

The Bohra Faith

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AN INVITATION

This is an invitation to all who believe in the supremacy of reason. If you are sincere about your religion and thoughtful for your hereafter, you cannot have blind faith regarding tenets of faith.

If at all your religion is the only right path, is it not the duty of all your co-religionists to invite the followers of other faith towards your beliefs?

Has the Almighty ordained salvation only people born in particular community?

Belief is not sufficient for salvation. You have to perform good deeds also. You cannot pay the high priest a sum of money and obtain exemption from prayers and fasts.

LACK OF AVAILABLE MATERIAL DUE TO SECRECY

When we decided to compile this booklet we had to face the insurmountable task of finding authentic material on Bohra faith. Internet search revealed a lot of matter on Bohra society and activities of their organizations but as for the articles of faith there was absolutely nothing. In contrast if you visit the Ithna Ashari site: al-islam.org you have an ocean of material on Shia beliefs and faith.

The main excuse given by the Bohras is Taqaiyyah. Taqaiyyah is good so far as it protects the faith and its followers. But it is not allowed if there is danger to faith itself. All the Imams of Shias practiced Taqaiyyah but not

at the cost of their followers getting astray from the true faith.

Even if Taqaiyyah was necessary once upon a time why is it needed today?

If you ask a Bohra about it he would invariably say that article of faith and knowledge of beliefs are very subtle matters, we must not delve into details or we shall be prone to error.

If you prod him more he will say, "Our Dai has taken guarantee of the correctness of our belief and once we have faith in him we can be assured that our faith is authentic."

In brief, the common Bohras are supposed to do taqleed in matters of belief. As for those who are educated in the religious sciences they are trained in the dogma right from their childhood and hence there is nothing which can make them see light.

It must be noted that there is sparse information about the early history and beliefs of the Ismaili sect available to the general public. The Ismailis have always maintained utmost secrecy regarding their activities due to their fear of persecution. Therefore, the early Ismaili history is laden with many uncertainties and obscurities. Daftary, an Ismaili scholar writes, "Little reliable information is available on the history and doctrines of early Ismailis who contributed so much to the success and intellectual development of their movement. As a result, many aspects of early Ismailism continue to be shrouded in uncertainty, causing irreconcilable

disagreements among scholars regarding vital issues" (The Ismailis, 91).¹

WHY DO BOHRAS CONCEAL THEIR LITERATURE?

According to the Bohra faith it is obligatory to conceal their belief, literature and everything connected with their religion from non-Bohras. Even the common Bohras are not supposed to read religious books without the permission of their religious elders. The selected few are issued copies of book duly stamped with the name of the person written on every other page so that if it is photocopied they would at once come to whose copy is being circulated.

Consequently the Bohras are unaware of their history and beliefs. Only books allowed to them are Dua books. They are not supposed to even read translation of the Holy Quran.

The Bohras are not encouraged to think rationally while Quran emphasizes on rational arguments and challenges man to think! Before we begin our discussion on the Bohra religion let us study briefly about their history and origin.

¹ The Crisis in the Succession to Imam Jafir Sadiq (AS) and the Emergence of Ismailism, Ruby Attari

HISTORY AND MAIN BELIEFS OF BOHRAS²

The Dawoodi Bohras, in common with other Shia Muslims, believe that the Prophet chose his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) as his successor and that an Imam descended from them both through the Prophet's daughter Fatema (s.a.) will always exist on earth as the final interpreter of religion and as a perfect guide to the faithful. The Imams functioned initially from Medina and then later from Egypt, where they led vast areas of the Muslim World as the Fatimid Caliphs. This era produced a unique tradition which is now called Fatimid. From the 21st Imam onwards, all Imams to date have chosen to remain in seclusion. It is an article of faith for the Bohras, that whilst the Imam chooses to remain in seclusion his mission is headed by his representative called *al-Dai al-Mutlaq*, meaning "absolute caller to the faith". This office, first instituted in Yemen in the 12th century, moved to India in the 16th century and has remained there ever since. Since 1965, the office is held by His Holiness Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin (T.U.S.), its 52nd incumbent.

There are about a million Dawoodi Bohras all over the world.³

The word Bohra is derived from the Gujarat word *vohorvu*, meaning "to trade".

² For information about the Dawoodi Bohra community, please visit the Dawoodi Bohra Internet Resource Site.

³ *Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford University Press)

The early Hindu converts of the eleventh century comprised a single group of Ismaili Bohras owing allegiance to the dai mutlaq in Yemen.

The dai mutlaq operates as the sole representative on the secluded Ismaili Imam, and as such has had a great influence on the history, faith, and practice of the Ismaili Bohra.

The term "Bohra" applies most commonly to the Daudi Bohras. The Daudi Bohra community has largely been molded into its present form by the two dais who have led the community in the twentieth century. The fifty-first dai was Tahir Sayf al-Din (1915-1965).

The religious hierarchy of the Daudi Bohras is essentially Fatimid and is headed by the dai mutlaq who is appointed by his predecessor in office.

The Bohras follow the Fatimid school of jurisprudence, which recognizes seven pillars of Islam. Wilayah (love and devotion) for Allah, the Prophets, the imam, and the dai is the first and most important of the seven pillars. The others are taharah (purity and cleanliness), Salah (prayers), zakah (Purifying religious dues), sawm (fasting), hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), and jihad (holy war).

The Daudis use an arabicized form of Gujarati, called lisan al-dawah, which is permeated with Arabic words and written in Arabic script.

EARLY ISMA'ILISM

Early Isma'ilism, is the most obscure major phase in the entire history of Isma'ilism. It extends from the proto- Isma'ili origins of the movement, in the middle of

the 2nd/8th century, to the establishment of the Fatimid Caliphate in the year 297/909, a period of almost one and a half centuries.

It seems that the early Ismailis produced only a few treatise which circulated mainly among the most trusted members of their community. Another point to be noted here is that the meager literary output of the early Ismailis soon became obsolete and was subjected to censorship by the Fatimids; not only because the earlier works appeared rather crude compared to the elaborate treatises of the Fatimid period but, more importantly, because some of the views contained in them were in conflict with the official Fatimid doctrines.

The earliest historical work in Ismaili literature is the Iftitah al-dawa of the famous al-Qadi al-Numan (d. 363/974), who served the first four Fatimid caliphs in different capacities.

Furthermore, only one general history of Isma'ilism seems to have been written by an Isma'ili; the 'Uyun al-akhbar of Idris 'Imad al-Din (d. 872/1468), the 19th Tayyibi dai in Yaman. This is a seven-volume history from the time of the Prophet until the opening phases of the Tayyibi dawa in Yaman. In all these Isma'ili historical works, the opening stage of the Isma'ili movement is treated with great obscurity.⁴

The Imam al-Sadiq's Shi'i partisans split into six groups, two of which constituted the nucleus of the nascent Isma'iliyya.

Thus, Musa al-Kazim soon received the allegiance of the majority of the Imami Shi'is, including the most

⁴ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

renowned scholars in al-Sadiq's entourage, such as Hisham b. al-Hakam and Mumin al-Ta'q who had supported Musa from the start. Musa, later counted as the seventh imam of the Twelvers, refrained from all political activity and was more quiescent than his father.

Two other groups supporting the claims of Isma'il b. Ja'far and constituting the proto-Ismailis, issued from amongst the Imami Shi'i following of the Imam al-Sadiq. However, these pro- Isma'il or proto- Isma'il i groups seceded from the rest of the Imamiyya only after al-Sadiq's death. One group, denying the death of Isma'il during his father's lifetime, maintained that he was the true imam after al-Sadiq; they further believed that Isma'il remained alive and would eventually return as the Mahdi. These Shi'is defended their claims by noting that al-Sadiq, who is an imam could speak only the truth, had done nothing to revoke Isma'il's succession rights to the imamate; accordingly, they had no reason for renouncing their allegiance to Isma'il. They believed that the Imam al-Sadiq had announced Isma'il's death merely as a ruse to protect his son, whom he had hidden because he feared for his safety. Al-Nawbakhti and al-Qummi call the members of this group, recognizing Isma'il as their Imam-Mahdi, the 'pure Isma'iliyya' (al-Isma'iliyya al-khalisa). Some later heresiographers, notably al-Shahrastani, designate this group as al-Isma'iliyya al-waqifa, referring to those who stopped their line of imams with Isma'il.⁵

There was a second group of pro- Isma'il Shi'is who, affirming Isma'il's death during the lifetime of al-Sadiq,

⁵ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

now recognized Muhammad b. Isma'il as their imam. They held that he was the rightful successor to Isma'il and that the Imam al-Sadiq had personally designated him as such, after Isma'il's death. According to these partisans of Muhammad, the imamate could not be transferred from brother to brother after the case of the Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn.

