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From Darkness towards Light

(A True story of an Ismaili Mustali Bohra
accepting Shia faith)

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In the name of the Most High

Preface

In the religion of Islam, worship only begins with the love of Allah. As mentioned in the verses of the Holy Quran:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.¹

Exceeding thanks be to the Almighty Allah Who bestowed lowly servants like us with His love and the love of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and made us take birth in a family where in addition to worldly education we also received religious instruction.

¹ Surah Aale Imran 3:31

We were fortunate to receive the honor of the company of pious scholars and preachers, most prominent among whom were Maulana Sayyid Ghulam Askari Sahab (t.s.), Maulana Shaykh Ismail Rajabi Sahab (t.s.), Allamah Zeeshan Haider Jawwadi Sahab (t.s.), Maulana Sayyid Karrar Husain Raeesul Waezeen Sahab (t.s.). We also came in contact with numerous scholars and pious believers.

By the grace of the Almighty Allah and through the mediation and guidance of the Imam of the Age, H. Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) our Jamat has been formed in Mumbai and Vadodra. If the help and assistance of Imam-e-Zamana had not been available, not only would it have been difficult but impossible for our Jamat to be formed. I still remember that whenever we mentioned about the formation of the Jamat, people used to ask what was the need to form a Jamat for such few people? And saying thus they used to create despair among us.

We can also not forget the favors of organizations like Tanzeemul Makatib Madressa (Lucknow) and Association of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) where today our children and we are receiving complete religious education.

I and brothers of my Jamat pray to Almighty Allah that O Lord! Bestow the best

position in the world and the Hereafter to all the scholars and believers who have helped us, supported us and solved our difficulties and encouraged us. May all of them have a peaceful life and may their Taufeeqaat (divine opportunities) increase. Aameen.

Fakhruddin Hebtullah

*In His name and in retymembrance of His
Wali*

His Eminence, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) is the last Prophet of the chain of prophets and messengers. The religion of Islam is the last religion and the Holy Quran is the last revealed Divine book.

The Almighty Allah has said in the Holy Quran:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي
الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers.²

Everyone has narrated the following tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) that, "After me there shall be 73 sects in the Muslim community; except for one, all would be destroyed. Only one sect would receive salvation."

² Surah Aale Imran 3:85

If we wish to obtain salvation in the Hereafter, if we wish to enjoy the bounties of Paradise, if we desire to be safe from the painful chastisement of Hell, it is necessary for us to search for that one sect which would be a cause for our salvation. And in this matter we should be very hasty, because after death all the doors of actions are closed.

The respectable Janab Fakhruddin Bhai Hebtullah is among those fortunate people who have succeeded in finding this sect. And thanks be to Allah, he has found the Shia Ithna Ashari sect after due contemplation and research. He did not blindly start following this sect. He has come here only after diligent search and efforts and I congratulate him for this great success.

He wished that just like he has come out from darkness into light and from misguidance towards guidance, other people too may get this opportunity to see the illuminated path through this book.

He has compiled this book in a brilliant and nice manner. This lowly servant has listened to the complete text of his book. It is a very informative work. It is a torch of guidance for those who seek truth and salvation. May the Almighty Allah keep him secure under the shade of the Hujjat Ibnul

Hasan al-Askari (a.t.f.s.) and protect him from all difficulties, calamities and problems. May He also give the people maximum divine opportunity (Taufeeq) to benefit as much as possible from this book. Aameen.

*Sayyid Ahmad Ali Abidi
Principal, Hauze Ilmiya,
Najafi House, 159, Nishanpada Road,
Mumbai – 400 009, India.*

Al Hamdo lillaahi Rabbil A'lameen. Was salaatu was salaamo wat tahiyato wal Ikraam a'laa sayyidina Muhammadinw wa Aalihit tayyabeenat taahireena wa la'nat ad daaim Alaa a-daaihim ajmaeen ilaa qiyaame yaumiddeen.

I had been thinking for a long time that I should write a small book explaining and documenting my conversion from Bohra Faith to the religion of Ithna Ashari Shias. Therein I should explain what made me give up the religion of my ancestors and be attracted towards the religion of Ahle Bayt (a.s.), also known as the Ja'fari faith or the Imamiyah religion. What were the underlying causes and factors of my conversion? And why the need arose for me to take such a drastic step? Some of my elderly friends had also been insisting that I should compile a short book on this topic so that it may prove informative to my former co-religionists (Bohras).

My late father was Hebtullah Ali Bhai, whom I used to address as 'Bawaji'. It was initially with him that I, dressed in a black shirt, used to attend the Majalis^r in Mumbai Kesar Baug, Dongri, Mehfil Shah-e-Khorasan and Masjid Iranian. It was my first step

³ Mourning assemblies of Mohurrum

towards the Twelver Shia faith. There was no possibility for us to attend the Majalis of Bohra community because though there are numerous mosques of Dawoodi Bohras in Mumbai, there is not a single mosque of Alawi Bohra community. The Alawi Bohra brothers used to go to Vadodra for 10 days during Mohurrum to attend the Majalis held over there. My Bawaji Sahab also used to go to Vadodra. But he went for a year or two, then discontinued and said that the speeches about Imam Husain (a.s.) were better in Mumbai, so there was no sense in traveling to Vadodra. He used to construct a Sabeel^s for 10 days in Mohurrum near his workshop. Maulana Sayyid Abbas Rizvi Sahab used to recite the Majalis in Kesar Baug. This majlis used to be held between 9 and 10 pm. After the majlis Alawi brothers used to assemble at our sabeel. Afterwards discussions were held about the majlis till 11.30 or 12.00 midnight. My Bawaji used to say quite clearly that the right and true faith is only of the Ithna Asharis. Neither anyone disliked his opinion nor anyone opposed it. They all agreed to what he used to say. I was very young at that time and I used to listen to all the proofs and arguments. This continued for some years.

⁴ Kiosk distributing free drinking water

In September 1965, Bawaji departed for his heavenly abode. After his passing away all the responsibility of the house and workshop fell on my shoulders. However, the attraction of the Shia religion remained on me. I made friends among the Shia people with whom I continued to attend the Majalis at Mehfil Shah-e-Khorasan, which was recited by Maulana Sayyid Ghulam Askari Sahab (t.s.). I was more influenced by his speeches. These speeches used to become my capital for a whole year and I used to study more and more. I was only occupied with the thought that I should study and research more about this faith so that I may reach the truth. I did not have any access to religious books. At the most I got to read *Sahifatul Alawiyah*, which contained Prayer, fasting, supplications and names of the 21 Ismaili Imams. A Dawoodi Bohra Mulla Saheb, Mulla Abdul Husain came to our residence from Borivli for teaching the Holy Quran. But no religious knowledge was gained through him also.

Whatever queries arose in my mind or whatever questions other people posed to me, all their replies were miraculously obtained through the Majalis I attended. And this was indeed a matter of great astonishment for me. I felt as if someone was guiding me and showing the correct way. I met Maulana Sayyid Ghulam Askari Sahab

with my brother-in-law Haji Raza Ali Noor Bhai and another Sayyid in 1965 at the residence of a Shia gentleman. I asked the Maulana many questions. The chief and the most important question was regarding the tradition of the Twelve Imams. It was about the authenticity of this tradition. The respected Maulana informed us that in the books of traditions of Ahle Sunnat, especially the *Sahih Bukhari*, which is considered their most important book, this tradition is narrated in 18 different ways and from various narrators. It is also present in the books of *Sahih Muslim*, *Durre Manthur* and *Yanabiul Mawaddah* etc. After this meeting I was convinced that I must follow only this faith, that is the faith of the Twelver Imamite Shiaism. First of all, I announced my decision in my family to my mother, my brothers and my sisters, that from now on we have to follow only the Ithna Ashari faith; and the most remarkable thing is that no one in the family opposed this decision. Today, by the grace of Allah, all of them are Ithna Ashari Shias. But gradually people around us and our neighbours consisting of 20-22 Dawoodi Bohra families learnt about it. Everyone in Mumbai and Vadodra also came to know about it. No one opposed us openly because first of all they were themselves uninformed about their faith. Then how they could

question us? The common people are absolutely ignorant about their religion.

Till today we have been unable to find any Islamic historical book of either the Alawi or Dawoodi or Sulaimani Bohras. It is very difficult to gain information on any authentic and reliable book, like the translation of Quran, exegesis and traditions etc. Among the Alawi Bohra, even a book on Islamic laws (Ahkam) is not available so far. There is no shop, library or center from where we could obtain or buy books about the Bohra Faith. Whom do we approach for information about the religion? When such is the condition of Mumbai, what can be expected from other towns and cities?

Religion of the Ismaili Bohras

Though Alawi, Dawoodi and Sulaimani Bohras are different communities, their fundamental religious beliefs are same. For example, all of them believe in 21 Imams. All of them follow the Misri (Egyptian) calendar. However, the Dai-e-Mutlaq (Absolute Missionary) is different to each group as are the Mazine Dawat, Mukasim Sahab, Aamil Sahab and Mulla Sahab etc. They do not visit the mosques of others and none of them allow people of other Muslim sects to pray in their mosques. It is also very difficult to attend

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Majalis there. When we ask them why they follow the Misri calendar we receive only the standard reply, it is so because it started when the Fatimid Imams and caliphs were in power in Egypt and it still continues. While we all know that more than a billion Muslims worldwide act after sighting the new moon, on various religious matters like fasting in the month of Ramadhan, celebrating Eid, and performing Hajj etc. Only 20 to 25 lacs Ismaili Bohras follow the Misri calendar. In the Holy Quran, the 189th verse of Surah Baqarah instructs us about the sighting of the new moon.

