

APPENDIX II

A SUGGESTIVE GUIDE TO THE "ISLAMIC" INTERPRETATION  
AND REFUTATION OF THE "HINDU" ELEMENTS IN OUR

HOLY GINANS

PAPER PRESENTED AT ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
FEBRUARY 1979  
NAIROBI - KENYA

## SUBMISSION MADE BY

H.H. THE AGAKHAN SHIA IMAMI ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION FOR  
CANADA AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ISMAILIA  
ASSOCIATIONS, HELD AT NAIROBI, KENYA, ON FEBRUARY 25, 1979

On the occasion of this International Conference of Ismailia Associations, we have gathered here today to review our fundamental concepts, beliefs and practical aspect of our religion and examine ways for our future development according to the need of our present day situation. This Conference, of course, is reviewing results of our experiences, which we have gained out of our historic Paris Conference that was held some four years ago, under the auspicious chairmanship of Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam.

During the time of that historic Conference, the Canadian Jamat was in the process of settling down in its new country of adoption. In view of this it was difficult for the Canadian Jamat to determine its exact destination in the practice of our faith in relation to its Canadian way of life and, therefore, we were unable to express the needs and desires of this Jamat in relation to the practice of our faith during that Conference and its participation was based on the experiences and idiologies of other Associations.

Now with the grace of Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam, the Canadian Jamat has become a well established jamat and its population has reached up to 20,000 and it is in the increase day by day. Inshallah, it may double in a matter of no time. Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam in His recent visit to Canada has described it as a firmly grounded Jamat, and directed this Jamat to follow, continue and upkeep the traditional values of our faith, as it was hundreds of years ago, without making any changes or alterations.

In the light of the present "Hidayat" of Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam to the Jamat of Canada, it has now been necessary for us to review our practice of religion and reconstruct it, if necessary, according to the wishes of Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam.

In the directions to follow the original practice and traditions of our religion, Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam has also specifically mentioned to maintain and continue the study of our Ginanic Tradition, and has said that it makes Him very happy and proud when he sees that this tradition is being kept up and continued.

Out of all our other traditions, this Ginanic tradition demands our utmost attention, as it has created a great confusion in the minds of Canadian Jamats, and it has become necessary for us now to guide our Jamats with a clear thinking, restraint and faith, in relation to understanding our Holy Ginans.

It is a general impression of our Jamats, that our most valuable and precious Ginans, Ginans of significant spiritual and moral value, Ginans with the true understanding of our religion, faith and Imamat and the Ginans most popular among the Jamat, are day by day disappearing from the circulation and recitation in our Jamats, and that the Ismailia Association should do its utmost to preserve and impart the knowledge of these Ginans in our Jamats.

On the other hand, our Historic Paris Conference has already discussed the problems of our Holy Ginans with the deepest understanding and has come to a decision in relation to following and practising this tradition of our Holy Ginans, and we have honoured to follow the guidelines given in that Conference in relation to our Holy Ginans.

In spite of having this valuable guidelines, why are we loosing our precious heritage day by day, why are our most popular and most significant and most valuable Ginans not reaching the Jamats, and have disappeared from circulation. In the ultimate analysis of the whole situation, we have been able to trace the difficulty of this problem. In the absence of a proper definition of Islamic theory, and "Islam" and "Hindu" theories in our minds some of us had started judging our Ginans according to our own ways of interpretation with regard to Islamic and Hindu theories, which are described in the Paris Conference Resolution.

This judgment, or this interpretation of the Paris Conference resolution has made our task difficult.

The Ismailia Association for Canada most respectfully believes that in implementing the resolution of the Paris Conference in the matter of our Holy Ginans, it was necessary to come to a common ground with regards to the correct definition of "Islam" and "Hinduism", we will have to create a basic formula to define clearly, to know what is a Hinduistic theory and what is an Islamic theory before selecting, rejecting or altering our Holy Ginans, we should have to use this basic formula for our definition.



