

Meaning of the Ginan:

AVICAL ALLAH AVICAL KHALAQ (Pir Sadruddin)

By: Mumtaz Ali Tajddin S.Ali

THIS ginan, composed by Pir Sadruddin (1300-1416), is one of the striking masterpieces of the Satpanth literature among the Ismailis, representing a sum of literary energy. It glorifies the skill and brilliance of Almighty God. The most outstanding feature of the ginan is the mention of "seven things" (*haft-chiz*).

Structurally, it contains 13 couplets (*dohras*), decorated in the spoken languages of India with Persian and Arabic words to accelerate the beauty of the poem.

The Hindi word "*sarjannhar*" is a usual term in the Ginans for the Creator. Its 3rd couplet reads: "*Haft chiz mer'e khalaq sirji*" contains the Arabic word "*khaliq*" (Creator), while the Hindi verb "*sirji*" (originated) has been used to retain the Hindi style. This plainly indicates an ample example to elucidate the contribution of the Ismaili pirs in the early growth of the modern Urdu language, vide "**Annexe**".

The word "*sirji*" is generally meant "originated", but it renders the meaning "got the thing workable" as well. The Arabic word "*khaliq*" also has the corresponding meaning of "the creation of a new object from the existing constituents". It is therefore improper and incorrect to translate the line "*Haft chiz mer'e khalaq sirji*" as "my Creator originated seven things" in the usual literal sense. Its actual meaning in this ginan runs as "my Creator got the seven things workable or floated". The function of the existing constituents may be written in the sense of a creation, but not the creation in reality.

The 1st & 2nd couplet of the ginan consist of the divine praise and His perpetual benediction. The description of the seven things contains from 3rd to 6th couplets, viz. *arsh*, *kursi*, *mizan*, *lauh-i mehful*, *qalam*, *dozakh* and *bahesht*. The root subject is changed from 7th to the 13th couplets, where it is imparted that the world is unreal and perishable, and it is a preparation ground for a real life to come, and that it is vain to set heart on its hopes and joys.

1. **EJI AVICAL ALLAH AVICAL KHALAQ,**
AVICAL QAIM DAYAL.

"Allah is the Eternal, the Eternal Originator, and an Everlasting Merciful."

2. **EJI AVICHAL REHANNA AVICHAL REHMAT,
AVICHAL DURAST DIVAN.**

"He is an Everlasting with a perpetual compassion, and a Perfect Maintainer for ever."

3. **EJI HAFT CHIZ MER'E KHALAQ SIRJI,
SO BI AVICHAL REHANNA.**

"My Creator got the seven things floated that are to remain for ever as well."

4. **EJI EK ARSH NEY DUJA KURAS,
TRIJA TOL MIZAN.**

"The first is Heaven, the second is Throne and the third is Scale."

5. **EJI CHOTHA LOHA PANJ'MA QALAM,
CHHATHA DOZAKH JANNO.**

"The fourth is Guarded Tablet, the fifth is Pen and the sixth is Hell."

6. **EJI SATMA BAHESHT SOONO MER'E BHAI,
SO AMAR THAAN VAKHANNU.**

"O'Brothers! listen, the seventh is Paradise, which I may praise as an eternal abode."

7. **EJI CHALANT'E LAKSHAMI CHALANT'E PRANN,
CHALANT'E ROOP DHAN JOBAN.**

"The wealth and life, beauty, wealth and youth are perishable."

8. **EJI CHALANT'E YARA SARV'E SANSAR KERA,
DHARAM TO RAHESH'E NECHAL.**

"O'Brothers! the entire world is perishable, but (the true guiding) religion shall remain for ever."

9. **EJI I'NYA TAM'E DESHO AGAR JAI LESHO,
KARTAV SAATHI TERA.**

"If you will give here, you shall be recompensed hereafter, and (such) deed shall be your (true) companion."

10. **EJI JIBH SVAD KAYA RAS LIANNA,
ITNA KHAVANN TERA.**

"O'Brothers! the body derives hormonal joy through the taste of tongue, which is the only food for you."

11. **EJI ITN'E KHAVANN TAM'E JIVADA PHIRAO,
EH NAHI BHAL BHALERA.**

"O'Brothers! it is not suggestible that you get the soul wandered for such food."

