

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN
SHIA IMAMI ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION FOR CANADA

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OBSERVATION AND COMMENTS ON
OUR MODERN GINANIC LITERATURE

PAPER PRESENTED AT
ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL REVIEW MEETING - 1980
NAIROBI - KENYA

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June 12, 1980

Rai Eqbal Rupani
International Co-ordinator
P.O. Box 40898
NAIROBI, Kenya

Dear Rai Saheb:

On the occasion of Ismailia Association International Review meeting - 1980, I would like to submit herewith our comprehensive report on the aspect of our Ginanic Publications. This report is an outstanding result of deep study and intensive research carried out by our Association.

It is hoped that the contents of this report will assist us in making appropriate decisions on the item Nos. 6.2.1 to 6.2.4 of the agenda prepared for this meeting.

With kind regards and Ya Ali Madad.

Yours sincerely:

AMIRALI P. WAJI
PRESIDENT

AH:mh

Encl: Report under the title of
OBSERVATION & COMMENTS ON OUR
MODERN GINANIC LITERATURE

OBSERVATION AND COMMENTS ON
OUR MODERN GINANIC LITERATURE

TO : PRESIDENT AMIRALI P. HAJI

FROM : THE WAEZEEN DEPARTMENT

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGAKHAN
SHIA IMAMI ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION FOR CANADA
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As per your directive to submit our comprehensive report and over--
all observation on the outcome of our Ginan Books, recently published
under the titles of "Ginan-e-Sharif Bhag Pahelo' and Ginan-e-Sharif
Bhag Bijjo' by some of our sister Association, most respectfully and
humbly we submit our views on these publications.

The views which we intend to express here are not the views of any
one individual person or any one department of our Association; but
these are the views which are being expressed by our Jamats all across
Canada and reflect the intellectual conviction which is being
professed by all the members, all the branches and all the divisions
of our Association.

While referring to these publications, our memory goes back to our memorable 'International Work-Shop' which was conveyed at Karachi in the year 1977, to determine the future of our Ginanic literature. This was done, as we know, in accordance with the discussion that took place in the Historic Paris Conference, which was held under the gracious chairmanship of Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam, in the year 1975.

We also know that the said Paris Conference had taken a decision, in the light of the proposal put forward by one of our sister Associations, to make certain adjustments in the future publications of our Holy Ginans. The basic idea behind the said decision was to eliminate 'Hindu Elements' from our Holy Ginans by replacing them with some 'Islamic Elements'.

This was indeed a very serious decision, and it was expected to be carried out with utmost precaution, because this was not to be an act of 'casting off an old garment from a human body and replacing it with a new one', but it was a question of removing 'living inspirations' from the heart of our 'Wonderful Tradition'.¹

However, there was no reason to be apprehensive about this problem because this task was to be carried out by the members of that institution which is known to be "the chief successor today of former Ismaili Da'ees and mission"² and therefore our Wonderful Tradition was apparently in the most trustworthy hands. It was not even necessary to explain to them the meaning of the term 'Hindu Elements' or 'Islamic Ideology', because they had studied our Holy Ginans in terms of a living commentary on the Holy Quran,³ and they were the teachers and preachers of the Quranic concept of Islam.⁴ They were also believers in the divine continuity of the Prophethood in all nations and in all generations.

There was of course a prevailing misconception about the 'Hindu Elements in our Holy Ginans' by a few dogmatic members of our Jamat at that time, who were of the opinion that all the symbolic, technical and idiomatic expressions in our Holy Ginans, which are based on Gujrati, Hindi or Sanskrit terminology should be regarded as 'Hindu Elements'. They further opined that those personal nouns, occurring in the Ginans, that do not have their origins in Arabia or Persia should also be regarded as 'Hindu

Elements'. It was their belief that any profound or classical word in the Ginanic Language which is not comprehensible without the help of Gujrati or Sanskrit dictionaries should also be treated as a 'Hindu Element' in our Holy Ginans. However, the members of our Associations were not affected with such notions and they were quite clear in their minds as regards to the true definition of 'Hindu Elements'.