Misaaq (Covenant)

There are various sects among the Muslims. According to the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) there shall be 73 sects, of whom only one would go to heaven and all the rest would be condemned to hell. It means that only one of the 73 sects shall be worthy of Paradise and the other 72 sects would go to Hell. Now this ritual of "Misaaq" or obligatory acts are not present in any sect except these three and neither does anyone know about it. When a boy or a girl attains 15 and 9 years of age respectively, the obligatory acts of the religion of Islam become incumbent upon them, like the Prayer, fasting, Hajj etc. However, in the Ismaili faith, till the

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boy or the girl does not take covenant (misaaq), their obligatory acts or rituals are not accepted. For Prayer and fasting etc. it is necessary that they first go to their Mullaji and give oath of Misaaq to them. Even after having given Misaaq, if an Ismaili lady or gentleman desires to go for Hajj or wants to go for the Ziarat of the Imams, perform the marital ceremony, organize a Majlis or bury the dead, they must seek and obtain permission from the religious authorities. Otherwise that particular act would not be considered correct and worthy of acceptance. And all those laws of Shariat are framed by the Dai-e-Mutlaq, because the Dai's call themselves as the representatives of the Imam of the time. If we accept for argument's sake, that the system of Misaaq and Permission (Raza) etc. is valid and correct and according to the laws of the Shariah, the question arises that in such a case which of the three sects are eligible for Paradise; Dawoodi, Sulaimani or Alawi? Because according to traditions only one sect is worthy of being admitted to Paradise. Because all the three sects regard their series of propagation (Dawat) correct, perfect, true and connect it to Maula Ali (a.s.). Sometimes it is also claimed that the center of the knowledge of the Panjetan and the Infallible Imams (a.s.) is this very Dai-e-Mutlaq. If someone were to say that principally all the three sects are true and

correct, then we would ask why these three sects keep themselves aloof from each other and regard their mutual differences to be so significant? Why do they allege that the others are wrong and false?

Unlike the other sects of Islam, the Dawoodis, Sulaimanis and the Alawis do not make any effort to propagate their particular school of thought to other people. Like the Shias, Sunnis and the Wahabis in their own ways try to attract people of other faiths towards their belief through a general invitation. Such a thing is not found in the Ismaili faith. Neither do they sell their religious books to others, nor do they allow others to even read their books. If anyone requests them to give their books for reading, the only response is: What have you got to do with our books? In this manner they do not allow others to gain any information about their faith. For years, the Bohra ladies and men have been coming in large numbers to attend the Mohurrum speeches (Majalis) organized by the Twelver Shias at Mogul Masjid, Kesar Baug and Mehfil Shah-e-Khorasan.

Dai-e-Mutlaq

In all the three sects, the Dai-e-Mutlaq is the supreme religious authority. The community has to act upon their verdicts

(Fatawa) and orders, and obey them; otherwise such people are expelled from the community (Baraat). After a Dai passes away, only his eldest son succeeds him as the next Dai. In this way, it is a dynastic rule. In order to become a Dai, no particular criterion, test or capability is required. All the Bohra sects celebrate with great fervor, the birthday of their respective Dai of the time. But they never celebrate the birthday of the Imam of their time. Neither are they ever eager for his reappearance nor do they pray for it. His Eminence, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said that: "After me there shall be 12 successors, who shall be the Imams of the Ummah, my legatees and caliphs of God. All of them shall be from Quraish. The first of whom is Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), the second and the third, his two sons, Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husain (a.s.) and nine Imams from the progeny of Husain (a.s.). The twelfth of whom shall be Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) who shall have a prolonged occultation and he shall appear in the last age by the command of Allah Almighty and rule over the whole world and fill the earth with justice and equity, like it would have been filled with injustice and oppression. His name and agnomen shall be same as my name and agnomen, that is Abul Qasim. When he reappears, he shall take revenge from the murderers of Imam Husain (a.s.)."

This tradition clearly shows that till date the reappearance of this Imam has not taken place. But most of the signs preceding his reappearance have appeared. From the first Imam, Ali (a.s.) to the eleventh, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) all of them have mentioned about him in their own time and given the Shias the glad tidings of his reappearance. All this is recorded in books. The prediction about the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is given in more than 160 books of Ahle Sunnat. Of the twelve Imams of the Ithna Ashari faith, eleven Imams were martyred. The tombs of all these martyred Imams are centers of pilgrimage for Shia people. The shrine of His Eminence, Ali (a.s.) is in the Najaf Ashraf. The tomb of Imam Husain (a.s.) is in the Kerbala Moalla. The tombs of Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) are in Kazmain Sharif (Iraq) and Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) are interred in their tombs at Samarra (Iraq). The shrine of Imam Ali Ibne Musa ar-Reza (a.s.) is in Mashad (Iran). The remaining four Imams, i.e. Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Ali Ibne Husain (a.s.), Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) have their tombs in the Baqi cemetery of Medina.

Imamate and Wilayat

Here we shall discuss in brief about Imamate and Wilayat in order to show how significant this matter is with regard to the Islamic faith and how important and indispensable this principle is.

All the sects of Islam know about the event of Ghadeer Khum. The Shia people know more about it and have more faith in it than other sects of Islam. Every year on the 18th of Zilhajj they commemorate the day with utmost joy and express their heart-felt happiness. It is the greatest Eid. After this incident, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), in the final days of his worldly life advised the Muslims and made bequest to them. This tradition is called the "Hadith Thaqlayn" (the tradition of two weighty things). All the historians, traditionalists and commentators of Islam have recorded this tradition in their respective books. In this tradition, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said: "I leave behind among you two weighty things, the Quran and my Ahle Bayt (a.s.). Till the time you follow them, you will never be misguided. The two shall remain together till they finally meet me at the (heavenly) Hauz (pond) of Kauthar." This tradition clearly shows that just as the Holy Quran is an invaluable book, in the same way the Ahle

Bayt (a.s.) are also infallible and righteous servants of Allah. They are altogether 14 personalities, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), Lady Fatima Zahra (s.a.) and the 12 Holy Imams (a.s.).

There are many verses of the Holy Quran, which explain the significance of the Imam. For example, that there shall be two kinds of Imams. The first kind are those who lead people towards Hell. Surah Qasas, verse 41 says:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أُمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا
يُنصَرُونَ

And We made them Imams who call to the fire, and on the day of resurrection they shall not be assisted.⁵

This clearly shows that those who follow such types of Imams would go to Hell.

The second type of Imams are those who guide people towards Almighty Allah. The 24th verse of Surah Sajdah says:

⁵ Surah Qasas 28:41

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا
بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

And We made them Imams to guide by Our command when they were patient, and they were certain of Our communications.⁶

The 35th verse of Surah Yunus says:

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ قُلِ اللَّهُ
يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ
أَمْ مَنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ
تَحْكُمُونَ

Say: Is there any of your associates who guides to the truth? Say: Allah guides to the truth. Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you; how do you judge?⁷

⁶ Surah Sajdah 32:24

⁷ Surah Yunus 10:35

In the commentary of this verse, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) has said that those who guide on the path of truth are only Muhammad and Aale Muhammad and those who are helpless to guide are the Quraish, who are the enemies of Ahle Bayt (a.s.). His Eminence, Imam Ali (a.s.) says in *Nahjul Balagha* (Sermon no. 164) regarding truth and guidance:

“You should know that among the creatures of Allah, the most distinguished person before Allah is the just Imám who has been guided (by Allah) and he guides others. So, he stands by the recognized ways of the Prophet’s behavior and destroys unrecognized innovations. The (Prophet’s) ways are clear and they have signs...”

In another sermon he (a.s.) says:

“Certainly the Imams are the vicegerents of Allah over His creatures and they make the creatures know Allah. No one will enter Paradise except he who knows them and knows Him, and no one will enter Hell except he who denies them and denies Him.”⁸

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

⁸ Sermon no. 152

O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and be with the true ones.⁹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ
وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى
اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end.¹⁰

According to traditions and exegesis of Quran, “the truthful ones” and “those in authority” denote the Infallible Imams or the 12 Imams (a.s.).

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ
فَأُولَئِكَ يَفْرَحُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يَظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا

⁹ Surah Taubah 9:119

¹⁰ Surah Nisa 4:59

(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imam; then whoever is given his book in his right hand, these shall read their book; and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.¹¹

All the above verses of Quran tell us what is the importance and significance of the Imams in Islam.

In Islam, except for the Twelve Imams (a.s.) and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) there is no one who is both “truthful” as well as “those in authority”. In addition to these verses there are many other verses in the Quran that explain the significance of the Imams but to discuss all of them here would unnecessarily prolong the discussion. Therefore we are refraining from the same.

Recognition of Imam-e-Zamana is obligatory

A well-known tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says: “Man Maata walam ya’rif imaama zamaanehi maata meetatal jaahilya.” Meaning: One who dies without recognizing the Imam of the time, dies the death of Ignorance.” That is he dies the death

¹¹ Surah Bani Israel 17:71

of disbelief. All the sects of Islam, the Shias as well as Sunnis have recorded this tradition in their respective compendiums of traditional reports and they all believe it to be an authentic saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). So much so, even the book of Ismaili Bohra Shia, *Ahad-e-Fatimi mein Ilm-o-Adab*, by Ashik Husain (Professor, Jamia Saifiyyah, Surat) and Muhammad Shakir (Farighul Tahsil, Jamia Saifiyyah, Surat) published by D.B. Book Depot, 176 Masjid Bunder Road, Mumbai – 3, Pg. 14 and 15 in Urdu it is mentioned as follows: Every Imam is the repository of Divine sciences and legatee of the science of interpretation. In addition to being proficient in all the sciences of Shariah, they are also knowledgeable about the secrets of the cryptic letters (Huroof Muqata-aat) of the Holy Quran. Recognition of the Imam is obligatory on every believer. If a person passes away from this world without having acquired the recognition of the Imam, it would be as if he has died the death of ignorance. Without the recognition of the Imam, the salvation of a believer is impossible.”