The Imami heresiographers call this group the Mubarakiiyya, named supposedly after their leader al-Mubarak, a mawla of Isma'il.

At the same time, Isma'il had to be elevated retrospectively to the imamate. In other words, it was maintained that while al-Sadiq was still alive, the imamate had passed from him to Isma'il. At any rate, it is certain that al-Mubarakiiyya was the original name of the nascent Isma'iliyya.

Al-Qummi identifies al-Isma'iliyya al-khalisa with the Khattabiyya; and al-Nawbakhti has a similar statement. Furthermore, both authors, intent on showing the influence of the Khattabis on the nascent Isma'iliyya, report that a group of Abu'l-Khattab's followers after his death joined the supporters of Muhammad b. Isma'il, claiming that in spirit of the Imam al-Sadiq had passed into Abu'l-Khattab and from him, to Muhammad b. Isma'il.⁶

According to some Isma'il i authors, Isma'il survived the Imam al-Sadiq. However, the majority of sources report that he predeceased his father in Medina, and was buried in the Baqi cemetery.

⁶ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

Many Isma'ili and non- Isma'ili sources repeat the story of how, before and during Isma'il's funeral procession, the Imam al-Sadiq made deliberate attempts to show the face of his dead son to witnesses.⁷

In addition, in the accounts of Isma'il's death and burial, al-Mansur, who succeeded his brother in 136/754, is usually named as the ruling 'Abbasid caliph. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Isma'il's premature death occurred sometime during 136-145/754-763, probably soon after 136 A.H.⁸

According to another report, Isma'il was evidently involved in a militant anti-regime plot in collaboration with several others, including Bassam b. Abd Allah al-Sayrafi, another extremist Shi'i engaged in money lending in Kufa. The caliph al-Mansur summoned Isma'il along with the Imam al-Sadiq, as well as Bassam, to his administrative capital at al-Hira near Kufa. The suspected plotters were taken before the caliph, who had Bassam executed but spared Isma'il. Massignon places the date of this event in the year 138/755, and suggests that Bassam had the responsibility of financing the alleged plot. This is one of the occasions reported by the Imami sources, during which al-Sadiq expressed his strong disapproval of Isma'il's activities.⁹

All this evidence confirms the existence of close relations between Isma'il and the radical circles in al-Sadiq's following; and it definitely places the young

⁷ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

⁸ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

⁹ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

Isma'il amongst those Shi'is who were not satisfied with their imam's conservatism and passivity. Ja'far al-Sadiq could not approve of such activities that were at variance with his efforts to consolidate Shi'ism on a quiescent basis.¹⁰

Lewis, too, accepts the idea of 'spiritual adoption' and envisages a close collaboration between Isma'il and Abu'l-Khattab who, according to him, worked for the creation of a revolutionary Shi'I sect comprised of all the minor Shi'I groups, around the imamate of Isma'il and his descendants.¹¹

THE RELIGION OF THE FATIMIDS

Cosmogony and Eschatology

In making a statement concerning Ismaili doctrines of the Fatimid period we begin with Zahr al Maani, which was written by Imam Idris Imad al din and is really a compendium of Ismaili esoteric teaching. It belongs to the Musa lian line, and therefore also to the Fatimid. Here we read that

The Supreme God is beyond our comprehension and has no relation with the worlds. Nothing can be predicated to Him and no attributes are applicable to Him. He is above all definitions of existence (ays) and

¹⁰ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

¹¹ Daftary, Farhad. *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines*. Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1990.

non-existence (lays). We know nothing about Him. The only possibility of the recognition of His unity is to admit our inability to recognize Him. The nearest approach to the knowledge of the Supreme God (al-Mubdi) is only possible by the recognition of an intermediary.¹²

Ismailism cycles

Ismailism emphasizes cycles. Owing to differences in time and place one revelation is insufficient. There have, therefore, been cycles of revelation, each initiated by a Prophet or Natiq, a speaker. These have been Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. A Prophet or Natiq brings a revelation of religious truth, not abrogating the revelation of his predecessor, but adapting it to the new time and situation. He is the speaker, the one who proclaims the revelation. With the Prophet through-out his life must be another known as the Asas, who is also, but less common, called the Samit, or Silent One. After each Prophet there are six Imams, followed again by the seventh who initiates a new cycle, and really ranks as a Prophet. Distinctive of Ismailism in the Fatimid period is the place given to Ali ibn Abi Talib, as Asas, or Asas al Imamat, the foundation of the Imamate, and is thus raised to a position above all other Imams.¹³

¹² The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

¹³ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

The Foundations

Among the 'Foundations' in Ismaili doctrine the Imamate easily holds first place. As with the Twelvers, the line of the Imamate is confined to the family of 'Ali and Fatima; and Imam must have a male child, for to be without a successor would at once falsify the position of such Imam; an Imam must clearly designate his successor, for only he can tell which son has received the nass; and in this the Imam can make no mistake. The Imam is regular succession is an Imam mustaqarr. In case an Imam dies leaving a minor as his successor he may temporarily designate one to act for him until his maturity and such a 'temporary' Imam is called mustawda.' The provision is thought to belong to the late Fatimid period. (Hamdani, op. cit., p. 217.¹⁴)

Ismailis and Quranic Tafseer

Among Sunnis and among Ithna Ashariya we found commentaries which would explain to the seeker the meaning of plain and hidden passages in the Quran. Ivanow states that he has been assured by "some learned specialists" in whom he has fullest confidence, "that there is no such thing as a work of tafsir in Ismailism." The obvious reason for this is that passages that need interpretation can be explained only by the Imam, and such secret knowledge is kept secret by the oath of allegiance.

¹⁴ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

The Sunna

As there is no commentary so there is no collection of traditions. The standard work of fiqh in Ismailism is Qadi Numans, Daaim al Islam which we have already seen is recognized as the work of the Imam. In this, not only as a pattern, but as a complete system of law, no traditions are used beyond the time of Ja'far al Sadiq and few if any before him excepting only Muhammad al Baqir.¹⁵

The principles of rai, qiyas, ijtihaad and istihsan are all rejected on the ground of the proneness of human nature to err. The chief authority cited for this position is Ja'far al Sadiq. (Ivanow, A Creed of the Fatimids, para, 44; cf. 56, 75.¹⁶)

Before her death Hurra al Malika appointed Dhu'ayb ibn Musa as her successor to be in charge of the whole dawat. He was the first Dai al mutlaq, or dai in absolute charge. The person holding, this office is the personal representative of the concealed Imam, and to the time of the nineteenth dai was believed to be in secret correspondence with the Imam.¹⁷

BOHRA SOURCE MATERIAL

Because of the lack of source materials, studies in Fatimi history have at times been subject to error. The source materials indeed consist of the books written by

¹⁵ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

¹⁶ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

¹⁷ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

Fatimi authors at the court of the Fatimi Imams, recording what they have seen and remembered of their Imams. They also cover the volumes written by Fatimi authors on the basis of the original books and records that were preserved by them.

The first set of authors who wrote voluminous books, gave discourses and prepared compilations and handouts were eminent dignitaries of the Fatimi period like Syedna Abi Hatim Al-Razi, Syedna Qadhi-en-Numan, Syedna Moyyed Shirazi and such other illustrious scholars. To them should go the credit for leaving a rich treasure-house of literature.

The second set of authors were those who, inheriting the Fatimi wealth of literature and also a keen perception of its background on the culmination of Fatimi rule in Egypt, based their writings on the original documents. They chose Yemen as their new centre of activity; and observing the evolution of the Fatimi civilisation, they assimilated it in their very being and manner of thinking. They not only preserved the Fatimi books, but also guided others to them, and themselves wrote volumes on the basis of the documents or communications sent to them by their Imams. The communications, woven on silken cloth, were preserved by the Yemen scholars for centuries. These too deserve praise for their efforts.