This resolution of the Paris Conference, as a matter of fact, was a challenge to the great administrators, teachers and preachers of Ismailia Associations to create an atmosphere of understanding about the meaning of 'Islamic Ideology' and 'Hindu Elements' in their proper perspective, and remove all misconceptions, once and for all, from the minds of those, who always look down upon our Ginanic Tradition with scornful eyes and describe its theological, philosophical, ideomological and symbolic aspects as 'Hindu Elements'. If this had not been the basic aim, Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam would not have allowed us to pass this resolution.

This resolution was passed with the foremost requirement that we retain all those Ginans UNCHANGED which were completely free from 'Hindu Elements' and made a provision for some adjustments in those Ginans which were DEMONSTRATIVELY affected with some 'Hindu Elements'. These Ginans, as we know, were classified as "A" and "B" categories of Ginans respectively.

As we all know, three of our prominent Associations were assigned with the responsibility of categorising and compiling all the Ginans and suggesting a model for their publication, and only 'AFTER AGREEMENT AMONGST (ALL) THE ASSOCIATIONS AS TO THE TEXTS OF GINANS and the model for printing'⁵ were they to be sent for final printing.

In order to fulfill this responsibility, our sister Associations conveyed that memorable 'Work-Shop' at Karachi, decided the destiny of our Wonderful Tradition, and published the first volume containing "A" Category Ginans and, subsequently, the second volume containing "B" Category Ginans.

It was our expectation that the first volume, being the compilation of 'A' Category Ginans, would contain Ginans in their original, unadulterated and unaltered form; the second volume, in contrast, would certainly reflect some intellectual approach towards the understanding of 'Hindu Elements' in our Holy Ginans. We hoped that these publications would be a turning point in the History of our Ginanic Literature and, therefore, we received them with unbounded enthusiasm and joyful anticipation.

Having received these two volumes in our office, we felt it our duty to study all the 'corrections' which had come into effect in these volumes so that we could give the necessary guidance and provide a satisfactory explanation about the reincarnation of our Holy Ginans. Keeping this view in our mind, we started making a thorough comparison of our new publications with our oldest and most authentic Ginanic documents. As the foundation of our comparison, the following two publications have been regarded as BINDING in their authenticity :

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1. SO GINAN BHAG 1 to 5 : the mother of all printed Ginanic literature, first ever printed in Khojki typeset form, by Mukhi Lalji Devraj, in the years of 1899 to 1905
2. GINANO NO SANGRAH of various Pirs and Syeds, published by the Ismailia Association for India in the early 50s.⁶

In addition, the following three sets of publications have also been regarded as authentic and have been frequently consulted :

3. SO GINAN-NI-CHOPDI parts 1 to 6, fourth edition, published in 1934 by the Recreation Club Institute
4. SATPANTH GNAN SAGAR published by the Khoja Sindhi Press in 1921.
5. GINAN BOOKLETS 11th to 13th editions, published by the Recreation Club Institute, in the years 1936/37.

The authenticity of the publications of the Ismailia Association for India and of the Recreation Club Institute stems from the fact that they were accorded explicit recognition by Hazrat Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah.⁷

After having compared each and every word of our modified version with the above mentioned oldest and authentic documents, we found that our modified versions differ at numerous places with the original documents. We also observed with painful surprises that a great number of Ginans, including those of the first volume, which have been classified as "A" Category, have received a 'Brush-up' treatment. Some of these changes are mild, minor or negligible in nature, but others are very serious and their impact has been devastating upon our Holy Ginanic Tradition. That treatment, which we describe as very serious in nature, can be classified in the following manner :

1. A large number of Ginans have been 'corrected' by some irrelevant and inapplicable words;
2. The form of the original language has been modified or modernized in various Ginans;

3. Newly created phrases, sentences or stanzas have been introduced into many of the Ginans, with no further addition of any meaningful substance;
4. The structure of the original stanzas has been changed absolutely by recomposing or rewriting them in a completely different manner and style;
5. Some of the original expressions have been completely omitted.