It clearly proves that even the Ismaili Shia believe in the veracity of this tradition.

I hope most sincerely that by the right of the Fourteen Infallibles, the Almighty Allah

bestows Taufeeq to all the people to benefit from this prophetic saying. Aameen!

The Imam of this present age is His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). Regarding him, traditions have been narrated from all the Fourteen Infallibles (a.s.) and recorded in hundreds of books. One such tradition, that I would like to present to my dear readers is the one quoted by the great Sunni scholar, Allamah Shaykh Sulaiman Qandoozi Husaini Balkhi Hanafi, the Chief Qazi of Ahle Sunnat in Constantinople (Turkey). In his book, *Yanabiul Mawaddah* which was published in Urdu from Lahore, Pakistan, in the chapter on Imam Mahdi (a.s.) he quotes:

“Man Ankara khurooj al Mahdi faqad kafara bima unzila ilaa Muhammad.”

Meaning: “One who denies the advent (reappearance) of the Mahdi, has disbelieved in whatever was revealed upon Muhammad.”

This tradition is also like the tradition about the death of Ignorance.

The Holy Quran points out towards the Twelve Imams

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

And certainly Allah made a covenant with the children of Israel, and We raised up among them twelve chieftains; and Allah said: Surely I am with you; if you keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and believe in My apostles and assist them and offer to Allah a goodly gift, I will most certainly cover your evil deeds, and I will most certainly cause you to enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow, but whoever disbelieves from among you after that, he indeed shall lose the right way.¹²

¹² Surah Maidah 5:12

The exegesis of this verse is as follows: Just as there were twelve chiefs of Bani Israel, in the same way there would be twelve chiefs and Imams in my community. It is mentioned in *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said: The world shall continue to exist till there are my twelve caliphs, and they are the Twelve Imams.

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Surely the number of months with Allah is twelve months in Allah's ordinance since the day when He created the heavens and the earth, of these four being sacred; that is the right reckoning; therefore be not unjust to yourselves regarding them, and fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together; and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil).¹³

¹³ Surah Taubah 9:36

According to traditions, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said: Just as four of the twelve months are sacred, in the same way four of the twelve Imams are 'Ali'. First is Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), fourth, Imam Ali Ibne Husain (a.s.), eighth, Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) and tenth, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.).

And the interpretation of this verse is that Abu Hamzah Thumali is reported in *Tafsir Burhan* to have said that one day he was sitting in the company of Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.). When all the other people departed the Holy Imam (a.s.) said to Abu Hamzah Thumali that: "The advent of our Qaim (12th Imam) has been decreed, and there could be no change in it. If anyone doubts my statement, he is a disbeliever." Then he (Imam) said, "May my parents be sacrificed on him, his name and agnomen is same as mine. He shall be my seventh descendant. May my parents be sacrificed; he shall fill the earth with justice and equity just as it would be fraught with injustice and oppression."

Another surprising fact is that the numerical value of the formula of Islamic faith (Kalimah) is twelve:

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لا	اله	الا	الله	محمد	رسول	الله	علي	خليفة	الله
2	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	5	4
		(12)	(12)						(12)

The total number of days in the Islamic months is 354 whose numerals also add upto 12. The sum total of days in the Gregorian calendar is also 365. The numerals of 365 also add upto 14. (i.e. equal to 14 Masoomeen).

There are four fingers in a human hand having in all 12 digits and the thumb is having two digits. They add to 14. The total number of stones fixed in the Ka'ba are 1614 and the total of their digits is 12. These calculations were presented by a historian on 26th Rajab 1377 A.H. (refer to the book *Prerna na Jarnao* (Gujarati)

The Hawaris or companions of Prophet Isa Ibne Maryam (a.s.) were also 12.

The numerical values of many of the Quranic verses is 12 or 14. For example:

لا	إكراهة	في	الدين	يا	ار	حم	الراجمين
2	5	2	5	2	2	2	8
							The Beneficent, the Merciful
							There is no compulsion in religion

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هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

4 4 6

This is the Straight Path

عَلَى صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

4 4 6

Upon the Straight Path

هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي

4 2 3 3

This is by the Grace of my Lord

فِي حَنَّاتِ الْجَنَّةِ

2 4 6

In the gardens of bliss.

The ABJAD value of the word 'Allah' is also 12.

Alif – 1, Laam – 30, Laam – 30 and Haa –

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5.

$$1+30+30+5=66$$

$$6+6=12$$

And the numerical value of YA Allah is also surprising.

Ya – 10, Alif – 1, Alif – 1, Laam – 30, Laam – 30, Haa – 5

$$10+1+1+30+30+5=77$$

$$7+7=14$$

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Sabe Masaani

(Seven oft-repeated verses)

Surah Hijr 15:87 says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ

Meaning: ***“And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Quran.”***

In this verse “Masani” denotes Surah Al-Hamd because this Surah (Chapter) containing seven verses is recited twice in every obligatory prayer and this Surah was revealed twice, once in Mecca and the second time in Medina. Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) has mentioned the interpretation of this verse from Ayyashi that Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) said in exegesis of this verse that: Its apparent meaning is Surah al-Hamd and its concealed implication is us, Ahle Bayt (a.s.), that is the Fourteen Infallibles (a.s.).

Cryptic Letters: (Huroof Muqatta-aat):

These cryptic letters occur at the beginning of 29 chapters in Holy Quran. They are as follows:

1.	Surah Baqarah	Alif – Laam- Meem
2.	Surah Aale Imran	Alif – Laam- Meem
3.	Surah Araaf	Alif – Laam - Meem – Saad
4.	Surah Yunus	Alif – Laam – Raa
5.	Surah Hud	Alif – Laam – Raa
6.	Surah Yusuf	Alif – Laam – Raa
7.	Surah Ra’ad	Alif – Laam – Meem – Raa
8.	Surah Ibrahim	Alif – Laam – Raa
9.	Surah Hijr	Alif – Laam – Raa
10.	Surah Maryam	Kaaf- Haa- Yaa – Ain – Saad
11.	Surah Taha	Taa – Haa
12.	Surah Shoara	Taa- seen- meem
13.	Surah Naml	Taa- Seen
14.	Surah Qasas	Taa- Seen- Meem
15.	Surah Ankabut	Alif Laam Meem
16.	Surah Rum	Alif Laam Meem
17.	Surah	Alif Laam Meem

	Luqman	
18.	Surah Sajdah	Alif Laam Meem
19.	Surah Yasin	Yaa-Seen
20.	Surah Suad	Suad
21.	Surah Momin	Haa - Meem
22.	Surah Sajdah	Haa - Meem
23.	Surah Shura	Haa - Meem - Ain - Seen - Qaaf
24.	Surah Zukhruf	Haa - Meem
25.	Surah Dukhan	Haa - Meem
26.	Surah Jathiya	Haa - Meem
27.	Surah Ahqaf	Haa - Meem
28.	Surah Qaaf	Qaaf
29.	Surah Qalam	Noon

All these cryptic letters occur in various places twice or thrice and if all the similar letters are cancelled we shall have: Saad, Ra, Alif, T'aa, A'in, Laam, Yaa, Haa, Qaaf, Nun, Meem, Seen, Kaaf.

Regarding these fourteen letters, it is written in *Khawasatul Aayaat* that all the above letters are called as Noorani (illuminated) in Arabic. Based on the numerical value it is possible to construct many sentences from these letters. However, they are all meaningless and absurd. But the

following sentence, also constructed from these same alphabets is really astonishing:

“Siraata Aliyyin Haqqun Namasekohoo.”

Meaning that the “path of Ali is truth. We are steadfast upon it.”

It is mentioned in *Ayatul Wilayah* that His Eminence, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also said that: “Siraata Aliyyin Haqqun Namasekohoo.”

For many centuries all efforts were made to conceal the merits of His Eminence, Ali (a.s.) and no stone was left unturned in this pursuit, to prove that all these things are false. But all such endeavors were rendered ineffective. Who can destroy this miraculous glory?

There is a tradition narrated from our 10th Imam, Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said: “Laa To-a'dul Ayyaam fa To-a'dikum.” That is, “You must not be inimical to the ‘days’, otherwise they would also be inimical to you.” He further explained that ‘days’ imply that till the sky and the earth remain we also shall remain. Saturday is the day of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), Sunday is the day of Maula Ali (a.s.), Monday is the day of Imam Hasan (a.s.)

and Imam Husain (a.s.). Tuesday is the day of Imam Ali Ibne Husain (a.s.), Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). Wednesday is the day of Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.), Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) and Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.). Thursday is the day of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.). Friday is the day of the Twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). (Refer to *Mafatihul Jinan*, Pg. 54)

Another astonishing fact is that the American Physicist, Carl Sagan, has observed from his research into the structure of this earth and other planets that everything is made of 92 basic elements. While the Hadith Qudsi says that the Almighty Allah has created this world for the sake of the love of His beloved Prophet of the Last Age and the ABJAD numerical value of the name of the Prophet, i.e. Muhammad also totals 92.

Meem- 40, Haa – 8, Meem – 40, Daal – 4 = 92

In the same way the birth of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) took place in the year 255 A.H. Now the numerals of this figure also add upto 12. That is the Twelfth Imam. The date of his birth was the 15th of Shaban and Shaban is the 8th month of the Lunar calendar.

$$15+8 = 1+5+8 = 14$$

That is equal to the 14 Infallibles.