So, it may truly be said that the immense treasure of Fatimi literature consists of both types of books, firstly, those of contemporary dignitaries like Al-Majalisval-Musayerat, Iftiahud Dawat and Daaemul-Islam, all written by Qadhi-en-Numan bin Mohammed at the instance and under the patronage of the Fatimi Imam al-

Moiz, who was the founder of Cairo and of the Al-Azhar University. There are many more of such books.

Uyunul-Akhbar, comprising old Yemeni manuscripts preserved in the library of His Holiness, is considered to be the most authentic source book of Fatimi history. A portion of these manuscripts is in the hand-writing of the author himself, Syedna Idris Imaduddin (872 A.H). The text of the book, running into seven volumes, bears eloquent testimony to the care taken by him in presenting without any bias established historical events.

The book presents Islamic history from its inception to the time of the Fatimi Imams. In dealing with the subject, the author has made the personalities of the Imams the pivot around which the story moves.

Syedna Idris Imaduddin is thus the first Fatimi historian to compile a book with selective, accurate details, thus ensuring for it an unrivalled place among writings on the subject.

The author, Syedna Idris Imaduddin, was the 19th Dai in the line of Fatimi dignitaries. He was born in the year 794 A.H. in a fortress of Shibam, a high mountain in the western region of Yemen near the Red sea. He passed away at the same place at the age of 78 in 872 A.H. His grave, high on the top of the mountain, is as well known today as the water-place beside which he used to carry on his literary activities.

Compiled by Al-Jamea-tus-Saifiyah to serve as a note of information on the valuable presents offered to His Excellency the President of the United Arab Republic during his visit to India in 1960, courtesy of Sakina Goolamabbas

WAS THERE A CLEAR NASS (DESIGNATION) FOR ISMAIL?

The complicated history surrounding the succession of Imam Sadiq (AS) revolves around the designation or nass of Ismail as the next Imam by Imam Sadiq (AS), the life of Ismail, Ismail's relations with radical, insurrectionary Shia circles, the timing of the death of Ismail, and the supposed change of nass decreed by Allah (SWT).¹⁸

DID ISMAIL PREDECEASE HIS FATHER?

Most of the Ismaili and non-Ismaili sources agree that Imam Sadiq (AS) had initially designated Ismail as his successor. However, the Ithna Asharis' claim that there was a change of nass by the will of Allah (SWT). "According to the majority of sources, both Ismailis and non-Ismaili, Imam Sadiq had originally designated Ismail as his successor by the rule of nass. "There cannot be any doubt regarding the historicity of their designation, which provides the basis of the Ismaili claims." (A Short History of the Ismailis, 33). However, it is a historical fact that Ismail predeceased his father. The Ithna Asharis claim that Allah (SWT) decreed a change in the nass which was confirmed by the fact that Ismail passed away before the death of his father. Some Ismailis agree that Ismail predeceased his father while other Ismailis disagree. Daftary accounts, "According to the Ismaili

¹⁸ Ruby Attari, The Crisis in the Succession to Imam Jafir Sadiq (AS) And the Emergence of Ismailism

religious tradition and as reported in some of their sources, Ismail survived his father and succeeded in due course. But most sources relate that he died before his father" (A Short History of the Ismailis, Daftary). History also accounts for the fact that Imam Sadiq (AS) showed the dead face of his son to many witnesses to confirm his death. The majority of the sources do not dispute that Imam Sadiq (AS) declared Ismail as his successor and that Ismail predeceased his father.

The majority of Ismailis today do not believe that Ismail predeceased his father. According to the current Ismaili creed, Allah (SWT) bestowed Imamate upon Imam Ali (AS), Imam Husayn (AS), Imam Zainul Abideen (AS), Imam Muhammad Baqir (AS), Imam Jafir Sadiq (AS), Ismail, and the Imams that descended from the line of Ismail. Ismailis do not consider Imam Hasan (AS) as an Imam because of their belief that Imamate cannot be transferred between brothers.¹⁹

LIFE OF ISMAIL

The life of Ismail is also shrouded with mystery. His exact date of birth is unknown yet approximated between 100/719 and 103/722. His mother was apparently Fatima, the first wife of Imam Sadiq (AS). Ismail was the second son and twenty-five years senior to Imam Musa Kazim (AS) who was the son of a different wife of Imam Sadiq (AS) (Sadiq Ali, 139). The Ithna Ashari Shia sources are critical regarding the

¹⁹ The Crisis in the Succession to Imam Jafir Sadiq (AS) And the Emergence of Ismailism By Ruby Attari

character of Ismail. However, not surprisingly, the Ismaili sources exalt and praise Ismail. Yet, the Ismaili sources have very little historical information about Ismail. Daftary comments, "He is highly revered by them, but unfortunately, Ismaili sources such as the Uyun al-Akhbar contain little historical information of any value concerning him. On the other hand, the Twelver sources, which are better informed than the Sunni sources regarding the Shii sub-sects, are basically hostile towards Ismail and the claims raised on his behalf" (The Ismailis, 97). The Ismailis quote that Imam Sadiq (AS) said, "He is the Imam after me, and what you learn from him is just the same as if you have learnt it myself" (Ali, 139). Also, once when Imam Sadiq (AS) was ill, he apparently called his trusted followers, members of his family, and handed the authority to Ismail. Evidently Imam Sadiq (AS) guarded and educated Ismail. Ismailis claim that a few events were especially indicative that Ismail was the true successor of Imam Sadiq (AS). For example, they state an instance when Imam Sadiq (AS) was absent and Ismail acted on behalf of his father as the head of the family (Sadiq Ali, 140). Another incidence was when Maulli bin Khunyas was killed by an Abbasid governor and Ismail resolved dispute. Ismail is often praised in Ismaili texts and his status as the successor of Imam Sadiq (AS) is often alluded. However, the Ithna Ashari have a completely different view of Ismail. They consider him to be a degenerate who disobeyed his father. "The Sunni and Twelver sources regard Ismail as a reprobate, and an unworthy son of his father. The latter in particular seem to adopt an attitude of the less said the better" (Lewis, 38). Also, many historians claim that Ismail drank alcohol. "The general statement is that

Ismail was deposed by Ja'far because of his excessive inclination to drink" (Lewis, 38). Allegedly, Ismail also participated in certain radical, insurrectionary Shia circles. Evidently, Ismail was not satisfied with Imam Sadiq's quiescent attitude. There are some references in Ithna Ashari sources that report Ismail's close association with al-Mufaddal b Uman al-Jufi who was a money lender. Apparently, Imam Sadiq (AS) disapproved of the radical Shias who were influencing his son. Al-Mufaddil initially was a supporter of Abul-Khattab. Later he became a follower of Imam Musa Kazim (AS) (The Ismailis, 98).

Another narrative accounts that Ismail was in a militant anti-Abbasid plot that almost cost his life during the year 138/175. He was in collaboration with Basam b Abd Allah al-Sayrafi that was another radical Shia involved in money lending. Subsequently, caliph al-Mansur summoned Imam Sadiq (AS), Ismail, and Bassam to his court to interrogate them. Bassam was actually executed while Ismail's life was spared (The Ismailis, 98-99).

According to the Ithna Ashari sources, Imam Sadiq (AS) indicated his deep disapproval of these activities of Ismail. Daftary writes, "All this evidence confirms the existence of close relations between Ismail and the radical circles in al-Sadiq's following; and it definitely places the young Ismail amongst those Shias who were not satisfied with their imam's conservatism and passivity. Ja'far al-Sadiq could not approve of such activities that were at variance with his efforts to consolidate Shiism on a quiescent basis" (The Ismailis, 99).

Apparently, Ismail also had links with other extremist Shias such as Abul Khattab.

