

## **Niyat (Niyah)**

### **Meaning and significance - Ismaili Muslim interpretation**

Ismaili Muslims are celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Aga Khan their Imam,<sup>1</sup>. The Imam will visit many countries & meet his followers<sup>3</sup> for religious ceremonies, and giving his guidance, collectively called Farmans<sup>2</sup>. His followers<sup>3</sup> go to see their Imam for homage, guidance and blessings. These visits are called Deedars<sup>4</sup>.

Niyat or Niyah, is the most significant part of preparing, when going to, see and pray in the physical presence of their Imam. Niyat is the real intention behind all religious and worldly deeds (or actions). Your real intention manifests from deep within your heart & soul<sup>8</sup> which is eternal. In Islam there is no separation of worldly and the religious actions in your life. They are both equal and inextricable parts of Islam.

Allah, (God), judges you by your intention (Niyat), and not by your acts or outcome. Niyat is a pre-requisite to your actions. Your intention is pre-eminent to actions, including acts of prayer. Ismaili Muslims also believe in final message of Allah (God), through Prophet Mohammed, who appointed the first Shia Ismaili Imam Hazrat Ali (as), with divine authority<sup>8 to</sup> continue the teaching and interpretations of the Quran. This teaching and interpretations are given by Imams in the form of Guidance (collectively called Farman's<sup>2</sup>)

During the Diamond Jubilee the Imam, has and will give more Guidances (Farmans) to his followers. The followers<sup>3</sup> give their allegiance to the Imam. This is called Bayah<sup>16</sup>. In return they are accepted as believers<sup>3</sup> by the Imam, whose guidance enables them to receive the blessings of enlightenment through the Noor<sup>4</sup> of Imam. Thus, guiding them, and informing their choices towards the right path in this world and after leaving this world (Sirat ul Mustaqeem – Path to the truth).

“You perform bay’ah,<sup>16</sup> but you must first understand it’s meaning and then offer bay’ah. When you offer me bay’ah it means that you extend your hand to me with a promise...He who obeys me and promises to follow me after offering me bay’ah I also give him my promise that I shall hold his hand in the Hereafter. The trials and tribulations of the Day of Judgment are very frightening and painful. I will keep him away from this” – Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III,<sup>16</sup>

The ultimate aim for an Ismaili Muslim is to receive the blessings of divine enlightenment, which are received in stages, and manifest in and through your soul which is eternal. To know yourself is to know your soul. Allah says in the Quran, knowing yourself is knowing God.

The soul is prone to evil, temptations and greed without divine mercy and blessings Allah says “Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human soul) is certainly prone to evil unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely certainly my Lord is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful (Surah 12 Yusuf, Verse 53)

A part of the daily prayers and worship of Ismaili Muslims is the following; “Those who swear allegiance<sup>16</sup> unto thee (Muhammad), swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So, whosoever break his oath, break it only to his soul's hurt; while whosoever keep his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestow immense reward. (Quran 48:10 Pickthall).

Allah also says In the Quran to Obey Him, and, obey the Prophet. Allah confirms that if you give your allegiance, your soul will be rewarded with blessings and if you do not keep your oath, then your soul will not receive the blessings of divine enlightenment from and through the noor of Allah and Imam (Deedar<sup>3</sup> and Noor<sup>4</sup>).

Daily prayers include the following prayer which is the first seven verses of the Quran “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Owner of the Day of Judgment, thee (alone) we worship; Thee alone we ask for help, show us the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger, nor of those who go astray (Quran 1:1-7)

During the Golden Jubilee and now Diamond Jubilee, Ismaili Muslims were invited by their Imam to give a Niyat of their time and knowledge called TKN<sup>5</sup>. These Niyats were all accepted by the Imam. Therefore, the benefit of the Niyat has been given by the Imam by those who gave the Niyat. Most of the Niyats used by the community Leaders, including mine were not called upon or used by Leaders of the community. Those who did not use this Niyat as directed by Imam, are responsible and will be judged by their Niyat in not using or not allowing this to be used. The question for them is whether they made and are now making every effort truly to use this Niyats.

Guidance of the right path is given by Allah in the Quran as interpreted by Imams in Farmans<sup>2</sup>. Allah says that prayers are through those with divine authority<sup>8</sup> Having, reading and understanding Farmans are necessary in order to first understand Niyat, and secondly whether it is for the sake, love and pleasure of Allah. Without Farmans it is not possible to understand. If you seek to get and understand Farmans, then you have done what Imams and Allah has asked you to do for your Niyat. Then it is up to you do that, if you truly want to receive the rewards and blessings of enlightenment.

You have freewill and are responsible for your Niyat. Allah, Prophet and Imams give you guidance. They do not guide force or decide your choices and decisions. You have freewill. They know what you intend and will do. What you choose and decide is up to you. The question is whether you choose their guidance toward the right path, which continues after you leave this world physically.

“The guiding of them is not thy duty (O Muhammad), but Allah guideth whom He will. And whatsoever good thing ye spend, it is for yourselves, when ye spend not save in search of Allah's countenance; and whatsoever good thing ye spend, it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged” Quran 2.272

Un-intentional errors in your Niyat and acts, are excused and not judged against you as sins. A bad intention & action resulting from a good intention is not a sin. A good intention and action resulting from a bad intention is a sin. Allah says,

“Name your adopted sons after their fathers; that is more just in the sight of Allah, and if you don't know who their fathers are, then call them as your brothers in faith and your friends. There is no blame on you for an unintentional mistake, but you will be held responsible for what you do with the intention of your hearts (Niyat); Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Surat Al- Ahzab, 33:5).

“And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good (Quran 29:69)

Intentions with a sincere commitment are indispensable prerequisites for the acceptance of your deeds and for receiving blessings for reward of enlightenment. The Imam says;

“And I want to leave this message with you today on the occasion of My Silver Jubilee, because I want this occasion to be one in which each and every one of you renew your understanding, and your commitment (Bayah and Niyat), to our Tariqah of Islam and that you should find confidence and happiness in Islam and in our Tariqah of Islam” (Hazar Imam 6 January 1983)

“One sees Him in the colour one wishes to: If your intentions Niyats, are sincere you become totally immersed in him. - Ginan Buj nirinjan <sup>16</sup>

The purity of your intention begins with your allegiance<sup>16</sup> to obey the teaching and interpretations by your Imams. This requires an understanding of guidance (Farmans) given by Imams.

Ismaili Muslim Daily worship<sup>7</sup> include specific prayers for this understanding and for purifying your Niyat, as well as guidance and forgiveness of errors mistakes & sins <sup>7</sup>.

Your worship begins with your Niyat. Niyat is a pre-condition to prayers and to receiving blessings of divine enlightenment. The purity and sincerity of your Niyat depends on whether it is for the sake of, in the way of, and for the pleasure and love for Allah. Understanding whether your Niyat is good, and how to purify your Niyat are your primary, and essential.

There are 3 primary questions which distinguishes your Intention (Niyat).

- Firstly, whether the Niyat is for Allah only.
- Secondly whether the Niyat is for others “than” Allah. Not for Allah
- Thirdly whether the Niyat is for Allah “and” others

You are not judged by the results or outcomes of your deeds. Every action is preceded by the formation and then manifestation of your Intentions (Niyat) from within you. Only you know this. Others may come to know your Niyat when you tell them, or in some cases when this is obvious from your actions.

Allah Says “It is not flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah, but the devotion (love), from you that reaches Him.” (Quran 22:37).

What we truly intend is not always the same and the reasons we may give to others may be different. For example, the intention or reason of a person in a car who stops at a red traffic light with the intention of maintaining order and respect for the law. That is different from a person who does the same but the reason is fear of being caught by a traffic officer or a fine for violating the law.

The following words are also used in the Quran and by Imams to mean, or in the context of Niyat.

- 1 “desire” meaning your intention (Niyat). behind a desire or
- 2 “reason”, meaning the real intention behind what you say or do or
- 3 “seeking” meaning the intention with which you are seeking or even thanking Allah (God). For example, out of fear or for reward or for love
- 4 Love and devotion – meaning what we are thinking and doing is out of love and pleasure of and for Allah

Allah warns us that there are some amongst you who will not desire and do what Allah has asked. “There are some who desire this world and some who desire Allah and the hereafter.” <sup>7</sup>

Niyat must be based on the Tawil (interpretation) and the Talim (Teaching), of the Quran by the Prophet and Imams <sup>1</sup> We must not pursue that of which we have no understanding. Therefore, seeking to learn and understand is required in order to understand and purify Niyat.