What was the reason for bringing about these variations in our Holy Ginans ?

If this question is asked by some of our Jamati members, we would answer with one sentence that we have made all these changes in order to remove 'Hindu Elements' from our Ginans. This could be, and this should be, the only logical explanation since this was the only criterion upon which the whole theory of making changes in our Holy Ginans was established at the Paris Conference. However, we regretfully want to mention here that when we made a real word to word comparison of our modified versions with the original documents, we were immensely surprised and utterly astonished

to see that our sole criterion for making changes on the basis of 'Hindu Elements' has not at all been respected during the whole process of making corrections. ALMOST NONE OF THE CORRECTIONS MADE IN OUR MODIFIED VERSION WERE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE RESOLUTION. Specifically, we note two forms of changes and they are :

- (a) Correction and amendments that replace or otherwise modify words, phrases or stanzas that, even in their original version, clearly contained no Hindu Elements and there was no suggestion of any INDIRECT HINDUISTIC ELEMENTS;
- (b) Correction and amendments that replace or otherwise modify words, phrases or stanzas that were mistakenly construed to be Hindu Elements.

In all such corrections, we could not find the slightest trace of real Hindu Elements, which was to be taken as a sole criterion for making changes, as established at the Paris Conference.

Having seen all these corrections we came to believe that something fundamentally wrong had occurred in the whole system and this had shaken the traditional identity of our Holy tradition from its very root. This could neither be the treatment which was accepted by the Paris Conference, nor could it be the form of our Wonderful Tradition which Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam has asked us to preserve "throughout our lives and lives of the spiritual children, who are yet to be born".⁸

We want to make a humble mention at this point that the views which are being expressed here are not based on the theory of 'imaginary generalization' but they are backed by self-evident facts; and we have established these facts only after having made a thorough and intensive investigation for each and every word of our newly published Ginanic editions. We would like to submit herewith a detailed account of this investigation in the form of 'Review Sheets' which we have prepared to cover most of the major changes that have taken place in the said Ginanic editions. (See Appendix 1) These sheets will enable us to make comparisons at a glance and see what was in the original documents and how it has been modified in the modern publications. Also, they will serve as a basis for

individual judgement to determine just how seriously and how critically our most wonderful and holy tradition is damaged by the series of unrestrained and unprecedented changes at those places where there were not the slightest trace of any 'Hindu Elements'.

We are quite confident that anyone who studies these Review-sheets carefully, will not deny the fact that our post 'Work-Shop' Ginanic editions are NOT CREATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS, AND THEY CONTAIN IRRELEVANT, INAPPLICABLE, UNNECESSARY AND UNWARRANTED CHANGES. The original version, in fact, contained no Hindu Elements.

In addition to all these modifications, there is as yet one more puzzling factor in our modified Ginanic versions, and this pertains to the statement made in the prefaces of both the first and second volumes. This statement indicates that Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam, at the Paris Conference, assigned certain Associations with the duty to verify all the Ginan books published so far throughout the world, along with their hand-written documents. By virtue of this assignment, all the appointed Associations

took the pain to scrutinize all available documents for several months and finally completed this assignment at the International Work-Shop, attended by the delegates of Ismailia Associations from all over the world.

This is a misinterpretation of the Paris Conference Resolution, recorded in the official minutes of the Paris Conference under item nos. 6.3.1 to 6.3.7. This statement falsely implies that whatever is printed in the present volumes is a direct result of some research work, authorized by Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam at the Paris Conference and carried out by those appointed Associations. This further implies that whatever material is printed in these volumes is simply a reproduction of those documents which are already in existence either in printed or hand-written form.

This statement evokes the following questions and they require substantial justification :

1. Do we really mean to say, by making such a statement, that whatever unusual changes have appeared in these editions are, in fact, existing somewhere in our early Ginanic documents, and we have not created anything new, out of our own imagination ?