Abul Khattab was a mawla or client and one of the close companions of Imam Muhammad Baqir and Imam Sadiq (AS). But, Imam Sadiq (AS) later disassociated and disapproved of Abul Khattab's actions. Nawbakhti, one of the early Ithna Ashari scholars describes Abul Khattab as being a close companion of the above Imams who was actually appointed as a representative of the Imams in Kufa until he claimed that he was a prophet and heir to Imam Sadiq (AS) (Lewis, 34). Imam Sadiq (AS) denied that Abul Khattab had any form of esoteric knowledge. When the Imam (AS) was asked why Abul Khattab had been a close associate and then rejected, he replied, "There are some whom God has created for prophecy and they cannot be anything but prophets. There are some created for belief, and they cannot be anything but believers. Some God has entrusted with belief. If He wishes He may perfect and He wishes He may withdraw it. Abul Khattab was one of those to whom God lent belief and when he falsified my father's words God withdrew it" (Lewis, 34). Abul Khattab apparently accumulated a following. According to Daftary, Abu Khattab's followers rallied to the side of Ismail. The early Ismailis were composed of many of the followers of Abul Khattab. Some Ismaili scholars such as Sadiq Ali claim that Abul Khattab did know the unseen and the ism-e-azam. Also this scholar says that Imam Sadiq (AS) was practicing taqiyyah when he was issuing statements against Abul Khattab. Other Ismaili others disassociate Ismailism from Abul Khattab and proclaim him as a heretic. Daftary refers to the relationship in the following, manner: Al-Qummi identifies al-Ismailiyya al-

khalisa with the, Khattabiyya; and Al-Nawbakhti has a similar statement. Furthermore, both authors, intent on, showing the influence of the Khattabis on the nascent, Ismailiyya, report that a, group of Abul -Khattab's followers after his death joined the supporters of, Muhammad b. Ismail, claiming that the spirit of the Imam al-Sadiq had passed into, Abul-Khattab and from him, to Muhammad b. Ismail. Many later sources, too, speak of close connections between the early Ismailis and the Khattabis (The Ismailis, 96).

But, some Ismailis believe that Ismail used the name of Abul Khattab in order to protect his life, or otherwise known as taqiyyah. Sadiq Ali alleges that Ismail adopted the name Abul Khattab and the later adopted the name of Ismail. Another interesting link between Abul Khattab and Ismail is found in Umm al Kitab, the earliest Ismaili source that was a secret holy book unearthed from Central Asia. It describes Abul Khattab as being a central figure and founder of the religion. Apparently the Khattabiyyahs and the Ismailis seem to be linked intimately and perhaps were overlapping groups. Evidently, Ismail had contacts with Mubarak who was another extremist, militant Shia. Again, little is known about Mubarak. However, he was a mawla or servant of Muhammad b Ismail. Some sources account that Mubarak plotted with Abdallah b. Mamun al-Qaddah and found the sect of Mubarakiiyyah. They supported Ismail as the new Imam during the lifetime of his father and accepted that Ismail predeceased his father. After Imam Sadiq's death they considered Muhammad b Ismail as the next Imam. Daftary accounts that "It seems likely then that the Mubarakiiyya were at first the upholders of Ismail's

imamate, and it was only after al-Sadiq's death that the bulk of Ismaili's supporters rallied to the side of Muhammad b. Ismail and recognized him as their new imam. At the same time, Ismail had to be elevated retrospectively to the imamate. In other words, it was maintained that while al-Sadiq was still alive, the imamate had passed from him to Ismail" (The Ismailis, 96). But, there are other sources that seem to contradict this view. Some Ismailis and Orientalists believe that Mubarak was another name used by Ismail. Apparently, Ismail was practicing taqiyyah while adopting the name Mubarak. Sadiq Ali quotes Daftary as saying "It has now become evident that the name Mubarak was the epithet of Ismail himself and it was applied as such to him by his followers" (Sadiq Ali, 156). There is sufficient evidence that Ismail had contacts with Abul Khattab and Mubarak and perhaps he even used their identities as a cover in order to protect his life. It is apparent that early Ismailism was influenced by Abul Khattab and Mubarak.

The Ismailis also believe that time is divided into seven cyclical eras. Each era began with a speaker or natiq who brings divine revelation. The first six eras had Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (SAWA) as speakers. The natiq is succeeded by the samit or silent one who describes the inner or esoteric meanings of the divine revelations. The six eras had Seth, Sham, Ishmael, Aaron, Simon Peter, and Imam Ali (AS) as silent ones. The seventh Imam is the natiq of the next era who will abrogate the sharia and replace it with a new one. In the sixth era, according to the early Ismailis, the seventh samit was Muhammad b. Ismail and they were waiting for the final natiq to come (A Short History of Ismailis, 51). They also believed that

God assumes the form of a man. The author of Haft Bab comments, "It was the wish of God that He should be recognized and worshipped. He chose (for this) man, from all creation, and favored him with His own form and attributes and this (man's) form is His personal form" (Haft Bab-I Bu Ishaq, 37). Also, they believe that Prophet Adam (AS) was made in the form of God and quote Prophet Jesus (AS) in the Gospels describing that man is in the form of God (Haft Bab- I Bu Ishaq, 37). These are some of the beliefs of early Ismailis. Ismailism arose through great tumult and remained secretive throughout the centuries in order to avoid harassment. The majority of the early Ismailis' central argument in claiming the legitimacy of their sect is that Imam Ja'far Sadiq (AS) designated Ismail as his successor, Ismail did not pass away before the death of his father, and a change of nass did not occur. However, these claims are questionable and other doubts remain in the Ismaili argument. One of the remaining doubts is that through the historical accounts of both the Ismailis and the non-Ismailis, it is apparent that Ismail had connections with extremist Shia who his father did not approve. This disapproval of Ismail's activities by Imam Sadiq (AS) raises doubts about the legitimacy of Ismail's imamate.

Ismail had become involved with the extremist group, and had intrigued against his father. Lewis analysis of this charge does indicate that Ismail was in close association with Abu al Khattab and others who would be classed with the ghulat. Abu al Khattab had been active in the Shiite group with Imam Ja'far, but the latter had to repudiate him openly. The Asrar also states

that Ja'far had to forbid Ismail to go to the school with Abu al Khattab had been conducting.²⁰

NASS REGARDING ISMAIL IN ISMAILI BOOKS – REPLY

NASS FOR ISMAIL IS NOT PROVED FROM ISMAILI BOOKS

THERE IS NO STATEMENT OF IMAM SADIQ (A.S.) REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ISMAIL

THE FUNERAL OF ISMAIL

Ismailis say the funeral of Ismail was a farce because of fear of Caliph Mansur. This is not true because Ismail died in AH 133 and Mansur became caliph three years later

²⁰ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

BOHRAS BELIEVE THE IMAMATE OF IMAM SADIQ (A.S.) WAS TRANSFERRED TO ISMAIL DURING THE LIFETIME OF IMAM SADIQ (A.S.) – REPLY

TRADITIONS THAT PROVE LOVE AND ATTACHMENT OF IMAM SADIQ (A.S.) FOR ISMAIL DO NOT PROVE THE LATTER'S IMAMATE.

THE NUMBER OF IMAMS ARE TWELVE

Just as the Holy Prophet mentioned and pointed out the Straight Path, similarly he has enlightened us about the Twelve Imams and has spoken in great details about their merits.

Allamaa Sayed Abdulla Shoobbar in the first part of his book 'Haqqul Yaqeen' says that these sayings are so authentic that even friends and enemies are in agreement of the Twelve Imams.

Allama Bahrani Sayed Hashim in his book 'Gaayatul Maraam' has mentioned about the Twelve Imams upto Imam Mahdi and has given about 293 quotations from Sunni Aalims.

One of the most important saying of the Holy Prophet is, "After me there will be Twelve Imams," and none of the following Sunni Aalims have taken any objection to this statement. Shaikh Abdul Haqqey Dehaliv Hanafi 'Umedetool Kari', Sharaay Saheehay Bokhari and Muhamad Ibn Hajar-e-Hanafi.

Tirmizi in his book 'Jaamay' – Shaikh Suleman Ibn Hanafi Nakashbandi Kadri in 'Kitabey Yaanabayul Mowaddah, Shaikh Suleman Hanafi, quotes from Ibn

'Abbas that the Holy Prophet has mentioned that "after me the successors will be the twelve, pious, righteous and purified souls. The first of whom is Ali and the last of them is the Mahdi."²¹

SHIA IMAMS ARE MENTIONED WITH THEIR NAMES IN SUNNI BOOKS

Moowaffak bin Ahmed Khawarzamee has reported a narration from Abu Sulaiman Ravee that the Holy Prophet said that on the night of Ascension (Meraaj) when he was taken up to the Heavens, God said, 'Aamanar Rasoolo Bayma oonzayla elaihay mirrabbayh', 'The Prophet believeth in what had come down unto him from his Lord.' To this the Prophet replied 'Wal Momeeynoon' (and so do the believers) II: 285. God has said "O Muhammad I have chosen you from the whole world, and your name is linked with My name. I am Mahmood and you are Muhammad. Allah chose Ali from out of the world and joined his name with mine. Then God said, O Muhammad, you, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Husain and the Imams from the line of Husain all are created from My Noor (Light), and your love I will proclaim in the heavens and the earth. Those who have accepted you, will be near to me, and those who have not accepted you, will be like the unbelievers."