Ismailia Association for Canada feels that in the recently published Category "A" Ginans by the Ismailia Association for Pakistan and India, a real definition of Islamic and Hindu theories has not been taken into consideration. If consideration had been given, hundreds of our most popular, most meaningful and most treasured Ginans could have been included in the selection of this "A" Category Ginans. If our Association had been fortunate enough to participate in the selection of such Ginans, we would have been able to convey our humble understanding as regards to the interpretation of Islamic and Hindu theories reflecting in the Paris Conference resolution.

We have now come to understand that the selection of "B" Category Ginans is now about to be released, although it is about three and half years behind schedule. In fact, we know nothing about the criteria used in the selection of this latter category, however, we are quite sure that if we had come to the proper ground about the interpretation of Paris Conference resolution, we could have saved hundreds of Ginans from unnecessary corrections or modifications.

We also feel that the publication of Category "A" Ginans was, according to the Paris Conference resolution, supposed to be the publication of Ginans in its original form. However, the preface of these publications conveys the idea that this selection is based on old manuscript and, as per Paris Conference, it is an unchanged version. In spite of this fact, this publication DOES BEAR ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS which weakens the spirit of the Paris Conference resolution.

The above treatment on our Ginans is not befitting to the way of the practice of our faith and certainly not to Canadian Jamat. It is also contradictory to the way which Mowlana Hazar Imam has directed us to follow. And, therefore, our Association strongly believes that the whole question of our most precious tradition - Holy Ginans - must be reviewed once again in the light of the wishes of the Canadian Jamat and in the light of the desires of Khudawand Hazar Imam.

We submit herewith a paper of our interpretation of Islamic, non-Islamic and Hindu elements in our Holy Ginan. We would like our Holy Ginans to be based on this interpretation. If some of our Associations

are not in a position to accept our interpretation, which is actually based on the teachings of Islam and Holy Quran, because of their existing orthodox situation, it is totally unfair to victimize our Holy traditions because of their domestic situation. We, in Canada are living in a free country, and we must be given our freedom to follow our tradition in accordance with the wishes of Khudawand Hazar Imam as this is Khudawand's explicit desire.



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In our contemporary history about the tradition of our holy Ginans, we have come across at least two perspective.

The first, consist naturally of our traditional view, that is the force of the "Noorani Hidayat" from the Imam of the time, and the second pertaining to some misinterpretation of Ideologies generated in the minds of some of the recipients of this Holy "Hidayat".

Analyzing them in turn we have :

From the Imams:

(a) From Imam Mowlana Sultan Muhammad Shah. (S.A.S.)

"Give your children the knowledge of our religion and teach them the Holy Ginans so that they may lead a better life in the future".

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From the Imams:

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"Give your children the knowledge of our religion and teach them the Holy Ginans so that they may lead a better life in the future".

October 19, 1903

"Our Firmans and the Holy Ginans possess such a vast knowledge that they have thousandfold meanings. Try to grasp the meaning of each and every line".

October 19, 1903

"Pir Sadardin has explained you such excellent Ginans which are able to create awareness in your being. The teaching of the Ginans are of such value that by listening to them carefully, it will carve deep impressions in your heart. If one of you is able to explain its correct meaning, it would insight even a blind man".

October 13, 1903

"When you followed the Ginans, you reached to the true religion. Because you have followed the teachings of the Ginans, you have remained on the true path".

February 21, 1896

(b) From Khudawand Mowlana Hazar Imam, who has even more forcefully emphasised:

"I feel that unless we are able to continue this wonderful Tradition which is a burden and a duty upon the Ismailia Association in particular, to teach the younger spiritual children their Ginans, I feel that we will lose some of our past which is most important to us and must be kept throughout our lives and lives of the Spiritual children, who are yet to be born"

Dacca - October 17, 1960

"Many times I have recommended to my spiritual children that they should remember Ginans, that they should understand the meaning of these Ginans and that they should carry these meanings in their hearts".

