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THE IMAM OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVOLUTION

HAZRAT IMAM SULTAN MAHOMED SHAH



HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN III

(2 NOVEMBER 1877 – 11 JULY 1957)

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PUBLISHER’S NOTE

In 2009, we published a special series on Hazrat Imam Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah (a.s), His Highness the Aga Khan III (1877 – 1957) on the occasion of his 132nd birth anniversary.

Now, 11 years later, as we mark his 143th birth anniversary on November 2, we are pleased to publish this PDF file containing articles from the original series as well as additional material that has since been added.

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Malik Merchant
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1: Successor and a Son Reflect on Accomplishments of the 48th Ismaili Imam



A mid 20th century portrait of the family of the late Aga Khan, seated above on a wheel-chair. Standing next to him is his grand-daughter, Princess Yasmin. Standing from left to right - grandson Prince Ayn Muhammad, his two sons the late Prince Sadruddin and Prince Aly Khan (holding daughter), and second grandson Prince Karim, the present Imam.

Photo: Zul Khoja Collection, Ottawa.

“My Beloved Grandfather”

by His Highness the Aga Khan

Today, I am speaking to you in a city and in a country which have a particular meaning to my family and myself. On 2nd November, 1877 my beloved grandfather was born here in Karachi. Through 72 years of Imamatus, he guided his spiritual children to happiness and prosperity. (Karachi, August 4, 1957)

Many many memories come to our minds as we think of him. He achieved in his life, for our community that which could only have been accomplished normally in a period of many generations. The tributes that the world has paid him bear honest testimony to his great life and work. (Takht Nashini, Karachi, January 23, 1958)

My grandfather was a most gifted person, and amongst his many qualities, one of them had always particularly impressed me. While the past was a book he had read and re-read many times, the future was just one more literary work of art into which he used to pour himself with deep thought and concentration. Innumerable people since his death have told me how he used to read in the future, and this certainly was one of his very great strengths. As a child I used to listen to him for many hours on end and I think, in fact I am convinced, that it was his inspiration which has created in me such a strong interest in the future, while at the same time, guiding me to learn from the teaching books of the past. (Karachi, May 12, 1964)

The Ismaili Community's Magnificent Transformation in a 100 Years

by the late Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan

(17 January 1933 – 12 May 2003)

My Dear Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Council, Mukhi/Kamadias, My Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all of you for the wonderful welcome which you have extended to us here this evening. I know that I reflect the view of my wife and of our guests when I say that we are so happy to be here in Mombasa with all of you tonight. You know that for us it is always a moment which we look forward to, to be able to return to *Bahati*, to enjoy the peace and quiet of this beautiful country and to meet so many old friends with whom we have a very warm and a very personal friendship.

I would like to thank our Chairman, Mr. Lutf Merali, for his kind words and also thank the Council members for giving us this splendid gift on the occasion of my birthday, which is going to be on 17th of January.

You mentioned, Mr. Chairman, that the year which just elapsed [1977] was a very special year. Indeed, during the week of the 2nd of November 1977, which was the day of the Centenary of my late father's birth, Sultan Mahomed Shah, my wife and I had the privilege of being with the Ismaili community in New York City. That day happened to co-incide with my annual visit to United Nations for the General Assembly, and since we wanted very much to be with the Ismaili Jamat on that occasion and since we had to be in New York, we arranged to spend the evening with the New York Jamat in a hall which was specially rented for that occasion and I could not help but think back to what the Ismaili community was 100 years ago.

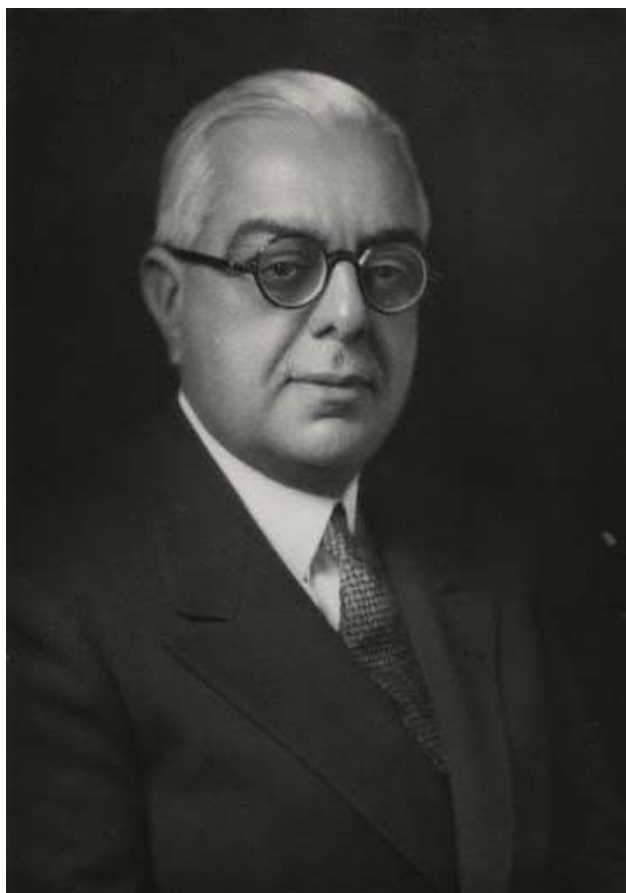
It was largely unknown, it was largely concentrated in but a few countries and, generally, it had not yet adapted itself to all the changes, all the development of the historical revolution of the world and then a short one hundred years during the Imamate of my late father, look what the Ismaili community has become.

Wherever the Jamat has settled, they have established a wonderful reputation for itself. They have always been respected for the peaceful and progressive manner in which they have succeeded in establishing good relation with their neighbours. They have been given credit – the credit they deserve – by the Governments of the countries where they have lived, they have been able to adapt themselves to change, to modern times; the younger generations have understood the need for modern education, they have learnt new languages, when they have become up-rooted because of circumstances, sometimes when they have become refugees even they (the younger generations) have succeeded in adapting themselves to new continents, to new ways of life and at the same time they have not lost their sense of unity, their sense of belonging, their sense of history and their religious faith, and I am absolutely convinced that this is what has made the Ismaili Community strong. This has made it resilient; this has allowed it to prosper and to develop. These are the qualities which the Ismailis are well known for.

So, in a 100 years a great deal has been accomplished and I think we are fortunate indeed to be able to have the guidance, the advice of the young, able and so International Imam as the Present Imam, Shah Karim al-Husseini - someone who has an understanding for the challenge of the 1980's and who can be relied upon to give the Ismaili Community the guidance which it needs in this particular day and age. These are the traditions of which we are proud and this is one of the reasons why I am so happy again to be with all of you here this evening.

2: The Imam of the Socio-Economic Revolution

By (Late) Esmail Thawerbhoy



Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, His Highness the Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam.

Photo : Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

INTRODUCTION

On 2nd November, 1877 was born at Karachi the lineal descendant of the holy Prophet Muhammad and Imam Mawla Murtaza Ali, one who was destined to become, eight years later, the 48th Imam of the Ismaili Muslim Community. A hundred years later, in 1977, the Centenary Celebration of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah's birth was observed with éclat at Karachi and other places.

Chronologically the one hundred years from 1877 up to 1977 spanned, fully or partially, the Imamates of four Ismaili Imams – the last four years of Imam Aga Hassanaly Shah, Aga Khan I (1877-1881), all the four years of the Imamate of Imam Aga Aly Shah , Aga Khan II (1881-1885), the seventy-two years of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's own Imamate (1885-1957), and the first twenty years (1957-1977) of the Imamate of Shah Karim al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV, who is now [2011] in his 55th year of Imamate.



Aga Khan I, Shah Hassan Aly Shah, 46th Imam



Aga Khan II, Shah Aly Shah, 47th Imam



His Highness the Aga Khan IV, 49th Imam of the Ismailis, pictured at the Governor General's residence in Ottawa, Canada, during his Golden Jubilee visit in 2008. The Ismailis have become a dynamic, intrepid community capable of bearing further loads under the guidance of their Imam. Photo by John MacDonald, Copyright

To Ismailis who believe in the Holy Institution of Imamat, the *Imam-e-Zaman*, or the Imam of the Age, is the manifest representation and the visible symbol of the Divine Institution they know as Imamat. The sublime verities of religious experience, based on the holy scriptures, remain inscrutable and beyond human understanding unless visualized by symbolic representation. It is impossible for man to look back at a

symbolism from a given symbol. But man can view the symbol in the light of, or in the background of, a symbolism. Viewed in this light each Imam presents to the world of his time that facet of the multi-faceted *splendour* the Ismailis call Imamatus. All Ismaili philosophers have emphasized the principle of the Unity of Imamatus under the superficial diversity exhibited by each Imam of the Time. It is in this sense that the Ismailis believe that Imam is the same irrespective of his own age or the time he lives in.

The proverbial valour and exemplary statesmanship of Imam Mawla Murtaza Ali, the encyclopedic erudition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, the extraordinary intellectual brilliance of Imam al-Hakim bi Amrillah, the administrative ability of Imam Mustansir Billah (during the first half of his Khilafat), the political acumen of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah (he defied geography and created history), the organizing genius of the present Imam, Shah Karim al-Hussaini, are only some of the more spectacular characteristics exhibited by the Imam of the Time in accordance with the exigencies of the situations facing him.

It would be therefore naïve and ingenuous for an Ismaili writer to try to assess the merits of a particular Imam, or attempt a comparative study of the Imam with other personalities. It is a cardinal principle of Ismailism that the Imam judges the Community and that the Community should never try to judge the Imam. To Ismailis the Imam is Imam. To transgress is tantamount to sacrilege.

IMAMS OF TRANSITION

The checkered history of the Ismailis can be broadly divided into five periods, each period being introduced by the Imam of the Age.

The Arabian Period:

Imam Hazrat Murtaza Ali, the first Imam, initiated the period of Shia (and Ismaili) history wherein the institution of Imamatus was established by the last will and testament of our holy Prophet. The period from the death of the Prophet in 632 until 909 may be called the Arabian Period. This period also witnessed a rift within the Shias upon the demise of Imam Jafar as-Sadiq into two main groups – the Ismailis and the Twelver Shias (or the *Ithnashries*).

The Fatimid Period:

In 909, the 11th Imam Mahdi Muhammad broke the shackles of Abbasid hegemony and established an independent dominion in North Africa, which flowered into the later Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt and Arabia. The Fatimid Period, with respect to the Nizari Ismailis, ended in 1094 with the death of the 18th Imam Mustansir Billah.

The Alamut Period:

In 1090 Hassan bin Sabbah had established an autocracy at Alamut and other mountain fortresses in Persia. It was here that the 20th Imam Hadi established himself. From 1090 until the fall of Alamut in 1256 in the time of the 27th Imam Ruknuddin Khurshah, the period of the 166 glorious years of defiance, is known as the Alamut Period.

The Anjudan Period:

The 28th Ismaili Imam Shamsuddin Muhammad inaugurated the Anjudan period when the Ismaili Imams maintained a low profile until the 46th Imam Aga Hassan Aly Shah migrated to India in 1845. The Anjudan Period may be said to have phased out with the death of the 47th Imam Aga Aly Shah in 1885.

The Indo-European Period:

With the accession of the 48th Imam Aga Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, in 1885, the Indo-European period may be said to have begun. Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah was the first, and as yet the only Imam, to have been born on Indian (now Pakistani) soil.

While each Imam who inaugurated one of the five periods of Ismaili history played a conspicuous part in its evolution, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's role was unique and unprecedented.

A MODERN SAGA

While it would be presumptuous to judge the Imam's qualities, the measure of the Imam's achievement can be gauged from the phenomenal progress of the Ismaili Community during the Imam's regime. The metamorphosis of a moribund society from the depths of its degradation to its proud position in modern civilization during the course of only about half a century is a saga of success with probably no parallel in history. And the Imam was the architect of this modern miracle. The resurgence of the Ismaili Community, literally from rags to riches, is a fitting monument to the Imam's indefatigable efforts.

THEN AND NOW

To properly appreciate the transmogrification of the Ismaili community into a dynamic society, we should compare the society as it was in 1885, when the Imam assumed office, with the society in 1957 when Imam handed over the mantle to his successor.

It was Pir Nuruddin, Satgur Noor, who came to India probably during the later Alamut period, the first half of the 13th century, and succeeded in converting some local Hindu communities to Ismailism. All through

the Mughal period and well into the British period, the Ismailis of India (mostly Western India) remained at about the lowest stratum of society. *Khoja uttha boja* was a common form of abuse. There were a few petty shopkeepers, but most were peddlers and hawkers, some were professional grave-diggers, and quite a few survived by eating at the common kitchen maintained by the Imam at his residence at Wadi on Nesbit Road, Byculla in Bombay. Until the end of the nineteenth century Ismailis remained a nondescript, bedraggled, amorphous conglomerate, without a consciousness of their distinct identity or pride in their heritage.