The Holy Prophet adds that God said, "O Muhammad if any of My subjects worship Me in the most devoted way, and if he has not been attached to you, then I will never forgive him." Then God asked the

²¹ Imam Musa Kazim, Yoosuf Lalljee

Holy Prophet whether he wanted to see his successors? “Yes, O my Lord”, then God asked him to look on the right side of the heavens. The Holy Prophet turned round to see, and he saw Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain, Ali ibn Husain, Muhammad ibn Ali, Ja’far ibn Muhammad, Musa ibn Ja’far, Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn Ali, Ali ibn Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ali and Muhammad Mahdi ibn-il-Hasan.

They were all there like glowing stars. Then God informed the Holy Prophet “these are My guardians over My subjects and are your Imams (Awsia), and the Mahdi will take revenge on your enemies.”

The above traditions are given by Shafei and Shaikh Mohamad Ibn Ibrahim Juvay Hamvaini. In this way the Ahl-e-Sunnat have given many authentic quotations and several important sayings of the Holy Prophet so as to make it known to their people.²²

IMAM JA’FAR SADIQ HAS CLEARLY SAID ABOUT THE IMAMATE OF IMAM MUSA KAZIM

Whatever the Holy prophet has said about the Imamate, has already been mentioned in the previous chapters. Every Imam has mentioned about his successor. Just as Imam Ali Amirul Momeneen appointed Imam Hasan as his successor, Imam Hasan appointed Imam Husain, Imam Husain appointed Imam Zainul Abedin, Imam Zainul Abedin appointed Imam Muhammad Baqir, Imam Muhammad Baqir appointed Imam Ja’far Sadiq, Imam Ja’far Sadiq appointed Imam

²² Imam Musa Kazim, Yoosuf Lalljee

Musa Kazim, Imam Musa Kazim was appointed Imam during the lifetime of his father as subsequent proofs will testify.

Kirshi in his book ‘Rijaal’ mentions that the first person to hear of the appointment of Imam Musa Kazim was Faiz ibne Mukhtar.

Ibn Salit mentions that he with others went to pay their respects to Imam Ja’far Sadiq. Ibn Salit greeted the Imam and said, ‘May my parents be sacrificed upon you, O my beloved Imam, you are our purified Imam and no one who is born is immune from death, and we have come to ask you about your successor’. The Imam pointed towards his sons, and then he pointed towards his son Musa and said that he will be the leader of them all. In him is tact, science, charity and love for the Creator, and whatever difficulties that people come across in their religion, he has all the answers to them and will guide them to the straight path. He has the best possible way of treating people and a wonderful tact of talking to them, and he is one of the doors leading to God.

Dawood Ibne Kasir asked Imam Ja’far Sadiq whom they would have to follow after him, to which the Imam replied that it would be his son Musa.

Once Imam Ja’far Sadiq openly proclaimed at a function that his son Musa would be the lawful Imam and rightful successor. At this function his sons Ali and Ishaq were also present and these two were termed as witnesses, and they were considered as learned divines. There were also present on the occasion, companions of Imam Ja’far Sadiq, and such other learned men whose knowledge of Islam was of a very high caliber and these were: Muffazzul bin Oomer, Maazbin Kaseer,

Abdulrehman bin Hajjaj, Faiz bin Mukhtar, Yakoob bin Sarraj, Imran bin Aayoon, Abu Baseer, Dawood-e-Rikkee, Yunus bin Zibyaan, Yazid bin Salit, Suleman bin Khaled, Safwanay Jammal. All of them were made to bear witnesses to the statement of Imam Ja'far Sadiq, regarding the Imamt of Imam Musa Kazim.

Ebrahim-e-Karkhi has mentioned that one day he went to Imam Ja'far Sadiq and whilst he was conversing with the Imam, his child Musa happened to come before them. He kissed the child and the Imam informed them "that after me, my son Musa will be your Imam."

"People will become his enemies and trouble him. But his enemies will suffer and may the wrath of Allah be on these murderers, and God will increase their punishment." Then the Imam informed me that after Imam Musa Kazim, his son Imam Ali Reza would be the Imam.

Walid bin Sabin narrates that he heard from Abdul Jaleel that Imam Ja'far Sadiq had made Hazrat Ismail his Successor. "I approached the Imam for clarification whether three years back he had proclaimed Hazrat Ismail as his successor?" Then Imam at once replied on oath, that he had never said it and he further said the he named Imam Musa Kazim as his successor.

Obaid Ibne Zorara narrates that the Holy Imam Ja'far Sadiq said "that it is Satan that comes in the form of Janab Ismail and deceives the people. It is absolutely certain that Satan can never appear in the form of a Prophet or an Imam. Now whoever says that my son Ismail is not dead but alive, it can be taken for granted that it is Satan appearing in the shape of Janab Ismail." Then the Imam informed me that the Imamt is in the

hands of God and HE will choose whomsoever He wants.

So God chose my son Musa as Imam, and Satan can never come in the likeness of Imam Musa and I praise the Lord for it. From this it is clear that Satan appeared in the likeness of Janab Ismail to deceive the people and create confusion, and it is also mentioned that Satan appeared in his garb even when he (Janab Ismail) was alive.

Kulaini in Furoo-e-Kafi mentions the followings: Janab Ismail had in his possession some Dirhams (currency of the place) and he decided to invest this amount with a businessman proceeding to Yemen for a share in a venture. Janab Ismail mentioned this to his father and the Imam informed him that the man was drunkard and to give him money for business or to have anything to do with him was very wrong. In spite of this advice, Ismail entrusted the amount to this stranger, who swindled him, and the money was lost.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq and Janab Ismail proceeded for the Haj Pilgrimage, and the Imam heard him supplicating to God to have his money returned. The Imam informed him that God would never listen to his request since he went against the wishes of the Imam.²³

THE DEATH OF HAZRAT ISMAIL

Hazrat Ismail was the eldest son of Imam Ja'far Sadiq, and when he was 28 years old, his brother Imam Musa Kazim was born. In these 28 years, people began

²³ Imam Musa Kazim, Yoosuf Lalljee

to feel that Hazrat Ismail would be the successor as they knew that the Imam loved him very much. This talk spread far and wide, and it was now left to Imam Ja'far Sadiq to make it known to the world who his successor would be.

Both Sunni and Shia authorities are unanimous in their verdict that Hazrat Ismail died during the lifetime of his father, Imam Ja'far Sadiq.

Saddrudin Hanafi-e-Kadri in his book 'Kitab Rawa-e-Hool Mustafa' mentions that Hazrat Ismail died during the lifetime of his father Imam Ja'far Sadiq in Urez, and his body was taken to Medina for burial.

As soon as the soul left the body, Imam Ja'far Sadiq closed the eyes of Hazrat Ismail with his own hands and kissed his face. Then he ordered that the body should be given the purification bath, and finally when the shroud was put on the body, Imam Ja'far Sadiq wrote the following inscription along with the name of Hazrat Ismail: 'Ismailo Yash hado an lailaha illalla.' I bear witness that there is no God but Allah.'

After the death of Hazrat Ismail, Imam Ja'far Sadiq did his best to spread the news of his death so that no one should think him to be Imam, and people should not be misled.

Dawood bin Kaseeray Rikkee, Himran bin Aamoon, Abu Basheer, Muffazzal ibne Oomer and 30 of his near and dear companions were asked by the Imam to uncover the face of Hazrat Ismail and ascertain whether he was dead or not.

Dawood confirmed that Hazrat Ismail was dead and all the rest were told to be witnesses. Then Imam Ja'far Sadiq prayed, O Allah, you bear witness to this.'

