

In 1945, at the East African Muslim welfare society Conference in Mombasa, Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah suggested a Muslim university for East Africa which never materialized but lots of schools were built to improve the standard of African Muslims. "MIOME" Mombasa institute of Muslim Education was a result of Ismaili Imams initiatives.

In the same book quoted above, the author says:

"One of Prince Agakhan's latest interest is in setting up a FLOATING UNIVERSITY, that should take the message of science to every Muslim land, and to place in Muslim hands, the means of progress and prosperity.

It is proposed that a sizable PASSENGER LINER should be acquired and converted into the world's first "FLOATING UNIVERSITY" for the study of Economic and other subjects.

This is how great intellect and great institution have been part of our history.

Now we have Aga Khan University geographically situated right in the centre of the whole Islamic Ummah - in Karachi, Pakistan - the nation which was born as a direct consequence of Aligarh Muslim University.

Hazer Imam Shah Karim has founded this great institution which is the largest institution of imamat and which is so dear and so near to the heart of Hazer Imam.

Originally it was planned to have a Nursing School with a budgeted cost of about \$10 million. Soon it grew to Teaching Hospital and University which has cost about \$330 million, totally financed by Hazer Imam.

Contributions from Jamat is placed in the Endowment Fund. What is this Endowment Fund? It is a fund deposited in Financial Institutions and the income derived from the fund is used to maintain the institutions. Other institutions or hospitals like McMaster or Toronto General have billions of dollars in Endowment Fund. Our AKU has only 50 million dollars.

I will give you an example as to how much it costs to maintain these large institutions.

Many patients who come to Aga Khan Hospital for treatment are not financially able to pay the full cost of treatment. Most of them receive assistance. In 1993 alone direct patient assistance was 31 million rupees, and 1,500 patients received welfare assistance. The quality of care is the best in our hospital compared to the best hospital in Karachi.

Our quality for care can be gauged from the fact that the average length of stay at AKUH is 4.95 days while in other hospitals average is 8 to 10 days. This is because we have modern and hi-tech equipment and use modern technology. Hospital has 654 beds.

These are just a few facts about the AKUH.

This is as I said, the largest Imamt Institution and is very dear and near to our beloved Hazer Imam's heart. We have seen what was the direct result of Aligarh Muslim University. Now we have AKU. What will be the out come of this - only Imam knows. But hazer Imam has said it is a continuation of that tradition.

Hazer Imam has great vision for this university, as He mentioned during Charter Presentation ceremony on 16th March 1983:

"It is my wish that this should become an INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, able to mobilize resources from other countries, to co-ordinate international research and to encourage the exchange of ideas between nations."

These are our beloved Imam's visions, and it becomes our duty to join the Imam to make His vision fulfilled.

GHATPAAT

GHATPAAT is a very solemn ceremony which every one should understand very clearly. We start the ceremony by giving the “**KUMBH**” to the person serving Ab-e-Safa, and at the end of the ceremony Kumbh is given back by the person serving the Ab-e-Safa. What does this signify? Giving KUMBH in the beginning signifies that ALLAH brought everything into being. The beginning is ALLAH and returning the Kumbh at the end of the ceremony signifies that all beings have to return unto ALLAH. In other words, this is the concept of “**INA LILAHI WA INA ILEHI RAJEOON.**” Meaning from God we have come and unto Him we will return.

Let us now try and understand the meaning of Ghat Paat.

Let us go back for a moment and visualize the Silver Jubilee Darbar. The following gnan was sung in Hazar Imam's presence.

**JIRE WALA AAJ HARI MARE ANGANE AVYA,
SATHE ANANT KARODI DEVE LAVYA
CHAUD LOK VADHAVYA.**

Meaning: O beloved, today Hari - manifestation of God (that is Hazar Imam) has come to my door steps. He has brought with him uncountable millions of Devs or Spirits of all kinds.....

This verse declares that Hazar Imam has come and it was very appropriate that it was sung when Hazar Imam was here physically.

Why do we sing this Gnan when Ghat Paat is established? Let us check couple of other verses of Ghat Paat Gnan “**JIRE WALA PAAT
MANDAVI NE CHOK PURAVO**”

**“JIRE WALA AAJ MINDAR RADIYAMANA DISE
RUDA SANT AVIYA, RUDA SAADH AVIYA, APANE
GHER, PRABHUJI PADARIYAMINDARIYE.”**

Meaning: "The house looks so beautiful! Sadhus and Saints have arrived and Prabhu - God himself, has arrived at our house." This gnan also declares arrival of Hazar Imam.

Another Ghat Paat Gnan says:

**"JIRE WALA DHANA RE GADI JO DIN SANT PADARYA
ALI MAE TA DIN KI BALI HARI RE WALA
GHAR ANGAN MARA PAVTARR KIDHA
MORO JIVA JANAM SUDHARI RE WALA."**

This Gnan says: "Fortunate is the moment of the day when Hazar Imam arrives, etc.