Economically backward as the Ismailis were at the turn of the present century, educationally they were even worse off. Few could boast knowledge of the three R's.

It was this community, in its lamentable state, that the Imam was called to lead in 1885. The most important question that faced the Imam was whether to develop the community economically, or to use the meager resources of the community to give some of the brighter students to go for higher studies and professional expertise. It was a question of priorities. Should the community be developed economically or educationally?

CHOICE BETWEEN EDUCATION VERSUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEMONSTRATED BY IMAM IN A DRAMATIC ACT

The Imam faced the problem boldly. Though both aspects of the development were important, the resources of the Community could not possibly sustain both. The Community could either become economically viable or educationally advanced, but not both. The choice must have been agonizing. But Imam firmly resolved to raise the economic level of the Community before venturing into higher education. Education, especially higher education, would have to wait. The first task was to make the community wealthy. Higher education and professional know-how would come later when the community's economy could sustain the burden.

At a historic moment Imam demonstrated his choice in a memorable Firman made at the Fidai Academy at Andheri in Bombay. Speaking on education, Imam stretched out both his hands horizontally, and then slowly raised them. He then explained the significance of his dramatic act. Imam said that he wanted a broad-based middle education, sufficient to establish the community as a mercantile entrepreneur. Then, raising both hands vertically, Imam said that he did not want that. He did not want the community to have a few highly-educated people at the risk of keeping many illiterate. The community must rise horizontally, not vertically. Imam also gave the Jamat the motto of "*Hasten slowly*", and not to act precipitately.

Due to the Imam's guidance the Ismaili business community proliferated widely. As too great a concentration of small businesses was not healthy for its development, Imam advocated emigration of some businessmen to less developed countries. At the Imam's behest – and sometimes mild compulsion – young Ismailis from the impoverished provinces of Cutch, Gujarat and Kathiawar (now Saurashtra) emigrated West to Africa (generally the East Coast) – Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar (now combined to

Tanzania), Congo, etc., and East to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. This was the beginning of a pan-Ismailism that was to bear abundant fruit in the not too far distant future. Even in India, Imam advocated that small businessmen should move out of Mumbai to other and more lucrative areas.

Of course, there were even in those days, a few business tycoons and a few highly-educated persons. Society always pushes its favoured few to the top of the ladder. The business house of Sir Currimbhoy Ibrahim, Bart. (the first and only Ismaili baronet) boasted owning thirteen textile mills, the largest chain of textile mills in the world; the house of Manji Nathoo, oil magnates, the most successful dealers in oil in India; the house of Chinoy Brothers, agents to General Motors of Detroit, were some firms with an international reputation.

In higher education Jafar Rahimtoola, B.A., Bar-at-Law, was the first Ismaili barrister in 1901, followed a year later by Mahomedali Jinnah, later founder of Pakistan.



In the interregnum between the two World Wars (both during the Imamate of the Imam) many Ismailis had made their fortunes. But the recession of the 1930's when the business tycoons Currimbhoy Ibrahim, Manji Nathoo, and the Chinoy Brothers, as well as a number of lesser luminaries crashed, showed up the weakness of the Ismaili economic structure. The main factor for this debacle seems to have been the absence of an infrastructure which could cushion the shock. It became the Imam's main concern to build up a solid economic infrastructure. An economic society is sustained neither by the few super rich people at the top, nor by the many poor at the bottom. It is sustained and regulated by a vigorous middle-class which is the economic backbone of a commercial, industrial or a technocratic society. For the creation of a dynamic middle class a higher education was not then essential. The leitmotif of the Imam's guidance was not higher education or professional degrees, but a wide-base middle education which was so necessary to develop a mercantile community. The far-sightedness of Imam's guidance was dramatically demonstrated during the

Golden, Diamond and Platinum Jubilees of the Imam when the largest contributions came from the solid middle core of Ismaili businessmen.

Educationally also, after the sporadic burst at the turn of the century, there was a marked decline in higher and professional education. As in the economic field, so also in the educational field, there existed a vacuum of infrastructure. It is the intellectual infrastructure which acts as a booster as well as a brake—booster to those who are still struggling to reach the higher echelons of society, and a brake to those run-away specialists who tend to break away from our traditional ideological moorings.

ISMAILI COMMUNITY: A WELFARE STATE

After the economic independence of the Ismaili Community, Imam undertook the social regulation of the Jamat. Whereas heretofore almost every problem of the Jamat was handled by the Imam himself, the increasing social consciousness and the realization of the duties incumbent in a well-regulated society indicated that the Jamat should learn to shoulder the responsibility. The Imam introduced a number of regulations with a view to making the Community a self-regulating body. Committees were appointed to look after the social, legal, and matrimonial problems; committees for religious education; committees for primary and secondary secular education; committees for health, hygiene and preventive medicine; committees for business advice. In fact, every aspect of community life came increasingly under the direction of the various committees. Members of the various bodies are selected by the Imam from a panel of candidates recommended by the retiring committees. This method of representation combines the advantages of election and nomination, while avoiding the abuses of both.



Begum Aga Khan with girl students and staff members of the Aga Khan school in Pretoria.

ISMAILI COMMUNITY: A GUIDED DEMOCRACY

The method of representation gives the highest possible privileges to the Community consistent with the guide-lines laid by the Imam in consultation with the leaders from time to time. *Democracy* here is not to be understood in a political sense. Imam has wisely left the political affiliation of each member to his own undeterred choice. At international gatherings, which are held periodically, it is a common sight to see Ismailis of all political affiliations and living under any form of government – democracy, secular democracy, kingship, dictatorship, communism, etc., sitting cheek by jowl like one big family.



Doctor in attendance at a Aga Khan clinic in South Africa

MODUS OPERANDI

How was the Ismaili Community able to take jump, almost literally, from the Middle Ages into reasons could be many. The basic cause of the *Centralized Guidance*.

Ismailis throughout the world – and this in a literal sense because Ismailis have become ubiquitous and are to be found in all five continents—have a common denominator. And this common factor is that they are all and always guided centrally by the Imam. This makes for unanimity, if not unity, in diversity.

THE COMMUNITY IN 1957 AND TODAY

Such was the Community whose leadership was assumed by Mawlana Hazar Imam in 1957. Socially well-organized, commercially adventurous, industrially productive, conscious of its strength and ready for any new challenge, the Ismailis have become a dynamic, intrepid community capable of bearing further loads under the guidance of Mawlana Hazar Imam. The strong and vigorous business community now has a superstructure capable of withstanding the stress it was not able to do in the nineteen thirties. The Imam of

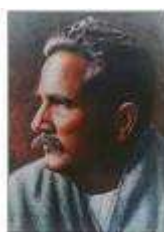
the Atomic Age is leading the Ismailis forward in a direction where they don't have to look back at their past weaknesses.

Article adapted from *Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah: The Imam of the Socio-Economic Revolution* by (late) Esmail Thawerbhoy, *Ilm*, Volume 3, Number 2, November 1977, published by His Highness the Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Association for the UK.

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3: A Muslim's Analysis of Lessons that Can be Learnt from the 48th Ismaili Imam



INTRODUCTION: THE FOUR REMARKABLE MUSLIMS OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT WHO ASSERTED THE TIMELESS VALUES OF ISLAM IN THE 19TH-20TH CENTURIES

There have been, in my view, during the last hundred years, four outstanding Muslims in the story of this sub-continent of India and Pakistan. The first, in point of time, was Syed Ahmed Khan who, a hundred years ago was reaching the very peak of his career and embarking upon the historic step of founding what became Aligarh Muslim University. The other three were born in 1877, namely Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Dr. Mohammed Iqbal and finally the great Muslim whose birth centenary we are celebrating today (2nd November 1977), namely the late Aga Khan. Perhaps it would be useful to recall that all four of these remarkable men asserted both the timeless values of Islam and yet at the same time were fully aware of the need for Muslims to understand and effectively deal with current problems and challenges. There is thus, a great deal of similarity between the four of them, both in their approach to Muslim matters and in their approach to the modern world, as I think you will agree, after I have given, in the short time available today, some of the outstanding qualities of the late Aga Khan as a Muslim in four particular aspects. Those aspects are: as a Muslim with respect to his own Ismaili Shi'a Muslim community; second as a Muslim concerned with the affairs of this sub-continent; third as a Muslim looking at the rest of the Muslim world, and finally, as a Muslim in relation to the non-Muslim world and the world as a whole.



Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad and 48th Imam Shia Imami Ismailis. Photo: Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

I: AS IMAM OF ISMAILIS: THE AGA KHAN'S ADVICE ON EDUCATION, CONCILIATION ON THE ISSUE OF THE FIRST FOUR CALIPHS, AND LOYALTY TO THE COUNTRY OF ADOPTION

With respect to his leadership of his own Ismaili Shi'a Muslim community it is not, of course, possible for a Sunni Muslim like myself to comment adequately on his teachings of Ismaili doctrine and practice. But there are certain lessons he constantly emphasized to the Ismaili community which are of the greatest interest to all other Muslims. He paid the greatest attention to the question of education, and stressed that this education should have a high religious and moral content in accordance with the teaching of Islam and, at the same time, must make students competent as active and practical members of society, able to handle the problems of the modern world. You will find, time and again, references to the importance of Muslims acquiring scientific knowledge, thereby recapturing the spirit of earlier Muslims. You will find he refers with great emphasis to the importance of women's education.

THE AGA KHAN'S MESSAGE TO THE ISMAILIS

Though Ismalis [sic] have been always staunch and firm believers in the truth of their own faith in the Imamate Holy Succession, they have never, like some other sects, gone to the other extreme of condemning brother Muslims who have other interpretations of the Divine Message of our Holy Prophet (S.A.S.).

Ismailis have always believed and have been taught in each generation by their Imams that they hold the rightful interpretation of the succession to the Holy Prophet, but that is no reason why other Muslims, who believe differently, should not be accepted as brothers in Islam and dear in person and prayed for and never publicly or privately condemned, leave alone abused.

I hope that in these days when the Muslims have to hold together in view of all the dangers, external and internal, from all quarters, I hope and believe and pray that Ismailis may show their true Islamic charity in thought and prayer for the benefit and happiness of all Muslims, men, women and children of all sects.

"The Spirit of Unity in Islam", Platinum Jubilee message to Ismailis, Cairo, 20 February, 1955

And, what is of the greatest significance is the broad- minded wisdom he displayed in commenting upon Muslim history. On the question of the first four caliphs at Medina, after the death of the Prophet, you will find in the late Aga Khan's healing and conciliatory approach that he gave one of the soundest reasons why all four should be accepted by all Muslims whatever their school of thought or sect. He took as his basis for this very desirable and statesman like attitude the point of view of the fourth caliph himself, with respect to the first three caliphs.

Another extremely significant part of his message to the Ismaili Muslim community is sometimes regarded as not the same as the attitude that other Muslims should adopt, but this is wrong. It concerns the importance the late Aga Khan always attached to the members of his community being loyal to the particular state of which they were citizens. This meant, of course that for those of his community in Pakistan that they should be fully committed to Pakistan, like all other citizens of the state and show, both by their words and deeds, that they were an asset and a valuable part of society. By the same token he attached great importance to members of his community who were citizens of other states, like India for example, being loyal citizens of those states. This, in fact is a rule which applies to all Muslims, because if Muslims in states where they are in a minority are not loyal to those states, they can hardly expect the majority communities in those states to treat them as they would wish to be treated. Indeed, the majority communities in those other states would

then regard Muslims, if they are not loyal, as unfit to be accepted as full citizens. It is vital that Muslims, where they are in a minority, should do nothing to give the majority community any excuse for treating them unjustly or imposing restrictions or penalties upon them. This rule is also of the greatest importance because by the principle of reciprocity Muslims, for example in Pakistan, can hardly demand of non-Muslim citizens in Pakistan, full loyalty to Pakistan, if we Muslims do not practice the same virtue where we are in minority ourselves.