Allah says “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart (Niyat) - about all those [one] will be questioned”. Quran Surat Al-Isra', 17:36.

Understanding and having pure intentions is not simple or easy to achieve. There are strong forces within you which influence your Niyat (real intentions). These include, ignorance, temptations, ego, greed, anger, arrogance, & jealousy etc. There are five challenges or hurdles and four virtues towards spiritual enlightenment and progress. “there are five vices i.e. lust, anger, greed, attraction for the world and pride “ and there are four virtues (truth, patience, tolerance and prayers). And get rid of the five evils (Ginan<sup>16</sup>)

All these forces together form our basic natural desires. And, Ignorance can be the strongest force for decisions and choices which are not for the love of Allah. Ignorance leads you away and astray from the right path and from your Imam. Today Imam warns and says there is a clash of ignorance today which is the root cause of conflicts and misperceptions. One of His Diamond Jubilee goals is for us to demystify, articulate and help to reverse and reduce misperceptions of Islam.

Purity of Niyat progresses from understanding and practicing your faith, and its ethical values of generosity, humility, selfless service, and love for Imam and Allah. This creates peaceful, harmonious, happy and enabling conditions and understanding in the human heart and soul. Those who interact with people of good Niyat helps them with their Niyat and purification.

However, if Niyat is infected & mixed with for example excessive greed, egos and anger or impatience. Then these usually result in arrogance, uncertainty, unnecessary suspicion, more greed, love for oneself. These lead to a deterioration of the quality and purity of your Niyat. Ego can be the biggest challenge of improving the goodness and purification of your intention. Ego clouds the good in you, and sees the bad or evil as Good. (ginan<sup>16</sup>). Sincere, & humble prayers for forgiveness and mercy can help with ethical courage to improve the purity of your intention (Niyat) in the way and for the sale of Allah. Imam says today we live in a post fact society today, and people not only make up facts <sup>8</sup> but many people feel they are entitled to their own made up facts. This is what we are see and read every day in the media and in our daily lives.

An example of a good Niyat. A poor man came to Prophet Mohammed and brought some grapes as a Gift (Mehmani). There were many present. Prophet thanked him and ate one. He continued and ate them all. The poor man was extremely happy and left. Those present looked surprised because the Prophet would normally do that to those present. Prophet explained when I ate the first one the grapes were very sour in taste. If I had shared then this would be clear from your faces & comments. That would have made this poor man very unhappy. So, I ate them all and the poor man left very happy. My real intention (Niyat) was to make him happy and smile.

Intention (Niyat), also gives value to your deed. For example, out of oppression and aggression, someone killed another and it became known later that the victim had been a criminal who should have been executed. Therefore, what the killer did was good. The Niyat in this case, was oppression and aggression. That was a sin. There is no value or benefit. The outcome or usefulness of a deed is not enough for it to be regarded as a righteous act and or good Niyat.

Good Niyat brings you closer to Allah as it becomes in the way of, for the sake of, and for the pleasure and love of Allah. Worshipping or obeying Allah out of fear or reward is not an act with a pure intention (Niyat). On the other hand, worshipping or thanking Allah because Allah is worthy, is a Niyat for the sake of Allah

Allah says

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors (Surah al-Baqarah 2:190). Fight is not meant literally but a struggle within you.

Niyat for the sake of Allah” [Saying], "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude. (Surah al-Insan or, ad-Dahr 76:9)

Niyat for seeking the pleasure of Allah and of the people is he who sells himself, seeking means to the approval of Allah. And Allah is kind to [His] servants (Surah al-Baqarah 2:207)

Worship out of gratitude or an act for the love of Allah “there is a group that worships Allah for gain; that is the worship of the trader. There is a group that worships Allah out of fear; that is the worship of the slave. And there is a group that worships Allah out of gratitude; that is the worship of the free. (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 41, p. 14).

In worldly love, a person loves his object because of, or for himself. That love is for yourself. However, in spiritual love the person dedicates himself and his love not for his pleasure but the love of Imam and Allah. That love is sublime or supreme.

His Highness the Aga Khan III, the 48<sup>th</sup> Imam, explained this. “I firmly believe that the higher experience can to a certain extent be prepared for by absolute devotion in the material world to another human being. Thus, from the most worldly point of view and with no comprehension of the higher life of the spirit, the lower, more terrestrial spirit makes us aware that all the treasures of this life, all that fame, wealth and health can bring are nothing beside the happiness which is created and sustained by the love of one human being for another. This great grace we can see in ordinary life as we look about us, among our acquaintances and friends. But as the joys of human love surpass all that riches and power may bring a man, so does that greater spiritual love and enlightenment, the fruit of that sublime experience of the direct vision of reality which is God's gift and grace, surpass all that the finest, truest human love can offer. For that gift we must ever pray. Now I am convinced that through Islam, through the ideal of Allah, as presented by Muslims, man can attain this direct experience which no words can explain but which for him are absolute certainties. (Memoirs Aga Khan III <sup>4</sup>)

When performing an act, do you have divine intention or other motive. For example, those who are performing beneficial generous acts on behalf of the people by constructing schools, hospitals, roads, and dormitories. The question is whether they have divine intention or they have other material motives. If their intention has other motives, then they have committed an injustice to themselves and to their Niyat. Even though others will get much benefit from them, they will not get any value from Allah.

Allah says “Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted” (Surah at-Tin 95:6)

Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (Surah an-Nahl 16:97)

Goodness of an act alone is not enough for goodness of intention (Niyat). Goodness of the Niyat of the follower or murid, comes first. For example. A person was slain in a battlefield. When considering if he is a martyr. Prophet Mohammed said in one such instance: “He was killed in the way of a donkey {qatil al-himar} because his true intention (Niyat), in going to the battlefield was not Allah. When he saw the enemy was riding a good donkey, he said to himself, I will kill him, and take his donkey as war booty {ghanimah}.’ (Muhajjah al-Bayda’, vol. 8, p. 104.). His Niyat was to get the donkey and so of no value or benefit to him.

Allah knows your Niyat. Allah knows everything you think, intend and do. Allah says He is closer to you than your jugular vein. He created you in his Image and knowing yourself is Knowing God. Knowing yourself means knowing your soul with your Niyat being pure and sincere for the love of the noor<sup>4</sup> of Imam & Allah

Hazar Imam says you must make a commitment to your intentions (Niyat) and that must be sincere. You must try to get close to Imams Noor<sup>4</sup>. Imams have said and leave this world physically. However, their Noor is eternal, it is one and the same, and it is and will always be present in this world to guide mankind.

“We, the Imams are the roots and branches of the same tree. the line of Imamate shall continue forever.” Fatimid Caliph and Imam Maadd al Muizz (Qadi Numan, al Majalis wal musayrat)

“Seest thou not how Allah coineth a similitude (parable): A goodly (Divine), saying, as a goodly (Divine), tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven” (Quran 14.24)

The goodness of your Niyat is regardless of whether you benefit from the outcome, or whether people would know about it, or whether people will support your deed or not. The success of your Niyat is in the purity and the effort. Not the outcome.

Actions are originally thoughts, which come to your mind. These thoughts then turn into desires. Thereafter, these desires become intentions and, then these intentions are transformed into actions. If thoughts are pure then desires and actions will be pure. If there is corruption in thoughts then this will lead to evil desires, intentions and actions. There are 5 key stages from thinking to Intention and action<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, your thinking should be deeply rooted and influenced by an understanding and belief in your faith (Niyat). When Niyat is purified, you are ready for blessings and rewards of enlightenment to be given to you. When you receive them Allah says, Allah’s hand is on your hand, and Allah informs and guides your hand. (Quran 48:10).

Divine blessing and grace are not a right. You have no control over them. You cannot command, demand or claim them. Imams have said when and if you receive this then you will know it and this is nothing like you will have known or experienced. On the other hand, if you do not receive this. You must not stop making the effort. Your duty is to search and make the effort with a good Niyat. After that you must desire whatever is the outcome. This may not be what you were expecting or thinking. Therefore, you have not failed.