All these Gnanas declare Hazar Imam's arrival and they are all Gath Paat Gnanas sung when Ghat Paat is established.

Have we ever given any thought as to why we sing Gnanas that declares Hazar Imam's arrival, when Ghat Paat ceremony is performed?

Does Hazar Imam arrive when Ghat Paat is established? And if yes, then what about our concept that says Hazar Imam is always present in Jamat Khana?

We will try to tackle these questions logically, later on, but first let us check the meaning of Ghat Paat. When did this ceremony start? How it was performed in the past, and how serious and solemn the ceremony is?

"GHAT" means the vessel and **"PAAT"** means a low table. This is the literal meaning. If we analyze the word further, there is a deeper and quite different meaning.

Very commonly we say Ghat Paat but it is **"GHAT PAATH"**

Ghat means HEART OR OUR INNER SELF. Paath is a simple Gujarati word which means LESSON OR CHAPTER.

**GATH PAATH IS A LESSON OR A CHAPTER FOR PURIFYING
OUR INNER SELF.**

Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah S.A.W.S. has said in his firmans: "You cannot clean your heart or your inner self by drinking Niyaz - Ab-e-safa made out of clay and water. Your heart is cleaned only when you drink Niyaz with firm Iman. Those who do not recognize our Swarup, (manifestation) achieve nothing by drinking clay and water. ZANZIBAR JULY 9, 1899.

This clearly indicates that Ghat Paat is a ceremony for purifying our inner self.

When did the Gath Paat ceremony start? This ceremony is not something that was started in India or Iran, by our Pirs, or in Arabia by the Prophet. Ghat Paat is older than that. According to "MOOD GAYETRI", this ceremony was started by God when He created the earth. The following Ghat Paat Ginan fully supports the fact.

EJI PAHELA KARTA JOOG MAHEN SONA NE RE GAT

Ginan says that in the 1st Joog, there were vessels of gold, and in the 2nd Joog, of silver etc. This proves that this is a very old ceremony.

Let us discuss the meaning of gold and silver, etc., mentioned in the above ginan.

We can also have golden or silver Kumbh, plates and cups in the present time.

Gold is a precious metal, silver is 2nd best precious, and so on. In the ginan, Pir compares the purity of souls to the precious metals. They were more pure, receptive in the 1st joog than 2nd Joog. Etc., This shows that gold and silver has nothing to do in the physical sense.

Now let us go back about 40 years and see how the ceremony was performed then.

Ghat Paat ceremony was a long ceremony, with special Ghat Paat Du'a, consisting of 20 Paaths in addition to the regular Du'a. There were different Paaths for each action, i.e. Opening the vessels, Cleaning them, Giving Loban or Agar Bati to vessels, to siro, Melting Niyaz gori, etc. In this Gath Paat Du'a, in several Paaths, the Ghat Paat ceremony performed in 1st, 2nd, 3rd

and 4th Joog is mentioned. Also, how the Sukreet was done and how many souls achieved salvation in each joog.

In the very first paath of the Gath Paat Du'a which was **Gath Paath STHAPAN JI DU'A**, it was said "**PRATHAM SWAMIJI NAKLANKI NAATH PADARYA.**" Meaning: "First of all (Naklanki Naaath) God - Hazar Imam has arrived."

Again in the tenth Paath it is said that wherever Gath Paath is established, Hazar Imam is sitting there with **330 million Devtas**.

Who are these 330 million Devtas? 330 million is a total of souls who achieved salvation in the four joogs, as follows:

50 million achieved salvation with Raja Pjhelaj in the 1st joog.

70 million achieved salvation with Raja Harishchandra.

90 million achieved salvation with Raja Jujeshtan and

120 million achieved salvation with Pir Sadardin.

If we add all these, it comes to 330 million. According to this Du'a, Hazar Imam arrives with these 330 million souls when Gath Paath ceremony is established.

Now let us come back to the question - we believe that Hazar Imam is always present in Jamat Khana. Then why is it said that He arrives when Gath Paat ceremony is established?

True, Hazar Imam is always present in Jamat Khana. We have all witnessed Hazar Imam's visits to Toronto. On his first visit to Toronto in 1978, Mawlana Hazar Imam accepted individual mahemanies from Jamati members and during his second visit, Silver Jubilee Visit, he did not accept individual mahemanies, but only Jamati mahemani was accepted.

What do we do when we go to present individual mahemani? How do we go there? We dress up in our best dress, wait anxiously in line for our turn to come. How eagerly are we waiting? We recite Salwat while waiting for our turn. Finally, when it is our turn, we go very humbly, very respectfully to

Hazar Imam, with our head bowed with a wish to have his blessings, and if we have any personal problems, we present our problems to Hazar Imam, seek his guidance and blessings.