12. **EJI BHAL'E RE BHAI TAM'E KAR LIYO KAMAI,
MAT'RE KHAO DUJA PHERA.**

"O'Virtuous brothers! you get the earning (of the good-deeds), and do not be trapped in another cycle."

13. **EJI BHANN'E PIR SADARDIN, SOONO GATIYU'N MOMANO,
ATHAR VED BHANN'E SO MERA.**

"Pir Sadruddin says: Listen O'believers of jamat! one who recites the final scripture is mine."

Interpretation of the *SEVEN THINGS*:

ARSH: Does it mean, as in the Ptolemaic system, the *satin heaven* or *primum mobile*? It is used seven times in Holy Koran, viz. 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4 and 57:4. Turning to the lexicons, we find that *arsh* literally means "a thing erected for shade" or "anything roofed". The court or sitting place of the monarch is also called *arsh* on account of its eminence. Raghīb writes in "*Al-Mufrīdat fi Gharībī'l Koran*" that "the *arsh* of God is one of the things which mankind knows not in reality but only by name, and it is not as the imaginations of the vulgar hold it to be ... and it is taken as indicating might

or power and authority or dominion". According to "*Bihar al-Anwar*" and "*Ma'ani al-Akhbar*", Mufazzal bin Umar reported that someone asked Imam Jafar Sadik, "what things are the *arsh* and *kursi*?" Imam replied: "From one point of view the *arsh* stands for all the creation of God, and the *kursi* is the container of it all. From another point of view the *arsh* is that knowledge and power to which the prophets and apostles and embodiments of God's proof have and had access, and *kursi* is that knowledge which no prophets or apostles or embodiments of God's proof know or can ever know." According to "*Tasawwurat*" by Nasiruddin Tusi, Hazrat Ali once said: "I am the Lord of the Great Arsh (*arsh-i-azam*) and the mystery of God."

KURSI: Literally it means "throne". Among the Arabs, there is an idiom of calling the learned men or savants, *Karasi*. The *kursi* is supposed to be a material thing by some, while no less an authority than Ibn Abbas explained the word *kursi* as meaning *ilm* or knowledge, (vide "*Tafsir al-Baidzawi*" by Qazi Baidzawi, 2nd vol., p. 255). The corresponding Aramaic word *kurseya* and the Hebrew *kisse* denote the same meaning. It is used only two times in Holy Koran, viz. 2:255 and 38:34. The *kursi* of God, according to the *Tafsir* (3rd vol., p.7) of Tabari is simply His knowledge. Sadiq, the eminent Shia theologian also states that: "*Kursi* is the knowledge of God, as Imam Jafar Sadik had told in his exegesis of the following words of Holy Koran: 'God's knowledge is far more extensive than the heaven and earth put together' (vide "*Itiqadiyah*"). According to "*Majm'aul Bayan*", Imam Jafar Sadiq is reported to have stated in another occasion that "the *kursi* means the knowledge possessed by God, which is undoubtedly much greater than the heavens and the earth." It is also written in "*Rasail Ikhwan as-Safa*" (2nd vol., p. 22) that "the *kursi* needs not to indicate a seat in the usual sense of the word. It is the absolute knowledge of God, or His kingdom."

MIZAN: It means "scale". The Arab traders generally devoted attention in testing the purity of metals and jewels to ascertain the composition of alloys, and to distinguish the false from the genuine. They called these balances as *mizan al-ma'a* i.e., "the water balance". According to Raghil, "*wazn* or *mizan* in connection with the deeds of men is meant 'the doing of justice in the reckoning of men'". He quotes the following Koranic verse: "And the measuring out (*wazn*) on that day will be just" (7:8); and "We will set up just balances (*mawazin*, pl. of *mizan*) on the day of judgement" (21:47). The *mizan* (balance) of men is clearly spoken of elsewhere as having been sent down by God: "We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the book, and the *mizan* that men may conduct themselves with equity" (57:25). Now the book is sent down by God to awaken the spiritual life in man, and thus the *mizan*, which is spoken of as having been sent down along with the book, must also relate to the spiritual life of man. Tabari writes that the *mizan* signifies *adl* or justice, which is explained by Fakhruddin Razi in "*Tafsir-i Kabir*" as meaning "the giving of due to those who deserve."

Cyrill Glasse writes in *"The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam"* (London, 1989, p. 271) that *"Mizan*, the balance scale is the Koran's symbol of harmony in creation and of cosmic equilibrium, and also eschatological justice and retribution for deeds in this life."