The Twenty-one (21) Imams of the Ismaili Mustali Bohras

We shall now present in brief, the circumstances of the 21 Imams of the Ismaili Bohras. The information presented below is sourced from their own book, *Aaimmatut Tahireen* (the Purified Imams). It is having concise biographies of the Panjetan Paak (Holy Five) and the other Imams. Translator: Tilmeez. Publisher: Ismailji Hasan Ali Presswala: Rajkot (Saurashtra) Gregorian Year: 1960, Hijri Year: 1379. Price: Rs. 5/- (This book was published to commemorate the 75th birth anniversary of Abu Muhammad Tahir Saifuddin (t.s.) on 27th Zilqad, Hijri 1379 date 22-5-60 printed on the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

1. Prophet Muhammad Bin Abdullah (s.a.w.s.)
2. Imam Maula Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.)
3. Maulatena Fatimatuz Zahra Binte Muhammad (a.s.).
4. M. Imam Hasan Ibne Ali (a.s.) (First Imam)
5. M. Imam Husain Ibne Ali (a.s.) (Second Imam)
6. M. Imam Ali Zainul Abideen (a.s.) (Third Imam)

7. M. Imam Muhammad Baqir bin Ali (a.s.) (Fourth Imam)
8. M. Imam Ja'far Sadiq Ibne Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) (Fifth Imam)
9. M. Imam Ismail wafi Ibne Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) (Sixth Imam)
- 10.M. Imam Muhammad bin Ismail (a.s.) (Seventh Imam)
- 11.M Imam Abdullah bin Muhammad (a.s.) (Eighth Imam) (First Imam of Satr)
- 12.M. Imam Ahmadul Mastur Ibne Abdullahil Mastur (Ninth Imam) (Second Imam of Satr)
- 13.M. Imam Husainil Mastur Ibne Ahmadul Mastur (Tenth Imam) (Third Imam of Satr)
- 14.M. Imam Abdullahil Mahdi Billah (a.s.) (Eleventh Imam) (First Imam of Zuhur)
- 15.M. Imam Qaim bi Amrillah (a.s.) (Twelfth Imam) (Second Imam of Zuhur)
- 16.M. Imam Ismail bin Mansur bin Muhammad Qaim Billah (a.s.) (Thirteenth Imam)
- 17.M. Imam Muiz li Deenillah (a.s.) (Fourteenth Imam)
- 18.M. Imam Aziz Billah bin Muiz le Deenillah (a.s.) (Fifteenth Imam)
- 19.M. Imam Husainil Hakim be Amrillah bin Aziz (a.s.) (Sixteenth Imam)
- 20.M. Imam Aliyenil Zaahir le Aejaaze Deenillah (a.s.) (Seventeenth Imam)

- 21.M. Imam Ma-aadenil Mustansir Billah (a.s.) (Eighteenth Imam)
- 22.M. Imam Mustali Ibne Mustansir Billah (a.s.) (Nineteenth Imam)
- 23.M. Imam Al Aamir Be Ahkaamillaah al Mansoor (a.s.) (Twentieth Imam)
- 24.M. Imam Abul Qasim at-Tayyabah (a.s.) (Twenty-first Imam)

Now we shall discuss in brief the circumstances and factors mentioned in the above booklet as many Bohra gentlemen inquire from us about the split of Bohras from Shias etc. From which Imam did the differences develop and what were the causes and other factors etc.

According to the same book, *Aaimmatut Tahireen*, Janab Ismail died during the lifetime of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). Both the sons of Janabe Ismail were brought up under the care of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). The Ismaili argument is that Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) had issued Nass (nomination) in favor of Janabe Ismail and the son passed away during the lifetime of his father. Since, according to the Ismaili belief, the nomination is never reversed, it passed on to the son of Ismail, Muhammad. In this way, Muhammad became the Imam (Refer: *Aaimmatut Tahireen* Pg. 212).

After the death of M. Ismail, he was sighted in the town of Basra, like the Prophet Isa (a.s.) was seen after his presumed crucifixion. When people saw Ismail, they remarked, "Ismail has died in Medina but he is seen here alive! Indeed his glory is strange! Why shouldn't it be so? He is the special servant of God." Now according to this book, Janabe Ismail passed away in Medina and his mortal remains were also buried in the Baqi graveyard of Medina. But later he was seen in Basra. Now these two statements are contradictory. While according to the historians, Ismail had really died in Medina. Now a person can only appear after his disappearance, no one can appear after his or her death! Such a thing cannot be accepted in this age. And another thing is that after Janabe Ismail, the Imamate of Janabe Muhammad bin Ismail remained concealed. That is he performed the functions of Imamate in a hidden manner. And in this way the Imamate of 8th, 9th and 10th Imams were all concealed. That is why they are called the Imams of concealment (Satr). Afterwards the 11th Imam, Adullahil Mahdi was known as the first Imam of reappearance because he had appeared openly in the public view. On Pg. 265 of this book, it is mentioned that this Mahdibillah is the same one regarding whom the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) have issued the tradition that our Mahdi shall

reappear in a time, approximately in 300 A.H. and shall spread Islamic power all over the world and he would fill the earth with justice, equity, peace and security. This Mahdibillah was kept in a prison in Sijilmasa, a village of Africa. Then his Dai, Abi Abdillah got him freed and made him reappear and established his power. After that in a few days an event occurred in which this beloved Dai was killed under suspicious circumstances and Imam Mahdi Billah performed his last rites and declared him a martyr. On page 268 of this book, it is mentioned that a new sect came into being and after reappearance the period of fear and calamities again commenced. The oppression and injustice of Dajjal (anti-Christ) also began. This Imam Mahdi Billah had never led the congregation prayer in the Holy Ka'ba and neither did he himself even pray over there. And neither did His Eminence, Isa (a.s.) descend from the fourth heaven to the earth. All this clearly shows that this Mahdi Billah is not the one about whom the traditions of the Infallibles (a.s.) speak. Dajjal was also not killed during his tenure. Rather he remained alive even during the tenure of the 12th and the 13th Imams. Mahdi Billah also was not able to exercise authority over the whole world. So much so, that even some of his Dais were against him; and some of them were even put to death. These and many other contradictory things are present in that book.

According to this book, the news of the death of some of the Imams was concealed from the people for sometime. But no reason is offered for the same. The only justification mentioned therein is that it was due to hidden wisdom that the information was withheld from the people. In the end the only thing understood from all this is that after the reappearance of Mahdi Billah the whole world did not come under his power and this has continued to our present time. The Fatimid Kingdom and Caliphate came to an end during the time of the 21st Imam, Tayyab and again he had to go into occultation.

People's Reaction to Our Conversion

Different types of reactions were observed among the people due to our conversion to the Ithna Ashari faith and due to the formation of our Jamat. Some of my close relatives one day met me in the Bohra Mohalla and began to ask me questions there itself. They asked me why I had changed my faith? I told them that I had not changed my faith. I only believe in the Twelve Imams. Then they asked me what was the need to become an Ithna Ashari? I was silent but they were becoming more and more agitated. I asked in a soft voice, "How many Imams have been in

our Bohra community?" In reply it was said that there have been eighty Imams. I said, "Please sir, come down a little! You are saying too much. So far the Ismaili Agakhanis have not reached even 50 Imams." So they said, "Okay, there must be at least forty then." I said, "No, there are only 21 Imams so far." At once they said, "Yes, yes. Right, there are 21 Imams." They became very pleased as if some old memory had refreshed. Again I said, "No, there are twenty-two." They said, "Then how from 21 it became 22? Why are you talking in a roundabout manner?" I said that according to *Sahifatul Alawiyah* there are twenty-two names. But they do not believe His Eminence, Ali (a.s.) to be the first Imam. They regard him as the Wasi (legatee). The gentleman became speechless and he realized how seriously their ignorance had been exposed. Since he was a matriculate, he understood that it was no use arguing further. I told the gentleman that I had accepted the Ithna Ashari faith only due to their ignorance and lack of knowledge. After that he never again started a religious argument with me till he was alive.

A maligning campaign began at Baroda that these Ithna Ashari Bohras have become deviated. The false accusations were spread in the mosques, in religious gatherings and in the residential areas. All this of course, were white lies and the false propaganda was

unleashed in Baroda because it was the seat of the Alawi Bohra Dawat. It was alleged that these people do not believe in the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). They don't even believe in Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). They are also enemies of Sayyidna Ali (a.s.). They have become Khojas. After this, the system of cursing started. They did not even observe the sanctity of the Imams. That is why some of our Alawi brothers proposed that we should come to Baroda and clarify all these things. Among them were also some well-wishers of ours who knew what the truth was and what was the falsehood.

For this purpose I went to Baroda accompanied with my two companions, the late Haji Raza Ali Noorbhai Vohra and Haji Shafaqat Husain Tayyabali Suterwala. And from the local Ithna Ashari Bohra Committee were Late Haji Qurban Husain Tayyabali Vasanwala, Haji Saifuddin Tayyabali and Late Ismail Bhai Tayyabali and other people were also present there. We issued a general invitation to all Alawi Bohra people and the program was held at Memon Tankara Hall, near Mandvi, Baroda. The month was Shawwal 1976. We invited the respectable people of the community in Baroda and the educated young men of the faith. The most prominent personalities who attended the program were Late Ghulam Husain Moochh, Late Akbarali Padriya, Janab Shuaib Bhai

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Vohra, Janab Akbar Bhai Lokhandwala and other well-known people. A 12-Thal dinner was organized. We explained to all of them in a very nice way that we had no animosity or hatred or any rivalry towards anyone. The fact was only that we have accepted the Ithna Ashari religion. That we have become followers of the Twelve Imams and the Fourteen Masoomeen (a.s.), and this is the principle of our religion. We had taken along with us some books from the Late Maulana Muhammad Ismail Rajabi like *Nahjul Balagha* of Imam Ali (a.s.) and important books of Sunni scholars like *Sahih Bukhari* (3 Vols.), *Sahih Muslim*, *Yanabiul Mawaddah Fil Qurba*, *Tirmidhi*, *Durre Manthur*, *Sawaiqul Mohreqa* etc. So that we may show in them the traditions about the Twelve Imams. Apart from this we did not make any controversial statement to antagonize any particular person or group. Neither did we propagate against anyone's faith and religion. We only spoke of the Islamic religion, Allah, His Messenger (s.a.w.s.) and Maula Ali (a.s.) and their traditions. Three types of people were present in the gathering. Some were opposed to us and some supported us and the third group was neutral.