Gath Paat ceremony is similar to this individual Mehmanis. Each person is going to partake Ab-e-Safa, is getting a chance to have Hazar Imam's audience personally and individually, and that person can present his or her problems while drinking Niyaz. We have seen people take Niyaz cup in their hands and stand there whispering something. Have we ever thought what is that person doing? He has clear understanding that Hazar imam with all kinds of Spirits, is present there, and he is presenting his problems and seeking hazar Imam's blessings. Believe me, all problems are solved if you have proper understanding of this very solemn ceremony of Gath Paat.

Why do we come to Jamat Khana all dressed-up on nights when Gath Paat is established? Because we are going for an audience with Hazar Imam, when going to drink Niyaz.

So what we should do when standing in line awaiting our turn? We should always say Salwat, not play mischief, and talk or gossip.

What should we ask when it is our turn to drink Niyaz? Anything - any problem you have. With the help of 330 million pure souls present and with Mowlabapa's blessings, all our problems can be solved. Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah has said "There is more sawab (benefits) in praying for others than in praying for yourself while drinking Niyaz" Zanzibar, 7th September, 1899.

Now if everyone goes there and stands for 5 - 10 minutes saying their problems it will take hours in larger Jamats. This problem was presented to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah by Vazir U - Kanji of Rangoon . Vazir said to Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, Ya Imam -e -Zaman, you have said in your firmans that "there is more sawab in praying for others than praying for yourself." Ya Mowla it takes very long in larger Jamats, what should we do? Imam replied, if that is the case, then you have to ask only one thing and that is "Ya MOWLA TUN ASA(N) MATHE RAZI RO" Meaning O Lord be raji with us.

Mowlabapa said "If we are raji with you, then you will have no problems."

There is Venti Ginan which we all know, it goes:

**EJI KIRPA KARI NE DOOKHA DALDARA TADO
SWAMI MARA MAHV MUKAND MORARI YA SHAH
TUJ TRUTHE NAV NANDAJ PAMUN
JO HOVE NAZAR TUMARI.**

Meaning: "O lord relieve me of all the miseries with your kindness, O Mowla I will achieve all the nine happiness, if you are raji on me.

This verse of venti was once sung by Pir Subzali in Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah's presence, and the Imam said, "Suzali, Pir has been very mean in saying nine types of happiness. If we are raji, you get not only nine types of happiness, but you get everything.

We have seen that Hazar Imam and all Ruhanis or Spirits are present at the Gath Paat ceremony. And we have seen what should be our attitude, dressing and discipline.

On other nights when Ghat Paat ceremony is not there, we present our problems and seek Hazar Imam's blessings through Mukhi/Kamadia Sahebs and Mukhiani/Kamadiani Sahebas.

In 1983 Silver Jubilee Darbar Hazar Imam did not accept individual mahemanis, but Mukhi/Kamadia Sahebs of each Jamat presented mhemani on behalf of their Jamats.

Similarly, on the nights when there is no Ghat Paat ceremony, we seek Hazar Imam's blessing through Mukhi/Kamadia Sahebs. We seek Hazar Imam's blessings to solve our problems (Mushkil Assan ji Tasbih), through Mukhi/Kamadia Sahebs and Mukhiani/Kamadiani Saheba's, they being Hazar Imam's representatives and with the authority vested in them, bless us on behalf of Hazar Imam.

Now let us discuss the position of the person serving Ab-e-Safa. Let us once again visualize the individual mehmanis being accepted by Hazar Imam. Mukhi/Kamadia Sahebs are standing beside Mowlabapaa. Mukhi/kamdia Sahebs are dressed-up in Joobas "robe" and Pagdi. One by one, individuals are coming to present their mahemanis. Mukhi Saheb introduces the

individuals to Mowlabapa, sometimes Mowlabapa asks question as to what is the person's problems. Etc.

Similarly, person serving Niyaz, are in similar position as MukhiSaheb standing beside Mowlana Hazar Imam during mahemani. That person i.e. the person serving Ab-e-Safa, should always be very attentive and say "Ya Mowla tun injii nek umedun puri kariyen." When someone is praying before drinking Niyaz The person who is serving Ab-e-Safa must be dressed respectfully. In fact, all those leading Du'a or Tasbih, should be dressed in proper attire.

What is that person doing when leading Du'a or Tasbih? The person leading Du'a or Tasbih is pleading before Hazar Imam on behalf of whole Jamat. His or her position is the same as an advocate or a lawyer pleading before a Justice, for the accused or a guilty person.

Have we ever seen any lawyer dressed-up in jeans and ordinary shirt and go before a Judge to plead? First of all, he will not be allowed to go into the Chamber or Court if he is not dressed properly or suitably.