LAUH-I MEHFUZ: It is generally supposed to contain all the decrees of God in writing. The word *lauh* means a "tablet for writing" and *mehfuz* means "that which is guarded". The expression *lauh-i mehfuz* occurs once in the Holy Koran in connection with the guarding of the Koran that: "Nay! it is a glorious Koran in a guarded tablet" (85:21-22). The word *lauh* in its plural form *alwah* is used in connection with the books of Moses: "And We ordained for him in the tablets (*alwah*) admonition of every kind and clear explanation for all things." (7:145) Thus the *alwah* of Moses and the *lauh* of the Koran are the same. So far as the Koran is concerned, there is no mention in it of a *lauh-i mehfuz* in which the Divine decrees are written. Raghīb writes: "the nature of it has not been disclosed to us". One thing is quite clear that God's writing is not of the same nature as man's writing; for man stands in need of pen, ink and paper, while God does not. Thus the writing of God therefore does not stand in need of a tablet or ink or pen, and if *lauh-i mehfuz* is spoken of in certain Hadith, it stands only for the great and all-comprehensive knowledge of God, before which everything is as clear as a writing before man.

QALAM: It simply means "pen" standing for the Universal Intellect. God says: "He Who taught by the Pen" (96:4), implying that God taught through the mediation of the Universal Intellect through whom God taught every Perfect Man the science of secrets (*ilm al-asrar*).

DOZAKH: Means "hell" which has been described by seven different names in Holy Koran. The most frequent occurring is *jahannam*, derived from *jihinnam* means "a deep pit" and as such, it is said in Arabic: "*Bir-un jahannam-un*" (a well whose depth is very great). Other names for Hell used in the Holy Koran are as under:

Hawiya: It occurs only once in Holy Koran (101:9), means an abyss or a pit having no bottom. It is rooted from *hawa* means falling down to a depth from a highest and Raghīb writes that it refers to the low desires.

Jahim: Derived from *jahm*, signifying the burning or blazing of fire. The term *tajahhama* is another measure from the same root, meaning he burned with vehemence of desire.

- Sa'ir:** Rooted from *sa'r*, means the kindling of fire, and it is metaphorically applied to the ranging of war or outbreak of disease.
- Su'ur:** It has been used in Holy Koran (54:24) in the sense of distress.
- Saqar:** Derived from *saqara*, means the heat of the sun scorched a man.
- Laza:** It means flame, and in one form, the "*talazza*" in Arabic is metaphorically used for burning with anger.
- Hutama:** It occurs only twice in Holy Koran in the same context (104:4-5). Derived from *hatam*, means the crushing or grinding of everything to powder or the breaking of a thing, also rendering infirm or weak with age, while *hutama* means a vehement fire.

It will be seen from the above that the different terms of the Hell convey at least three different theories, viz. the falling down to a great depth, the burning and the breaking down. The reverse wheel of the theories, viz. the rising aloft, eternal peace and happiness are sharply associated with the concept of Paradise. When one follows his low and baser passions, burns in anger etc., it means that he suffers with the punishment of hell.

BAHESH'T: It generally means "paradise". The word *firdaus* for paradise occurs only twice in the Holy Koran; on one occasion in conjunction with *janna* (18:107) and on the other alone (23:11). It is the word *janna*, or its plural *jannat*, that is used 154 times in Holy Koran to indicate the abiding place of the righteous. It is derived from *jann* which signifies "the concealing of a thing so that it is not perceived by the senses." It also means *garden* in ordinary usage, because its ground is covered by trees. But the use of this name for the abode of bliss has a deeper significance, since it is plainly stated that its blessings are imperceivable by the physical senses. The seven different names of Holy Koranic paradise are given below:-

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|--------------------|---|----------------|
| Darasalam | : | Abode of peace |
| Darul Khuld | : | Peaceful place |

Darul qarar	:	House of peace
Jannat-i Eden	:	Entertaining abode
Jannat-i Na'im	:	Place of mercy
Jannat-i Mawwa	:	Resting place
Jannat-i Firdos	:	The garden