We have freewill, and can choose whether our Intention and actions are for the sake of Allah. If they are not, you cannot expect the blessings of enlightenment or to know your soul<sup>7</sup>, or the Noor<sup>4</sup> of Imam. Without knowing yourself, you cannot know God.

To illustrate your freewill. This is similar to the proverb that you can take a horse to the water but you cannot make it drink. Meaning in this case Allah and Imams have given guidance and so guided you to the water (right path). But It is up to you to drink (to choose Allah, Imam & the right path), The soul <sup>8</sup> is eternal and your ordained journey does not end what you leave this world physically.

The quality of Niyat and blessings of enlightenment and are in stages or degrees. These two kinds of people have different levels or degrees or ranks, in the sight of Allah; Allah is observant of all their actions. Elevated people who even sit at the lower section of a congregation, can become “high”. They are themselves makers of degree and rank, and are not subject to degrees. This Spiritual ranking is not exclusive to human beings; for, there is also ranking among the angels.

The Qur’an thus says regarding Jibra’il (Archangel Gabriel)

“(One) to be obeyed, and trustworthy” (Surah at-Takwir 81:21)

The term “darajat” {degrees} has been mentioned frequently in the Qur’an. For example, “Those are they who are in truth believers. For them are grades (of honour) with their Lord, and pardon, and a bountiful provision. (Surah al-Anfal 8:40)

: “They (themselves) are degrees “There are degrees (of grace and reprobation) with Allah, and Allah is Seer of what ye do.” Surah Al ‘Imran 3:163.

Those who call on God with the intention of only their own sakes and remember Him only in times of problems and they at other times forget or even deny Him: Allah says of them.” And when they mount upon the ships they pray to Allah, making their faith pure for Him only, but when He bringeth them safe to land, behold! they ascribe partners (unto Him) - Surah al- ‘Ankabut 29:65

Worshipping Allah because he is worthy is a righteous act for the sake of Allah. “O God! My worship is not out of fear of hell or desire for Your paradise. Rather, it is because I found You worthy of being worshipped and thus I worshipped You.” Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 18

Just as the body has a soul, every act has an intention. Sincerity and purity of Niyat is a necessary responsibility. Having a pure heart and good intention (Niyat), are among divine assets and treasures you have accumulated. The better the purity of your Niyat, the more the value of this treasure. Pure intentions multiply your treasure.

For one whose aim and intention is the performance of a duty given by Imam. The type of work or its outcome are not important. For example, those fight in the way of Allah and give their lives in doing this.

Allah says “Whoso fights in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward. (Qur’an 4.47).

What is important is to struggle in the way of God in all acts. The outcome has no effect on the divine blessings and reward. Allah also says

“And whoever leaves his home migrating toward Allah and His Apostle, and is then overtaken by death, his reward shall certainly fall on Allah.” (Surah an-Nisa’ 4:100).

This also means that if a person leaves his home for the sake of God, even though he does not reach his destination, he would be rewarded. What is important is the intention, and not the act itself.

Holy Prophet said: “Decide to do a good deed though you might not succeed in doing so; for, it is this decision that will take you out from the circle of the neglectful.” (48 Wasa’il ash-Shi ‘ah, vol. 1, p. 39)

“Any deed which is accompanied by a divine intention is great even if that work is simple and trivial.”<sup>49</sup> Wasa’il ash-Shi ‘ah, vol. 1, p. 87

During the Tabuk expedition, Holy Prophet said: “Indeed, those who are in Medina but wish (Intend – Niyat), to participate with us in the battlefield shall share in the spiritual reward on account of that intention.” Muhajjah al-Bayda’ vol. 8, p. 104.

Anyone who goes to his bed with the intention of waking up to say the night supererogatory prayers, if he is not able to wake up, God will treat his sleep as charity and his breathing as glorification (of God) {tasbih} and give him the reward of saying the night supererogatory prayers. (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 206). This means you must have a true intention and you made the effort.

And for example, if you love a person for the sake of God and truly believe him as a good person, even if he is actually a dweller of hell, you are excused. Muhajjah al-Bayda’ vol. 4, p. 374.

‘Umar said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (s) say: "Verily, the reward of deeds depends upon the Niyah (intentions) and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. “..,

What is not a good Niyat. Allah gives examples.

"...And when they stand up for As-Salat (prayer), they stand with laziness and to be seen of men, and they do not remember Allah but little..." (Surah An-Nisa: 142)

s "...And be not like those who come out of their homes boastfully and to be seen of men..." (Surah Al-Anfal:47) I

"To give charity in public is good, but to give the poor in private is better and will remove from you some of your sins. Allah is aware of your actions" Therefore the quantity of your sins are also the basis of your reward and the degree of your blessings and enlightenment – levels of your enlightenment., (Surah Al-Baqara:271)

Say (O Muhammad "I am only a man like you. It has been revealed to me that your Allah (God) is One. So, whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord." (Surah Al-Kahf 18:110)

Strong forces influence our Niyat. These include, ignorance, ego, greed, anger, arrogance, & jealousy. Ignorance can be a strongest for thoughts which lead to intentions which are not for the love of Allah.

Good Niyat comes from your faith and its ethical and moral values of generosity, humility, selfless service, forgiveness and love for Allah. These first create good values with harmonious and happy conditions in the human heart and soul. Those who interact with people of good Niyat helps them with their thinking, mindset, Niyat and search for blessings and reward. On the other hand, if Niyat is infected or mixed with anger, greed, selfishness, and ego, then they create arrogance, more ego, uncertainty, unnecessary suspicion and doubts. This leads to deterioration of the quality and purity of Niyat. Ego can prove to be the strongest force in accepting our human limitations before God, or to improve our intention for the love of Allah. Human ego always tries to make you see and feel good things in you, and faults in others. Understanding and sincere, humble prayers for forgiveness and mercy can help in purifying Niyat.

There is Pre-eminence of intention over every action. In the performance of action, sometimes there is ostentation, and showing off. Intention is an inner matter and has no outward appearance to others. The benefit of intention over action is that it is always possible to have a good intention, if you so choose<sup>15</sup> For example, if somebody hears a tradition in a community, which states that such an act has a reward. If he or she performs that act with a true intention (Niyat). Then Allah will grant him the reward, even if that tradition is not correct and the person has been deceived and misinformed. Because act was done with a pure and good intention.

Good Niyat leads to nearness of the Noor of Allah. Recognising and understanding how to attain divine proximity {qurb-e ilahi} is important. Nearness {qurbah} is achieved in two ways: One is to recognize that God is indeed above all else. and the second is to recognize that you and others are limited and need the continuity of guidance and blessings of Allah to guide you to the right path in this life and when you leave this world to continue your journey.

Qur'an shares the divine favours and graces to the servants (of Allah) for us to understand and to be filled with love, with the love for God. Understanding His Attributes, His creatures, His material and His spiritual guidance, great and small—all in all, are meant for us to understand, experience and enhance our love for Allah and our Niyat.

On the other hand, there are many verses which indicate the weakness and meanness of those "other" than God. Anyone and anything other than God have neither honour nor power. Allah is above all else and everything is possible for him and nothing is impossible for Him. So, if we choose to follow what others say, then we are choosing them, as equal and better than Allah.

The Quality of the acts of are also of important for the acceptance of our Niyat. For example, Allah says" [He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving (Surah Hud 11:7; Surah al-Mulk 67:2)

While in a state of prayer Hazrat 'Ali ('a) gave his ring to a beggar, and on account of this, a verse below of the Qur'an was revealed. It was on account of the quality of the deed and not its quantity, and on account of the sincerity and of intention for nearness, and not the weight and magnitude of the ring's value.

Allah says "Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down." (Surah al-Ma'idah 5:55). Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger, and according to Ismaili Muslims interpretation, the rightful Imams with divine authority <sup>1</sup>

An example whether a Niyat or intention is for the sake of Allah. Bahlul saw a group of people constructing a mosque and claiming that they were doing so for the sake of God. He inscribed on a stone: "The builder of this stone is Bahlul," and placed it at the door of the mosque one night. The following day, when the workers saw the inscribed stone, they reported it to Harun ar-Rashid. So, he summoned Bahlul and asked him: "Why have you assumed ownership of a mosque I am constructing?" Bahlul replied: "If you are really constructing the mosque for the sake of God, then let my name be

inscribed therein (as the owner). Anyway, God knows who the real builder is. Besides, He will not commit any mistakes in giving the reward to you. If it is really for the sake of God, whether my name or your name is inscribed there does not matter. In doing so, Bahlul let him understand that he had no intention for nearness {qurbah} (to Allah), but rather for desire and fame.