On October 25th, 1967 Mowlana Hazar Imam sent the following Talika to the Jamats in Africa, let us say salwat:

"My beloved Spiritual children, from year to year customs and traditions in human clothing are changing and it has become necessary to draw your attention to the fact that when you go to Jamat Khana, you should do so in proper and suitable attire. I do not want those Spiritual children who have done well in a worldly manner to make demonstration of their success, nor do I wish clothes to be worn which are incompatible with the practice or your faith in an atmosphere of calm and serenity.

The aforementioned matters are universal and binding principles of Islam and must be followed by all Muslims, for indeed, these principles were established by the Prophet himself. I give my most affectionate paternal, maternal blessing to all my beloved Spiritual children of Africa. Yours affectionately, Aga Khan.

Let us say salwat.

This Talika is very specific about proper dressing.

We should not act in anyway or do something which Hazar Imam does not like.

For example, Hazar Imam does not like us to put on black clothes, etc. I know some of you will say Hazar Imam himself wears black sherwani, We do not have to do what Hazar Imam does, but we have to do what he wants us to do.

Why I am saying that Hazar Imam does not like us to wear black?

When Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah passed away, Mawlana Hazar Imam sent a message to all Ismailis all over the world that those attending the DAFN KRIYA of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah, should wear white and no one should wear black.

Once in Dar-es-Salaam, a Mukhi of Darkhana was wearing black socks in Hazar Imam's presence. Hazar Imam told him to take the black socks off.

If our aim is to please Hazar Imam, we should not wear black at all, or at least not in Jamat Khana.

What is the significance of Niyaz, first poured in "KUMBH" and from Kumbh to CUPS (Piyaalis)?

The whole concept of Ghat Paat ceremony is of CREATION

Niyaz is "NOOR" as per Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah's firman. This Noor of Allah goes into the Kumbh, which symbolically represents Hazar Imam's physical body. In other words Allah's Noor is in Hazar Imam and from Hazar Imam it goes to piyaalis. The "PIYAALI" symbolically represents "CREATION." Allah's Noor goes into Imam's body and all the creation is from Imam's Noor.

Now that we understand the meaning of Ghat Paat ceremony, let us observe it solemnly.

PAANCH BAAR SAAL

Let us discuss the concept of Paanch Baar Saal.

First of all let me quote two firmans of Paanch Baar Saal made by Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah and Shah Karim Hazer Imam.

Bombay March 10, 1912

Before departing for Europe Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah accepted Mahemani by Paanch Baar Saal members and said:

"Those who have five hundred Rupees should join Paanch Baar Saal and if some one has more and have twelve hundred Rupees should join Baar Saal, because we have made firmans some seven, eight years ago that one day there will be a firman to stop paying dasond. At that time, those who did not join Paanch Baar Saal will regret. You will not be given advance notice of this but it will be very sudden. Like someone awakes in the morning and finds out that thieves broke into his house at night and that he was robbed. At that time it will be like when a bridge collapses some will have crossed it and some are stranded and cannot go across the bridge. And at that time those who did not join the Paanch Saal and Baar Saal will regret. It will not be obligatory on those who are borne after the firman to stop paying dasond is made, but it is compulsory to be in Paanch Saal or Baar Saal for those who were born before that firman.

There is no harm in discussing this firman with friends, of course tell them."
(Private firman book page 87-88)

The following firman was made by Hazer Imam Shah Karim in Vancouver on Nov. 14, 1978:

"I do not want spiritual children joining Paanch Baar Saal because their parents have said that they have to join or because your friends have joined therefore you feel that you have to join. You do not render service to the Imam through a sense of competition one against the other and the Imam only would wish to accept this service if it is rendered out of your own free will, that is your wish to render five or twelve years of service, of symbolic service to the Imam."

Both firmans look very controversial on the face of it. Imam in His 48th jama'a says it is obligatory to join this Mijlas and again in 49th jama'a He says it is not compulsory, etc. Surely they look controversial but are they really contradicting

each other?

We will discuss this with the help of Mowla. Paanch Baar Saal Mijlas is observed on the ninth night after the new moon. That is why it is also called *Navmi Raat ji Mijlas*. Paanch means five and baar means twelve and we all know it signifies the five years and twelve years of service to the Imam of the Time. But have we ever thought why five and twelve years and why not seven and fifteen or any other number for that matter? Have we ever given any thought as to why we are carrying the title "Member of mijlas of ninth night?" Now we have two questions to discuss; one - why five and twelve years and the other is why ninth night?

In one of the messages from Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah which is read on every Chaandraar, He says "Dasond is the first of all duties and there is no foundation of faith without it."

Being an Ismaili or a Muslim for that matter, it is our duty to pay dasond *from whatever we get*.

We pay dasond from our earnings derived from our business or our employment. Does this relieve us from our obligation of dasond? We have to pay dasond on everything that we get which includes gifts that we receive, that includes food that we eat at someone's house, etc. What else? Most of all we get *life* and we have to pay dasond on the life that has been given to us.

In certain firmans Imam Sultan Mhammed Shah said that man's average life is 40 to 50 years.

