly, the light also has two aspects: one is linked with *azal* (pre-eternity) and the other is linked with the internal aspect (*bāṭin*) of the personality. Thus, the real meanings of sacrifice continue to be applied to both the *zāhir* and *bāṭin* (aspects) of the Imām's personality. Although from one aspect sacrifice is not applicable to the light, but from another aspect, the light also continues to make sacrifice.

(b) We have numerous examples of the physical sacrifices of the Prophets and Imāms in front of us. By the proof of these examples we can be sure that the blessed personality of the Prophet and the Imām is the fountainhead of physical and spiritual sacrifices.

(c) For the sake of upholding the true and truth, the chief of martyrs Ḥaẓrat-i Imām Ḥusayn^(c) sacrificed his holy personality. From this, two realities become crystal

clear in front of us: one is that Ḥaẓrat-i Ismā'īl's^(c) sacrifice was not a show rather it was possible for him to be sacrificed decisively. The other is that the Imām, with respect to the physical and spiritual aspects of his personality, is not free from sacrifices, but no doubt with respect to light he is free from them.

(d) The *azalī* (pre-eternal) aspect of the light is not active (*fa^{cc}āl*), it is silent, but the aspect which is linked to the inner aspect (*bāṭin*) of the Perfect Man is absolutely active, just as the rising flame of a bright lamp is moving and active, which continues to spread light upon light, yet the light which is seen on the clean and clear wall of the house is silent and immobile. In this example the active shining flame represents the moving aspect of the light which is in the spirituality of the guide of the time (*hādī-yi zamān*) and the light which is silent on the surface of the wall shows the immobile aspect of the light which is towards the *azal*, (pre-eternity).

(e) A clear and vivid concept of *azal* is also possible only in the light of the Imām of the time therefore, in this example I have compared the active light of the Imām with the flame of the lamp and that of his *azalī* (pre-eternal) light with the silent light on the wall.

(f) We had said that from one aspect, even the light continues to sacrifice. Truly speaking, the sacrifices of the light are the greatest. Think clearly about the sun, since when has it existed and how long will it continue to subsist. Try to assess with what speed every moment this fountainhead of material light fills the infinite expanses of this universe with its fresh light! This is an example of the sacrifices of the material light, but the sacrifices of the spiritual light are immensely greater

than this.



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'Allamah
Naṣīr al-Dīn Naṣīr (Ḥubb-i 'Alī) 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 Diwān of poetry in Burushaski, his mother tongue, and is known as "Bābā-i Burushaski" (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 is widely recognized. His works include "Practical Ṣūfism and Spiritual Science", "Balance of Realities", "What is Soul?", "Book of Healing" and "The Wise Qur'ān and the World of Humanity". 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-i Imtiyāz" awarded by the Government of Pakistan for his contribution to Literature.



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