Allah says “As for the faithless, their works are like a mirage in a plain, which the thirsty man supposes to be water.” (24 Surah an-Nur 24:39). Those who disbelieve - their Niyat and deeds are like a mirage in which they seeing water from a distance, but when you come to it, they find nothing.

In principle, Islam regards an intention with act as righteous if its four constitutive elements are good and they are for the sake of Allah;

- 1 components of the action including thoughts and intention
- 2 motive for the actions
- 3 means, of the actions
- 4 method of the actions

The motive for seeking nearness of Allah is necessary, before and at the beginning of an intention and act. The thoughts and intention for divine proximity or for the sake of Allah should begin with the formation of your Niyat, and remain throughout the course of the action. If not the intent and act in its entirety can become void and of no benefit to your soul.

For example, If the motor of an airplane malfunctions for only a minute, the airplane will definitely come crashing down. Polytheism or ostentation (showing off) although for only a moment, will render it useless for any blessing or reward to your soul.

Many good deeds lead to ascension, and progress to nearness to God. But because of a spiritual vice, they will not lead to ascension and progress. Instead, those deeds would lead to sin.

Bilal al-Habashi, who was the caller to prayer {mu ‘adhdhin} of the Holy Prophet (S), would pronounce “sh” {shin} as “s” {sin} in the recital of the following sentence, “Ashhadu an la ilaha illa’llah” as he had a defect in his speech. People criticized it, and the Prophet said: “The sin of Bilal is shin for God.” Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, hadith 4696.

Allah (God), will weigh your deeds according to your intention, Niyat. That means your original and true intention. Prophet Mohammed said “actions are but by intentions.”

“Save those who believe and do good works, and exhort (Urge) one another to truth and exhort (urge) one another to endurance Surah al- ‘Asr 103:3

An act that is not done sincerely or for the sake of Allah, may be divided into 2 main parts:

The first is that which is solely for display (showing off), such that its sole motivation is to be seen by others in order to achieve a material goal world, as for Hypocrites in their performance of prayer, where Allah described them as When they join prayer, they go lazily, with the purpose of displaying themselves to the people.”

The second is an action that might be partially for the sake of Allah and partially to display one’s self in front of the people or to other for self-interested motives. If the desire to display one’s self arose at the origin of the action, then the whole action is vain and of no value and benefit to the soul

If your intention is not for Allah, but for others. Imam Ahmad reports the Prophet (SWS) said, "When Allah gathers the first [of His creation] and the last [of His creation] for that Day for which there is no doubt, a crier will call out, 'Whosoever associated with Me another in his actions let him seek his reward from other than Allah, for Allah is the most independent of any association

Al-Nasa’i reported that a man asked the Prophet (S), "What is your opinion of one who fights [in the way of Allah] seeking fame [in the profane world] and reward (from Allah)

Prophet (Sws) replied, “He receives nothing [by way of reward from Allah’.” Prophet (Sws) repeated this three times and then said, “Allah accepts no deeds other than those that are performed solely for His sake and by which His face (deedar<sup>3</sup>) is sought.” (Salaf, including, 'Ubada b. al-Samit, Abu al-Darda`, al-Hasan al-Basri, Sa'id b. al-Musayyib and others)

Nothing is more difficult for a person than sincerity of intention. Without this the person (soul) gains no share of that act. Ibn 'Uyayna said that Mutarrif b. 'Abdallah would repeat the following prayer,

“O Allah! I seek Your forgiveness for that which I sought your repentance but to which I subsequently returned; I seek Your forgiveness from that which I rendered to You from myself, but then, I was not able to maintain faithfully; and, I seek Your forgiveness from that by which I claimed I desired your face but my heart became corrupted with that which I did.”

The Messenger of Allah said: *"Verily actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended. So, the one whose 'hijrah' (migration) was to Allah and His Messenger, then his 'hijrah' was to Allah and His Messenger. And the one whose*

*'hijrah' was for the world to gain from it, or a woman to marry her, then his 'hijrah' was for what he made 'hijrah' for."* [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Saheeh Al-Bukhari, with this Hadeeth, explains that every action that is done without seeking Allah's pleasure and love is invalid and devoid of reward for your soul.

Another sign of sincerity is that you are looking for a deed which you know will not increase your title, welfare, income and social standing from that Act. For example, rendering service in deprived regions or small and far-off villages and areas with bad climate, and extreme poverty.

For a sincere person, wealth and position are not hindrances in the performance of his duty, acts and deeds. He sacrifices his desires and needs, and if necessary, even his life in the fulfilment of his duty. His sincerity of intentions will leave and depart, if attachment to wealth, position, relatives, and friends becomes a hindrance.

Allah says "If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and to waging jihad in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict."<sup>52</sup> Surah at-Tawbah (or, Bara'ah) 9:23

Your ego and desires control you and your soul, which by nature is greedy and prone to evil<sup>8</sup>. The sincere intention (Niyat), is not a captive of place, time, spouse, residence and his self. He only strives to please God.

For example, a rider and his horse arrived at a stream. The man did everything, he even whipped the animal but the horse would not step into the water. The man stepped into the water and pulled the horse's bridle but the horse still refused. A sage who was present there said: "Mount the horse and muddy the water with your stick and spade and then the horse will cross." He did so and the horse crossed the stream without any problem. The rider asked the reason for the wise man's advice. The wise man replied: "As the horse could see its reflection in the limpid water of the stream, it was not willing to step on its face. But since the water was disturbed, the horse crossed the stream! Yes, those who are self-centred and inclined toward wealth, position, children and occupation for themselves cannot be sincere, because in the path of sincerity of intent in the way of Allah everything material can be sacrificed if needed.

Sincerity of Niyat, is accompanied by the luminosity of disposition, purity of inner self and insight, which guide you in the twists and turns of life as well as impasses and difficult predicaments.

Another sign of sincerity of intent is that the volume of work, the individuals involved, the places, types of work, and situations make no difference for the person. The only concern is to seek the pleasure of God, regardless of whether he benefits from it or not, or whether people would know or not, or would support it or not.

Sincerity, God-wariness and keeping away from carnal desire have an outcome that enhances clear-sightedness and leads from the darkness of polytheism, ignorance (jahl) and capricious desire, to the monotheism, knowledge and divine enlightenment.

Sincerity if Niyat has extraordinary value, but at the same time it is difficult and very challenging. In the supplications at dawn during the month of Ramadhan, Imam as-Sajjad (as) prays to God to remove hypocrisy (nifaq) from the heart, and ostentation from the act. In the Du'a' al-'Arafah, Imam al-Husayn (as) also beseeches God to bestow sincerity of intention and action

A sincere person keeps himself pure in the midst of an impure and corrupt environment, and free his actions from ostentation (for Showing off). The sincere person sets himself at the disposal of God, because his heart is the sanctuary of this love, and allows divine motives and intentions to guide all his actions and behaviour, doing so, he attains honor nobility and diving blessings.

An act that is not done with a sincere intention and for the sake of Allah may also be divided into parts:

The first is that which is solely for display, such that its sole motivation is to be seen by others in order to achieve a material goal, as was the case of the Hypocrites in their performance of prayer, where Allah described them as "When they join prayer, they go lazily [with the purpose] of displaying [themselves] to the people."

The second, an action might be partially for the sake of Allah and partially to display one's self in front of the people. If the desire to display one's self arose at the origin of the action, then the action is vain.

Prophet said, "When Allah gathers the first [of His creation] and the last [of His creation] for that Day for which there is no doubt, a crier will call out, 'Whosoever associated with Me another in his actions let him seek his reward from other than Allah, for Allah is the most independent of any association (fa-inna allaha aghna al-sharaka` 'an al-shirk). "

Al-Nasa'i reported that a man asked the Prophet (S), "What is your opinion of one who fights [in the way of Allah] seeking fame [in the profane world] and reward [from Allah]?" The Prophet (Sws) replied, "He receives nothing [by way of reward from



Allah’.” The Prophet (Sws) repeated this three times and then said, “Allah accepts no deeds other than those that are performed solely for His sake and by which His face is sought.”