II: ON AFFAIRS OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT: THE AGA KHAN CONTRIBUTION TO ALIGARH AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ADOPTION OF ARABIC AS PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL LANGUAGE

His advice to his own Ismaili Muslim community moves very easily into his advice to all the Muslims of the subcontinent and we find that his was a tremendous contribution, not merely in terms of money, (although this was substantial) but also in terms of local support and active campaigning. This was a major factor in putting the Muslim University at Aligarh, founded by Syed Ahmed Khan, on to a firm footing which enabled this university to play its vital indispensable role in enabling the Muslims of the subcontinent to recover from the disaster of 1857 and to properly equip themselves for the battle of survival and progress of later years. It has often been said that without Aligarh, there could not have been a Pakistan and, equally correctly, it can be said that without a forward looking Muslim Community in any part of the subcontinent or indeed the Muslim world as a whole, no enduring development can be possible, whether with respect to the Muslims themselves or in their relations with the non-Muslims in any area.

It is also important when considering the significance of the late Aga Khan to remember that he developed and exhibited broad tolerance with regard to the natural and normal differences of opinion as in 1951 about Arabic being paramount and essential for bringing about real substantial unity in Pakistan that could withstand any crisis of provincial feeling. It is our misfortune that his wise farsighted advice was not taken at that time. But it does not make his advice any less relevant to Pakistan's present problems. But Arabic, in Pakistan, for example, has two other significant functions which are probably even greater. Without Arabic, a Muslim cannot have direct access to the Holy Qur'an, which God in His wisdom chose to reveal in Arabic. Without this direct access to the Holy Qur'an, i.e. in the language in which it is revealed, and without understanding the meaning of the prayers we offer to our Creator, it is difficult for Muslims to become increasingly better and better informed as Muslims about Islam itself. After all, knowledge is an essential part of Muslim faith. The very first Surah to be revealed (Surah 96) begins by commanding Muslims to 'read', and goes on to emphasize that one of the great proofs of God's beneficence and mercy is that he has taught man knowledge. The other great significance of Arabic, which doubtless was also in the late Aga Khan's mind at the time, that he stressed its importance is that it is indispensable for enabling Muslims from

different parts of the Muslim world to converse with each other and that Arabic has the potential of being the authentic vehicle of unity from Morocco to Indonesia.

III. THE AGA KHAN AS CHAMPION AND DEFENDER OF ISLAM

Finally the late Aga Khan's attitude to non-Muslims and the non-Muslim world was a forceful combination of a constant defense and a positive championing of Islam against the hostile criticisms and ill-founded assertions of certain people, in the West particularly. In a memorable letter to the *London Times* in October 1951 he defended Islam against some totally unjustified criticism that had been leveled against it. He was foremost in the defense and propagation of Islam everywhere, whether in dealing with the hostility and prejudices of some non-Muslims or in the building of mosques in the West, just as he made substantial contributions to the repair of such outstanding mosques in the Muslim world, as the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore.

IV. THE AGA KHAN'S INTERNATIONAL STATURE AS STATESMAN

But, at the same time, he saw the world wide relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as a relationship that must become one of mutual respect and understanding and tolerance. This it would seem is essential, if the world is to develop on more sane lines, than a struggle of force against force based on hatred and prejudice.

The result was that the late Aga Khan was greatly respected throughout the world for his frank and statesmanlike approach to world problems and the relationship that is desirable between the different religions of the world. That he was so respected is symbolized by the fact that he was elected as President of the League of Nations in 1937. It was a recognition of the fact that although he was in his ideas and convictions thoroughly Muslim, he understood Islam in the true spirit which meant that his attitude to non-Muslims was tolerant and understanding and based on mutual respect, the only basis that can further the cause of world peace.

CONCLUSION

This is a useful point at which to remind ourselves once again of those four great Muslims, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Mohammed Iqbal, Syed Ahmed Khan and the Aga Khan. They are in the context of Pakistan, the real expressions of what the movement of Muslim reconstruction and reform means in this subcontinent and in Pakistan in particular. It is no exaggeration to assert that if we in Pakistan forget or ignore the message of Islam, as understood by these four great Muslims and if we revert to narrow bigotry and prejudice in our ideas or practices, to that extent we are endangering Pakistan itself. Conversely, to the extent we remember what these four Muslims stood for and we try to implement in our ideas and practices the true message of

the Qur'an and the Sunna of our Prophet, to that extent we are serving Pakistan and assuring its survival and laying the foundations for its welfare, prosperity and greatness in the Future.

The main body of the above article is from a paper presented by Kamal A. Faruki at a seminar held in Karachi on 2nd November, 1977, to celebrate the birth centenary of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III. The complete paper was produced in a number of periodicals including *Iln*, Volume 3, Number 4, March 1978, published by His Highness the Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismailia Association for the UK (now known as the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board).

4: A “Mendicant” Who Transformed a Dream into Reality and Stirred the Soul of a Bitter Critic

“I came upon a rather striking surprise in looking through the texts of earlier Peterson Lectures. Not just one – but two of those addresses in recent years have quoted my grandfather! It was from him, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, that I inherited my present role in 1957. I also inherited from him a deep concern for the advancement of education – especially in the developing world....As you may know, the developing world has been at the centre of my thinking and my work throughout my lifetime. And I inherited a tradition of educational commitment from my grandfather. It was a century ago that he began to build a network of some 300 schools in the developing world the Aga Khan Education Services – in addition to founding Aligarh University in India.” (Excerpts from *The Peterson Lecture* by the current 49th Ismaili Imam, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, grandson of Aga Khan III, to a meeting of the International Baccalaureate, Atlanta, Georgia, April 18, 2008).

HOW “THE GREATEST PERSONALITY AND BENEFACTOR OF ISLAM” FULFILLED THE DREAM OF INDIAN MUSLIMS



A portrait of Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam by Elliott & Fry, half-plate negative, 1911.

Copyright, National Portrait Gallery, London.

In December 1910, the session of the All India Muslim Educational Conference at Nagpur gave the signal for a concrete, nation-wide effort to raise the necessary funds for the projected University. A Central Foundation Committee with the Aga Khan III as Chairman and Maulana Shaukat Ali (1873 – 1938) as his Secretary was formed at Aligarh on January 10, 1911. The committee included many other high profile representatives from the Muslim community. The Aga Khan accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali toured throughout the country to raise funds, visiting Calcutta, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Lahore, Bombay and other places.

‘As a mendicant’, the Aga Khan announced, ‘I am now going out to beg from house to house and from street to street for the children of Indian Muslims.’

It was a triumphal tour. Wherever he went, people unharnessed the horses of his carriage and pulled it themselves for miles.

The response to the touching appeal of the Aga Khan was spontaneous. On his arrival at Lahore, the daily *‘Peace’* of Punjab editorially commented and called upon the Muslims *‘to wake up, as the greatest personality and benefactor of Islam was in their city.’*

The paper recalled a remark of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan prophesying the rise of a hand from the unseen world to accomplish his mission. *‘That personality’* the paper added, *‘was of the Aga Khan III.’*

Collecting Funds from a Bitter Critic – the True Spirit of Islam

The significant aspect of the Imam’s fund collection drive was not the enthusiastic welcome accorded to him, but the house to house collection drive.

Qayyum A. Malick writes in *‘Prince Aga Khan’* (Karachi, 1954, p. 64) that once while on his way to Bombay to collect funds for the university, the Aga Khan stopped his car at the office of a person who was known to be his bitterest critic.

The man stood up astonished and bewildered and asked, *‘Whom do you want Sir?’*

‘I have come for your contribution to the Muslim university fund,’ said the Aga Khan.

The man drew up a cheque for Rs. 5000.

Then the Aga Khan took off his hat and said:

‘Now as a beggar, I beg from you something for the children of Islam. Put something in the bowl of this mendicant.’

The man wrote another cheque for Rs. 15000 with moist eyes, and said:

'Your Highness, now it is my turn to beg. I beg of you in the name of the most merciful God to forgive me for anything that I may have said against you. I never knew you were so great.'

The Aga Khan said:

'Don't worry! It is my nature to forgive and forget in the cause of Islam and the Muslims.'

The drive received further great fillip from the announcement of a big donation by Her Highness Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal. The Aga Khan was so moved by her munificence that in thanking her, he spoke the following words:

Dil'e banda ra zinda kardi, dil'e Islam ra zinda kardi, dil'e qaum ra zinda kardi, Khuda'i ta'ala ba tufail'e Rasul ajarash be dahadmeans

Translation:

'You put life in the heart of this servant; you put life in the heart of Islam; you put life in the heart of the nation. May God reward you for the sake of the Prophet!'

In sum, the Imam collected twenty-six lacs of rupees by July, 1912 in the drive and his personal contribution amounted to one lac rupees.

On October 20, 1920, the Aligarh University was granted its official Charter. In spite of several obstacles, the Aga Khan continued his ceaseless efforts for the Muslim University, and further announced his annual grant of Rs. 10,000 for Aligarh University, which was subsequently raised. Various Ismaili individuals also made their generous contributions to Aligarh University. For instance, Mr. Kassim Ali Jairajbhoy gave Rs. 1,25,000 to found chairs of Philosophy and Science in the Aligarh in memory of his father.

It might be noted that in January, 1857, Lord Canning (1856-1862) had passed the Acts of Incorporation in India which provided for the establishment of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The fourth university was then established in 1882 by a Special Act of Incorporation in Punjab and the fifth was that of Allahabad University in 1887. Thus, by the end of 1902 there were five universities in India. Aligarh University became the sixth one.

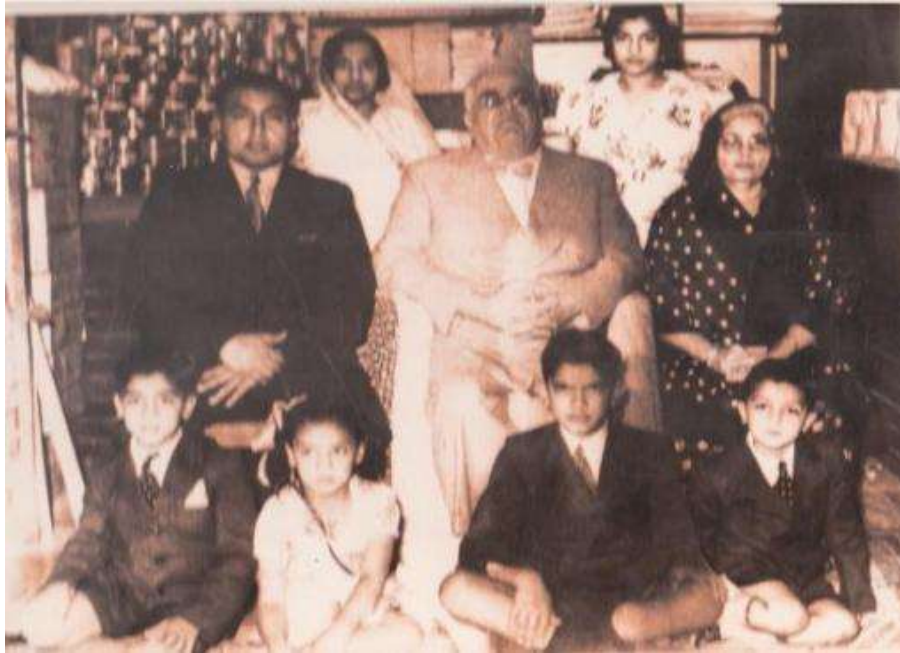
'The Movement of establishing a Muslim University' wrote Mumtaz Moin in his *'The Aligarh Movement'* (Karachi, 1976, p. 184), *'is an important chapter of our history. Initiated by Waqar al-Mulk it soon became a live issue under the patronage of the Aga Khan.'*

Islamuddin wrote in 'Aga Khan III' (Islamabad, 1978, p. 27) '*...it would not be an exaggeration to say that without Aga Khan, there would have been no Aligarh University, and without Aligarh, Pakistan would have been a near impossibility.*'

The Aga Khan himself wrote in his 'Memoirs' (London, 1954, p. 36) :

'We may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of no outside benevolence and surely it may also be claimed that the independent sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh.'

5: Recollection of Imam's Visit to a Family Shop; A Story about the Diamond Jubilee Scale and...Does it (Still) Work?



1. Zul Khoja recalls a memorable visit by the Imam to their family shop in South Africa

The above is a picture of Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah when he came to our shop during his South African visit in 1945. I remember some things very vividly. We were all very excited about the visit and the Mulaqat with the Imam. The Jamati leaders, in their wisdom, decided that the Imam would visit every business for *Barakah* and have a picture taken with the family. Our shop floor was red cement. We spent several days applying red polish and made sure that it was clean and shiny. The entire store was cleaned, dusted and spotless.

When the day arrived we were not too sure of the exact time, because Mawla sometimes spoke to the family members a little longer than others. When he arrived in front of the store we immediately took our places and there he was in His Majesty! He immediately sat down in the chair reserved for him and it so happened that the sun was shining very bright that day (why wouldn't it?) and it reflected off the red shiny floor. Hence the Imam looking up. It was a truly memorable experience and his visit is still vivid today after fifty years! I do not know what the Imam said to my parents and grandmother.