After the purification bath, Imam Ja'far Sadiq asked Muffazzal to verify once again by looking at the face of Hazrat Ismail. Muffazzal after seeing the face confirmed that Hazrat Ismail was dead and there could be not doubt whatsoever. All those present were asked to bear witness, for Imam Ja'far Sadiq knew very well the controversy that would arise from this. Once again he asked God to bear witness and then the coffin was finally closed and taken towards Medina.

The Imam removed his gown (Aba) as a sign of his grief. At various places the cortege halted and the face of Hazrat Ismail was shown to the people as a proof of his death. This was especially done to make known to everyone that Hazrat Ismail was truly dead, and that he died during the life-time of his father who was the Imam. In spite of all these precautions, some people in distant lands could not reconcile themselves to the thought of Hazrat Ismail's death.

The funeral reached Medina and Hazrat Ismail was about to be buried in the grave prepared for him. Once again Imam Ja'far Sadiq asked Muffazzal to look at the face of Hazrat Ismail and confirm whether he was dead or alive, and to identify him. All replied, 'O friend of Allah, there is no doubt whatsoever that Hazrat Ismail is dead.' Once again Imam Ja'far Sadiq said, 'O Allah you bear witness to this'. The Imam then warned that the mischief makers amongst the people would try to create confusion.

'Youreedoona lay-yootbay-o Noorallahay. People would try to extinguish the Light of Allah.' Chp: 61: 8.

Then Imam Ja'far Sadiq turned towards his son Musa and said: 'Wallaho Muttimmo Nooreyhee, Walau Karehal Kafeyroon. God will see the Light is not

extinguished and let the unbelievers feel hurt at their lost.' Chp. 61: 8.

Then the coffin was lowered in the grave and filled with earth. After this the Imam asked the people who attended the burial as to who the deceased was and they replied that it was the Imam's son Ismail. Again the Imam said, 'O Allah you bear witness.'

After the burial, Imam Ja'far Sadiq stood near the grave and prayed to God, 'O Allah if Ismail has failed to do anything for me then I forgive him, and if You have found him wanting in Your way, then forgive him for my sake.'

Then Imam Ja'far Sadiq held his son Musa's hand and said, 'Howa haqqoon wal haqqomah, wa min ila an yeareysallah al arzey wa man alaiha.' This is truth and truth is with him and through him the truth will be known till then end.' Then he returned home and spoke to his companions about the treachery in this world.

There is no dispute about where Hazrat Ismail is buried. He is buried in Medina. Kitab-e-Muntahal Aamaal quotes that Syed Zaamin Sadkam mentions in his book Taufatul Azhar, that Hazrat Ismail is buried in the house of Zaidus Saeed, the son of Imam Zainul Abedin at Medina. A small mausoleum was built on the grace by Husain ibne Abil Hamza, the minister of the Caliph Obaid Ali in 546 A.H.²⁴

Ja'far took great pains to see that the death was properly authenticated. The body lay in state in the house for three days where people might see it. When people came to express their sympathy with him, the Imam had them sign a statement which he had drawn

²⁴ Imam Musa Kazim, Yoosuf Lalljee

up. "He did this until in Medina all the Hashimites, local people and visitors had given their signatures." At the grave, in the Baqi' cemetery, the signature of the Governor was also secured.²⁵

Ismail's death is even more mysterious than his life. The Ithna Asharis, Sunnis, and Orientalists seem to agree that Ismail predeceased his father. However, some Ismailis disagree and have some interesting theories regarding the death of Ismail. Even the Ismaili scholar Daftary comments, "but most sources relate that he (Ismail) died before his father" (A Brief History of Ismailism, 33). As mentioned previously, the original Mubarikiyya sect and the smaller sect that emerged from it after it split upheld the notion that Ismail did predecease his father and was Imam during his father's life. Other Ismailis believe that the funeral of Ismail was a mere ruse in order to trick the Abbassids into assuming that Ismail was dead and no longer a threat to their caliphate. According to Ismailis, the performance of a false funeral was justifiable because Imam Sadiq (AS) was applying the principle of taqiyya. "Some of them (followers of Ismail) say that he did not die, but that his father had declared that he had died to save him from the Abbasid caliphate, and that he had held a funeral assembly to which Mansur's governor in Medina was made a witness" (Sadiq Ali, 142). Another theory espoused by Sadiq Ali is that the identity of the deceased was not Ismail but was his twin brother, Abdullah. Imam Sadiq (AS) remained silent when people assumed that the identity of the deceased was Ismail. Also, Ismail was stealthily sent out of Medina that

²⁵ The Shia of India, John Norman Hollister

night. Later, Ismail adopted the name of Abdullah. Sadiq Ali draws the following conclusions: It (book called *Asraru'n-Nutaqa*) further relates that both Abdullah and Ismail almost resembled each other physically, and none among those present could perceive the death of Abdullah due to an likeness among the identical twins and therefore, the death was considered that of Ismail. On that juncture, Ja'far Sadik was constrained to remain silent, since the Abbasids had conspired to kill Ismail and therefore, it became a mystery, making Ismail publicly dead during his father's time, but in reality he was not dead (Sadiq Ali, 143).

The issue of whether or not Ismail passed away during the lifetime of his father is central to the debate behind the succession to Imam Sadiq (AS). Another central question to the debate regarding the succession to Imam Sadiq (AS) is whether or not a change of nass occurred. Ithna Asharis claim that there was a change of nass decreed by Allah (SWT). Initially, Imam Sadiq (AS) had designated that Ismail would be his successor. However, supposedly, Allah (SWT) revealed to Imam Sadiq (AS) that Imam Musa Kazim (AS) should replace Ismail as the successor of Imam Sadiq (AS). The Ismailis argue that the hadith about the change of nass is fabricated. Also, the Ismailis believe that Allah (SWT) would not change a decree on the designation of Imammate. They quote the following hadith: "Verily, God makes changes in everything except in the matter of Imam" (Sadiq Ali, 148). Also, some Ismailis claim that the Imams know the unseen and the future. Since they have the knowledge of the unseen, the declaration of the change of nass would imply that the Imam is deficient in his capabilities. Sadiq Ali quotes *Sachedina*

from Islamic Messianism, "It implied God's change of mind (*bada*) because of a new consideration, caused by the death of Ismail. However, such connotations in the doctrine of *bada* raised serious questions about the nature of God's knowledge, and indirectly, about the ability of the Imams to prophecy future occurrences" (Sadiq Ali, 148). The Ithna Asharis maintain that the Imams have knowledge of some aspects of the unseen; but, certain abrogations can be made in injunctions which is a reflection of the Divine Will. The issue of the change of nass is vital to the discussion about the succession to Imam Sadiq (AS).

In order to maintain legitimacy in the face of criticisms from the Ithna Asharis, the Ismailis also have various refutations of the Ithna Ashari doctrines. The Ismailis ridicule the Ithna Asharis' view on Imam Mahdi (AS). The Ithna , Asharis believe that their twelfth , Imam, Imam Mahdi (AS), did not pass away and remains in occultation till the present day and will return to the Earth's physical plane before the Day of Judgement. In *Haft Bab*, an early Ismaili text that was written more than five hundred years ago, the author contends that no human being can have such a large lifespan. "And, every intelligent man knows that no human being can live for five hundred years, and cannot therefore remain all that time hidden in a cave" (*Haft Bab*, 15). The Ithna Asharis might argue that Prophet Nuh (AS) also lived for one thousand years, that Prophet Khidr's lifetime spanned a great deal of time, and the Sleepers of the Cave also lived beyond their average lifespan. To this argument the author of *Haft Bab* replies, " We would say to this that all such stories require *tawil*

(esoteric interpretation), and they must be used (only) in their implied sense"

(Haft Bab, 16). Also, the Ismailis claim that the general public would remain bereft of knowledge under an Imam who they cannot contact. The Ithna Asharis might reply to this argument by quoting a hadith by Imam Sadiq (AS) that equates the awaited Mahdi (AS) to the sun behind the clouds which constantly bestows light to the people. Since, the Ismailis do not accept the concept of the Mahdi (AS), they consider the line of Ithna Ashari Imams to have ended at Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS), the father of Imam Madhi (AS). Sadiq Ali quotes Ivanow as saying, "If an Imam dies without leaving a son as his successor, it can only mean that not only he personally, but the whole line of his ancestors were not the true Imams. Thus the discontinuation of the line of the Twelvers proved that at least the last several of them were not genuine" (Sadiq Ali, 153). These are some of the arguments between the Ithna Asharis and the Ismailis. The early Ismailis shared some similar doctrines. They believed that Quran and sharia have a *zahir* or exoteric and *batin* or esoteric dimension. The rules within the sharia are the exoteric aspect and are followed by only the common people. However, the *khawass* or elite follow the esoteric aspect of the sharia which is extracted from the *tawil* or esoteric aspects of the Quran. There are some Ismailis today, the Nizaris, that do not follow the shariat in minute detail. The author of Haft Bab explains, "Those persons who have stuck in the world of shariat and have not reached the *haqiqat* are described in the Coran as 'dead, not living. The people who follow sharia only are dead because

they are not under the orders of the Bearer of the Truth of the time" (Haft Bab-I Bu Ishaq, 19).