How do we pay dasond on life???? We pay dasond on life by serving the Imam of the time. If we calculate regular dasond on 40 to 50 years of life, it equals five years of service and for those who are members of Mubarak or One-Fourth, if we calculate $\frac{1}{4}$ of 40 to 50 years, it equals twelve years of service.

Let me substantiate the above statement with a firman made by Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah in Dar-es-salaam on 10th February 1937 during Mulaquat of Paanch Baar Saal members from Bagamoyo, Kimamba, Morogoro and Dar-es-salaam. The Imam said, "You people have given the service of dasond in your lifetime, not the dasond on your wealth but dasond of your body's life. Some amongst you have given five years of service and some have given one-fourth of the life of their body meaning they have given twelve years of service."

(Private firman book page 153).

This is Paanch Saal and Baar Saal. Upon joining the mijlas, Imam accepts our five or twelve years of service in lieu of dasond of the life that has been given to us. This is a grace or a baksheesh from the Imam.

How did this concept of accepting five and twelve years of service as a baksheesh or grace from the Imam start?

Imam Sultan Muhammed Shah explains this very clearly in His firmans to Paanch Baar Saal in Hasnabaad, Bombay on 14th of January 1946. Imam said, "Those who have read history know that our forefathers have ruled over Egypt for three hundred years. At that time murids were rendering service without any remuneration. They were serving in agriculture, in mines, as labourers, as road sweepers, in the army and in the offices. They were doing khidmat without any remuneration. Thereafter during the time of Aga Hasanali Shah when we did not have any worldly state but reign was there. At that time some murids came to the Imam and asked, "How can we achieve the sawab of service that the Ismailis used to get when they were serving in Egypt?" Aga Hasanali Shah told them, "You work and save 100 Rupees in one year, this way you save 500 Rupees in five years. When you save 500 Rupees, present them to me and I will give you the same sawab as the Ismailis in Misr Used to get." This way Murids used to bring five years savings in order to obtain baksheesh of five years service." (Private firman book, page 167-168)

This is how the concept of accepting five and twelve years of service as baksheesh started.

The whole concept of Paanch Baar Saal is dasond of life that is given to us and dasond is obligatory without which there is no foundation. Joining the Mijlas is not compulsory, but one has to pay the dasond of life. Either we fulfil the obligation of dasond of life by doing five or twelve years of service without remuneration or by joining the mijlas and earn the sawab of baksheesh which is equivalent to five or twelve years of service.

After understanding the explanation of the concept of Paanch Baar Saal, the opening firmans will not appear to be controversial anymore

I hope I have dealt with the first question which is: Why five and twelve years

and not seven and fifteen or any other number for that matter.

Let us now discuss the other question as to why Paanch Baar Saal Mijlas is also called Navmi Raat ji Mijlas and why it is held on the ninth night after Chaandraat and why members of Paanch Baar Saal carry the title of “member of navmi raat”?

If we read the history of Imam Hussain and the Battle of Karbala, we will know that Yazid had a very big army and only a handful remained with the Imam. On the ninth night of Muharam, Imam gathered all who were there including the Ahl-e-Bait (His family) in a tent and told them, “Yazid is my enemy, he wants my head. He is not your enemy and we all know what the result of the battle will be. You are free to leave the battle field.” All those present at this meeting said, “ya Mowla whoever is your enemy is our enemy too. We do not wish to leave. We will fight till the end and join the rank of your chosen ones.”

The next day the battle continued and some of the Murids surrounded the Imam in order to create a human shield to protect Him from arrows and spears of the enemy. If one person dies, then another person would take his place. Hence all were killed protecting the body of the Imam.

If we read Hazer Imam Shah Karim's firman about the service of Paanch Baar Saal, Imam says, “But I want you to understand that in the eyes of the Imam the service which you are rendering is identical as any spiritual child who might have accompanied Hazrat Ali on a journey, who might have defended Hazrat Ali for several years or *who might have lived next to Imam Hussain and defended Imam Hussain* when it was necessary. The service that you are rendering, is in my eyes, identical to the service which spiritual children at that time rendered.” (Paanch Baar Saal Malachite, Vancouver November 14, 1978)

This firman points to the incident of Battle of Karbala and Hazer Imam refers to those Murids who attended the meeting or Mijlas in the tent on the ninth night of Muharam and those who died protecting Imam Hussain and became martyrs or **SHAHEEDS**.

This is why Paanch Baar Saal Mijlas is called Navmi Raat Mijlas or Mijlas of the ninth night. As member of this mijlas, the title that we carry is very high because those who died in Karbala are called shaheeds or martyrs, so let us be worthy of this title.

Meanings of our Standing Tasbih

We must remember that two things are required in order to benefit from the standing Tasbih:

- * We must concentrate in the Tasbih, and offer the prayers with all our heart. It is fruitless to automatically say "Ameen" mechanically after each line.