The description of paradise as a garden with flowing rivers is plainly stated to be a parable or a likeness, not an actuality, in terms of this life: "A likeness of the garden which the righteous are promised : there flow in it rivers; its fruits is perpetual and its shade." (13:35); "A parable of the garden which the righteous are promised : therein are rivers of water that does not alter...." (47:15). The famous companion of Holy Prophet, Ibn Abbas is reported to have said: "In paradise there are no foods of this life except the names." (*Sahih al-Muslim*, 1st vol., p. 172). Nasiruddin Tusi writes in "*Tasawwurat*" (p.53) that: "The information which the prophets gave on the subject of paradise and hell, describing these in such terms of material qualities, was calculated to suit the capacities of the minds of the people. All this was said in order either to evoke desire to acquire (paradise) or to frighten (with hell), and thus make ordinary people either develop an inclination towards obedience to God, or abstain (from doing wrong) owing to fear of punishment. The chosen ones know the mysteries and the truth of these stories."

Sultan Walad writes in "*Walad-namah*" (Tehran, 1937, p. 298) that: "The true nature of meanings (*ma'ani*) cannot be expressed in words; they do not resemble anything, nor are they opposed to anything. But something has to be said in keeping with the understandings of people, so that they will strive to reach those meanings. In the same way, one explains to a child the pleasure of kissing by comparing a woman's lips to sugar. But in fact, what is the relationship between lips and sugar? There is no resemblance at all. Likewise God explains the Garden in terms of hurris, castles, trees and rivers in order that it may be understood in these terms. But in fact, how should the Garden resemble such things? For they are transitory, while it is eternal."

Mohammad Ziaullah writes in his "*Islamic Conception of God*" (London, 1984, pp. 58-59) that: "While we belong to this world, we cannot understand the nature of the next. Descriptions of the hereafter, therefore, fall back upon symbols and metaphors and experiences derived from life here. The joys of paradise, for instance, will have to be described in terms of joys we know here. The Holy Quran and Hadith use just this method for the elucidation of life hereafter. There is no other way open. Unfortunately, not only common people, but even scholars - who ought to know better - have taken the scriptural description in their literal sense. God says in the Holy Quran:

"That is, the description of paradise is a metaphorical not a literalist description." (47:16)

"And no souls know what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their good works." (32:18)

"The joys of paradise are not reproductions of the joys of this world but only their images. Were it not so, the joys of paradise would not have been described as joys kept hidden from the believers. Milk, pomegranates, grapes, honey, we know and use. They are not secrets hidden from us. Used for paradise they must be understood as images or metaphors. Again the Holy Prophet himself has said about paradise: 'No eye hath seen it, no ear hath heard it, no man hath any conception of it.' ... They are appropriate metaphors and similes for what we have yet to know. It is their essence or hidden meaning we must, not their outer superficial sense. That would be wrong, utterly wrong." (pp. 58-59)

According to "*Tasawwurat*" (p. 55), "The real paradise is the "direct reason" (*aql-i mustaqim*) i.e., the one which unites with the Divine volition *amr* And the real hell is the "reversed reason" (*aql-i mankus*) i.e., the one which deviates from the Divine volition *amr*."

Hence, the Koranic and Ginanic concept of *arsh*, *kursi*, *lauh-i mehfuz*, *qalam* etc. do not stand in literal meanings. They are the absolute power, authority, knowledge and kingdom of the Supreme Being embodied in the Imam of the time. Hazrat Ali said according to "*Irshadatu'l Ariffin*" that:

"Ana nuqtatu ba'i bismillah, ana qalmun wa ana lahun mehfuz, ana arshun wa ana kursiun wa ana samawaat"

means: "I am the point of the letter *ba* of *bismillah*. I am the *Qalam*. I am the *Lauh-i Mehfuz*. I am the *Arsh* and I am the *Kursi* and I am the firmaments."

Composition of the Ginan into English poetry:

1. **God the Eternal, Everlasting, He the Originator
Clement Imperishable Master He is.**

2. **Himself Everlasting, His mercy perpetual,
And a Flawless Liege as He's the Eternal.**
 3. **Originator got seven salutes sprouted,
Will perpetuate this relation for ever.**
 4. **Terrestrial first, second is Throne
The Scale is the third on.**
 5. **Preserved Tablet follows fourth
Fifth Pen, sixth Hell brought forth.**
 6. **O'Brethren! lo, seventh is Elysium
An eternal abode I revive.**
 7. **The decayings are material and dwelt,
beauty, adolescence and wealth as well.**
 8. **Material world wholly perishable
But only religion shall live eternal.**
 9. **Give here if, be paid later
For deeds the only equip is fair.**
 10. **O'Brethren! by tongue the body entertains
The sustenance for you remains.**
 11. **O'Brethren! soul's straying not good at all
As just only for such you call.**
 12. **O'Virtuous brethren! yield deeds
Hence remove another breed.**
 13. **Sadruddin, the Pir says: lo, o'faithful comrades!
Those are mine, real guidance those who coat.**
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ANNEXE:

Origin of Urdu language:

Urdu, by origin is a dialect of the western Hindi spoken for centuries in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Meerut. Hindi and Urdu are of the same root, but each has taken a different route of development. Urdu has sought its inspiration from Persian, while Hindi has reverted to its original fount i.e., Sanskrit. The Hindi spoken by the Indian Muslims was known earlier as *Indostan*, wherein contained rich incorporation of the Persian words in place of the Sanskrit. Hence, the Persian language exercised incalculable influence on the destiny of Urdu.

Urdu is a word of Turkish origin, found in the earliest literature in different forms, such as *Ourda*, *Ourdah*, *Ourdou* and *Urdu*; means "camp", "alighting place", "army post", "an army" or a "part thereof". The Muslim army stationed in Dehli from 1193 onwards, was known as the "*Urdu-i Mualla*" (the exalted army). The first sultan of Dehli, Qutub-ud-din Aibak captured Dehli in 1193, and from that time, the Persian speaking soldiers were quartered in the city, and they began to speak Hindi. They found it difficult to pronounce and understand the Sanskrit words prevalent in Hindi, and therefore, they began to use the Persian words instead of the Sanskrit in their Hindi speech, relating to dress, food, religion etc. Gradually, it became a fashion among them to speak a modified form of the Hindi, which was honeycombed with loan words, expressions, phrases and sayings. In other words, a child forsook its parents and took its abode with its adopted parents under different mode. The Muslims delighted to use Persian words which were thought to be sonorous, refined and pleasing to the ear. Thus was Urdu cut off from its native land in infancy and fed from a foreign source. In Dehli this form of Hindi speech was known "*Zaban-i Urdu-i Muala*" (the language of the exalted army) or simply "*Zaban-i Urdu*" (the language of the army). As the soldiers and the people intermixed and intermarried, the language spread over the city.

The earliest writers in India, Terry and Fryer, called Urdu as then prevalent *Indostan*. It was Doctor Gilchrist who is first said to have coined the word "*Hindustani*" in 1787 for the language. The earliest reference to the word could be traced as far back as 1616 when Yule first mentions it. *Rekhtah*, *Hindi*, *Hindwi*, *Gujri* - all these names were given to Urdu at the various stages of its progress. It was called according to Hobson Jobson "*the language of the Moors*".

Sheikh Ainuddin (1306-1393), Khaja Banda Navaz (1321-1422) and Shah Miran'ji Shamsul Ushshaq (d. 1496) are the earliest notable practitioners of Urdu literature, who have written the Hindi prose and poetry by incorporating the Persian and Arabic words, and their works are considered the mile-stone in the early development of Urdu literature.

The Ismaili Pirs were propagating during the above period in India, and they were the Persians by birth. They also composed many poems in Hindi, known as ginans. It is observed that they also used the Persian and Arabic words in their Hindi ginans during the time when Urdu yet was getting its earliest form. Their reason to incorporate the Persian and Arabic words was not the same as the Persian Muslim soldiers of Dehli, but to create close relation between the Persian and Indian Ismailis. Hence, the contribution of the ginans in the early development of Urdu historically cannot be ruled out. Since the Ismaili Pirs worked mostly in the villages, and far from Dehli and Meerut, and also their ginans were not for the general public like other Indian poets, their contribution in the Urdu literature could not be considered.

The ginan of Pir Sadruddin (1300-1416) for illustration has been studied in this paper, is an example of a Hindi poetry being enriched with the Persian and Arabic words. For example, *haft chiz* (seven things), *divan* (maintainer), *dozakh* (hell), *bahesht* (paradise) are the notable Persian words. Among the Arabic, the significant words are *Allah* (God), *Khaliq* (Creator), *Qaim* (Perpetual), *Rehmat* (mercy), *arsh* (heaven), *kursi* (throne), *mizan* (scale), *lauh* (tablet) and *qalam* (pen).

*B/15 Noor Apartments,
Webb Street, Garden East,
Karachi (Pakistan)*

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