The scale then...

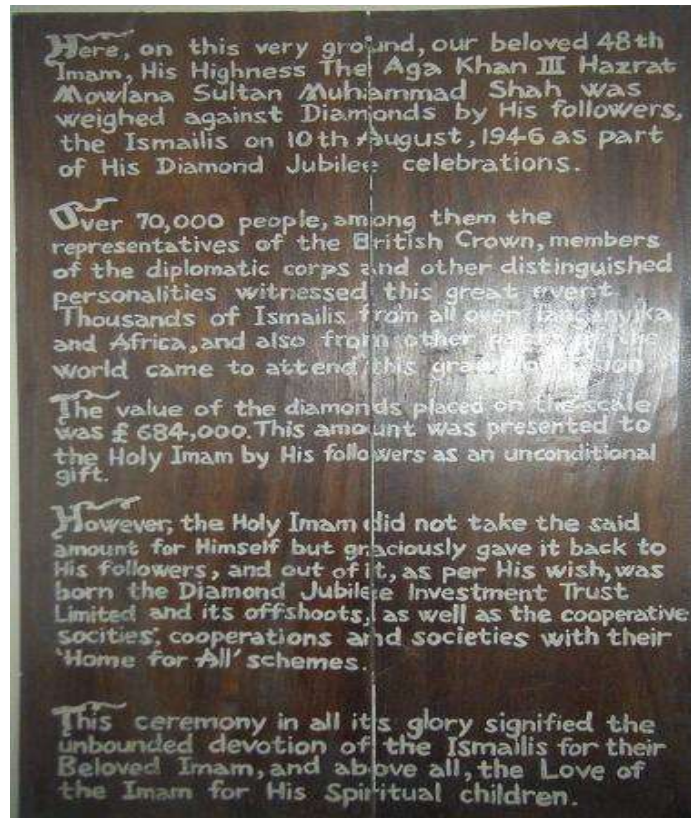
2. Al-Karim (Korji) Pirani Tells a Story behind the Diamond Jubilee Scale

Last year my family and I travelled to Tanzania for a holiday. We had lived close to Upanga Jamatkhana when we were residents in Tanzania and decided to go to the Jamatkhana during our visit. We found to our amazement that the scale that was used to weigh Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah during his Diamond jubilee was still there, on the ground floor, with some other memorabilia including photographs from the celebrations and a huge wooden plaque (appx. 5' x 2' or may be larger) containing a handwritten inscription about the Diamond Jubilee event (note the stylish first letter of each paragraph).



The scale today...at Upanga Jamatkhana, Dar-es-Salaam

The scale was first used in Mumbai for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations there and as my father Abdul (Korji) Pirani of Toronto recalls, it was shipped to Dar-es-Salaam upon the completion of the ceremonies in India. As a note, the scale had been donated by my late grandfather (Itmadi Mohamed Korji Pirani) for the Diamond Jubilee in India. I believe the cost was approximately 8000 rupees. The stage, on the other hand, was much more expensive – about 40 to 50,000 rupees – and had been donated by another family.



Diamond Jubilee Plaque...one of the memorabilia at Upanga Jamatkhana

With a slight trepidation my son, Jamil, climbed up on to the scale to see whether it still worked after 65 years – and lo, the needle went up (see photo). With minor tuning and adjustment it might show a weight as accurate as any of today's electronic gadgets but like many other antiquated objects of the past, such as computers, it is quite huge and bulky.



The scale tipping to take Jamil's weight during his recent visit to Dar-es-Salaam

The scale, such as the one shown here, might be of historical importance and perhaps one day finds its proper place in a museum! We were gratified that the scale and the memorabilia have been preserved by the institutions and the Jamat.

Both the above contributors, Alijah Zul Khoja and Al-Karim Pirani, are members of the Ottawa Jamat, Canada.

6: Imam's Message in South Africa Addressed Artificial Barriers, Unity, Education for All, and Damaging Social Habits

The happy period of your Imamate shall ever remain green in the history of the Ismaili world. Being the direct lineal descendant of the Great Prophet of Arabia, through his beloved Fatima and the first Imam Ali, Your Highness has been the most faithful torchbearer of all the marvelous teachings of your illustrious ancestor...(Excerpt from an address to Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, by his followers in South Africa)



Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah's arrival at the colonial city of Lourenco Marques on August 4th 1945 to commence his visit to the city and South Africa



Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah and the Begum being received at Johannesburg's train station on August 7th 1945 where they arrived from Lourenco Marques. Vazir Alibhai Keshavjee, the Ismaili Provincial Council President, is at left.



The Imam admiring the Ismaili Jamatkhana in Lourenco Marques, which he had visited before departing for South Africa

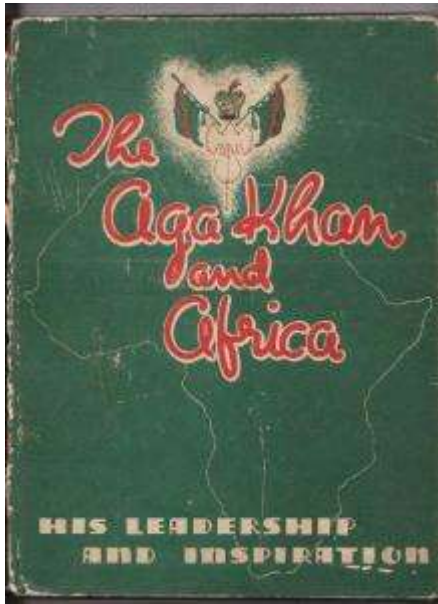


The Lourenco Marques Jamatkhana in 1945, which the Imam described as one of the finest in Africa. Both the interior and exterior underwent major changes more than two decades later

I. Ismaili Imam Addresses Artificial Barriers and Appeals for Human Understanding at Indian Congress Banquet

August 7, 1945 was a historic occasion for the Ismailis in South Africa as their 48th Imam, Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, and the Begum Om Habiba, Mata Salamat, arrived in Johannesburg by train from Lourenco Marque's (now Maputo) where they had earlier commenced their visit to Southern Africa on August 4th.

His visit to South Africa was marked by remarkable speeches and statements and this reading focuses on some of the key messages that he conveyed to South African Indians and Muslims.



The Front Cover of the "The Aga Khan and Africa"
Souvenir issue



Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah's 1946 message to South Africa
published in the Souvenir, following his visit in 1945

Speaking at a banquet held by the Transvaal Indian Congress on the day of his arrival, the Aga Khan firmly asserted the Indians' rights to be treated equally for the sake of their happiness. He said:

"May I sincerely and earnestly appeal to all citizens of this great country to permit the Indians to enjoy the benefits of peace and happiness. Is it possible to find a solution of the Indian problem on the basis of human understanding?"

And may I also remind friends of India here tonight, that to make cultural, economic and social barriers artificially can never lead to what is your ideal—a union of all civilized people in this vast land. My Indian compatriots here are keen on education. Is it right that the gates of knowledge should be closed to them artificially?"

"Tonight's banquet", he noted, "shows that whatever may be the difficulties which exist, the human union is not absent."

"Is there any danger to your supremacy? Is there any possibility of such a menace? Then, why not allow them to go along with you on the road of happiness. The world is big enough for all. Above all, South Africa is a big country. If an overcrowded country like India can show a readiness to open its doors to those who come from outside why cannot South Africa do the same thing?"

II. “This is Most Beautiful, Wonderful” – Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah in an Ismaili Council Function



Photogravure illustrating the magnificent floral decorations and seating design at the reception given to Aga Khan III and the Begum Aga Khan by the Aga Khan's Ismailia Provincial Council, Pretoria, on Thursday August 9th 1945

On August 9th, Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah and the Begum were given a reception by the South African Ismailia Provincial Council in Pretoria. In an emotional welcome to the Imam, the President, Vazir Keshavjee, said:

“We in South Africa have lived to this day. In an article your Highness once wrote, your Highness referred to the hour of prayer as your greatest hour. This hour – when we see you face to face, when we speak to you – is our greatest hour...We glory in your presence ; we pay our reverence to you.”



Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah pictured with Louis Trichardt Jamat in Pretoria

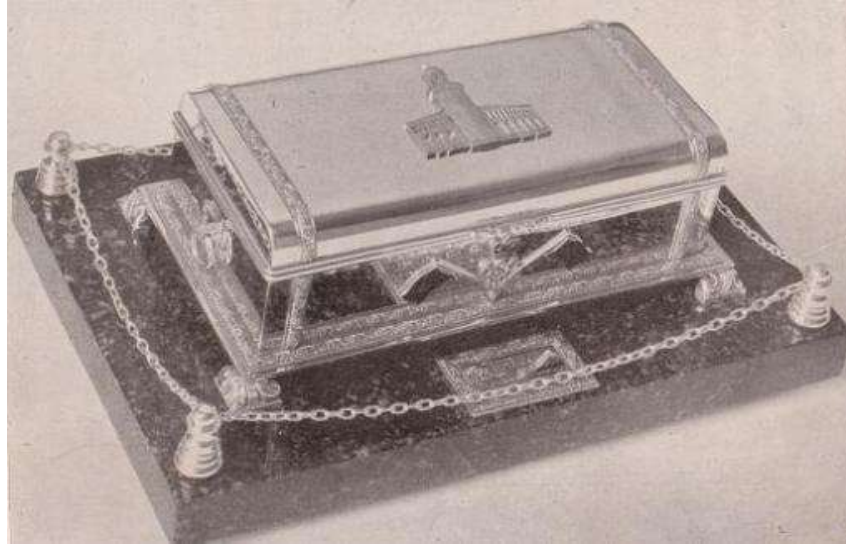
In another welcoming address, the organizing secretary of the function said:

“The happy period of your Imamate shall ever remain green in the history of the Ismaili world. Being the direct lineal descendant of the Great Prophet of Arabia, through his beloved Fatima, and the first Imam Ali, Your Highness has been the most faithful torchbearer of all the marvelous teachings of your illustrious ancestor.”

The entire stage and the surrounding areas were filled with a variety of high blooming flowers, beautiful greenery, and poinsettias that had transformed the hall to a “*veritable fairyland*.” The lighting effects had been so arranged that as the party of distinguished guests advanced into the auditorium, the illumination gradually dimmed and the beauty of the stage decorations stood out in bold and splendid radiance.

The Imam paused and looked around him and said:

“This is Most Beautiful, Wonderful.”



The address presented to the 48th Imam illuminated in gold and bound in chased Moroccan leather was contained in a casket mounted in black granite. The lid bears a replica of the Pretoria Jamatkhana. The front represents the Aga Khan's coat-of-arms.

III. (a) On Political Unity and Division between Rich and Poor – Do not be divided on an economic issue... make friends on an intellectual basis

Do not allow Muslim or any other sectarian differences to divide your united front in South Africa. Believe me, there are great temptations, but whatever happens, do not disunite.

One of the highlights of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah's visit was a remarkable address to the Transvaal Muslim League in the Johannesburg City Hall on August 12th, 1945. He began by saying:

"It is never a happy business to give advice to others."



The Aga Khan offering prayers at the Muslim League Function

The Aga Khan asked the meeting to forgive him for lecturing them, but he felt that being very nearly seventy years of age and having had well over fifty years of experience in various activities, he would be failing in his duty if he did not offer them the advice which his years and experience permitted.

First of all he urged them to be politically united.

“Do not allow Muslim or any other sectarian differences to divide your united front in South Africa. Believe me, there are great temptations, but whatever happens, do not disunite.”

He also said to the Indians in South Africa that division between the rich and the poor should not be allowed to occur; it had no place in their national political movement. They were nationally exposed in the Union; they were 250,000 people in a vast country surrounded by people of many races and it was of the greatest importance that they should not be divided on an economic issue. Rather they should make friends on an intellectual basis. Truth and wisdom were unanswerable, because truth was always established by time in the long run.

Then he proceeded to give specific advice to his Muslim brethren.



The Aga Khan speaking at the Muslim League Reception warned of the dangers of Alcohol and Tobacco

III. (b) Alcohol and Tobacco

AlcoholAvoid it at all costs. Avoid it, I say, for in this country you cannot afford to lose one man...Tobacco....What would you think of a man who went about the streets burning up ten shilling notes

“The greatest danger,” said the Aga Khan, “to every Muslim citizen – I have not the least hesitation in saying it – is alcohol. Time has shown that it is an injury to you; an injury to your person; an injury to

your health. It is forbidden because it carries greater evil than good. Believe me, in a community like yours, alcohol is a very grave danger. Once you got into the alcohol habit, I do not know where it would lead you. A handful, here and there, of the weak, or of the unhappy, find their way to this terrible poison. Avoid it at all costs. Avoid it, I say, for in this country you cannot afford to lose one man."