Prophet Muhammad has reminded us about this in his Hadith: "The Lord does not regard a prayer in which the heart does not accompany the body".

- * Secondly, we must understand what we are saying. It is obviously meaningless to offer prayers without knowing what you are saying.
- * We will take each section of the official evening standing tasbih and will go through its meaning.

1. Tasbih kadho giriazariji, Ya Ali Ya Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussainy Hazar Imam tu gat jamatji kul mushkeliyu asan kar.

The word "giryah-o-zari" means to cry, to weep. "Tasbih kadho giriyah zariji" therefore means to take out Tasbih (prayer) of sincere pleading and begging, with crying hearts. This phrase should really set the mood for the rest of the standing Tasbih. We are standing before Hazar Imam sincerely pleading for the various things we ask in the Tasbih. That is why we keep our hands raised and say "Ameen" after each prayer.

"Gat Jamatji kul mushkeliyu asan kar" means "make all the difficulties of the whole Jamat bearable."

Note that we do not say "mushkeliyu dur kar". We are not asking for the removal of our difficulties, we are asking Mowla to make our difficulties bearable. This is

so because:

a. The difficulties may be blessings in disguise. Often it is hardships and failures that teach us many lesson in life. We do not really know what is good for us; only Hazar Imam does. Therefore, rather than praying for the removal of our difficulties, we ask Mowla to make our difficulties easier, to give us the courage and strength to bear our difficulties.

After his son passed way, Count Hassanali Rajan Lalji went to Hazar Imam in Paris and told Hazar Imam how grieved he was because his young son Kabir had died.

Hazar Imam told the Count: "Remember that Allah is good. It is said so over and over again in Koran. There are certain things that Allah does which are for our own good. We do not know what is good for us but Allah does. He knows what is good and what is bad. We become discouraged when such things happen but we must remember that Allah is good. Read Koran - it is said hundreds of times that Allah is good. He would not do anything to harm us."

"I understand how hard it is but I implore you to have courage and not to grieve. Please do not worry. His soul is at rest in eternal peace. He is with me and I can assure you that he is resting in peace. Whatever difficulties he had in this world are now over. He is now much happier than he ever was or would have been in this world. If you have faith in me then have courage and do not grieve." (Firman of Mowlana Hazar Imam to Count Hassanali Rajan Lalji at Hazar Imam's villa in Paris, on 31st October, 1961).

b. The second reason why we pray that our difficulties be made easier rather than be removed is that our difficulties (which all arise as a result of our deeds) result in our sins being forgiven. If these sins were not forgiven now, we would have to suffer for them later.

Mowlana Mustansir billah has said"

"Every difficulty which arises for you reduces the number of bad actions, calamities and retribution so that your punishment may not be postponed to the hereafter." (Pandiyate Jawanmardi. Selections. Page 18).

2. Ya Ali tu tasbih kadhān wareji mushkil asan kari nek umedu
puri kar.

When ever we have difficulties, there is always help for us from our religion. The first thing we should do is pray to Hazar Imam to make our difficulties easier and bearable. If, after a lot of sincere prayers, we find that the difficulty is still not bearable, then we turn to the Jamat for help. We go to Mukhi or Kamadia Saheb and we give some money for "mushkil asan ji Tasbih". Mukhi Saheb prays that our difficulties may become easier. Then, during the standing Tasbih, the whole Jamat prays for us. The Jamat says, "Tasbih kadhan wareji mushkil asan kar", which means "Those who have given money for 'Mushkil asan ji Tasbih', make their difficulties easier."

Nek means good; Umed means wishes, desires
"Nek umedu puri kar" means "fulfil (their) good wishes"

3. Ya Ali tu rahem kar, Ya Mowla tu fazal kar

Rahim means mercy Fazal = mercy, bounty, graciousness
We are pleading to Mowla to shower His mercy upon us.

We need God's grace and mercy for worldly success as well as for spiritual success. In a worldly sense, we should remember that when we achieve success, it is not only due to our own efforts or intelligence, but it is also Allah's grace.

As Mowla says in Firman:

"If you do well in your worldly lives, you should not think 'My name is Jaffer, and I have made success in my life'. Because it is not Jaffer who has made success; it is through the blessing of the Creator that Jaffer has made a success of his life." (Mowlana Hazar Imam. Baitul Khayal. 1966 E. Africa visit).

And in another Firman, Hazar Imam says:

"I would like you to be strong and courageous in adversity, to be humble and understand that success is not only due to you. It is Allah's will." (Lahore. 25th November, 1964).

For spiritual success, we must also realize that no matter how much Ibadat and "nek ammal" we do, it is still nothing in comparison to being blessed with Didar. It is only when Hazar Imam's grace falls on us that we can attain Didar.

