

Holy congregation of Ismaili Muslims, in presence of Imam

Chronology of Prayers

These religious congregations, and Prayers, in the presence of, and presided by Imams, are called Deedars¹. Prayers start before Imam arrives. When Imam arrives, prayers continue, starting with a prayer for blessings, and remembrance, called Salwat, meaning “*O Allah, let Your Blessings be upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad*”. The family and ancestors of the present Imam, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan³, are members the family of Prophet Mohammed.

1. Prayers of Affirmation

This Affirms acknowledges and invokes, the spiritual relationship of the Imam of the time, with believers (Murids). This is also a renewal of the oath of allegiance⁵ (Bayah⁵), to the Imam, in return for spiritual & worldly guidance (Firmans⁶, and blessings, from the Quran -Talim and Tawil)

These are followed by prayers of acknowledgement, and acceptance with Insignia’s symbolising Imam’s divinely ordained light (Noor³), and authority³

First: The Chain of Office of Imam³ which symbolises one Light, (Noor¹), of all Imams, and of the spiritual link between the Imam and every believer (Murid)

Second: The Holy Qur’an. This symbolises acceptance of the message and guidance from God. Also, an affirmation that “there is no Allah (God), but God, and Mohammed the messenger of God” (The Shahada)

Third: The Ismaili Constitution and the Inkwell following an Alid-Fatimid tradition of the Intellect and Knowledge in the service of both Din and Dunya. (acceptance of Authority, knowledge (Noor), and Firmans⁶ of Imam)

Fourth: The Ceremonial Sword from the time of Prophet Mohammed PBUH, and after him the first Imam, Hazrat Ali, symbolising the defence and protection of the faith and its values, and dispensation of justice according to the Quran and Guidance (Firmans⁶) by Imams.

Fifth: The Parasol of Fabric matching the Imam's robe garments – Traditionally representing Imam's Divinely Ordained Authority which is also affirmed in the Ismaili constitution⁶.

2. **Quran recitation** – (Prayer/worship)
3. **Recitation of Ginan (Hymn)** – Indian, south Asian tradition - Worship & prayer
4. **Recitation of qasida (Hymn)** - Syrian central Asian tradition - Prayer and worship
5. **Bayah** - Renewal offer and prayer⁵, which is accepted by Imam. A solemn oath acknowledging Imam's authority, and promise to abide by Imams Firmans⁶
6. **Mehmani** - offering with prayers to Imam for blessings and guidance. This is done on behalf of Jamat by those representing and serving the Jamat - (Prayer and worship)
7. **Blessings for the religious purification**- Abe Shafa – (Prayer, blessing and worship)
8. **Firman⁶ and Blessings by Hazar Imam** (worldly and spiritual guidance for the wellbeing of all believers).
9. **A Gift (Nazrana)**, is given to Imam from the community, and handed to Imam on their behalf, by those appointed constitutionally⁶ and delegated.
10. **Imam leaves, with recitations of prayers**, by the congregation and blessings (Khanavadan) from Imam. (ending prayers/blessing).

Bayah and Oath of allegiance⁵ (Prayer offered to Imam)⁵

The following prayers, and renewal were re-affirmed, offered to, and accepted by Imam. This was offered on behalf of all believers (Murids) by the Chairman of Leaders International Forum -LIF (One of the constitutional⁶ entities of the community) - *Quote*

“Khudawand² we now wish to submit our pledges and loyalty. I request the Jamat to be upstanding.

Oh, Imam e Zaman, on this 11th Day of July 2017, on this auspicious occasion of the commencement of your Diamond Jubilee year, we present here before you, we voice our emotions, commitment and sentiments of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world.

We submit our homage to you and reaffirm our Bayah. Representing our Ismaili brothers and sisters we make the following solemn pledges

- 1. Mawla we submit to you our unreserved spiritual allegiance⁵*
- 2. We pledge our absolute loyalty*
- 3. We submit ourselves to you as our Imam, Pir and Mursheed to lead us on the path of Surat ul mustaqeem*
- 4. We submit all our love devotion and dedication to you*
- 5. We submit our allegiance to you as the bearer of true authority³*
- 6. We pledge our unreserved and unconditional support for all your endeavours*
- 7. We pledge our total support in your work in the. Abuse of Islam, our faith, peace, compassion and human dignity*
- 8. We submit our humble gratitude for your constant care, protection, guidance, and inspiration*

9. *We pray for the safety security good health and long life for all who are near and dear to you*

10. *We pray that we be blessed with your Imam³ for ever more*

Ya Mawla we pray you accept our humble pledges and submissions. Amen

Khudawand we beg to submit this scroll in affirmation of our pledges. (A scroll is given to Hazar Imam on behalf of all murids, which is accepted by Imam - symbolising the offer and acceptance of Bayah⁵) “

This religious congregation¹ is considered by all Ismaili Muslims to be the highest of congregation. And it is additional to, and not the same as, the daily congregational prayers in Ismaili Muslim Prayer halls (Jamat Khannas).

Maheeb Chatur©

26 April 2020

Bibliography – Links

1. Meaning and significance of Deedars and Noor - link <http://ismaili.net/source/didar-meaning.pdf>
2. Meaning “oh Lord”, an address for Imam of the Time, whose religious title is “Noor³ Mawlana Shah Karim Al Husseini Hazar Imam”
3. Link to divinely ordained authority and Noor of Imam e Zaman - link <http://www.ismaili.net/html/modules.php?op=modload&name=phpBB2&file=viewtopic&t=9224>
4. Firmans⁶ - The obligation to give read understand and share Firmans⁶ with all believers (Murids) link <http://ismaili.net/timeline/2018/101-proofs-chatur.pdf>
5. Baya’h (Bayat) - Bay ‘ah is the spiritual and material 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 Jamat Khanna is the private space where the Imam makes these available to his murids.

Bay 'ah, a word which means "buying/selling", is a two-way contract that includes a commitment from the murid and a commitment from the Imam.

Bay 'ah between the murid and the Imam is a spiritual and a material "transaction" or "contract" in which the murid commits his allegiance, devotion, and obedience (walayah) in exchange for the Imam's spiritual guidance, intercession, blessings, and purification – in this world and in the afterlife.

Imam said. "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)

"Lo! those who swear allegiance (Bayah) unto thee (Muhammad), swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So, whosoever breaketh his oath, breaketh it only to his soul's hurt; while whosoever keepeth his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestow immense reward." Quran 48:10

"It is incumbent upon the parents that they should first make their children my murid through the performance of bay 'ah³³...Those who have not offered Bayah. 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 soul²¹.– Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III, (Kutch Nagalpur, November 27, 1903)

6. Ismaili constitution and Firman. A Firman is defined by Imam as "Any pronouncement, direction, order or ruling made or given by Mawlana Hazar Imam" (Imam)
Link to the constitution - 1998
<http://www.ismaili.net/html/modules.php?op=modload&name=phpBB2&file=viewtopic&t=8190>