THE LAST ADVICE OF IMAM JA'FAR SADIQ

Because of the great danger to the life of his son Musa Kazim, Imam Ja'far Sadiq used a stratagem. He gave firstly the name of the Caliph Mansoor, secondly the Governor of the Caliph at Medina, thirdly the Imam's son Abdulla Aftab, and fourthly the Imam's wife Hamidah Khatoon (the mother of Imam Musa Kazim) and finally the name of his son Musa. Firstly, the murderers of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (namely the Caliph and the Governor) could not be Imams. Then Abdulla Aftah had an inherent defect and could not be one, and finally, a woman could not be an Imam. So finally there was only Imam Musa Kazim left. When the followers of Imam Ja'far Sadiq heard these names they were happy and understood the situation and said that the Truth has been disclosed.²⁶

THE WRITINGS OF SUNNI SCHOLARS ON THE IMAMATE OF IMAM MUSA KAZIM AND HIS SPLENDOUR

Sadrud-din-e-Hanafi Kadri in 'Kitab-e-Rawa-e-hool Mustafa,' mentions what many a Sunni Aalim has said about Imam Musa Kazim.

²⁶ Imam Musa Kazim, Yoosuf Lalljee

In Kitabey Rauzatul Ahbab and Sawaahaydoon Nabuoway and Taarikay ibne Khallaykan it is mentioned that Imam Musa Kazim was the seventh of the twelve Imams and his titles are Kazim, Abdus Saleh, Saabir Saleh, Zainul Mujtahaydeen, and the period of his Imamate was 35 years. Shaikh Abdul Haq Dehalvi (Hanafi) says in Sher-e-Miskat, that Imam Shafei has said that the Tomb of Imam Musa Kazim has become a sanctified place for the fulfillment of one's wishes and his wonderful knowledge and dealings with people clearly showed that he was pious, virtuous and endowed with knowledge from the Holy Prophet. In his speech he never hurt anyone and whatever he said no one could dispute or challenge.

Ibne Khallakan says that Khateb-e Bhagdadee has said that Imam Musa was known as the Righteous because of his prayers and supplications; he was well known as Kazim, and he set about his way in such an humble manner, that he even forgave his enemies.

In 'Sawaaykul Moreka' Ibne Hazar-e-Hanafi mentions that Imam Musa Kazim was the natural successor of Imam Ja'far Sadiq in knowledge of religion, in his behavior towards the people, and in his miracles; his knowledge was beyond the bounds of ordinary mortals and as he used to restrain his temper and forgive people he was called Kazim; the people of Iraq used to take his name as intercessor to God, and get their supplications granted. He was the greatest religious authority of his times and greatest giver of charity.

Yaafeyee Yemani, in his book 'Miraatool Jinnan', mentions that Imam Musa Kazim was pious, charitable, virtuous and a person commanding great respect and

was known as Abdus Saleh. He was one of the Twelve Imams, who spent his time in fervent prayer.

In the book 'Rauzatoos Safa,' Mamoon Rashid has mentioned that he had heard from his father Haroon Rashid, that Imam Musa was the Imam, and the Imam of his time and the Caliph for everyone. "And I (Haroon Rashid) am the Imam for oppression and injustice and still I am the Imam of my time, and I swear on God, that Imam Musa is the rightful heir to the Holy Prophet. I admit that I do not care for the good of my people and I am heartless and cruel. I swear on God, that if my son were to oppose me, I would tear out his eyes, for according to me I will not tolerate any opposition and interference in the sate." Further adds Haroon Rashid, "that this Musa Kazim is the Successor of the Holy Prophet of Islam and if anyone wants to have the knowledge of Islam, he should go to the Imam Musa Kazim." When I heard these words from my father, Mamoon says that the love of the Ahl-ul-Bait became firm in my heart and felt that they (the Ahl-ul-Bait) should be respected and given the great importance that they deserve and under no circumstances should they be troubled.

Shaikh Abdulla bin Mohammad bin Aamir Sibraawee Shafei, in his book Ittayhaf bay Hoobbil Asraaf (Egypt) mentions that Imam Musa Kazim was the seventh of the Imams.

THE RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF IMAM MUSA KAZIM

The knowledge of Imam Musa Kazim connects with that of the Holy Prophet, who had his knowledge direct from God. Hence it is very clear that even in his infancy the Imam's knowledge was outstanding.

Yakoob Sarraj mentions that one day he had been to visit Imam Ja'far Sadiq at his residence and noticed that the Imam was standing near the cradle of his son Musa and was talking to him in confidence, I waited till the Imam was free and then I sat near him as instructed. Imam Ja'far then asked me to greet his successor Imam Musa Kazim. I did so, and to my surprise the infant clearly reciprocated to my greetings, and informed me that I should go back home and change the name of my daughter, whom I had named Humeara, as the name was not pleasing to God. Imam Ja'far told me to do exactly what his son had said, so that the result would be good. I went home and changed the child's name."

Once Abu Hanifa went to see Imam Ja'far Sadiq in Medina. A young child of about 5 years was also with the Imam, and Abu Hanifa inquired of the Imam who the young child was! The Imam replied that he was his son Musa. Abu Hanifa asked the child, 'Who sins?'

The child asked Abu Hanifa to sit down. He told Abu Hanifa that sin could be from God or from man or from both. But God cannot sin, for he is Aadil (Just) and can never do injustice. If the human being is not guilty it is not possible for God to punish him. Now if both God and man sin then God is a partner in this; again this is not possible. Hence it clearly points to the human being who is responsible for his actions. Hence the idea of

'reward and punishment' and 'Heaven and Hell'. When Abu Hanifa heard this he recited the following verse of the Quran: "Zoorreeyatan bazoha min baz. Wallaho samee-oon aleem." Meaning: "Offspring, one from the other; and verily God is All-Hearing; All-Knowing." Chp. 3:33. This ayat is a pointer to the Holy Ahl-ul-Bait.

Abu Hanifa visited Imam Ja'far Sadiq and said that he had seen his son Musa saying his prayers and had noticed people passing to and fro in front of him. Imam Ja'far sent for his son Musa, and told him what Abu Hanifa had said. Janab Musa replied that it was true. Then he said, 'O dear father, the Person before whom I am offering namaz is nearer to me than my jugular vein.' Then he recited the following verse of the Holy Quran: 'Wa Nahnoak akrabo eelaihay min hablil warid'. Imam Ja'far lifted him in his arms and kissed him and said, 'my parents be sacrificed for you, and 'God is the Knower of all things.'

Ali ibne Rashid and other tradition writers mention that the Shias of Naishapur gather together and made Mohammad Bin Ali their deputy to go and give Imam Musa Kazim 30000 Dinars, 50000 Dirhams and 2000 pieces of clothes. A lady by the name of Shatita gave to this deputy on her behalf to give to the Imam a knitted piece worth 4 Dirhams and a 1 Dirham coin and she told Muhammad bin Ali 'Innallah la yestahee minal haqqay', meaning Allah is proud of the Truth (Haq) even if the amount be small.' A bag was given containing 70 letters with a request for some religious clarifications and an empty bag was given for bringing back replies. Each envelope was tied with a string and sealed.

He was instructed to take the envelopes in the night to the Imam and collect them the following

morning. He was asked to open five letters to see whether the Imam had replied to the queries. If he had replied to these letters then he was the true Imam and the money and clothes should be given to him, or else to bring back everything that he had taken.