Then the Aga Khan warned them about the dangers of tobacco. *"It is not a religious question,"* he said, *"but it is a question of economy. What would you think of a man who went about the streets burning up ten shilling notes? You would call him a madman, wouldn't you? But people go around buying cigarettes and burning them.*

"Also, many doctors will tell you that tobacco smoking is bad for you. So although smoking is not forbidden, it is from my long experience of life that I strongly urge the young not to acquire the habit and the more mature to reduce it to the minimum. I assure you that the economic position will greatly improve."

III. (c) Education – Institute Night Classes and Educate Muslim Girls and Women

...the girl's function was the maintenance of home life and the bringing up of the children. Her influence in the family circle was enormous and the future of the generations depended upon her ability to lead the young along the right paths and instruct them in the rudiments of culture and civilization

Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah then turned to the question of education. There were, he said, many causes which hampered educational effort in South Africa, but it was his opinion that night classes, as they had done in other countries, might perform a great service in the Union.

"Night classes where there are a number of Muslims together using books on Muslim history and Muslim literature would bring you in through the Western door into the palaces of Eastern culture."

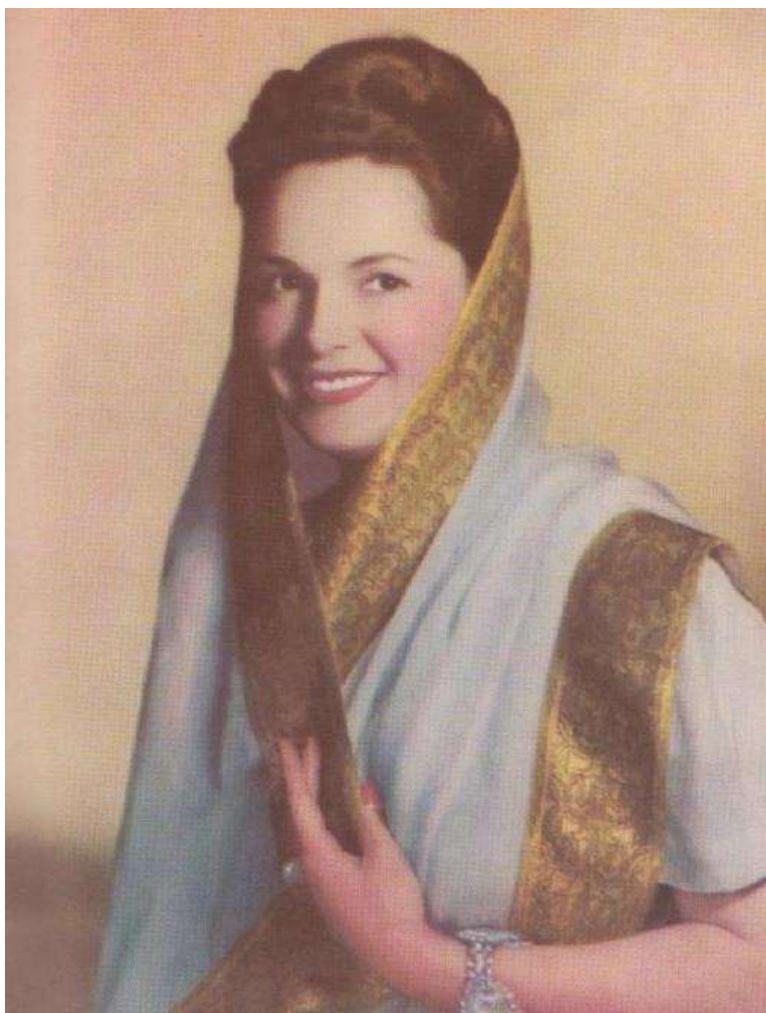
Education for women was a thing which His Highness stressed. Without it there would inevitably result other great drawbacks for the Muslim community.

"Personally," he said; *"if I had two children, and one was a boy and the other a girl, and if I could afford to educate only one, I would have no hesitation in giving the higher education to the girl."*

The male, he said, could bend his energies to manual effort for reward, but the girl's function was the maintenance of home life and the bringing up of the children. Her influence in the family circle was enormous and the future of the generations depended upon her ability to lead the young along the right paths and instruct them in the rudiments of culture and civilization.

The League should bear this in mind and arrange for the proper night classes for boys and men and lectures for girls and women.

The Aga Khan undertook to supply to every Muslim community with the necessary books which would further their cultural advance.



A beautiful portrait of Begum Aga Khan in "The Aga Khan and Africa" Souvenir.

Mata Salamat took an abiding interest in every aspect of the Jamat's activities

III. (d) Duties of Muslims and the Importance of Setting High Standards

He said that unfortunately since the fall of Spain and Baghdad, Muslims had forgotten science, and in this respect the leadership of Muslims had taken a back place.

“Even the Chinese have long since passed us,” said the Aga Khan. “The Hindus have long since passed us. It is not only by books but also by night classes that you will go far in preparing the way in which you should be brought up.”

The Aga Khan then spoke of the duties of Muslims. He noted that in East Africa a Muslim welfare society had been formed at last. Rich and poor alike were doing all in their power to help Islam. It involved, he said, a science in which every Muslim should participate for the welfare of the people. It required the observance and furtherance of hygiene, dietetics and social welfare. The rich had to help the poor in this important matter and the poor had to co-operate with their benefactors.

“The high standard upon which you insist for yourselves,” said His Highness, “will win for you the respect of all the other communities in South Africa.”

He ended his remarkable address by saying:

“Once more, forgive me for lecturing you, and for showing – to the best of my ability – where there is light and where there is darkness. I know that if it has some influence in your life in the future, then my time and your time has not been wasted..”

IV. Ride Bicycles, he urges his followers

On August 16, 1945, Ismailis had gathered at Rand airport to see their beloved Imam and Begum depart for Durban.

When they arrived at the airport they saw Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah on the tarmac swinging a golf club. The Imam turned to them and said, not without a twinkle in his eye, that they would do well to buy bicycles for not only would that be an economic proposition but also supply the necessary exercise. He advised them not to use their motor cars more than two or three times a week for pleasure, but to use them whenever required for business. As petrol rationing was in force at the time the advice was most timely.



Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah and the Begum with a South African family visiting Paris

V. (a) Asks Muslims and Hindus to Swim Together

In Durban, he addressed the Indian National Congress. After paying tribute to the pioneering efforts of Indians in South Africa, the Aga Khan said:

"..Forgive me if, after spending only a short time in your midst, I venture to give you a few words of advice. The onlooker often sees most of the game, and I have known and studied the case of the Indians in South Africa for a very long time.

First of all, and by far the most important, let there never be any question of Hindu and Muslim in South Africa. The Hindu and Muslim difficulties and squabbles and differences in India, are not articles for export. Here, once and for all, you are all in the same boat. You will sink or swim together and, for goodness sake, do not allow questions of religion or geography ever to disunite the Natal Indian Congress."



The Aga Khan speaking at the Congress Function

V. (b) Educate to Overcome Artificial Barriers

To the Indians he said that while many artificial barriers were pressing against them, there were other fields in which they could make good.

"I implore you, with all my strength, to go in more for education," His Highness said. "No one can stop you if you sincerely and honestly try to raise the standard of every Indian boy to that of the level of the European. Fortunately there are men of wealth among you, and bursaries could be provided so that the poor may achieve a standard of education which their own resources make difficult, if not impossible.

"If certain avenues are closed, there are many that are open. Boys could be sent to the highest educational centers in Britain or the United States, and even in South Africa there are opportunities at the Universities. In the long run this education will go further than any amount of other action in bringing about a better

understanding of your qualities as citizens of South Africa. These doors are open. They must always be kept open, for the standard of material life will depend upon the standard of moral and cultural life.”



The Begum with the Aga Khan Girl Guides

V. (c) Equality Between Men and Women

Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah insisted that in the standard of education, essentially there should be equality between both sexes. He pointed out that it was only when a nation could bring into its service both the men and the women to carry on the social and home life as well as its secular and economic activities and when both the men and the women contributed to the utmost that the greatest success and advantage could be gained.

“Could Great Britain have won the war without the contributions of the women?” asked the Aga Khan.

“Could the United States have reached her international status without her womenfolk? And we all know the tremendous contribution of the women in Russia since the Revolution in 1917. By constant effort if all these advantages are brought to our mothers and sisters and daughters, a great advance will have been made in achieving those principles of right and dealings of fair play.”

V. (d) Gandhi’s Teaching Should be the Guiding Star

Speaking of Mahatma Gandhi, he said:

“A higher standard of moral force, of sobriety, of honour and of integrity which must break down even the greatest of prejudices,” was Gandhi’s teaching.

“Brethren, let that standard of integrity, which the greatest of Indian sons preached here to the world at large, be your guiding star.

“How can I better my knowledge, my integrity and my ability to help my brother more to-day?” Such a self-searching question will lead to a great increase in that moral strength to which Mahatma Gandhi attached such great importance. You may have fights politically here, but at least be of such a character that those, however reluctantly they may be your opponents, will ever and ever respect you and say: ‘Our Indian citizens are as good citizens as we are.’

“Here there is bravery, happily not on the battlefield, but in the faith in the higher destiny of mankind, no matter what be his colour or creed—that quality which makes man; that judgment of conscience. I am sure that judgment of conscience, if firmly believed in and acted upon, will go far to solving the problems of South Africa.”

The moment of departure took place at Durban Airport on August 17th, 1945 bringing an end to a visit by Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah and Mata Salamat that had charmed the whole of South Africa.

Credit: This reading and accompanying images are adapted from *“The Aga Khan and Africa – His Leadership and Inspiration,”* a 200 page commemorative Souvenir published to celebrate Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah’s Diamond Jubilee as well as his visits to Lourenco Marques and South Africa. The book was compiled by Habib V. Keshavjee. The date of publication is not noted anywhere in the souvenir.

7: The Road to Happiness and the Concept of Life

I. THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS



"Happiness is never a negative affair; it is to be won by men who are fully alive, full of the joy of living" - Aga Khan III.

Photo: Copyright, The National Portrait Gallery, London

Be One and Harmonious with God

First, I would place spiritual happiness. A man must be at one with God. This may sound old-fashioned to some people. A few may think that they do not believe in God, and some others that it matters little to the individual in his daily life how he stands with regard to Him.

Ruling out the atheist, with whom a believer can no more argue than he can discuss colour with a blind man, it is surely strange that a believer in an Omnipotent and Ever-Present Deity should fail to realize that how we stand this instant and every instant toward Him matters to us more than anything else in the universe.

That is the fundamental question:- *Are you in harmony with God? If you are – you are happy.*

Treasure the Glories of Nature With the Blessing of the Sight

Next I would place appreciation and enjoyment of the glories of nature. All those sunrises and sunsets – all the intricate miracle of sky colour, from dawn to dusk. All that splendid spendthrift beauty... As a very rich man treasures the possession of some unique picture, so a man should treasure and exult in the possession – his individual possession – of the sights of this unique world.

Those glories are his from dawn to dusk, and then – and then comes night – “a night of stars – all eyes.” I look up at night and I know – I *know* the glory of the stars. It is then that the stars speak to us – and the sense of that mystery is in our blood.

There are other more homely delights in an English landscape – twisting lanes with living leafy walls, villages clustered in a nook of the hills, the soft undulation of down or moorland, no more than emphasized by the occasional bold scarp of a rocky peak. But you have grandeur enough in the tall cliffs that look down so proudly on your encircling seas. All that is yours, and mine – ours for the seeing.

With nature I would link painting. Pictures are very useful. If a man cannot get to the countryside, a picture will remind him of it. And the man who has been blind to the beauty of nature may have his imagination quickened by seeing the visions of great artists. He may come to see that dawn and dusk make glorious even the drab pavement of a town.

Let Great Poetry Put You in Touch with God

Then comes literature – above all poetry. Poetry is the voice of God speaking through the lips of man. If great painting puts you in touch with nature, great poetry puts you in direct touch with God. It is not a soft indulgence, you need to be wide awake, with all your wits about you, to share the poet’s joys. And, indeed, happiness is never a negative affair; it is to be won by men who are fully alive, full of the joy of living.

Make the Body Feel Alive With Rapid Movements...and Let the Electricity Flow



Aga Khan III believed that sport, with its rapid movements, would make a body feel alive. He was an avid golfer and is seen here with Willie Nolan, the great Irish golfer

Next I would place the joys of rapid movement such as you get from games like golf, tennis, football, and, they tell me, cricket. As with literature the mind, so with games the body feels itself vividly, happily alive. Of all sports of rapid movement the riding of a horse is the best.