"It is most important that my spiritual children from wherever they may come should, through the ages and from generation to generation, hold to this tradition which is so special, so unique and so important to my jamat".

Karachi - December 16, 1964

In contrast to these Holy Firmans of the Imams - which is the solemn duty of every true Ismaili to follow without question. It is held in some quarters an opinion we might categorise as "reformatory" in that, is stated apart from just following the traditions of the Holy Ginans in its original and true form, they maintain that its composition should be changed according to their specification, because they suspect the infiltration of some "So called" Hindu elements or Hindu teachings hidden or camouflaged with our Holy Ginans, moreover, that the Holy Ginans preach Hindu philosophy and mythology or in other words, Non-Islamic elements.

They have further sought to indoctrinate the idea that this Holy tradition should now be abbreviated, altered or in some cases be completely rejected. In addition, they have innocently and without valid reason, promulgated, substituted and even discarded original words at the cost of losing and even destroying the eternal message contained therein.

This opposite view has been weaved and sustained in the notion of what they call "The Islamic Spirit" and this belief has spread so far and wide that it has become almost a modern fashion amongst our communities,



with the disastrous and catastrophic results that this Holy tradition of our Ginans has been looked down with a degrading attitude and has begun to be branded as a literary corpus of orthodox or Non-Islamic people.

Following the above remarks, it becomes necessary to remind ourselves of the True definitions of "Islam" and "Hinduism", since so far the so called "Islamic Spirit" from the opposite quarters is far from being satisfactory or acceptable to the seeker of truth even to Islam .

This will help in understanding the true nature of our Ginanic tradition and also enlighten as to the reason the Imam of the time has consistently and firmly emphasised and continually re-emphasised, the continuation of this unique, special and most important tradition through the ages and generation to generation and not only for our lives but also for those children who are yet to be born. It should be noted that this guidance is for the whole tradition in its purest and most original form and not for an adulterated, abbreviated or altered tradition.

The contention that, our Holy Ginans contain Non-Islamic or Hindu elements which derive them to change, alter, substitute or reject it, seems to be the following reasons:

- (1) The Holy Ginan contains words such as "SAMI", "HARI", "GUR", "NAR", "TRIBHOWAR", "SATGUR", "BRAHMA", "VISHNU", "MAHESWAR", "ISWAR", "PARMESHWAR", etc.
- (2) They contain stories or narratives of the so called Hindu people such as : "PAHELAJ", "HARISCHCHANDRA", "TARAMATI", "JUJISHTAN", "BHIRMA", "ARJUN", "SOHDEV", "NIKUL", etc.

Consider the word "Hindu" just like the word "Indian" is derived from the Sanskrit word Sindhu, which is the name that the Indians give to their great river. It was at a later time, and in the western world, that the word Indian became the designation for all the inhabitants of the sub-continent. And it was the Muslim Conquerors who called those Indians "Hindus" who did not belong to the Christian, Islamic or any other dogmatically definable religion. As a concept, Hinduism is not sharply delimited.

In its broadest sense, one can speak of the inhabitants of India proper as Hindus. However, many people reserve the word Hindu to designate the religion that came into being between the 9th and the 11th centuries A.D.

Hinduism in general terms is known however as the religion of adherence to or worship of numerous Gods, goddess, water, fire, animals, sun, moon and stars. Many adherents of different cult and worshipers of the images of Rama, Krishna, Durga and Ganesha can be included.

In other words, it may be said that the so called Hindu religion is, as it stands presently, consists of a belief in the plurality of gods, i.e. Polytheism; a belief that other deity may possess the perfect attributes of the Divine Beings i.e. Pantheism; a belief that anything or Deity or persons may be related to the Eternal God, sons and daughters of God; a belief that others may replicate what is solely ascribed to the Divine being, i.e. miracles of saints etc.

The distinction between the level of popular belief and that of elaborate ritual technique and philosophical speculation is very marked

and attended by many stages of transition and varieties of co-existence. Primitive magic and fetishism, animal worship and belief in demons occur beside, and often combined with, the worship of more or less personal gods, as do mysticism, asceticism.