The Quran describing this as the lazy state of the hypocrites as they go to prayer, dragging their feet, only so that people can see them performing prayers:

“Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah, and He shall requite their deceit to them, and when they stand up to prayer they stand up sluggishly; they do it only to be seen of men and do not remember Allah save a little.” (4:142)

The Quran also mentions showing off in respect to charity, as people sometimes pay charity to appear generous but their intention and motives are not the same.

“O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his property to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day; so, his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.” (2:264)

This means that if the intention is not sincerely to please God, then the reward for charity could be washed away just like rain washes away soil off a smooth rock, thus stopping any chance of plantation on it.

The Prophet said: *"For the ones whose concern is this world, Allah will scatter his affair, and place poverty between his two eyes. He will not get from the world except what is written for him. For the one whose intention is the Hereafter, Allah will gather for him his affair and place contentment in his heart, and the world will come to him willingly."* [Ibn Maajah]

Zayd Ash-Shaami said: "Verily I like to make an intention for everything I do even if it is eating and drinking." "I have not treated anything more difficult than my intention, because it keeps changing."

Ibn Al-Mubarak said: "Maybe a small action is made great by its intention, and maybe a great action is made small by its intention."

*Allah created you to test you and your deeds "He who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed."* [Quran 67: 2]

## Conclusion

Niyat is one of the most important part of the Ismaili Muslim interpretation and doctrines, in which your worldly and religious actions are Judged, not by the outcomes, or actions, but by your true intentions which may or may not be the same.

In order to receive the blessings and reward of enlightenment which are progressive or in stages, your real intentions must be for the love, sake, in the way and pleasure of the Noor Marlana Hazar Imam and Allah. This is explained in the Quran and interpreted by the Imams, in Farmans, since Prophet Mohammed delivered the final Message of Allah to Mankind (Quran). Without seeking, reading, and understanding these, it is not possible to receive the grace and blessings of enlightenment to guide your Niyat and actions into making the right choices towards and along siratul muqtaqueem (right path to knwing yourself and knowing God).

Alhamdulillah

Hai Zanda.

**By Maheubub A Chatur**

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### **Bibliography and references**

1. Imam lit. means a religious Leader. For Ismaili Muslims, this is explained by His Highness the Aga Khan (The Imam)

“I am the 49th hereditary Imam in direct lineal descent from the first Shia Imam, Hazrat ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib through his marriage to Bibi Fatima-az-Zahra, our beloved Prophet’s daughter. (Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV, (Letter to International Islamic Conference, Amman, July 2005)

In accordance with Shia doctrine, tradition, and interpretation of history, the Holy Prophet (S.A.S.) designated and appointed his cousin and son-in-law Hazrat Mawlana Ali Amiru-l-Mu'minin (Alayhi-s-salam), to be the first Imam to continue the Ta'wil and Ta'lim of Allah's final message and to guide the murids<sup>6</sup>, and proclaimed that the Imamatus should continue by heredity through Hazrat

Mawlana Ali (A.S.) and his daughter Hazrat Bibi Fatimat-az-Zahra, Khatun-i-Jannat Alayha-s-salam). (His Highness the Aga Khan in the Ismaili constitution)

Imam In general usage, is a leader of prayers or religious leader. The Shi 'i\* restrict the term to their spiritual leaders descended from 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. (Institute of Ismaili studies states)

(\*Shia schools of thought and interpretation of Islam. In the context of this article the reference is to Imams of Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, also known as Ismaili Muslims or Ismailis)

Imama

An abstract noun from the term Imam referring to the institution of hereditary spiritual leadership in Shi 'i Islam.

Imamah

An abstract noun from the term Imam referring to the institution of hereditary spiritual leadership in Shi'i Islam.

Imamat or Imamate

An abstract noun from the term Imam referring to the institution of hereditary spiritual leadership in Shi 'i Islam.

This must not be confused with the Imamat as Imam and his divine authority, with the worldly institutions set up by the Imam for the benefit of the community as governed by Farmans and the Ismaili constitution. (Institute of Ismaili studies UK)

“Mawla” for Ismailis also means the Ismaili Imam. There are many others names of Imam used by Ismailis and in their Ismaili prayers, traditions, ginans, rites and practices. Namely, Mursheed, Pir, Mushkil Kusha, Sat Gur, Shah, Hazar Imam, Khudavand, Bapa, Yali Bapa, Sat Gur, Mawla, Sami, Noor Mawlana, Ya Shah, Ya Ali, Shahebul Zaman, Dhani Salamat Datar, Awal, Akhir, Zahir, Batin, Noorun Allah Noor. Ya Hahul Kayum, Hai Zinda, & Kayam Paya, Ya Rahman, & Rahim.

2. Farman or Farmans. meaning guidance from Imams which has been defined by the present Imam as “any pronouncement, direction, order or ruling made or given by Mawlana Hazar Imam” (Ismaili constitution ordained by His Highness

the Aga Khan. The latest was ordained in 1998). The Ismaili constitution, by the same definition is also a Farman.

Farmans include Ginans <sup>12</sup> They include knowledge of and from Imams by and through Imams and Pirs. In addition there are also devotional poetry in praise of Imams (including Quaseedas and Geets)

Pir is a title given by the Imam and is the highest title. The title is often translated into English as "saint" and could be interpreted as "Elder". In Sufism a Pir's role is to guide and instruct his disciples.

Ismaili Pirs communicate and give guidance of, and by the authority of Imam to followers. Today the title of Pir is only with the Imam of the time. He is Imam and Pir <sup>1</sup>

Hazar Imam has confirmed regarding Ginans "they are my Ginans" 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 2010. Through the medium of Ginans, Pirs provide Imams guidance on doctrinal, ethical, material and spiritual matters to the community while also explaining the inner (batin) meaning of the Qur'an to the external (zahir) aspects of life.

'Ginans can also be perceived as a commentary on the Qur'an. In his pronouncement, Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah guided the community in this issue: 'In the ginans which Pir Sadardin has composed for you, he has explained the gist of the Qur'an in the language of Hindustan.' (Ali Asani).

".. It must not happen that so long as I am here you read my farmans, and later on you no longer read them. That must not occur. Just as you read my Ginans, you must read my farmans. The way you seek out the meaning of my Ginans, the same way seek out the meaning of my farmans too. My farmans themselves are the ginans.." Aga Khan III

"I pray that your discussions may be held in the true spirit of Islamic brotherhood and that at all times you will seek to create, for the future tools with which to improve the conditions of our future generations while at the same time guiding them to THE TRUE understanding and practice of our Faith."  
- Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV First Ismaili World Socio-Economic Conference (Karachi, Pakistan), 15 December 1964

3. Deedar or Darshan, means vision or light also called Noor <sup>4</sup> in the Quran. His Highness the Aga Khan (Hazar Imam), will see his spiritual children, and so they will be seeing him. Hence the use of the word Deedar. The words Darbar (Meeting), and Mulakat (meeting) are also used for Deedar. Seeing their Imam is a physical Deedar, also called an exoteric or Zahiri Deedar. This is a part of a religious Journey of enlightenment and experiencing the light (Noor)<sup>4</sup> of Hazar Imam. Going to see Hazar Imam physically begins with your intention (Niyat) to go and see your Imam.

The journey to spiritual enlightenment includes the following. A Zahiri or exoteric Deedar, A Batini or esoteric or religious Deedar, and a Noorani<sup>5</sup> or spiritual Deedar. Except for the Zahiri deedar which you can decide and go to. The rest are given and cannot be claimed. But they are all parts of Deedar, to seek and receive Imams blessings of “divine enlightenment” which originate and manifest from the Noor of Allah <sup>5</sup> through the Noor of the Imams, to the Individual who is blessed. The Noor of all the Imams is one and the same.

Deedar is a blessing which is given. It is not a right which one can demand or take. Seeing the Imam physically, is a deedar, but that does not mean that one has, or will receive the blessings of Deedar (enlightenment).

Imams have given guidance of what must be done for this blessing in Farmans and ginans. That includes having a pure Niyat, following the guidance, prayers, and seeking forgiveness. Without doing what Hazar Imam and Imams have asked and said, there should be no expectation of enlightenment beyond seeing the physical form of the Imam.