The legend of the centaur- half man, half horse – was no idle dream; for you and the splendid creature are one. As its limbs gather and stretch out in perfect rhythm, electricity passes from the animal to you. It is a joy of the spirit as of the body. Through us speak the souls of our ancestors, who have ridden horses from the beginning of time. Yes, we may well believe that the horse was with man from the beginning.

No doubt we who have ridden horses get a touch of that great happiness when English thoroughbreds, the exiles of Arabia, fly down the course like winged messengers of speed. Of course you cannot get a comparable feeling from the utmost Horse-Power (save the mark!) of a machine. No ! No !

These are the independent means of happiness. Any man may worship God, wonder at the miracle of nature, exult when he hears (in literature) the sons of God shouting for joy, and give praise for the perfection of his body in rapid movement.

But there is a *dependent* means of the first importance.

Marriage and Parentage – Venture Into (It) Despite Risks

When I speak of marriage, I need not emphasize the joys of a happy marriage and fortunate parentage. They are inextricably interwoven – warp and woof of the same pattern, and the pattern is the whole of life in miniature.

He who refuses that venture because of the risk is refusing life.

Do not Shirk Life's Responsibilities Like a Hermit

No. I have no liking for hermits and other solitaires who refuse all responsibilities. They may live in a town as likely as in a desert, and their avowed purpose may be to lead holy lives; but, in fact, if they have ecstasies, they are the ecstasies of self-indulgence. My concern is not with them.

If You Have Small Griefs, Great Sorrows – Be one with God and Live Manfully For the Peace of the Soul

Those who accept the normal responsibilities of life, with all the chances of minor annoyance and utter catastrophe, may know many small griefs and much great sorrow – that is why I call their joys dependent – but, if they are at one with God and have lived manfully, behind the mask of sorrow, bitter though it may be, their souls will be at peace.

Source: The above are excerpts from an interview the Aga Khan III gave to *Daily Sketch*, London, on November 2, 1931 (the day happened to be the Imam's 54th birthday).

II. THE CONCEPT OF LIFE

Reading adapted from *Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's Concept of Life* by Kamaluddin A.

Muhammad, *Ilm*, Volume 3, Number 2, November 1977.

As we have seen in the readings that have been presented in this series so far, the seventy two year Imam of the late Aga Khan III, known to his followers as Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, was one of the most progressive periods in the history of Ismailis. The 48th Ismaili Imam dedicated his life for the progress of his community and the Muslim world in every aspect that one can think of. It is evident that he lived a full life. Indeed, he wrote in his *Memoirs* that in his entire life, he had never once been bored. He not only enjoyed life to the full but also accomplished so much in his life that his successor, Prince Karim Aga Khan, said that such accomplishments would normally have taken several generations.

The late Aga Khan possessed a philosophy of life which anybody who wishes to be happy should adopt (see also *Road to Happiness*, above).

One of the most quoted messages of the late Aga Khan appears at the very beginning of his *Memoirs* [1] which he published in 1954. In the quote, the Imam clearly defines life as the most precious gift granted by God to human beings. He wrote:

“Life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and groveling thing to be shuffled through as best as we can but a lofty and exalted destiny.”

His approach to one’s perception of failures or disenchantment in life was that of keeping hope alive and rejecting the very thought of despondency. He said:

“You must remember that life will have for you many disappointments. If one-fifth of one’s hopes are realized, one is extremely lucky and fortunate, so do not be discouraged by disappointments.

“Failures should be forgotten and new efforts made. Despondency is a sin, and hope, a necessary part of iman (faith) both for material wealth and, above all, for progress to spiritual enlightenment.”

The idea of this faith based hope resonates with the following important teaching from the *Holy Qur’an*:

“Despair not of the Spirit of Allah. Lo ! None despaireth of the Spirit of Allah save disbelieving folk.” (Chapter 12, Verse 87).

Rather than looking at an unfortunate event on hindsight, the Aga Khan recommended that one should not only accept the event, but try and accept it wholeheartedly.

“I should first of all advise my heirs to learn to desire the thing that happens, and not try to mould events to their desires....I say that you should endeavour to suit your desire to the event and not event to your desire. If a wall tumbles down and crushes my foot, I must say ‘that is the best thing that could happen to me’.” [2]

To individuals who consider themselves in a hopeless situation in worldly terms and draw a comparison of their plight with those deemed to be in a better situation, the Aga Khan gave the following advice:

“I should have a word to say to those who deem themselves unfortunate from a worldly point of view. I should say to them, ‘Do not look up and lament that you are not as well off as those above you. Look down and congratulate yourself that you are better off than those below you’. To a man who looks with such eyes upon the world, it is not a prison but a garden. A marvelous garden – the garden of the Lord.” [3]

Finally for him the primary message of Islam – that of *Submission to the Will of Allah* – was by very nature the key to happiness in this world. This is not to suggest that human beings should become completely passive and just drift through life without attempting to improve their circumstances. On the contrary, the Ismaili Imam paid great emphasis on human endeavour and struggle, and had even sent the following message to his followers:

“Struggle is the meaning of life; defeat or victory is in the hands of God. But struggle itself is man’s duty and should be his joy.” [4]

References:

1. The Memoirs of Aga Khan, Cassel and Company Limited, London, 1954.
2. My Philosophy of Happiness by Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah.
3. Ibid.
4. Messages of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah – #1 published by Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Africa, 1955.

8: Defender of Islam, Activist for Justice and Equality, Confidence Booster, And Deliverer of Joy



Mosaic of the 48th Ismaili Imam by renowned Pakistani

Ismaili artist, the late Gulgee

DEFENDER OF ISLAM

The Aga Khan's Letter to The Times of London, November 3, 1951, written from Cannes

In your leading article of October 22, 1951, under the heading “*The Middle East*” you have stated that “*in the Muslim countries the second tendency (a violent reaction against the West) is exaggerated by an intolerant religion which preaches the duty of shunning foreign influences.*” This sweeping generalization not only against Muslims but against their faith and Islam itself, is both untrue and unfair, and, indeed, shows a lamentable dearth of knowledge regarding Islam and its legal and religious principles, even among leading writers of the leading journal of the West.

Even a little knowledge of Islam will show that its religion is not only tolerant of other faiths, but most respectful, and, indeed, fully accepts the divine inspiration of all theistic faiths that came before Islam. It does not only teach tolerance to its followers, but goes a step further and enjoins on them all to create the godly quality of “*Hilm*,” that is, tolerance, forbearance, patience, calmness and forgiveness. It is due to the spirit of tolerance of Islam that even the smallest Christian and Jewish minorities survived and kept all their doctrines during the thousand years of Muslim rule. Nothing like what happened to Muslims in Spain after the Christian conquest has ever happened to a non-Muslim faith in any Islamic dominion.

How can Europeans be so ignorant as to have forgotten that in the first century of Islam the Khalifs ordered that all that was best in Greek and Roman cultures should be assimilated; that not only the philosophy,

medicine, and science of Greece but its poetry and drama were carefully translated into Arabic and were generally sought not only by the learned but also by the pious?

The Muslim attitude towards the absorption of ideas was based on the principle of Islam which enjoins to acquire knowledge wherever available, and there is a well-known and authentic saying of the Prophet that *"his followers should seek learning even if they have to go to China."* Islam by its geographical position suffered the terrible Mongol invasions one after the other, just at the time when it was weakened by the long and immense efforts with which it had mastered the many successive crusades. It should not be forgotten that the Tartar invasions came one generation after the other. In fact, in the interest of the universal unification of mankind the Quran ignores the minor differences and says: *"Come, let us unite to what is common to us all,"* which obviously encourages Muslims to assimilate ideas and even customs from others.

It is, of course, true that Muslim countries, like modern European races, have acquired in this century a strong sense of nationalism which has no connexion with their religion. As such, if there has been violent reaction against the West in some of the Muslim countries, the reason is to be found in the attitude and behaviour of the Westerners, their ignorance and want of respect for the faith and culture of Islam, of which the reference to that faith in your leading article is a typical and usual example. Only recently I was in all the Muslim States where there is a so-called anti-western agitation, and I have no hesitation in saying that if the Atlantic nations and the West generally want better relationship with the Muslims, the solution lies in their own hands, and this can be done only if they change their mental attitude and cultivate better understanding of the Muslims' material needs and the loyal recognition of the high quality of their national culture and the purity of their faith.

Aga Khan Reacts to Chancellor Lloyd George's Criticism of Prophet Muhammad

His services to the world of Islam are unmatched. No Muslim can claim to have rendered as much service to the cause of Islam as Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah and for which he has been addressed as *'The Redoubtable Champion of the Muslim Faith'*. No attack or threat of attack on the fair name of Islam did he allow to go unchallenged.

It was during the 1st World War that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George (Prime Minister from December 7, 1916) had made unfortunate remarks against the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Ismaili Imam responded as follows in a speech that he delivered at the meeting of the Indian Volunteers Committee in London on October 1, 1914:

May I speak of one matter of special interest to Mussulmans, for it is one in which I am confident we shall have the most cordial sympathy of our Hindu and Parsi brethren. Representations made to me from many quarters, as well as my own reading of the speech, showed that Moslem sensibilities have been deeply wounded by an observation, Mr. Lloyd George let fall in an otherwise inspired and splendid recruiting speech he delivered in London on the 19th September. The just scorn and ridicule that he poured upon the blasphemous claims of the Kaiser to be the weapon and the sword of the Almighty was followed by an unhappy and an unfortunate comparison that has seen nothing like it since the days of Mahomet. (Cries of Shame).

It is most unfortunate that, at the time when the Mussulman subjects of the King Emperor, constituting nearly a quarter of the population within His Majesty's Dominions, are eagerly responding to the call of the hour, a leading Minister of Crown, whom we all respect, should have likened, or should have appeared to liken, the arch enemy of this Empire, who has wantonly plunged Europe and the world into unexampled suffering, with the Prophet of Islam. (Cries of Shame). Gentlemen, the Chancellor of the Exchequer may not be able to reciprocate the veneration for the founder of our faith which we are taught from childhood, to give to the Founder of the Christian faith, but he might at least show towards him the respect and reverence we all accord to the memories of the great sons of Christendom who do not belong, so to speak, to our religion like the Founder of Christianity does.

It is however, my personal belief and conviction that the observation from one who has never lived outside this country, or in contact with Moslem people, was, so to speak, an unconscious sort of passing reference not really meant towards the Prophet of Islam... I am sure it was not meant to be offensive and was unpremeditated; but I venture to urge that leading statesmen, and also publicists, should be careful not to play thus thoughtlessly and gratuitously into the hands of the Enemies of the Empire. (Cheers).

Soon after this protest, a meeting was called by the then Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, and the Chancellor publicly apologized to the Muslim world for his unreasonable criticism on Prophet Muhammad.

THREE EPISODES SHOW THE AGA KHAN AS AN ACTIVIST FOR EQUALITY



The Aga Khan resigned from St. Cloud golf club near Paris when some members objected to the black boxer Sugar Ray Robinson playing on the links.

The late Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, in an article contributed to the *Times* of London on the occasion of the birth centenary of his father, noted:

“My father abhorred injustice and fought actively for both human and civil rights at a time when it was hardly a fashionable pursuit. He resigned from the exclusive St. Cloud golf club near Paris when some members objected to Sugar Ray Robinson – the black boxer – playing on the links.

“In Aix-Les-Bains, one day, he rebuffed the pompous head waiter of the hotel *Splendide* who refused to seat a large group of Senegalese students and promptly invited them to a three star lunch.

“He was deeply shocked by the ruthless and arrogant discrimination practised by whites in America, India and China. During his visit to China in 1906, he remarked: ‘*Within the foreign settlements the general attitude towards the Chinese was little short of outrageous. All the better hotels refused them entry. From European clubs they were totally excluded. We hear a great deal about the colour bar in South Africa today. In China, in the early years of this century, the colour bar was rigidly imposed – not least offensively in discrimination against officials of the very government whose guests, under international law, all foreigners, were supposed to be. Is it any wonder that the Chinese intelligentsia long retained bitter memories of this attitude?.*’”

AGA KHAN WAS A BLESSING AND CONFIDENCE BOOSTER DURING FAMINE AND PLAGUE



Yerawada (or Aga Khan) Palace, now the Gandhi Memorial, was built by Aga Khan III to provide a means of livelihood to the famine stricken people in Pune

The Aga Khan's public career may be said to have begun just before the end of the 19th century when he was called upon to take a leading part in famine relief work in India. That was in 1897 when he saved thousands of people from starvation and hunger. He recognized no distinction of caste or creed while distributing grain, money and clothes. The construction of his Yerawada Palace was undertaken solely with a view to providing an honourable means of livelihood to the famine stricken people.