In our deposition we quoted many sayings of Maula Ali (a.s.) from *Nahjul Balagha*. We also spoke about the reality of

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the Ithna Ashari faith and proofs of the veracity of the Twelve Imams (a.s.). These proofs were furnished by us both from the Shia as well as the Sunni books of traditions and exegesis. We did not exhort anyone to give up his or her religion and embrace the Ithna Ashari faith. However, if we have accepted the Shia faith after research and conviction; it was only our birthright to do so. India is a democratic country and all the citizens are entitled to follow their religion and propagate it. Then what right anyone had to unleash a slur campaign against us and utter all sorts of nonsense? If in their view, we have deviated from the right path, they may try to reform us and show us the Straight Path (Siratul Mustaqeem). The present tactics only prove that they can neither propagate their faith and nor do they want the truth to be revealed about their religion. That is why they had chosen this method in which the opponents are only abused and falsely implicated. Abusing and cursing does not benefit gentlemanly and religious people. If due to our acceptance of Shia faith, someone feels insulted or dishonored, it is not our responsibility. We received no reply to all this.

During our discussion some people also posed some questions to us. The Late Janab Akbarali Bhai Padriya told us that Janabe Ismail who was the son of Imam Ja'far Sadiq

(a.s.) did not actually die during the lifetime of his father. It was only due to the fear of the caliph that Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) had declared that Ismail has died; while in fact he was alive. This was to keep him safe from the caliph's harm. Later Ismail was seen in Baghdad. In reply to this we said, "All right, then we accept what you all say that Janabe Ismail was the Imam and only his Imamate was correct. If this is true then Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) has himself become responsible for this. And on the Day of Judgment the Ismaili Shia and the Ithna Ashari Shias both groups would ask the Imam that: O Master! Where do we go now? The historians have only written that Ismail died and the Imam (a.s.) himself buried him in the Baqi Cemetery of Medina. According to the traditions and the statements of historians, when the bier of Janab Ismail Ibne Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) was being taken to the Baqi graveyard, Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) halted the funeral procession at three different places on the way and removing the shroud from the face of Ismail told the people: See, this is my son, Ismail who is dead and this is his corpse. At that time some special Shia companions and prominent personalities asked, "O Master! What are you trying to explain by this?" The Holy Imam (a.s.) replied, "You don't know what I am aware of. Some people would make a false propaganda about this son of mine and claim that he was an

Imam.” And this is what actually happened. A group came into being after the death of Ismail who claimed that Ismail was an Imam. These people, in order to prove their claim, only presented one argument that only the eldest son of an Imam can be an Imam. They used to swear to prove their claim and tear up their own clothes and hair. Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) has mentioned a tradition in *Biharul Anwar* that someone came and told Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) he had seen his son, Ismail in an astonishing condition. Sometimes he is seen holding the curtain of the Ka’ba and weeping profusely and praying and sometimes he is seen enjoying wine in the tavern with other drinkers. What is this? Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) told him that he was right. “The one who is seen near the Ka’ba is my son, Ismail. And the one seen imbibing wine is Iblees (Satan) in the form of Ismail.” This statement also proves that Ismail was not an Imam, because according to traditions, the Satan can never come in the form of a prophet or an Imam. [Refer: *Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.)*, Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi (a.m.) Mumbai, 1365]

Another point mentioned in the book is that Ismail had invested a lot of money in the business of a Yemeni trader even though his father, Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) had told him not to do so, because that particular Yemeni

branch was notorious among the people and traders. Despite this, Ismail succumbed to greed and was ultimately cheated of his funds. When the Yemeni did not reimburse him with any profit and even usurped the principal amount, Ismail, when he traveled for the Hajj with his father, held the curtain of the Ka’ba, beseeching the Almighty to have his money returned from the Yemeni. At that time Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) told him, “Son, that is enough! You will never get your money back.” This incident also proves that neither Ismail was an Imam nor did he follow the advice of the Imam (a.s.).

Now what reply would Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) give to the Shia people in Qiyamat? Is it possible for an Imam whose title was as-Sadiq, ‘the most truthful one’, to falsify the death of his son to save his skin and in consequence cause millions of people to be deviated from truth? Can he leave all these people in the darkness of ignorance? Whom shall they accept? Ismail or Musa Kazim (a.s.)? And the title of as-Sadiq is bestowed by Almighty Allah and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). And we must also keep in mind that Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) was also from the progeny of Imam Husain (a.s.).

Immediately, Akbarali Bhai said, “I am not saying this of my own. It is mentioned in the

books and thus I have repeated it.” We told him with all respect that then he must read books with an open mind and inquiring manner and decide whether it is possible for anyone to accept such things? By way of illustration we said that there were many concocted traditions present in the Sunni books of traditions that neither the Sunni Muslims accept nor the Shias do.

Another question posed by Janab Akbarali Bhai was that though both the Ismaili Bohras and the Agakhani Khojas are Ismaili. Then from which point did they split into different sects? And what were the factors that led to this split etc? We explained to him that on the death of the 18th Imam, Maulana Mustansir Billah, the Ismaili community became divided into two groups. Mustansir had three sons; the eldest was Nizar, the second Abdullah and the youngest, Mustali. Leaving the two elder sons, the mother with the co-operation of the vizier announced that Mustali was the Imam. (Refer: *Aaimmatut Tahireen*, Pg. 346). Today there are altogether more than two crores (20 million) Nizari Ismailis in the world. While there are only 2.5 million Mustali Shias. Karim Agakhan is the 49th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis.

A young gentleman said, “Let us assume that all of Bohra people became Ithna Asharis;

then what would happen to our ancestors and predecessors?” (that is, would they go to Paradise or Hell?).

We explained to him, “Brother, the ancestors of all us are dead; yours as well as ours. And we are not having authority on Paradise and Hell. However, it must be kept in mind that there is a vast difference between the situation today and the times of those ancestors. Today, it is the age of knowledge, technology and higher sciences etc. It is the age of newspapers, radio and television etc. and the information media are widespread. Therefore, if our ancestors had sincerely believed in Allah, the Prophet and the Panjetan Paak and acted in good faith, on the Day of Judgment the Almighty Allah would certainly deal with them with mercy. For example, there is a tradition of Imam Ja’far Sadiq (a.s.) that a Shia gentleman approached him and said, “Maula, suppose there is a person who has not heard about Islam, or he is born insane or blind or dumb and deaf. Or in the case of children who die soon after birth. What would be their fate in Qiyamat? Would they go to Paradise or Hell?” The Holy Imam (a.s.) gave a nice and convincing reply as only an Imam could. Imam (a.s.) said that on the Day of Judgment the Almighty Allah would gather all such people together in one place and a blazing fire shall be before them.

All of them would be told: It is the command of your God that you all jump into this fire. Those who obey the command and jump into the fire would succeed and enter Paradise and those who remain standing in uncertainty would fail the test and they shall not be given salvation. Then another person asked the Holy Imam (a.s.) that, Master! Iblees (Satan) worshipped the Almighty for thousands of years and recited the Prayers. In spite of this when he failed to perform one prostration for His Eminence, Adam (a.s.), he became a disbeliever and was condemned to Hell and became accursed. Then what would be the end of weak creatures like us? We are never going to have such a long life and thus we can also get misguided and deviated.

Imam (a.s.) explained that it was not so. The Satan was such that since he had started the worship of Allah, from that time itself he carried a desire in his heart to ask for Divine Caliphate through this worship and piety. Thus since the beginning itself his worship was conceited. He was greedy right from the beginning. It was not a pure and sincere worship. That is why he became infuriated. Thus the verse of the Holy Quran says: "He was of the unbelievers." That is: He was already an infidel.

Another gentleman asked us that if the tradition of our 12 Imams was correct and our sect was true, then why did the other sects not accept it? There was some bitterness in the question. In reply we said: Dear brother! All the sects of Shia believe that Maula Ali was the rightful successor of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and the first Imam and Caliph without any gap. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had declared in Ghadeer Khumm in the presence of a hundred thousand people: Man kunto Maulaho fa haaza Aliyyun Maula. All the Muslim men and women continued to congratulate Maula Ali (a.s.) for this, saying, "Bakhin! Bakhin! And they gave him oath of fealty. It was the 18th of Zilhajj. But on the following 28th Safar, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) passed away from the world and though only 70 days had passed since Ghadeer, all the Muslims deserted Ali (a.s.) and gave oath of allegiance to the first caliph. There were only 9 or 10 believers and family members of Bani Hashim who did not abandon Ali (a.s.). After that, what all was done regarding Maula Ali (a.s.) and the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) is known to all Muslims. And further pay attention to this. On the plains of Kerbala, the army of Yazid consisted of 30000 men while Imam Husain (a.s.) had only 72 companions. And from the Yazidite army only Janabe Hurr crossed over to Imam Husain (a.s.) with his

son and a bondsman. Now, no one can say why only three people from the army realized the truth? Why others did not come over? Today in the whole world everyone knows that Islam is the true faith and is the religion of Allah. The Quran is also the book of Allah. In spite of this, why do all the people of the world not accept Islam and become Muslims? The infidels of Quraish used to witness the miracles of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) with their own eyes and yet they used to deny him. They used to say that all this is the sorcery of Muhammad (God forbid!). Respected Brother! All this is the matter of Taufeeq (divine opportunity). Only one given Taufeeq by Almighty Allah understands the truth. All this discussion consumed around 2-3 hours and in the meanwhile the Azaan of Maghrib was heard. In the end, a youth, who was waiting for an opportunity to vent his ire, shouted loudly: You are talking so much about religion. Why don't you perform the Prayer? Before we could afford him a reply, many people from the crowd began to chastise and denounce him that this was not the proper way of addressing others. Moreover, the Azaan was that of the Sunni Muslims, while the Prayer time of these people hasn't even arrived. Also this place is not a mosque and these people are travelers and our guests. And many people, on behalf of that young man, sought forgiveness from us but we

assured them that we have not felt bad about it and neither were we surprised as it was an ordinary thing. It was later learnt that, the young man was related to some religious leader and he had arrived there only to create mischief but his tactics had failed.