In this regard Allah has said in the Quran “And if ye call them to the guidance, they hear not; and you (Muhammad) see them looking toward you, but they see not.” (Quran 7:198).

See also Meaning and significance of Deedar at [www.ismaili.net](http://www.ismaili.net) by M Chatur

4. Murids of followers or believers – means Ismaili Muslims who follow and have given their allegiance <sup>16</sup> to the Imams of Ismaili Muslims, The Present Imam is His Highness the Aga Khan. The followers are also called Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims or Ismailis.
5. Noor of Allah – Nur - Lit. ‘light,’ a term used for God, defined as light in the Qur’an in the so-called verse of light (ayat al-nur) Q 24:35: ‘God is the light of the heavens and the earth...’).

In Shi 'ism, the term is taken to mean the light that is believed to have emanated through Adam, via Muhammad into the family of 'Ali and his successors, the Imams. (Institute of Ismaili studies UK)

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things” (Quran Sura Noor 24:35)

Who knows himself knows God. “Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord.” Surah 43 Verse 14:

We are made from one soul, and we (our soul), comes from and returns to God “And verily, to Our Lord we indeed are to return! “(Prophet Mohammed - al Hadith)

6. TKN Niyat – Time and Knowledge Nazrana Niyat. This is defined by the Ismaili official newsletter of the Ismaili community as “a formal declaration of the “intention” to gift one’s time and knowledge to the Imam, for utilisation at his discretion in the work of the Imam, Jamati and AKDN Institutions”

“The Time and Knowledge Nazrana (TKN) represents a combination of two cherished Ismaili traditions:

- (i) submitting to the Imam of the time an unconditional Nazrana (gift) in commemorating epochal events, as a gesture of love and homage, and
- (ii) offering one’s intellectual capacity to assist the Imam’s efforts for the progress of the Jamat, and the communities within which the Jamat lives. The tradition of offering Nazrana also serves to reinforce the ethic of giving for human development and improvement of quality of life for the less fortunate. The contribution of time and knowledge in the service of the Imam is a tradition that dates back to the earliest period of Shia Islam.

The TKN endeavour was launched as a Golden Jubilee initiative to harness the expertise and skills of murids worldwide for building institutional capacity of

Jamati and AKDN institutions. Thousands of murids pledged TKN Niyats during the Golden Jubilee and a large number since then have been successfully placed on assignments in these institutions. <https://the.ismaili/microsite/time-and-knowledge-nazrana>

7. Desiring this world or Allah (hereafter)- "...Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter..." [Quran 3: 152] ...And Allah had certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were killing the enemy by His permission until [the time] when you lost courage and fell to disputing about the order [given by the Prophet] and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you love. Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter. Then he turned you back from them [defeated] that He might test you. And He has already forgiven you, and Allah is the possessor of bounty for the believers

"Whoever desires the life of this world and its adornments..." [Quran 11: 15]  
"Whoever desires the life of this world and its adornments - We fully repay them for their deeds therein, and they therein will not be deprived.

"And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them, desiring adornments of the worldly life..." [Quran 18: 28]  
"

Restrain thyself along with those who cry unto their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His countenance; and let not thine eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own lust and whose case hath been abandoned" (Quran 18:28)

8. Post Fact Society

"we live in a "post-fact" society. Yes - a post-fact society. It's not just that everyone feels entitled to his or her own opinion - that's a good thing. But the problem comes when people feel they are entitled to their own facts. What is true, too often, can then depend not on what actually happened, but on whose side, you are.

Our search for the truth can then become less important than our allegiance to a cause - an ideology, for example, or a political party, or a tribal or religious identity, or a pro-government or opposition outlook.

And so publics - all over the world - can begin to fragment - and societies can drift into deadlock. In such a world, it is absolutely critical - more than ever - that the public should have somewhere to turn for reliable, balanced, objective and accurate information - as best as it can be discovered. No one - including the Nation Media Group - will ever be able to do that perfectly. But it is critically important that all of us should try... "

" My information is infinitely more precise and infinitely wider than yours. ... I have delayed the ultimate decisions to the ultimate moment" (Aga Khan)

#### 9. Soul - Soul – oneness and unity of Souls – Tawhid

"O mankind reverence your Lord, who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath scattered countless men and women."4:1

"Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul, whoever works evil, it is against his own soul." --41:46

"On the day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil." -3:30

"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds." 74:38

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour unto you: ....", 3.103

"How can ye disbelieve, when it is ye unto whom Allah's revelations are recited, and His messenger is in your midst. He who holds fast to Allah, he indeed is guided unto a right path. 3:101

"Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human soul) is certainly prone to evil unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely certainly my Lord is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful (Surah 12 Yusuf, Verse 53)

#### 10. Divine authority. Allah has said in the Quran that believers are to send their prayers for blessings and purification through the Prophet. Allah will forgive and or purify.



Allah said to obey the Prophet who appointed, according to Shia Ismaili interpretation Imam Ali at Ghadir e Khumm. This divinely ordained authority was passed on to, the first Ismaili Imam Hazrat Ali. All future Imams are spiritual inheritors. Ismailis send their prayers through their Imam, as directed by Allah and Prophet Mohammed.

The following are the related verses of the Quran regarding this. And the verses where Prophet says Prophet will appoint a light (who was Hazrat Ali and Imams. Also, what Imam said in a Farman about his Noor (light). He said this also in the Ismaili constitution <sup>14</sup>

Ask for forgiveness through Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) “And We did not send any messenger except to be obeyed by permission of Allah. And if, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you, [O Muhammad], and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Accepting of repentance and Merciful” Quran 4.64

Pray for them “Take alms of their wealth, wherewith thou mayst purify them and mayst make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, Knower”. Quran 9.103

Re appointment of Light (Imam). “O ye who believe! Be mindful of your duty to Allah and put faith in His messenger. He will give you twofold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light wherein ye shall walk, and will forgive you. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful - Quran 57:28

“For hundreds of years, My spiritual children have been guided by the Rope of Imamat. You have looked to the Imam of the Age for advice and help in all matters and through your Imam's immense love and affection for His spiritual children, His Noor has indicated to you where and in which direction you must turn, so as to obtain spiritual and worldly satisfaction (The Imam 1964).

#### 11. Daily Ismaili Muslim prayers of Niyat

##### a. Allah knows your Niyat

- i. To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent. Surat Al-Baqarah, 2:284

- b. Old Ismaili Muslim Dua (Daily prayers) – This includes
  - (i) congregational collective prayers for the acceptance of your Niyat (Dua niyat ni Kher)
  - (ii) individual prayers before the Mukhi for acceptance of Niyat and Murad - Wishes
- c. Current Dua includes a specific prayer for Niyat (Dua Niyat ni Kher and of Niyat Murad).
  - (i) The congregational prayers recited by Mukhi Saheb, (representing and by authority of the Imam for acceptance of Niyat)
    - 1. He recites a prayer to the Noor of Imam (and Allah) for our Niyat to be accepted and purified in the presence of, and by authority of the Imam. (This is called Amr.
      - a. This Niyat is for our intentions of all our deeds and actions.
    - 2. This Niyat prayer is the final and most significant prayer which ends the daily worship.
  - (ii) Individual prayers by Mukhi Saheb, (representing and by authority of the Imam for acceptance of Niyat.
    - 1. Standing before the Mukhi we pray for forgiveness of our errors and sins and the Mukhi accepts and prays that the Noor Of Imam accepts our prayers.
    - 2. This Niyat is for our intentions of all our deeds and actions.
  - (iii) We invoke and pray in congregation and individually for continuity of, and receiving Farmans (Guidance from Imam)
  - (iv) We pray for deedar (Blessings of divine enlightenment)

## 12. Know yourself and being closer to you and your very soul.

A Hadith of Rasul (SAW) says that, “Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord.”  
 “Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa Rabbahu”

Allah says He is closer to you than your Jugular vein. The only thing closer to your body is your heart mind and soul. (Surah 50 Al Qaf, Verse 16)

“It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”

13. Ginan – one example

***“if one meets a True Guide (Imam), He will explain the essence (hidden meaning) of existence; and will destroy the doubts of your mind. No lotus flower can bloom without water, in the same manner one who is ignorant cannot know his/her soul without a true Guide (Imam)- (water of the soul).”***