After the famine came plague, first in Bombay and then in other parts of India. The terrified people shut their ears against the voice of wisdom and raised a huge cry against inoculation. It was reserved to the Ismaili Imam to set an example to his followers and to the residents of Bombay. He called a meeting and explained to his followers the benefits of inoculation, and by being personally inoculated in their presence several times, stimulated them to follow his example.

For his services, a public dinner was proposed but he wrote back to the reception committee to express his deep reservations about holding such a function:

I cannot accept any entertainment when thousands of people are dying of starvation. I would urge that every rupee that could be spared should be given for the relief of sufferers by famine instead of wasting it on entertainments."



A joyful looking Aga Khan, 48th Imam of the Ismaili Muslims. Photo: New York Public Library

AGA KHAN – “DELIVERER OF JOY”

Unbounded love for Islam and sincere devotion to the cause of Muslims were dominating passions of the life of Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah. The great and lasting services he rendered to the world of Islam could not be matched by anyone else. Muslim leaders took any opportunity that came their way to shower lavish praises on him.

In 1914 during the Muslim League Conference at Lahore, a rousing welcome was accorded to him. The Welcome Address presented to him read as follows:

“Welcome to you, most glorious leader, master of our hearts, defender of the Faith of Islam, leader amongst leaders, guide of the mu’mins, hope of the faithfuls! Muslims flock at your doorsteps for guidance. Great Prince! Islam is proud of you. Member and direct descendant of the great family of our Holy Prophet Muhammad, the whole nation is ready to sacrifice at the instance of your command. The dust under your feet gives light to the blind. Your heart is a symbol of unity. You are the destroyer of religious differences. You have uprooted the evil of ignorance and have lighted our paths. The shouts of welcome are being heard coming from the heavens. Your care and protection over us will never cease to exist. O Aga Khan! May you live forever.”

Again at Delhi, in the year 1928 when Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah attended the All India Muslim League Conference, people in large numbers had thronged to welcome him. A Muslim poet 'Khaliq' sang some Persian couplets, one of which rendered in English reads:

"The arrival of Sir Aga Khan to this land has breathed new spirit into our lives;

There is rejoicing all over the land, for the bright sun, with all its glory, has descended from the sky.

O Khaliq! Give good tidings to the Muslims of this land –

'The Messenger of Peace' and 'The Deliverer of Joy' has arrived amongst us."

Then in his welcome address, Sir Moulvi Muhammad Yaqub narrated an incident of an old lady who had visited the court of Abbasid Caliph Mamun saying:

"Valuable things were spread out in the palace hall of Caliph Mamun for his subjects to take away whatever they wanted. People had flocked in large numbers to the palace hall and they carried away as much as they possibly could. By evening, time when everybody had left Caliph Mamun noticed an old lady still waiting in the empty hall. He went up to her and asked:

'What would you like to have from these precious things?' and the old lady replied: 'O Caliph! I want nothing from your treasure. The only thing I desire is to live under your lordship'."

Having related this incident, Sir Yaqub voiced the feelings of all Muslims in the following words:

'O Aga Khan! We are saying this to you to-day. We desire nothing but your grand self, O great Aga Khan.'

Concluding his welcome address, he recited a Persian couplet, the rendering of which in English reads as follows:

"Far and wide have I traveled,

Love and pleasure of many have I earned;

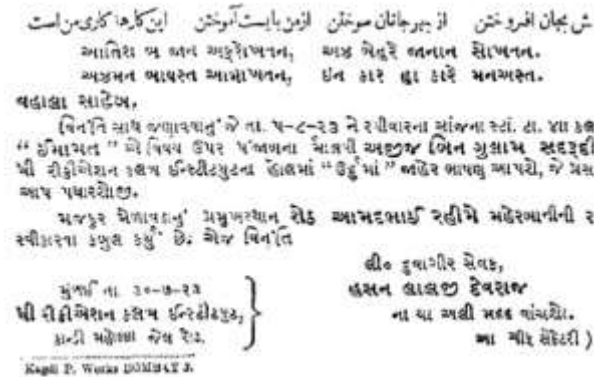
Personalities great have I met,

O Aga Khan! You are incomparable.

Words I have not to glorify your charm."

9: Eloquent Persian Quatrain by 48th Ismaili Imam Graces a 1923 Invitation for Talk about Imamat

Shown below is an image of an historic document dated 30 July, 1923. It is an invitation extended by the newly established Recreation Club Institute of Bombay for a lecture on the subject of Imamat, which was presented a week later by a bright and enthusiastic sixteen year old matriculation student from Punjab by the name of Aziz Ghulam Sadaruddin.



This unique 1923 Gujarati invitation to a talk on Imamat includes a Persian quatrain on the top line. The quatrain had been handwritten by Aga Khan III in a personal diary belonging to Vazir Mecklai. Image: A.M. Sadaruddin family collection of "Africa Ismaili".

The complete English translation of the invitation card is provided below, but one item on the invitation which makes it distinctly unique and historical is the Persian Quatrain which appears at the top of the card (translation below). This quatrain was originally entered by Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, in his own handwriting, in a diary belonging to Vazir Ali Mahomed Mecklai, the president of the Recreation Club.

**How to kindle a fire in the soul
and burn oneself for one's beloved
should be learnt from me
as this is one of my responsibilities**

Upon reflection on the verses two important aspects come to light. It is well known that the 48th Ismaili Imam was particularly fond of Sufi Poetry. The quatrain, in the first two lines, refers to the doctrine of annihilation, which is so prominent in Sufi thought and literature. Secondly, for Ismailis, the last two verses

– irrespective of the context by which the Imam noted them in the diary - are an affirmation of the historical and traditional notion and reality that the teachings (or *talim*) of the Imam of the Time leads them to spiritual advancement, and lights their path to enlightenment and vision. The Imam's light (or *Nur*) leads his *Murids* (followers) to inner peace and happiness.

Aga Khan III, direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and 48th hereditary Imam of the Ismailis. Each Imam, at any given time in history, is responsible for advancing the spiritual and material conditions of his followers. Photo: Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London.

That the quatrain of such profound significance was included in an invitation for a talk about Imamatus, makes this document even more thoughtful and valuable, and of immense historical importance.

The composition of the invitation card is as follows:

A. 1st line

Text of Persian Quatrain (copied from Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah handwritten Persian quatrain in Vazir Mecklai's personal diary)

B. 2nd and 3rd lines

The Gujarati transliteration of the Quatrain

The following is the English transliteration and translation of the Quatrain (not shown on the card):

Transliteration:

Atish Ba jan Afrokhtan,

Az Bahray Janan Sokhtan,

Azman Baist Amakhatan,

In Kar ha Karay Manast

Translation:

How to kindle a fire in the soul

and burn oneself for one's beloved

should be learnt from me

as this is one of my responsibilities

C. The remainder of the card contains the invitation text in Gujarati. A reasonable translation of the invitation is as follows:

Dear Saheb (Sir),

It is with great pleasure that we wish to invite you to a public lecture to be delivered by Maulavi Aziz bin Gulamali Sadrudin of Punjab on the subject of "Imamat" at The Recreation Club Institute Hall on Sunday, 5th August, 1923 at 4.30 p.m. Indian Standard Time.

Mr. Ahmedbhai Rahim has kindly accepted to chair this occasion.

Yours sincerely and with Ya Ali Madad,

Hasan Lalji Devraj,

Hon. Chief Secretary.

30-07-1923

The Recreation Club Institute

Kandi Maholla, Jail Road,

Bombay.

The card appears to have been printed by Kagdi P. Works, Bombay – 3 (see last line)

On the card, the speaker's name Aziz bin Gulamali Sadrudin, is preceded by the term *Maulavi*. In referring to this term and introducing the speaker, Vazir Mahomed Mecklai made the following light remark:

“Please do not wait for a “Maulvi” with a “juba” (gown) and a beard. This young boy is in fact our ‘beardless’ Maulvi who will prove to you the significance and the need of Imamah from the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith.”

A.M. Sadaruddin spoke for approximately two hours at this historic gathering. Subsequently, he continued his literary pursuits with passion and determination until his demise in London in 1980 while attending a review meeting of the Institute of Ismaili Studies. That the 48th Imam always held Rai A.M. Sadaruddin in high esteem is shown by a personal message that the prodigious literary figure received from the Imam on the occasion of the publication of the Diamond Jubilee Souvenir in 1948. Indeed, Rai Sadaruddin’s services were also recognized by the current 49th Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan, who sent a personal message to his family describing the late Rai as a *“pillar of strength and example.”*



A portrait of Rai A.M. Sadaruddin (1906 - 1980).



Aga Khan III message to A.M. Sadaruddin on publication of 1948 Diamond Jubilee Souvenir mentions family history & author's contribution to the Ismaili faith. Images: A.M. Sadaruddin Family collection of "Africa Ismaili".

A.M. Sadaruddin provided the following background context for the above message to him from Aga Khan III in “Africa Ismaili”:

Ismailis in the Punjab, before 1912, were known as *Shamsis*, the followers of the great Ismaili Pir Shams who converted them to Islam two generations before the Ismaili *Khojas* who were converted by Pir Sadar Din in Kathiawar and Cutch. Like many *Khojas* they still had Hindu names, but in 1912 there was a riot between

Hindus and *Shamsis* at Amritsar and several Ismailis lost their lives. Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah, the 48th Imam of the Ismailis, thought it was time that Ismailis in the Punjab adopted Muslim names only and identified themselves completely with Islam. Until then they had practiced Islam and their Ismaili tariqah in secret.

Rai Sadaruddin's father was personally given the name of Sadar Din by the Imam. He, however, adopted the full name as Ghulam Sadar Din. He maintained how could he call himself Sadar Din which was the name of a great Ismaili Pir. He shall be (Sheikh) "Ghulam" Sadaruddin, a "servant" of Sadar Din. All Ismailis in the Punjab came to be known with the honorific title of "*Sheikh*" i.e. new converts who were loyal to their faith. When Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah gave to A.M. Sadaruddin a personal message for the Diamond Jubilee Souvenir in 1948, he was referring to this occasion when he wrote:

Mr. Sadaruddin is of particular interest to me as he is one whose family was converted by me personally. I am glad to see the good work he has done for our faith. I have followed his work & career with great interest. I give him my blessings & best wishes for a life of success & service – Aga Khan.

Credits: Simerg would like to thank the family of the late Rai A.M. Sadaruddin, and specifically his grandson Mohib Ebrahim who is currently in Vancouver, for providing images and material from the family archives of *Africa Ismaili*, the magazine that Rai Sadaruddin founded and edited in Kenya.

10: Titles, Decorations and Honours Conferred on 48th Ismaili Imam; 72 Year Reign Spanned Six British Monarchs and Seventeen Prime Ministers



Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, 48th Imam of Shia Imami Ismailis, in full regalia. Photo: Jehangir Merchant archives

Titles

1. Title of Aga Khan was first granted to Aga Hassanaly Shah, the 46th Ismaili Imam, by the Shah of Persia, in the 1830s (*see image of vintage engraving print of Aga Khan I below*)
2. His Highness to Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, 48th Ismaili Imam, by the British Government (1886)
3. His Highness by the Shan-en-Shah of Iran (1949)

**HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN'S IMAMAT (1885 - 1957) SPANNED SIX BRITISH
MONARCHS AND SEVENTEEN PRIME MINISTERS**

MONARCHS (with date of ascension)

Victoria, 20 June 1837

Edward VII, 23 January 1901

George V, 6 May 1910

Edward VIII, 20 January 1936

George VI, 11 December 1936

Elizabeth II, 6 February 1952

BRITISH PRIME MINISTERS (party and date of taking office)

Marquess of Salisbury, Conservative, 2 July 1895

Arthur James Balfour, Conservative, 12 July 1902

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Liberal, 5 December 1905

Herbert Henry Asquith, Liberal, Coalition, 8 April 1908

David Lloyd George, Coalition, 7 December 1916

Andrew Bonar Law, Conservative, 23 October 1922

Stanley Baldwin, Conservative, 22 May 1923

James Ramsay MacDonald, Labour, 22 January 1924

Stanley Baldwin, Conservative, 4 November 1924

James Ramsay MacDonald, Labour, Coalition, 8 June 1929

Stanley Baldwin, Coalition, 7 June 1935

Arthur Neville Chamberlain, Coalition, 28 May 1937

Winston Spencer Churchill, Coalition, 11 May 1940

Clement Richard Attlee, Labour, 26 July 1945

Winston Spencer Churchill, Conservative, 26 October, 1951

Sir Anthony Eden, Conservative, 6 April 1955

Harold Macmillan, Conservative, 13 January 1957



This vintage engraving depicts the portrait of Aga Khan I (1804 - 1881), the 46th Imam of the Shia Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims. The engraving was made by an unknown artist after a photograph circa 1870. © iStockphoto.com

Decorations

1. Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E.) by Queen Victoria, UK (1897)
2. Brilliant Star of Zanzibar by Sultan of Zanzibar (1899)
3. Shamsul Humayun (Star of Persia) by Shah of Persia (1899)
4. Star of Turkey by the Turkish Government (1899)
5. Grand Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (G.C.I.E), by King Edward VII, UK (1902)

6. Status as a Ruling Prince for Life , by King George V, UK (1912)
7. First Class Prince of the Bombay Presidency, by King George, UK (1916); granted with a salute of 11 guns.
8. Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order (G.C.V.O.), UK (1923)
9. Order of Omayyad's by the Syrian Government (1951).