After dinner, when people began to leave the assembly, many elderly gentlemen congratulated us and said that they were deeply influenced by our statements and that our mission and religious knowledge was worthy of praise. In the end we recited some traditions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and Maula Ali (a.s.) for these people as follows:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said: One whose Hereafter is successful, his world is also successful and one whose Hereafter is destroyed, his world is also destroyed.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: This pit of your grave is either a garden of Paradise or a ditch of Hell. What you make it is upto you.

In the third tradition he (a.s.) said: Today there is action and no accounting. Tomorrow there is accounting and no action. Meaning: Perform the deeds in your life; there is no one to take your accounts here. Tomorrow in the

Qiyamat your account would be taken. There no one could act.

There is a tradition of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) in which he said: Whoever does not obtain guidance from the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.), no guidance of the world is effective on him.

The poet of the East, Allamah Iqbal has said in a couplet:

“Through actions is created life, Paradise and Hell also. This man is neither in his nature of the light (Paradise) nor of Fire (Hell).”

An elderly relative of mine asked me in a very kind manner, “Son, how many Imams do we Bohras have?” “21”, I replied. Then he asked, “And how many Imams do the Shias have?” “12”, I replied. He at once asked, “Then what is the point in leaving more and going to believe in less? Is it not better to have more?” I told him very nicely, “Uncle, you can't apply this criterion of less and more everywhere. It is okay if we pray more, fast more and do more good actions. It is a good thing. But if we leave one God and believe in many gods, it is a sin, It is called polytheism. We must recite only as many obligatory prayers as the Almighty Allah has made obligatory. If we make additions to them from

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our side it would be polytheism and disbelief. We must only accept and believe those about whom the Almighty Allah has mentioned and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has informed us. We must not go beyond that.

When a Sulaimani Bohra neighbor of mine heard about our religious beliefs he used to come over everyday and engage in discussions. But there were no relation-breaking points in his discussions. His only favorite topic was Dawat and the series of Dawat and he used to only emphasize upon the matter that whose system is correct, that's all. I told him very nicely that I had no interest in this topic. If he wanted, he can discuss only Imamat with me and nothing else. Or alternatively, I said, that I was prepared to have a debate with an educated religious scholar of his community. He made a promise and left and came back the next day and said: My small and big Hazrat have expressly prohibited me to have any discussion with you. While departing he said, “If your Twelve Imams are correct, prove it only from the Holy Quran. I told him to look up in the Holy Quran, Surah Maidah 5:12 and read its translation and commentary and also show it to his small and big Hazrat. But his greatest complain was that why we have abandoned the Misri calendar? It was a great tragedy and a serious problem for him.

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We even found some people who were of the opinion that what is the true religion (sect) is known only to Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.s.). No one can say with complete confidence that my sect is true and that of the others is false.

We said that if this is so, then the religious rituals you perform, you are not sure whether they would be accepted by Allah or not? Of what use is a true religion where you have to doubt also and perform actions as well? There is no one in the world who would keep his money in a bank or invest his funds in a company if he or she were not sure the bank or company would be safe and secure in the future. What type of a religion it is, that it is not possible to understand it and you cannot even trust it?

Although it is true that it is difficult to find the true religion or sect, yet some effort is also required. Time is needed. You also have to be patient and also spend some money on it. But along with this you must understand that it is the question of the Hereafter. Because the life of the world is for a few years, while after death, the Hereafter is going to be forever (eternal). After death there is no birth in this world again and after death, repentance and regret is of no use.

According to traditions though there would be 73 sects; of these only one shall go to Paradise. The basis of this tradition was seen during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) himself and after his passing away the event occurred which is clearly recorded in the pages of History. On the day of Qiyamat no one can prove himself ignorant and innocent before the Almighty Allah and neither can he shirk his responsibility. On the basis of the above tradition all the sects of Islam consider themselves to be the one that would go to Paradise. Today those who claim to be the followers and devotees of Maula Ali (a.s.), they are ignorant of his book, *Nahjul Balagha* which contains his sermons, letters and sayings. Then how can we claim to be the devotees of Maula Ali (a.s.)? Though reading the *Nahjul Balagha* is not an obligatory duty but it is the demand of love that the Shias of Ali (a.s.), after the Holy Quran, should hold the *Nahjul Balagha* next in importance. They should read it and take benefits from it for the world and the Hereafter and also guide their family members through it. We should remember that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said that: Ali, you and your Shias shall be successful on the Day of Judgment. And said that: You are the distributor of Paradise and Hell. That is, on the Day of Qiyamat, you would distribute Hell and Heaven between the people. Then why is

there such sloth in the Shias of Ali (a.s.)? The Ahle Sunnat Muslims accord great importance to books like *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* and they say: Ba'ad az Kalaame Baari, *Sahih Bukhari*." It means that after the word of the Lord (Quran) if there is an authentic book, it is *Sahih Bukhari*. While the greatest Sunni scholar and intellectual of this century, the Chancellor of Al-Azhar University (Cairo), the Late Maulana Dr. Taha Husayn if he has praised any book, it is only *Nahjul Balagha*. The late scholar says, "The words of Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) are only below the words of Allah and above the words of the creatures. It is the best discourse of the human world."

A few years ago a friend of mine informed me that a lady doctor had surveyed around 3000 Bohra households, that how many of them possessed the book, *Nahjul Balagha*. The results were depressing and stunning. There were only ten houses having *Nahjul Balagha*. Of these only in one household it had been read even less than half and the other nine did not get time to go through it. There were many who hadn't even heard the name of *Nahjul Balagha*. It should be remembered that all the Shias of Ali (a.s.) can read the *Nahjul Balagha* and gain from it for the world and the Hereafter and it is also a nice way of worship and expression of love. Just as the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) had

remarked on the plains of Ghadeer Khumm: Man kunto Maulaho fa haaza Aliyyun Maula. After that he immediately mentioned the supplication: "Allahumma waale man waala ho aade man aadaa ho wan sur man nasaraho wakhzul man khazalaho." Meaning that: O Allah! You love those who love him and hate those who hate him. Help those who help him and abandon those who abandon him."

Some months ago I met a Bohra gentleman according to whose knowledge in Kerbala, Janabe Aliasghar, the infant son of Imam Husain (a.s.), was killed by an arrow shot by Janabe Hurr. After that he sought the forgiveness of Imam Husain (a.s.) and later he was also martyred with the companions of Imam Husain (a.s.). When I informed him about the true fact he expressed great regret and began to ask for repentance from Allah. I don't know how many such young people are there present in our society who have no knowledge about their religion and history and no one is there to guide them to the true path. Anyway even now there is time and we all must realize that it is better late than never. We must all be concerned about our Hereafter, because the life of the world is going to end one day. While the Hereafter is there forever. Just as the Holy Quran says:

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا
قُلْ فَادْرَأُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Those who said of their brethren whilst they (themselves) held back: Had they obeyed us, they would not have been killed. Say: Then avert death from yourselves if you speak the truth.¹⁴

The Almighty Allah says that the inmates of Paradise shall reside in Paradise forever and the inmates of Hell shall remain in Hell forever.

“No man is aware of his death. You have plans for a hundred years not knowing what would happen the next moment.”

Common people have a misunderstanding that discussions regarding religion and faith etc. are beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. And all these are very difficult and complex problems. And neither is it the responsibility of the common people to investigate about the true faith. That is why they have absolutely prohibited any type of religious debates and

¹⁴ Surah Aale Imran 3:168

discussions. They are also restrained from speaking about religious matters with the people of other faiths. What is the reason for it? “If one does so he might become insane and mad.” This is what I have heard since my childhood. That is, only the elite religious scholars are qualified to understand this divine power. In this way the people have been frightened and made to understand that if we question you it is your duty to give us a reply but if you question us we are not bound to reply you. Rather you don't even have the right to question us. That is the relationship of slave and master. In this way, people became very much further from religious knowledge, understanding the principles of faith and spreading information about the theological issues. Rather all these things are made obligatory in the religion of Islam. No Muslim can perform the practical rituals without knowing about Usoole Deen (roots of religion) and Furu-e-Deen (branches of religion). Leave alone being a believer, a person who knows nothing about the Usoole Deen cannot even be called a Muslim. According to the verdicts of the Mujtahids if a woman or a man is ignorant of Usoole Deen even his Nikah is not correct. It is the saying of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) that acquisition of religious knowledge is incumbent upon all Muslim men and women. In another of his saying the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said that

even if you have to travel to China for acquiring knowledge, you must do so. Even today, China is very far from India. In those days it took months and years to travel from Medina to China. Actually this tradition means that even if you have to struggle and make efforts for obtaining knowledge you must do so.

During the time of his caliphate, His Eminence, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) used to say from the pulpit of Medina and Kufa that people may ask him whatever they like. "Ask me! Ask me! Before you are deprived of me!" It shows that Maula Ali (a.s.) used to encourage the people to ponder and contemplate and engage in discussions. In the Holy Quran, the Almighty Allah exhorts the people to reflect. That they must use their reason and intellects. 4000 students used to study under Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) and many of them were foreigners. And after the rituals of Hajj, Imam (a.s.) used to put up his tent in Mecca and invite people to pose questions and problems to him. Among them many of his students used to conduct debates by the permission of the Holy Imam (a.s.). The most prominent of such people were Hisham Ibne Hikam, Jabir Ibne Hayyan and Abu Baseer. There were around 18 such companions of the Holy Imam (a.s.) who used to propagate the religion on behalf of the Imam and they also

used to participate in debates. All this was the result of the efforts and the troubles the Imam undertook to train his disciples. The Imams, in every age, trained and educated their disciples so that they may learn about religion and Islamic faith. In this, the Imams never discriminated between his disciples. They used to dispense knowledge to all, whether they be Shia or the followers of the caliph.