ABDU MAN JEETE MAN ICHHA FAL UPAJE

PEER HASSAN KABEERDEEN

abdhu man jeete man ichhaa fal upaje, ane tan jeete uchhara(n)g;

hardo jeete aana(n)d upaje, is beed jog pacha(n)d abadhu.....1

O slave! when anyone conquers the mind (thoughts)

his mental desires are fulfilled OR attains the fruits of his desires (without indulging in them); and by conquering the body (sense perceptions), (spiritual) energy is available. **When a person conquers both of them (mind and body) completely, he attains (constant) joy, this is indeed the state of maturity(ripeness) of worship.**

abdhu rasnaa puchha(n)ta ka(n)thnaa amrat, ane geenaan purash ku(n) beenam;

aakaash raajaa dehen see(n)gaasann, to aad purash ku(n) beenam abdhu.....3

O slave! by asking(seeking) for the speech (kanthnaa) of Divine nectar (nourishment), using the tongue(rasnaa); and **bowing to the wise and knowledgeable personality (the True Guide), you will experience that your body is the throne of the King of Heavens (aakaash raajaa); then your bowing to the first personality (the Creator- Gur Bhramaa) has been fulfilled.**

abdhu aashaa maaro cheetaa jaaro, ane hu(n) khudhee karo rasoi.

aasann jeeto nee(n)ddhraa jeeto, keertaar kare so hoi abdhu.....6

O slave! kill vain desires and hopes and banish all worries, and make a roast of "I" ness or self flattery. Conquer the physical comforts and **conquer sleep (of ignorance) and then surrender yourself to the will of the Creator.**

abdhu jo gur male to arath bataave, ane matte cheet kaa se(n)saa;  
jal beenaa kamal na fulle, taaku(n) murakh jaanne ha(n)saa abdhu..7

O slave! if one meets a True Guide, He will explain the essence (hidden meaning) of existence; and will destroy the doubts of your mind. No lotus flower can bloom without water, in the same manner a fool (or ignoramus one) cannot know his/her soul without a Guide(water of the soul).

AAE RAHEM RAHEMAAN AB TO RAHEM KAROGE  
BY: SAYYADAA IMAAM BEGUM

aae rahem rahemaan, ab to rahem karoge  
ejee tan man dhan guruku(n) arapann kije  
to ginaane ginaane ginaan...ab to.....1  
Should mercy touch You, Kindly Lord,  
Will You now mercy show?  
If I submit my body, heart, and wealth to the Guide (Imam) ,

In every heart One Lord appears,  
Its glory's Glorious Glow.  
ejee kahet imaam begam meraa pir hasan shaaha  
imaane imaane imaan...ab to.....4  
To Hasan Shaah my Pir I(Imaam Begum) say:  
Through faith my faith will grow.

This translation taken from Zawaahir Moir's Ismaili Hymns  
Source: Heritage Society Collection

BUJ NIRANJAN  
By Pir Sadardeen

A. O MY TRUE LORD, O MY LOVE...  
YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL, O CREATOR, THAT WORDS FAIL ME.  
IT IS LIKE A DUMB PERSON EXPERIENCING A BEAUTIFUL DREAM AND IS  
UNABLE TO EXPRESS IT VERBALLY.

6. Only when one humbles oneself to the dust then can one understand God.

D. GOD HAS MANY FACETS (COLORS): ONE SEES HIM IN THE COLOR ONE WISHES TO: **IF YOUR INTENTIONS ARE SINCERE YOU BECOME TOTALLY IMMERSSED IN HIM.**

1. He first blesses you and then grants you His didar.
2. One can lose oneself eternally in this (Noor).
3. The fourth stage is Fanafillah; having achieved that one knows the good from the bad.
4. In this stage the difference between I and You no longer exists and one realizes God and Prophet.
5. The fifth stage is then reached whence Love is experienced.
6. The one who immerses in His knowledge achieves knowledge.
7. These stages teach us that one has to progress to that ultimate goal.
8. And you should all know that without Imam this progress is impossible. (ismaili Heritage)

IF THERE IS NO THOUGHT OF GOD IN YOUR HEART THEN YOUR HEART IS WORTH LESS THAN THE DUST: THE WORLDLY UNHAPPINESS DESTROYS YOU: THUS IGNITE DIVINE LOVE IN YOUR HEART (SO THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE WORLDLY UNHAPPINESS)

1. When your Lord takes you to the right path His first advice is that...
2. ...in whatever you do remove the "I" ego, from it to achieve God.
3. And when you advance then your thoughts remain constant with your Lord.
4. Immerse yourself in your Lord (God) and do not think of anything else except that God is around you.
5. Discard pride and selfish motives for they will hamper you.
6. Your mind, which sometimes acts as Ali's enemy, bring it under control and remain constantly in your Lord's service.
7. Attachments and worldly achievements should be discarded and the seed for Divine Love should be sowed in your heart.
8. When you achieve all the above then you will be enlightened.

U. I WENT IN SEARCH OF MY LORD BUT FOUND HIM EVERYWHERE. AT TIMES HE WAS APPARENT AND AT TIMES I FELT HIS PRESENCE. HOW CAN WE ALL ACHIEVE HIM? (THINK ABOUT THAT, O MOMINS!)

1. When Truth is realized then one's worthlessness (insignificance) is realized.
2. Seeing God within oneself gives you the vision where you could be called to a person with Divine Insight.
3. With God in your heart the 'I' submerges into Him.
4. People may call you 'beimani' (without Iman) - like with Mansoor - and even label you as kafir.
5. Why don't people understand this? It is because they are not looking within.
6. The experience which Mansoor had is the experience to aspire for, for then your whole being will 'say' God.
7. People's taunts and insults will not matter.

Y. STOP WORRYING ABOUT WHY THIS! WHY THAT! FOR WORRIES WILL ONLY MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR HAIR - THE THINGS THAT SEEM UNREASONABLE TO YOU HAVE A REASON SO DON'T LET THE SURPRISES RUIN YOUR IMAN.

1. One who recognizes Him furthers his knowledge and it seems to increase everyday.
2. He begins to preach and tries to guide others on the right path.

Z. LOSING YOUR EGO WILL LEAD TO GETTING HIM FOR HE IS THE ONLY ONE WORTH KNOWING: IF ONLY YOU KNEW HIM YOU'D REALIZE HOW INSIGNIFICANT YOU ARE.

1. The one who has achieved Him is the one whose life is Him.
2. In other words his existence is Him and he is His slave.
3. Such a person can remember everything and is fortunate to have Spiritual Bliss.
4. His soul is elevated and he is detached despite being physically here.
5. Since he sees himself in God he can sometimes do spiritual feats to impress others and guide them to the right path.
6. Lose yourself in Him and you will find Him.
7. Wash your heart with meditation so that it can shine to reflect His Noor.

ZA. WHEN YOU CAME TO MY HEART THEN I FOUND MYSELF IMMERSSED IN YOU: THE THING THAT SURPRISES ME, O LORD, IS THAT I, YOUR SLAVE, NOW FEEL THAT I AM YOU TOO.

1. When you will become holy (elevated or sinless) then you will feel the brightness that can perhaps be equalled to lightening.
  2. When you realize your insignificance then you will have immersed in the Noorani Ocean.
  3. People may say that God is a separate entity but you will know that He is you and that you are His slave and you will have the true knowledge of God.
  4. It is indeed your deeds that enable you to understand Him and when deeds are not adequate then your knowledge of Him will be inadequate.
- 5

DHAN DHAN SAAHEB TORO PA(N)TH KAAYAM TORO PA(N)TH  
SAYYED IMAAM SHAH

dhan dhan saaheb toro pa(n)th kaayam toro pa(n)th  
to reekheesar jeev ne udhaaroje.....1  
toro - weighing scale; ornamental tassel

It is a source of great happiness that You, Haazar Imaam are  
the Evaluator of the Path and You, the Everliving are the Evaluator of the  
Path.