4. Aliyullah giriazariji tasbih ji venti Shah toje huzur me kabul kar Noor Mowlana Shah Kair Al-Hussayni Hazar Imam.

This means: "O Ali, who is from Allah, O our Lord Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussayni, O our present Imam, please accept our requests and prayers of pleadings in your (Holy) Presence."

5. Allahumma Ya Mowlana Antas Salaam Haziril Maujood.

This is from the second part of our Holy Dua.

In this prayer:

- * We are asking for spiritual Union (Fanafillah).
- * We are acknowledging our complete reliance on Hazar Imam.
- * We are seeking his help.

6. Ya Ali Ya Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussayni Hazar Imam, tu gat jamat ji kul mushkil asan kar.

7. Ya Ali tu gat jamat jo Imam salamat rakh.

Literally this prayer means "O Ali, maintain the steadfastness of the whole Jamat's faith."

In order to understand clearly what we are asking, we need to realize what exactly is Iman. Iman does not simply mean belief or faith or trust in Hazar Imam or religion. Iman means actions, it means "nek ammal", it means pure deeds. True Iman does not exist if the faith or belief is not accompanied by corresponding actions.

As Hazar Imam has said:

"Islam first and Ismailism much more so insists on action. Without action, faith is useless; without action prayers become pride." (Mowlana Sultan Muhammad Shah. Message to Count Paroo. 7th May, 1952. Precious Pearls Firman #41).

Our Imams have always distinguished between accepting Islam or Ismailism (merely professing to have faith or belief) and Iman (actually implementing the faith in our daily lives by our actions).

Hazrat Ali has said:

"Islam is mere verbal affirmation whilst Iman is both verbal affirmation and its acceptance by the heart."

Mowlana Jaffer As Sadiq has also explained this in the following words:

"Iman (faith) is contained within Islam (submission), but Islam does not imply Iman. Islam is the outward profession of faith and work whereas Iman is the hidden (batin) aspect of faith, namely, the purity of the heart."

It is also very important to pray for the steadfastness of our Iman, so that no matter what happens to us, no matter what difficulties befall us, our Iman will never waver. That is why Mowla asks us to pray for "Iman ni salamati" every morning.

Imam says:

"Tame jyare savar na nindra mathi utho, tyare Dua mango ke amaru Iman Salamat rahe". (Mowlana Sultan Muhammad Shah. Zanzibar. 17th September, 1905. Gavhare Rahemat. Page 14).

8. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat ke Dason, Sukrit, Ibadat-e pura rakh.

We are beseeching Mowla to make us perfect in three things:

- * In giving our Dasond.
- * In doing good deeds (sukreet).
- * In being regular in Ibadat.

In order to attain Didar, all three things are absolutely essential. Without any one of them, we cannot achieve our ultimate goal.

8a. Dasond.

There are numerous Firmans and Ginans which explain that Dason is the first of all our duties, and without it there is no foundation of our religion.

Pir says in a verse of Gnan:

Ashanji Dasond na didhi ne kirya kidhi, te sati huo apar.

Dasond karane uncho na chadvo, tene aavi Didar ni khot." (Pir

Hassan Kabirdin. Anant Akhado).

8b. Sukreet.

Sukreet means good deeds. Again, if we give Dasond and are regular in our prayers and in Bandgi, but our actions are not good, we cannot expect to progress spiritually. Mowla beautifully explains the importance of Sukreet in the following Firman:

"It is the duty of human beings to be virtuous. A man is not emancipated from sins by prayers and fasts. On the Day of Judgement you will be questioned about your character, and if you are found virtuous, your sins will be pardoned." (Mowlana Sultan Muhammad Shah. Zanzibar 31st August, 1899. Precious Pearls. Firman #33).

8c. Ibadat.

The importance of Ibadat is explained in the following Firman of Hazar Imam:

"I would like you also to have clear in your minds what is essential in our practice. It is not only Dua, it is not only presence in Jamatkhana; it is not only service to Imam and to Jamats, but it is also Ibadat". (Mowlana Hazar Imam, Dacca 1964. Addressing a gathering of workers of the Ismailia Associations).

Bandgi, as we know, is not compulsory upon everybody. This means that you are not committing a sin if you do not do Bandgi (provided you have not taken 'Bol'). However, Bandgi is essential for spiritual progress, that is, we cannot attain Batuni Noorani Didar without doing Bandgi. Thus we see the importance of praying to Mowla to keep us perfect in Dasond, in good deeds, and in Ibadat.

9. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat ke haqiqati samaj de.

This means "O Ali, grant true understanding to the whole Jamat."

This is an extremely important and all-encompassing prayer, because if we get true understanding, then we will not fall prey to materialism; if we have true understanding, our actions will be pure; if we have true understanding, we will be regular in all our religious and worldly duties.

10. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat mathe rahem kari, gat Jamat ja kul gunah maaf kar.

When we offer this prayer, we should sincerely repent and beg for forgiveness of our sins, because sins displease Mowla, and a true Momin will never be happy if he displeases his Beloved.

11. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat me samp, salah, ikhlas, mohabbat jo wadharo ka.

"Samp", "salah" and "ikhlas" in this context all mean unit or oneness. We are praying to Mowla to increase the unity and love amongst the Jamat. What is true unity or brotherhood? It does not simply mean that we believe that we are all spiritual brothers and sisters. It means to actually live and act as if we are all real brothers and sisters (which we are). It means to help others in every way possible; it means to consider the needs of others as equally important to one's own needs; it means to please others because that is the way we can please our Mowla (remember that Mowla resides in everyone's heart).

Mowlana Mustansir Billah has beautifully explained what true brotherhood, unity and love means: "The real man is one who in good actions is ahead of others, who tries to do and (really) does good, who treats the needs of his brother in religion as more urgent than his own. He gives priority to others in food and rest. So far as he can, he gives, but does not take. If his brother in religion eats food, he feels as if he himself has eaten it. He rejoices in the joy of his brother believer, and is aggrieved by his grief." (Pandiyyate Jawanmardi. Selections. Page 2).

"If you seek for the Truth, you must also sympathize with the sincere followers of the realign, and must render service to them, because God abides in the pure hearts of His sincere followers. You must not annoy anyone, or aggrieve or distress anyone, or corrupt his heart, because the heart of the believer is the house of God, although the ignorant do not know this. If you want God to be pleased with you, make a believer pleased with you because the pleasure of God is the pleasure of the believers." (Pandiyyat Jawanmardi. Selections. Page 3).

12. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat ke roji, kamani me barkat de.

Rozi or rozi means sustenance, maintenance, nourishment. Kamani means earnings.

We are pleading to Hazar Imam to give us "barkat" in our sustenance, in our earnings. "Roji" does not refer only to physical earnings, it also refers to spiritual

earnings. The word "barkat" has two important implications:

- * It implies abundance, plenty.

- * It also implies sufficiency. This means that even though we do not have a lot, whatever we have somehow becomes sufficient for our needs. For example, one household may earn quite a bit less than another household. Yet the first household may find that it is able to manage with what it receives, it is satisfied, its income suffices for its needs. The second household, despite earning more, may still not find what it gets to be sufficient. This may be because the first household has "barkat" in its "roji". Thus, when we offer this prayer, we should be consciously asking Mowla to grant us sufficiency and abundance in our worldly and spiritual earnings.

13. Ya Ali tu tasbih kadhanwareji kul mushkelyu asan kari nek
umedu puri kar.

This prayer also occurs twice in our standing Tasbih.

14. Ya Ali tu duniya ja matra Ismailio ke harek taklif ane musibat methi ugari gini,
sada sukhi ne abad rakh.

Matra means all Harek mens every Ugarvu means to release, to save
Sada means forever Sukhi means happy Abad means prosperous.

This prayer thus means:

"O Ali, save all the Ismailis of the world from all difficulties and keep them happy and prosperous forever."

15. Ya Ali tu duniya methi ashanti dur kari, sukh, shanti, and abadi felai.

Ashanti means lack of peace, restlessness Felai means to spread

This prayer means:

"O Ali, remove the lack of peace from the world and spread happiness, peace and prosperity in the world."

16. Ya Ali tu gat Jamat ke toja Zaheri wa Batuni Noorani Didar nasib kar.

This is the most important prayer of all; this is the real desire of every true Momin.

Our prayer for Didar should be accompanied by corresponding actions (good deeds, bandgi, etc.)

17. Ya Ali Ya Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussayni Hazar Imam, tu gat Jamat ji giriah zariji araz venti toje huzur me kabul kar Noor Mowlana Shah Karim Al-Hussayni Hazar Imam.

We are begging to Hazar Imam to accept, in His Holy presence, the request and sincere pleadings of the whole Jamat, that is, to accept all the prayers that the Jamat has offered during the standing Tasbih.

18. Ash-had ann la ilaha ilallah

Wa ash-hadu ann Muhammadur Rasoolullah

Wa Ash-hadu ann Aliyun Ameerul Mu'mineen Alyuillah

Finally, we recite the Holy Kalima, whose meaning is:

"I bear witness that there is no God except Allah,
and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,

and I bear witness that Ali, the Master of Believers, is from

Allah".

1. The first part of the report is a general introduction to the subject of the study.

2. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the methods used in the study.

3. The third part of the report is a discussion of the results of the study.

4. The fourth part of the report is a conclusion and a list of references.

5. The fifth part of the report is a list of appendices.

6. The sixth part of the report is a list of figures and tables.

7. The seventh part of the report is a list of footnotes.

8. The eighth part of the report is a list of references.

9. The ninth part of the report is a list of appendices.

10. The tenth part of the report is a list of figures and tables.

11. The eleventh part of the report is a list of footnotes.

12. The twelfth part of the report is a list of references.