It is the tradition of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) that in order to obtain the recognition of God, if you spend an hour in acquiring knowledge or discussing about religion it is better than 80 years of worship. Innumerable traditions quoted from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) and the Holy Imams (a.s.) are present in books regarding the topic of Divine recognition (Marefat) and knowledge. Those who wish to obtain religious knowledge may contact our Jamat address. And for books on Shia faith they may get in touch with:

World Islamic Network

**67/69, H. Abbas (a.s.) Street, DONGRI,
Mumbai- 400009. (India)**

Tel: (91-22) 23433540 / (91-22) 23434304

Email: winislam@hotmail.com

Or :

Al-Iman Book Centre

**16/20, H. Abbas (a.s.) Street, DONGRI,
Mumbai- 400009. (India)**

Ph: 9819010228. aliwalis@hotmail.com

People in Gujarat can contact:

**Janab Haji Ibrahim Bhai Patel,
Amirul Momineen Islamic Library,
170, A-Ahmednagar Avenue Park,
Manubar Road, Bharuch (Gujarat).**

“Now 100 Imams instead of 21”

Many new religious beliefs have come into being in the last few years. As seen in a discussion between a new member of Jamat, the young Shabbir Husain Ja'farali Gadawala and a teacher of Jamia Millia Saifiyya, Karachi, Pakistan. The debate took place at a guesthouse in Jhumpa Bazar in Surat. Janab Shabbir Husain had recently converted to the Ithna Ashari faith and he had a discussion with Janab Shaykh Mulla Mustansir Rangoonwala Sahab, who is the principal and senior teacher of the Bohra seminary in Pakistan. The debate continued for three days and arguments were put forth by both the sides. We present here in a very brief form the above-mentioned discussion.

The Bohra gentleman had come on a special mission from Karachi and this meeting took place to 'correct' the religious beliefs of Shabbir Husain. The respected father of Shabbir Husain was also present there.

By way of his defense, Shabbir Husain said that on the basis of prophetic traditions, he believed in the Twelve Imams and the Fourteen Masoomeen (a.s.) and also possessed recognition of the Twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

Janab asked, "Where is your 12th Imam?"

Shabbir Husain replied that he was behind the curtain of occultation (Ghaibat) and his age today was more than 1170 years and he would reappear in the world by the permission of Allah.

The Janab said that it was a wrong notion of Shabbir Husain and his co-religionists because it was not possible for anyone to have such a long life. He also said that no human can live for more than a hundred years. Then how could the Mahdi live for so long? Also how can the people benefit from him if he lives in occultation? What is the use of such an occultation?

Shabbir Husain said that the matter of benefit would come later. First of all it must be decided whether it is possible for anyone to have such a long life? He asked the Bohra gentleman that was it not a part of their belief that their Imam Tayyab is also in occultation since centuries?

The Janab immediately responded that who says that he is the 21st Imam? There are going to be nearly a hundred Imams!

Shabbir Husain immediately challenged him to name the hundred Imams and also state who was the Imam of the present age?

What is his name and agnomen? What are his titles etc?

The Janab replied that it was the matter of esoteric interpretation (TAWHEEL) that is only known to Allah and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.).

Shabbir Husain asked him then what was the use of such interpretation?

The Janab further explained that in addition to the Almighty Allah and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) the present Sayyidna was also cognizant of the interpretation of all this, but others do not have any right to learn about the esoteric meanings.

Shabbir Husain asked, "Then how can a believer or a Muslim have recognition of the Imam? While it is the faith and belief of all the Muslims that Prophet Khizr is alive on the earth and Prophet Jesus is alive on the fourth heaven. And the Holy Quran also testifies to this. Moreover, Prophet Idris and Prophet Ilyas are also alive. And all of them shall arrive when Imam Mahdi (a.s.) reappears. Now what do you have to say?"

The Janab said that all these things were self-made and imaginative. How can a human

being remain alive for so many years? This has not yet been proved so far. "You are being befooled and you are ignorant about all this and it is beyond your power to understand religious issues."

Shabbir Husain said that then was it a lie (God forbid) in the Holy Quran that Prophet Nuh (a.s.) spent 950 years propagating faith to his community? And according to traditions his total age was 2500 years. While Prophet Jesus (a.s.) is alive on the fourth heaven since the last 2000 years. Can the Almighty not keep his righteous successor alive through His power? While the Almighty Allah Himself says: Inallaaha Alaa Qulle Shayyin Qadeer. "Indeed Allah is powerful over everything." Come on! The Satan is also alive till date!

The Janab said that it was really a shameful matter that, "You Ithna Asharis have to resort to comparison with Satan in order to prove the long age of the Imam of the time. The fact is that the original Satan died long ago and his progeny continues today." Regarding His Eminence, Nuh (a.s.) he said that actually no deluge occurred in the lifetime of Nuh (a.s.) and about Khizr (a.s.) he said that actually he was the Imam-e-Zamana (Imam of the time).

In other words, though the gentleman had information about the whole world, everything was a matter of esoteric interpretation.

The Janab said, "Shabbir Husain, all this is a matter of esoteric interpretation which you cannot understand. What you can do is to revert to your original faith of Dawoodi community. Give the Misaaq again and repent for your conversion to Ithna Ashari faith."

Now Shabbir Husain became angry and he was infuriated by this insult, because the Janab had, in a heated moment said, "The claim of your Kazim Musa to Imamate is not correct. And I would not even call him the Imam. So you must not feel bad about it."

Shabbir Husain said, "All right, I do not want to address your Imams in the insulting way you refer to my Imams. It is not the manner of we, Ithna Ashari people, and we also maintain decorum even though we may be engaged in a debate or argument. We never behave with anyone in an insulting manner. So we must end all discussion and debate here. It is best for everyone and the most appropriate thing. Because it is upto me what religion I follow and believe in. No one can dictate to me in this regard. And the Holy Quran clearly says: Laa Ikraaha fiddeen. "There

is no compulsion in religion.” (It means that where there is compulsion, there is no religion). Refer to Surah Baqarah, the throne verse. When there is no compulsion in religion how can you or even my father and grandfather force me to follow this or that religion in this way? If after believing in the 12 Imams I have to go to Hell I prefer it to believing in 21 Imams and going to Paradise. Because your religion and your faith is that which I cannot comprehend and which you cannot even explain to me and make me understand; now what use is such religion to me? Which is beyond reason and logic? When I ask you to explain your religion to me you tell me that I have to go to your Saifiyyah Seminary in Surat. And that too for seven days so that you may explain from your books. Would you say the same thing to other Muslim sects that if you like to know about our religion and know the facts, you have to come to Surat?

You are even offering an esoteric interpretation of this verse of, “There is no compulsion in religion.” And you speak in a roundabout manner. Now what else remains for you to say? For everything and for every question you have the standard reply: “This is a matter of esoteric interpretation.” Then you please leave me as I am and I don’t feel there

is any need of further discussion and debate. For you your religion and for me, mine.”

Then Janab, changing tracks said, “No one can change his or her religion. He shall remain on the faith on which he was born and he should remain on the same religion. I am giving you the last warning that you desist from this and return to your original faith otherwise we would boycott you socially from your rights. You shall be expelled from the Jamat and shunned by all (Baraat). So you must immediately give up your stance and do not be obstinate in it.”

Shabbir Husain said, “You mean to say that if someone feels that the religion of Islam is correct, he cannot accept Islam and become a Muslim? He should remain on his old faith even though he may die in disbelief; but he cannot change his faith. Is this what you mean to say? What a nice thing you have said! If a Muslim man or woman likes the Ismaili faith, he or she cannot change the faith? What do you say about the time when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) started his mission and people from the infidels of Mecca, the Christians and the Jews accepted Islam? What do you say about them? And this Bohra Ithna Ashari Jamat that has been formed; are they all mad and insane? That they follow the Shia religion?”

The Janab said, "Yes, we are aware that a few Alawi Bohras have formed a Jamat in Vadodra." Shabbir Husain said that they are not 'few' and their Jamat is also formed in Mumbai and many Bohras have become Twelver Shias in many parts of India."

The Janab said, "Then what do you think about it? Since you have no intention of leaving the faith then we will complain about you to the higher authorities."

In the end except of speaking about esoteric interpretation, the Janab did not present any rational or textual proofs. And the discussion ended at this point.

(Writer: There is a tradition of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) that: If our ignorant one and their scholar argues and our ignorant follower is defeated in the debate, our religion is false). It means that our religion is so strong and true that even our ignorant member cannot be defeated by the scholars of other people.

After a month, the Janab called up Shabbir Husain in Mumbai and told to come for a meeting in Bohra Mohalla so that discussion may be carried forward. Shabbir Husain replied that he did not feel any need of meeting because he said, "My conscience cannot accept that I should go on accepting

what all you say while you do not accept as correct whatever I say. It is not possible for me to go on saying 'yes' to all you say. Whatever discussion we had in Surat is sufficient for me. You remain on your religion and let me remain on my faith. Was-Salaam."