Therefore redeem the souls of the true believers.

paameeyaa paameeyaa shaahnaa deedaar ruddaa maaraa shaah naa  
deedaar

to neet neet meelo shaah hareeyaa jee.....2

I have attained the Vision of the Lord, and indeed the Vision of my  
perfect Lord. Therefore meet daily the Imaam (in JamaatKhaanaa),  
for He is fresh of grace and mercy (and therefore you will be refreshed  
spiritually and you may also be blessed with what I have).

falleeyaa falleeyaa tarvar vaaeknaa ho tarvar vaaeknaa  
ha(n)sa ttabukyaa nur bhareeyaaajee.....3

vaaek - discourse

tarvar - full

ttabukyaa - elevated???

I have borne the fruits full of (meaningful) discourse.

My soul has been elevated and indeed filled with Light.

dasmo avtaar shaah takhat rachaaveeyaa shaah maaraa takhat  
rachaaveeyaa

shaah maaraa bes-she seer chhatra dhareeyaaajee.....4

The Tenth Manifestation of the Lord has established the throne,  
my Lord has indeed established the throne. My Lord will be seated  
upon it providing a cover(of protection) over our heads.

Iddhr imaamshaah ameeras boleeyaa re ameeras boleeyaa  
maaraa muneearne bahest navaajojee.....5

Indra Imaam Shaah has spoken the "Ameeras" (water of life) (and prays):  
"Bestow upon my believers the heavens".

DHARAMEE TE JE DHARAM VICHAARE BY SAYYED IMAAM SHAAH 06

jeere bhaaire dharamee thaine par nee(n)daa su(n) raache  
te dharamee nahee(n) pann chor.....2

O living brothers, a person who after becoming a religious person,  
engages in backbiting, is not a religious person but a thief.

jeere bhaaire satnu(n) maarag tene kaa(n)i nav suje  
te amathee alagaa jaanno.....3

O living brothers, this person is not at all inclined towards the path of  
truth and is remote from us.

**jeere bhaaire moman te je aapnnaa man ne samjaave  
avar samjaave so kesaa.....4**

**O living brothers, a momin is the one who explains (and reflects about  
the mysteries) in his own mind(heart). Why should he explain to  
others(who do not practise and hence cannot have that  
understanding).**

**jeere bhaaire kahe sayyed imaamshaah tame hetesu(n) aavo  
bhaai to aagal amaraapuree paamo.....5**

**O living brothers, Sayyed Imaamshaah says that you should come with  
love(to JamaatKhaanaa). Then brothers, ahead you will attain the  
eternal abode(abode of immortality).**

**O living brothers, have hearty conversations with the Guide and the  
Master("Gurnar") and perform the prescribed rites and rituals and the  
good deeds in a complete and perfect manner(with understanding of  
the inner purpose).**

**jeere bhaaire pa(n)jabhu vaaree jenne vash-j keedhaa  
te shaah naa didaar velaa paameeyaa.....10**



**O living brothers, the ones who have abandoned the five vices i.e. lust, anger, greed, attraction for the world and pride, and have completely got rid of them, have indeed attained the Vision of the Lord early(before death).**

jeere bhaaire amaraapuree maa(n) tenaa u(n)chaa chhe aavaas  
teeyaa karshe leennaa(n) laadd apaar.....11

O living brothers, in the eternal abode, the most exalted places of habitation are reserved for them. There they will perform limitless fondling.

jeere bhaaire bhanne sayyed imaamshaah jo man ne samjaavo  
to vahelaa amaraapuree maa(n) aavo.....12

O living brothers, Sayyed Imaam Shaah teaches that if you reflect (about these teachings) in your hearts, you will come to the eternal home early.

Source: Heritage Society Collection

**SATNA SAROVAR SARASAR BHARIYA**

Pir Sadardeen

O momins! Jamat Khana is like a vast lake full of invaluable treasures; treasures which will bring for you immense spiritual benefits. O momins! Follow the truth and build in your hearts a stronghold of love. ...1

O momins! When the soul receives the benefits of the spiritual practices. Evil makes an exit from the heart and everything becomes pure. ...2

O momins! Religious teachings are like a cool breeze that engulfs you. Indeed it is a spiritual bliss for which there is no comparison. ...3

O momins! Drink from this pure spiritual lake and rid yourselves of the evil. Be like a thirsty man, and drink till eternity from this spiritual lake (Jamat Khana). ...4

Cherish the four virtues in your hearts (truth, patience, tolerance and prayers). And get rid of the five evils

#### **14. Thoughts to Intention and expression or manifestation – Five stages**

Prophet Mohammed said in an Al Hadith, Allah (SWT) overlooks thoughts as long as these thoughts are not given practical expression – fiunal intention and action

There are five stages in thoughts viz.

- I. Haajis – This is a thought which in the beginning produces no reaction in the nafs (soul) also called by some as the higher consciousness.
- II. Khaatir – If one fails to eliminate the thought and it establishes its presence in the soul but your soul does not give it practical expression then this thought enters the Khaatir stage.
- III. Hadeethun – In this stage the soul ponders whether it should put into action or negate the thought which has established itself without giving preference to any side. NB. The law regarding these three stages is that there is no punishment at this stage.
- IV. Hamm – In this stage the soul partially inclines to one side in the formation of the Niyat (i.e. whether to commit or shun the act). In this stage reward is given if the thought is good and punishment if evil. This is the firm intention stage.
- V. Azm – In this stage the intention is firm. The Niyat is firm. The decision is made to give practical expression to Act. Reward and punishment are applicable to this stage as well.

15. Niyat (Intention), has to do with that which is possible AND that which is not possible. Unlike qasd (objectives) and iraadah (will), which have nothing to do with that which is not possible, whether it is one's actions or of another.

There are four types of people in this world:

- a. a man to whom Allah gives wealth and knowledge, so he fears his Lord with regard to the way in which he disposes of his wealth, and he uses it to uphold ties of kinship and he realizes that Allah has rights over it. This man occupies the highest status.
- b. And a man to whom Allah has given knowledge but did not give him wealth, so he says, 'If I had wealth I would have done the same as so and so is doing.' So he will be rewarded according to his intention [niyyah] and the reward of both of them is the same.
- c. And a person to whom Allah has given wealth but not knowledge. That is the worst status before Allah.
- d. Then he said: A person to whom Allaah has given neither wealth nor knowledge, and he says: 'If I had money I would have done what so and

so is doing'. So, he will be judged according to his intention [niyyah], and the burden (of sin) of both of them will be the same."

Therefore niyyah has to do with that which is possible and that which is not possible. This is unlike qasd (objectives) and iradah (will). They have nothing to do with that which is not possible, be it your actions or that of others.

*Badaa'i' al-Fawaa'id* (3/190). See also *al-Qawaa'id al-Kulliyyah wa'l-Dawaabit al-Fiqhiyyah* by Dr. Muhammad 'Uthmaan Shabeer, p. 93, 94.

16. "Bay'ah is the spiritual contract or covenant that every Ismaili Muslim or murid has made with the Ismaili Imam of the Time. Bay 'ah gives the murid the right to access the Imam's teachings, guidance, blessings, and spiritual medicine, and the Jamatkhanah is the private space where the Imam makes these available to his murids. The bay'ah, an Arabic word which means "buying/selling", is a two-way contract that includes a commitment from the murid and a commitment from the Imam. Thus, the bay'ah between the murid and the Imam is a spiritual "transaction" or "contract" in which the murid commits his allegiance, devotion, and obedience in exchange for the Imam's spiritual guidance, intercession, blessings, and purification – in this world and in the afterlife."

You perform bay'ah, but you must first understand it's meaning and then offer bay'ah. When you offer me bay'ah it means that you extend your hand to me with a promise...He who obeys me and promises to follow me after offering me bay'ah I also give him my promise that I shall hold his hand in the Hereafter. The trials and tribulations of the Day of Judgment are very frightening and painful. I will keep him away from this.

– Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III,  
(Manjewadi, October 31, 1903, quoted in Kamaluddin Ali, Practices and Ceremonies)

The act of bay'ah indicates that a person accepts the Ismaili Imam as his or her spiritual master and guide:

It is incumbent upon the parents that they should first make their children my murid through the performance of bay'ah...Those who have not offered bay'ah they have not signed to accept our faith. Just as you sign on an agreement in your business and in other dealings, similarly, through bay'ah, I take signature from your soul.

– Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III,

(Kutch Nagalpur, November 27, 1903)

Bay'ah as a religious practice goes back to the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an mentions it in numerous verses (48:10, 16:91, 48:18, and 60:12) – (Ismail gnosis)

M Chatur

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