When Muhammad Bin Ali reached Medina, people asked him to go to Abdulla Aftah. He went to Abdulla and when he returned from there he was very dejected and said, 'Where to go. 'Shall I go to a Jew or shall I go to a Christian,' and said, 'O Allah show me the way to the right path-guide me, O Allah.' I was standing in this confusion, when a slave approached me and said that he would take me to the one whom I wanted to see. So saying he took me to Imam Musa Kazim. When the Imam saw me, and although he had never seen me before, addressed me as Abu Ja'far, and asked me why I was so sad and dejected over not finding him and why I desired to go to the homes of the Jews and Christians? 'Come, I will make you comfortable and relieve you of your worries. I am the representative of God on this earth and the friend of God. Did not Abu Hamza guide you when you were waiting outside the mosque of our beloved Prophet? I have already answered all your questions yesterday.' Then the Imam asked for the bag in which was kept the Dirham belonging to Shatita which was correct in weight, which I had kept in the same bag containing the other Dirhams. The Imam also requested for the knitted piece given by Shatita, which was kept in the bag with the other clothes sent for him. Muhammad Bin Ali said, "When I heard this I was amazed and astonished, and handed over the knitted piece and the Dirham given by Shatita to him. I did exactly as instructed by the Imam and when he had the

knitted piece and Dirham in his hands he turned towards me, and recited the same verse as Shatita 'Innallaha la yestahee minal haqqay'. Then he said, 'O Abu Ja'far, convey my salaams to Shatita, and give her this bag containing 40 Dirhams; then the Imam gave me a piece of coffin cloth and asked me to tell Shatita that my sister Halima has worked on it and the thread used in it is from my grand mother Fatima, the daughter of the Holy Prophet."

The Imam said, "Tell Shatita that 19 days after she gets the coffin cloth, she will die and tell her to use 16 Dirhams out of the forty sent to her, on her own requirements, but she must give the balance of 24 Dirhams as her own offering to the poor, and I will be present at her funeral, to recite the burial prayers: Abu Ja'far it is better for you to keep all this secret. The amounts which you have brought for me, may please be returned to their respective owners and then open the seals of the envelopes to see if they have been answered or not." When Muhammad bin Ali returned home, he noticed that the seals on the envelopes were intact. He broke open one seal to see whether it was replied and he was surprised to find that inspite of the seal being intact the letter was answered. Then he opened another seal and surprising enough the reply had also been given. He checked up on yet another cover and found the same. He was no more surprised because he now had full faith in the Imam.

When Muhammad bin Ali reached Naishapur, he returned all the things he had brought back, and noticed that all those who had given money and clothes for the Imam Musa Kazim had joined hands with Abdulla Aftah. No wonder Imam Musa Kazim had returned what these

people had send and retained that of Shatita. When he met Shatita, he noticed that she was firm in her faith and informed her what the Imam had said. Shatita expired on the day predicted, and the Imam was seen arriving on a camel to perform the funeral prayers. Before leaving, the Imam sent greetings to his followers, and urged them to be God fearing and righteous, and the Imam would also be present at their funeral prayers.

THE MIRACLES OF IMAM MUSA KAZIM

The miracles of Imam Musa Kazim have been mentioned by many learned divines of the Sunni Community.

Shaikh Abdullah ibn Muhammad Aamayree Sibraawee Shafei in his book 'Ittayhaf,' mentions that when Imam Musa Kazim was in prison during the time of Caliph Haroon al Rashid, Kazi Abu Yusuf and Muhammad ibn Hasan Shaybani (Both learned divines of the Sunni community and followers of Abu Hanifa) visited the Imam at night to ask him about some urgent problems. The guard of the prison came to the Imam and told him that as his duty was over, he was going home and would return the next day. Then before leaving, he asked the Imam if he had any work which needed to be done. The Imam answered in the negative and the guard departed.

After the guard left, the Imam told his guests that the guard would die tonight. They were shocked to hear this and in the excitement forgot to clarify their problems, and left the prison. On the way they were saying there was no doubt that the Imam knew the

hidden secrets, but to verify this statement they deputed someone to go to the guard's house and wait outside to find out the truth of the Imam's statement. In the middle of the night, the person who was sent to watch, heard the sound of crying, and upon making inquiries, he was informed that the prison guard had died. He returned to Kazi Abu Yusuf who had sent him, and informed him of this. All were wonder-struck and fully realized the powers of the Imam.

Sadruddin Hanafi Kadri in his book, 'Rawaayhool Mustafa' mentions from 'Rauzatool Ahbab' that Badrey, a slave of Imam Ali Reza narrates the following incident: 'Once Ishaq Ibne Amman was present in the company of Imam Musa Kazim, when a person from Korashan came and sat down in the congregation. This person spoke to the Imam in a language unknown to anyone else. The Holy Imam spoke to the stranger in the same dialect. Ishaq was wondering what language this could be and asked the Imam for some clarification. He was informed that this was spoken in Tibet and China. Ishaq told the Imam that since you have always been in this part of the world, how is it that you know the dialect of a place which you have never visited. The Imam told him there is no speech unknown to one who is real Imam and whose appointment was made by God and the Holy Prophet. Even the language of birds, animals and fish is known to us!

Sadruddin Hanafi, in his book, Rewa-e-Hool Mustafa, mentions that after the death of Imam Ja'far Sadiq, in complete disregard for the instructions left behind, Abdulla Aftah, one of his sons, proclaimed himself as Imam.

Imam Musa Kazim, who had been appointed as Imam by his father Imam Ja'far Sadiq, had ordered a bundle of firewood to his house, and send his brother Abdulla Aftah who posed as the Imam. He lighted the wood, and the fire started to burn. Imam Musa Kazim stood up and with his clothes walked into the fire and sat in it, and from there he talked to the people who were his guests. Then he came out from the fire and dusted the ash from his clothes and turned towards Abdulla and told him that since he was making claims on the Imamate, he should not be afraid to walk into the fire. Abdulla the imposter was so frightened that he quickly walked out from the Imam's house.

1. It is necessary to know the Imam of the time
2. Appointment of Imam is based on Divine command
3. An Imam is born as such but he attains Imamate only upon the passing away of his predecessor.
4. Nass in favour of Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) is proved from both Shia as well as Sunni books
5. The life and character of Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) matches with that of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and the other preceding Imams.
6. A brief description of 8th to 12th Imams (a.s.) to show they matched perfectly with their predecessors.

BOHRAS TODAY

FATIMIDS AND THEIR DAI AVOID DETAILS REGARDING THEIR GENEALOGY

THE GENEALOGY OF THE SHIITE IMAMS IS CLEAR

ISMAILI BELIEFS CAN NEITHER BE PROVED FROM SHIA NOR SUNNI BOOKS

CONCLUSIONS

WHY THIS SECRECY?

Ninety nine percent of Bohras are not taught beliefs based on rational arguments.

What are the pitfalls of blind faith

1. Charm of a leader is not a proof of his truth. In India we have dozens of godmen who charm their followers by their good behaviour and miracle acts.

ABROGATION OF ISLAMIC SHARIAT

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "The halal of Muhammad will remain halal till the judgement day and the Haram of Muhammad will remain so till Qiyamat."

This proves that the Shariat of Prophet Muhammad will remain in force till the day of judgement.

If a claimant of any divine office announces the abrogation of the Shariah we must regard him with suspicion.

On the other hand the Ithna Ashari Imams always announce the validity of Shariah and never even claimed to exercise their personal views. They always presented themselves as the protectors and expounders of the religion of Islam.

WORLDLY ADVANCEMENT IS NOT THE TOUCH STONE OF SUCCESS IN THE HEREAFTER

PROBLEMS THAT A NEW CONVERT HAS TO FACE

- I. Ostracism/social boycott
 - II. Loss of Business
 - III. Reaction of Ithna Asharis to Bohras who convert to 12er Shiaism
 2. Search for truth – Bohra Shia Isna Asharis of India
- Even if we agree that Taqaiyyah was an absolute necessity at one time, is it still necessary?
- Keeping the above points in mind let us study the following treatise without any bias. The book is divided into seven chapters:

BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 1) Twelve Successors of the Prophet

- 2) Imamate
- 3) Let us learn about Imamate
- 4) Kitab-al-Irshad
- 5) A Brief History of the 14 Infallibles
- 6) The Ismailis
- 7) The Shia of India
- 8) Bohra Mazhab Haqeeqat ke Aaine Mein