We have recorded the above statement in writing because we have accepted this faith after a lot of contemplation and reflection. We have adopted the religion of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) after extensive research and study. If the situation demands we are ready for discussion and we can also participate in debates. We have solid arguments and firm proofs also. We follow the tradition of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.). He told his companions that they must propagate religion with their mouths shut. So the companions asked him, "Maula, how is it possible to propagate religion with our mouths shut?" The Imam said that their character, manners and actions should be such that when people see them, they should exclaim: May Allah send mercy on Abu Abdillah Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) that what a nice training and education he has given to his Shias. So that they become the followers of our Imamate. We do not need to criticize and denounce the religion of others and we do not even have time for all this. Our religion contains a lot and we are satisfied with it.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) has said that if there are a hundred thousand people in a town, the one known to be the best and the most righteous of them should be our Shia.

Due to the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) about 12 Imams, a tendency has started among the Muslim scholars that they try their level best to conform to this figure. Because salvation is not possible without it. Thus efforts began to compile a list of these twelve Imam-caliphs.

First of all, they mentioned the names of the first four caliphs and Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) was taken as the fourth caliph. Then to this list were added the caliphs of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas. But the problem for the scholars was that some of the caliphs of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas were such that they openly flouted all the Islamic principles and indulged in all sorts of un-Islamic deeds. They oppressed the Ahle Bayt (a.s.) and were unjust to the Bani Hashim and the Shias. They were such wayward people that similar examples are not found anywhere in history.

(Example: Muawiyah Ibne Abu Sufyan fought a battle with His Eminence, Ali (a.s.); Yazid had Imam Husain (a.s.) martyred, Marwan bin Hakam and his sons, Haroon Rashid, Mansur Dawaniqi and Mutawakkil etc.

etc. In this way this list could not be completed. In spite of this, the Fatimid Imams of Misr were 21 Imams in number and hence more than 12. The Muslim scholars were aware that if they included such names, the Muslim community would never accept it. These scholars had nothing to do with the list of Allah and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.). They were worried about the community. In this way, this movement also failed and proved to be useless.)

It is nothing but the power and might of the Almighty Allah that like the Twelve Imams, not one Imam has been found by the world till today. The conditions He has fixed for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) are such that no matter how they try, the people are incapable to fulfill those conditions. Like the descent of His Eminence, Isa (a.s.) from the fourth heaven, the rising of the Sun from the East instead of the West, the advent of the one-eyed Dajjal, the 313 companions of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), the two eclipses in the month of Ramadhan - solar and lunar eclipse. Imam Mahdi (a.s.) would reappear from the Holy Ka'ba. And there are many other signs of reappearance that are all present in various books. The Imam would rule over the whole world and except for the Almighty Allah, no one shall be worshipped. Justice and peace would be so perfect that the lion and the goat

shall drink water from the same watering place etc. Many false claimants have passed in the world but none were able to show such miracles. Many in history have claimed to be the Mahdi but they all failed in two things. One is the showing of a miracle and the other is the coming down of Prophet Jesus (a.s.). This is because if someone were to ask them if they were truly the Mahdi as prophesied by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) could they show a miracle to prove their claim? Or could they explain why the Prophet Isa (a.s.) has not descended? What reply could they offer for these objections? So they found it best to simply deny those two things. Whoever claimed to be Mahdi had only one aim in mind and that was to obtain worldly power and wealth, and nothing else.

The scholars of Ahle Sunnat too, though they accept the belief in Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), they are of the view that the Imam will be born in the Last Age and then establish his universal government. They deny that Imam Mahdi (a.s.) was born in 255 A.H. and is presently in occultation. Because if they were to accept this, they would be compelled to accept the Imamate of all the Twelve Imams; and thus it is a helpless situation for them.

The Almighty Allah addressed the believers in the following way in the Holy Quran, Surah Tahrir 66:6:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا
وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ
لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones; over it are angels stern and strong, they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded.¹⁵

The above verse tells us that man must save himself from Hellfire and must also keep his family safe from it. He should not become religious just for himself and remain content with it. One must provide religious training and education to ones family members too.

In the Shia Ithna Ashari faith, after the belief in Twelve Imams and Fourteen Masoomeen (a.s.), the most important act is to do Taqleed (Emulation of a religious jurist). How significant this Taqleed is and its

¹⁵ Surah Tahrir 66:6

obligatory nature is clear from the traditions of the Infallible Imams (a.s.).

The Almighty Allah has described the aim of human life in the following way: “Wa maa Khalaqtu jinna wal insa illaa le ya’budoon.” Translation: “and I did not create the Jinns and humans except that they worship Me.”

Divine recognition is necessary

In any circumstance for worship, it is a must to have the recognition of the deity. Therefore it is the primary duty to obtain the recognition of the Lord. That is the knowledge of the Usoole Deen.

Worship is not doing something according to ones wish and desire. It denotes doing according to the will of the Almighty Allah. This is true worship. Any deed or action, no matter how nice and good it seems in itself, if it is not according to the pleasure and permission of Allah it would not be correct worship. If someone were to recite the Zuhr and Asr prayer loudly, intentionally, this worship will not be accepted from him. It would instead constitute a sinful act. Because it is not allowed to recite the Zuhr and Asr prayer in a loud voice and to do this would be against the commands of the Almighty.

Worship: Obeying the orders of Allah. When Allah commanded all the Angels to prostrate before His Eminence, Adam (a.s.) they all prostrated but Iblees (Satan) refused to do so. He disobeyed the command of Allah and then beseeched Him: “O my Lord! Please excuse me from this one prostration. I would worship You with such zeal as none has ever done.” Allah told him that worship was only in the way He wanted and not what he (Iblees) desired.

How can we know what Allah wants and what is the Divine command? For this purpose, the Almighty Allah sent prophets and messengers to the people. And after them He sent the Holy Imams (a.s.). In this world when the Imams (a.s.) were present among the people it was easy to learn about the Divine commands. For example, one could approach them personally with a question or write to them about it. Or to have their problems easily solved through their representatives. However, in today’s time when our Imam (a.s.) is in occultation, what should one do if one encounters some new problems or wants to act on some new matter? In all such matters one should get in touch with those whom the Imam (a.s.) has appointed as his deputies. Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) told in reply to a question to his special deputy, Muhammad bin Uthman (r.a.):

“But as for the problems which will occur in the future, you should refer to the narrators of our traditions for their verdicts as they are my proofs to you, and I am the proof of Allah.”

If in the present age, we wish to worship and act according to the commands of Allah, it is necessary for us to do Taqleed of a Mujtahid and refer to him. That is why Ijtihad is necessary and obligatory. For Ijtihad it is necessary to understand the Quran and all the traditions that are in Arabic. Therefore it is necessary to understand the Arabic language. In this way, for a Mujtahid to have complete know-how of Islamic Jurisprudence, he must become proficient in the following subjects of study:

Arabic language, grammar and literature.

Ilme Rijal (Biographies of the narrators of traditions)

Ilme Hadith (The science of evaluating the traditions)

Principles of Jurisprudence (Rules of deriving the laws of the Shariah from Quran and traditions)

Jurisprudence

Science of Quranic exegesis – Tafsir (Science of the circumstances of revelation of Quranic verses and their interpretation)

Mathematics, Geography and other useful subjects.

In order to become proficient in all the above fields one has to put in a lot of time. Therefore it is not possible for everyone to do so and it is not an easy task. Consequently it becomes necessary to follow a Mujtahid who is most learned of all the present scholars, one who is righteous and pious, one who is sane and well mannered. Such a Mujtahid is called the Aalam (the most learned one) of the time. To do his Taqleed is best. The Aalam of this age of ours is Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Ali Husaini Seestani Sahab, who presently resides in Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq).

**Letters in appreciation of the first
(Gujarati) edition of this book**

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17-03-2006

Mohtaram Aziz Biradar Fakhruddin bhai

Assalaamu Alaikum

On the onset I heartily congratulate your goodself for having accepted and adopted the Shia Ithna Ashari Mazhab, the only one right Din-e-Haq among 73 paths.

My heart knew no bounds of joy to go through your wonderful book *Andhkar thi Noor Taraf* in 80 pages you have summarized 8000 pages. You tried your best and proved yourself parallel to Pyarali Tejani and Janab A.K. Tejani. Keep it up. Acquire knowledge from "Cradle to grave".

I pray, May Almighty bestow upon you courage and confidence coupled with health, wealth and happiness with "Sabit Kadam Imaan", success in every enterprise for yourself and your family and people at large of Shia Ithna Ashari community and Ahle Insaniyat.

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Yours,
Mutaje Dua
(Pyarali J. Merchant)

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Date: 25/2/2006

Dear Mr. Fakhru Bhai

After Salaam and regards we are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of a nice booklet from you, *Andhkar thi Noor Taraf* (Gujarati). Really you have done a great job!

By including the name of my teacher, the Late Maulana Ghulam Askari Sahab and also that of the Allamah Zeeshan Haider Jawwadi Sahab in the Preface of the book, you have added to its merits. May the Almighty Allah give you more encouragement and Taufeeq. Maulana Safi Sahab is coming from London to recite ten majalis from 3/3/06 at Mumbai Khoja Masjid. If it is possible, please join us for dinner on 3/3 at our Tanzeem office.

Yours,

A. K. Tejani

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the end, I take this opportunity to thank all those individuals who encouraged me and supported me in writing this small booklet that narrates the story of my conversion from Ismaili Bohra faith to the Shia Ithna Ashari faith.

Naming all the brothers and sisters would make the list long. But I sincerely and from the depth of my heart express my gratitude to all those who stood behind me in my endeavour, I pray to Allah ta'la and Imam Zamana (atfs) to solve their worldly problems and to include them in his (atfs) intercession in the Hereafter.

This booklet is just an humble effort and a Taufique bestowed by Imam Zamana (atfs) to undertake this task.

"And we have (now) come only with scanty capital, so, give us full measure and bestow charity on us. Verily God rewards the charitable ones."

(Surah Yusuf, Ayat No. 88)

Fakhruddin Hebtullah Rajpiplawala

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