In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any. Presently, the belief and customs of the masses are much the same as they were in the past. As a religion, Hinduism is an utterly diverse conglomerate of doctrines, cults, and ways of life.

With reference to the above facts on Hinduism, can anyone assert that our Pirs preached the same in our Holy Ginans ? There exists not a stanza in our Holy Ginans which even remotely reflects or implies the notions or philosophy of Hinduism. If so, then how could anyone dare, unless done with sheer ignorance, label our Holy Ginans as a heritage or a mixture of Hindu Notions or Teachings ? On the contrary, there exists enough evidence that our Pirs have again and again rejected the Hindu theories, practices and beliefs and invited the people to adhere and accept the "true path" of Islam - the Sirat-al-Mustakim - out of many examples, a few are cited hereunder :-



જેજી બોળા રે બોળા માનવી નમે ભૂલડા થઇ ક'યિય ભમો, પર ભેઠા શ્રેવો શ્રી નારાયણ દેવ  
જુઓ જુઓ પિડના જેવા વેદ પૂરાણ, ડિયે રૂપે હરી મારો હોના પાખાણ

જેજી બોળા રે બોળા માનવી નમે પાણાને ક'યિય પૂજો  
જે આપ ન બોલે, કેનો બોલાવિયો ના બોલે, તેને કેમ કહિયે કરસન દેવ

-પીર સદરદીન

નમે ચૂંટીશ મ ફૂલડા ને છાંટીશ મ પાણી, જેવો પાથરિયો પૂજના ક'ઈ મૂરખાઇ આણી

-પીર સદરદીન

સતગુર શમસ એમ કહેરે ગાકલો, કેમ ઉતરશો પાર

પાથર રંજે રાધિયા રે ગાકલો, પામો ન સિરજનહાર

કોગટ ફેરા નમે શું કરો રે ગાકલો, ટ્યાવો ને સતપથ પરમ

પત્થર મૂરત મૂકીને ગાકલો, સત છોડાવો કરમ

મૂકો ભવાની માતને રે ગાકલો, સેવો જલી જવનાર

-પીર શમસ

બૂલા મ ભમજો રે હિન્દુઓ, જુઓ છો શું પરમ; પત્થર પૂજે શું પામશો રે હિન્દુઓ, માથે લિયો છો કરમ  
વહી ગયા બ્રાહ્મણ ભરમા રે હિન્દુઓ, થયા હુસેની ઇમામ,  
વહી ગઇ પૂજા ગઈ તણી રે હિન્દુઓ, પૂજો જલીભ્નુ નામ  
માથા પત્થરમંડિ શું હણો રે હિન્દુઓ, જોળખો નર કાસમ જવનાર  
કહેક નગરીમંડિ જે રહે રે હિન્દુઓ, ને સાહેબ વર દાનાર

-પીર શમસ

જેજી ગંગા બનારસ મન જાવો રે ગોદાવરી, રામ ભજન જાળ કેસા હોજી,  
જલીધા રૂપ ભયો રે નારાયણ, જેસી કરણી કળ નેસા હોજી

-પીર હસન કબીરદીન



It should be understood, that no literary tradition can be divorced from considerations such as sociological and historical backgrounds, psychological and theological understanding, and philosophical and ethnological knowledge, but all in a sense serve to provide a point of departure in any quest for intelligibility of the end product - in our case the tradition of Holy Ginans. The real value lies in those aspects which illuminate the way in which the Pirs sought to explain themselves to the new adherents, the methods it used to evoke a positive response, and the content which it presented as the sum of its experience and understanding of the values it preached.

But this does not mean to say that the Pirs borrowed any elements from the belief of existing Hindus.

In view of the above, we cannot but emphatically declare that our Ginans do not in any way, concern itself with any so called Hindu Teachings or beliefs, a belief of this nature, can be nothing but an unwise and an unjust attack on our Ismaili faith and traditions.