A 1902 photo of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, with Sir Mancherjee Merwanjee, bearing their signatures.

Photo: Copyright, National Portrait Gallery, London

Leadership

1. Founding member and first permanent President of the All India Muslim League, (1907-1914)
2. Permanent President of the Deccan League. (1908)
3. Life Member of the Club at MOA College (precursor of the Aligarh College) (1910)
4. Vice Chancellor of the Aligarh University, India (1921). Also founding member since 1910's
5. Chairman of the British-Indian section to the Round Table Conference (1930)

6. Delegate of India to the League of Nations at the fourteenth meeting. (1932) He said:

“The basis of all security is a foreign policy rooted in mutual goodwill and cooperation; a foreign policy in which no country covets its neighbor’s possessions or seeks to infringe its moral and spiritual rights.”

7. First Delegate of India to the Assembly of the League of Nations (15th session (1934). He remarked on the entry of Afghanistan as a member:

“To a Muslim like me, it is no small thing that another Islamic nation is today entering the League, for I am convinced that her entry will strengthen the League in far greater measure than the number of her subjects...”

The following is an eye witness account provided by Sheikh Hussein Kidwai on Afghanistan’s entry to the League of Nations:

...I was thrilled to the bone by what the Aga Khan said when the Muslim State of Afghanistan joined the so-called League of Nations. The Aga Khan was the head of the delegation from India. While welcoming the entry of Afghanistan he said:

“India is proud of her Eastern culture, Eastern traditions, Eastern language, Eastern civilization and with Afghanistan, eighty million Muslims of India are proud, as I am proud to belong to the Glorious Brotherhood of Islam.”

I was fortunately present on the occasion. The Hall was full with peoples of different nationalities professing different religions. The members of the League itself belonged to over fifty different nationalities. They were all educated, talented men representing their respective Governments. But none was more cultured or enlightened than His Highness the Aga Khan who had assimilated all that was best in the Eastern as well as in the Western culture. He, indeed, was most cultured of them all.

In the presence of so many learned persons who claimed to represent nations scattered all over the world stood up a man – a responsible, thoroughly educated, well-experienced, well-travelled, well-polished man, a gentleman, a nobleman, respected by one and all, – and he proclaimed at the top of his voice that he was proud to belong to the Glorious Brotherhood of Islam. The bold announcement was thrilling. The occasion when it was made was thrilling. The Aga Khan’s words raised the prestige of Islam in an assembly which was almost prejudiced against it. I was overjoyed. I am a man hard to bend before anybody – not even “before a king”. But I would gladly bow before a man who spoke from his heart those thrilling words....

8. Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (1924, 1925)

9. Imperial Privy Councilor (1934).

10. President of the League of Nations (1937-38).

The election was held on September 13th, 1937 under the presidency of M. Negrin of Spain under the following procedure (see table below):

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 18TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY: PROPOSAL OF THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE
<p>The Chairman: <i>Translation:</i> The first duty of the Assembly at the present meeting is to elect its President, after hearing the report of the Nomination Committee. I call upon the Chairman of the Committee, M. Hambro, delegate of Norway, who has been asked by the Nomination Committee to lay its conclusions and proposals before the Assembly.</p> <p>M. Hambro (Norway):</p> <p><i>Translation:</i></p> <p>The Nomination Committee has met and has reached unanimity upon all its proposals.</p> <p>On behalf of the Nomination Committee, I propose His Highness the Aga Khan as President of the Assembly.</p> <p>The Chairman:</p> <p><i>Translation:</i></p> <p>The Assembly has heard the proposal of the Nomination Committee with regard to the Presidency of the Assembly. In conformity with the Rules of Procedure, the voting will be by secret ballot by roll-call.</p> <p>May I call upon His Excellency M. Guani, delegate of Uruguay, and His Excellency M. Sandler, delegate of Sweden, as former Presidents of the Assembly, to be good enough to act as tellers?</p> <p><i>(The votes of the delegations were taken in turn by secret ballot)</i></p> <p>The Chairman:</p>

Translation:

In the first place, I wish to thank the tellers for their kind assistance.

The result of the voting is as follows:

Number of States voting..... 50

Blank and spoilt voting-papers 1

Valid voting papers..... 49

Absolute Majority.....25

His Highness the Aga Khan, delegate of India, has obtained 49 votes. I have therefore the honour to declare that His Highness the Aga Khan is elected President of the Assembly.

I am particularly happy to congratulate His Highness the Aga Khan on his election as President of the eighteenth session of the Assembly of the League of Nations. It is an honour for the latter to be presided over by so distinguished a personality as His Highness the Aga Khan, representing as he does a country, whose culture has influenced numerous civilisations, including that of Europe.

I call upon His Highness the Aga Khan to take the Presidential Chair, and I wish him every success in the proceedings over which he will preside.

(His Highness the Aga Khan took the Presidential Chair)

At the address to the Assembly, the Aga Khan said:

“With warmth of feeling at heart than I can bring to my lips, I thank you. You have done India, my country, a great honour and my delight is undisguised.”

On October 6, 1937, in a speech to the League of Nations in Geneva the Aga Khan said:

Indeed all the problems that fall to the League of Nations may be ultimately reduced to one - that of man and the dignity of man...The tribulations of one people are the tribulations of all. That which weakens one weakens all. That which is a gain to one is

surely a gain to all. This is no empty ideal...

Source: Verbatim record of the 18th ordinary session of the Assembly of the League of Nations, Monday, September 13, 1937, Geneva.

Honorary Degrees

1. LL.D , Oxford University (1918)
2. LL.D. by Dacca University (1951)

Honorary Citizenship

1. Citizenship of Le Cannet, France (1947).
2. Citizenship of Iran (1949)

Other Recognitions



*Pakistan First Day Cover for Aga Khan's birth centenary,
November 2, 1977*



*Mint Aga Khan III stamp in Pakistan's "Pioneers of
Freedom" series issued in 1990*

Credits:

1. Mr. Azeem Maherali of Atlanta, Georgia, compiled the above details specifically for this series, and Simerg acknowledges with deep gratitude the valuable and interesting contribution he has made.
2. The signed photo of the Aga Khan with Sir Merwanjee is by Sir (John) Benjamin Stone. It is a platinum print in card window mount, and dated July 1902. The actual size of the image is 8 in. x 6 1/8 in. (20.4 cm x 15.7 cm). It was given to the National Portrait Gallery by the House of Commons Library, in 1974.
3. Excerpts of eye witness account by Hussein Kidwai printed from Ilm, November 1977.

11: Historic Photos and Imam's Recognition of Services Rendered by the Family of Itmadi Kassam Kothari of Jamnagar

The following account and photos were submitted by Ms. Taj Kothari of Florida and her brother, Bashir Kothari, of Calgary, Alberta.

The Kothari's write:

This opportunity to share a little bit about our family through this Web site [www.simerg.com] has given us immense inner happiness in the sense that we feel that our family's humble and sincere contribution is being recorded somewhere. We hope that other readers of this blog will share their stories too.



Itmadi Kassam Kothari

Alijah Ismail Punja Kothari and Itmadi Kassam Kothari, our grand father and father respectively, worked closely with our beloved 48th Imam, Hazrat Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, and also were brought up in the *Raj Darbar*. My grandfather was awarded a *Justice Of Peace Medal* by the British Government. This medal was saved by our late mother, Khadija, and is still with us today. As a note I might add that our family was provided special escort by the British whenever we left the home to go out. This was due to our closeness with the Maharajas (literally meaning great or high kings). India at that time was made up of princely states each with its own ruler.

1927



The above photo was taken in 1927 at the residence of my grandfather, Alijah Ismail Punja Kothari, when Imam Sultan Mahomed , the Maharaja of Jamnagar - Jam Ranjit Singh – and the King of Limbdi visited our bungalow in Jamnagar, Kathiawar. They held a meeting which was attended by our family members and also had lunch during the visit.

Seated on the ground in a traditional dress is my grandfather, Alijah Ismail Kothari. My father, Itmadi Kassam Kothari, is the person in the white suit and tie, by the pole on the right. Standing between Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah and Jam Ranjit Singh, the Maharajah, is my grandfather's older brother, Premji Punja, with a white turban. As you can see, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah is in a white suit and hat and carrying a cane.

All the Highness's were garlanded by my grandfather.

1934

The demise of our grandfather - a handwritten message from the Imam

MOIPAA-

INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS DEPARTMENT.

G. DLT 0

NOTICE.
This form must accompany any inquiry made respecting this Telegram.

Observe to pay.
No. As.

Words 25

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

TO Dlt Cassam Ismail Poonja car
Comaua Council Jamnagar

Deepest sympathy and Blessing
you poor father whom
I will always remember for
his great service to agalwan

N.B.—The name of the Station, if telegraphed, is written after the last.

Above is shown an image of a handwritten telegraph that my father received from our beloved 48th Imam when our grandfather, Alijah Ismail Kothari, passed away.

The telegraph was sent from *Cannes* and has an official receipt date in Jamnagar of 15 April, 1934. As the heading suggests, it was processed by the Indian Posts and Telegraph department. Some of the features that can be noted – number of words in the telegraph (25) and that it was dispatched from *Cannes* on 13 April at around 14:00 hours.

The transcript of the message is as follows:

“Dear Cassam Ismail Poonja care Ismaili Council Jamnagar

Deepest sympathy and blessing

your poor father whom

I will always remember

for his great service Aga Khan”

On the lower half of the page is seen a Gujarati *Tarjuma* (translation) of the Imam’s message.

1939



The photograph shown above was taken during our beloved 48th Imam’s visit to the State of Jamnagar in February, 1939. The same photo is published adjacent to page 342 in Dumasia’s book *“The Aga Khan and his Ancestors.”*

From left to right are His Highness Jam Saheb, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah and Jam Saheb's brother, who is seen holding the Jam Saheb's daughter in his arms. On the extreme right of the picture, in the volunteer's uniform, is Major Lakhpati of Bombay, and standing beside him in the traditional dress of the Raj Darbar is our father, Itmadi Kassam Kothari. He wore the dress of the *Raj Darbar* since he was working with the Maharajas of Jamnagar.

1954



The above photo was taken during Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah's visit to London in 1954 for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. He and Mata Salamat met with the Mukhi and some other members of the Jamat at a hotel in London. Our (late) brother, Hadi, was among the Ismailis visiting London and he is in the picture seated on the floor, at left.

There is a very interesting account of how my brother got into the photo. Now, this anecdote was conveyed to us by one of the person's who happened to be present, and we have the video of this conversation with him that was taken in Kenya in 2003.

It appears there wasn't enough room for everyone to fit in the group photo and our brother, Hadi, could not join in.

But before the photo was taken, the Imam inquired of the Mukhi “*aur koy baki hey?*” (Is anyone left out?)

The Mukhi had told my brother there was no room and he could not join, but there was no way out of this question that the Imam asked, and the Mukhi replied: ” *Khudavind ek baki hey*” (one person is missing).

The Imam asked, ” *Kon hai?*” (who is that person?)

The Mukhi replied “*Hadi Kothari.*”

The Imam sought a confirmation, “*Kothari?*”

The Mukhi replied, “*Yes, Khudavind.*”

The Imam said: “*Usko Bulao, uske Bap Dada ne Imam ke Ghar ki Bahoth seva kihe*” (call him – his father and grandfather have rendered a lot of service to the House of the Imam).

Our brother, Hadi, passed away on May 24, 2004 leaving behind his widow, Khairoun, who lives in Nairobi, and two daughters. Hadi served in various capacities until 2000.

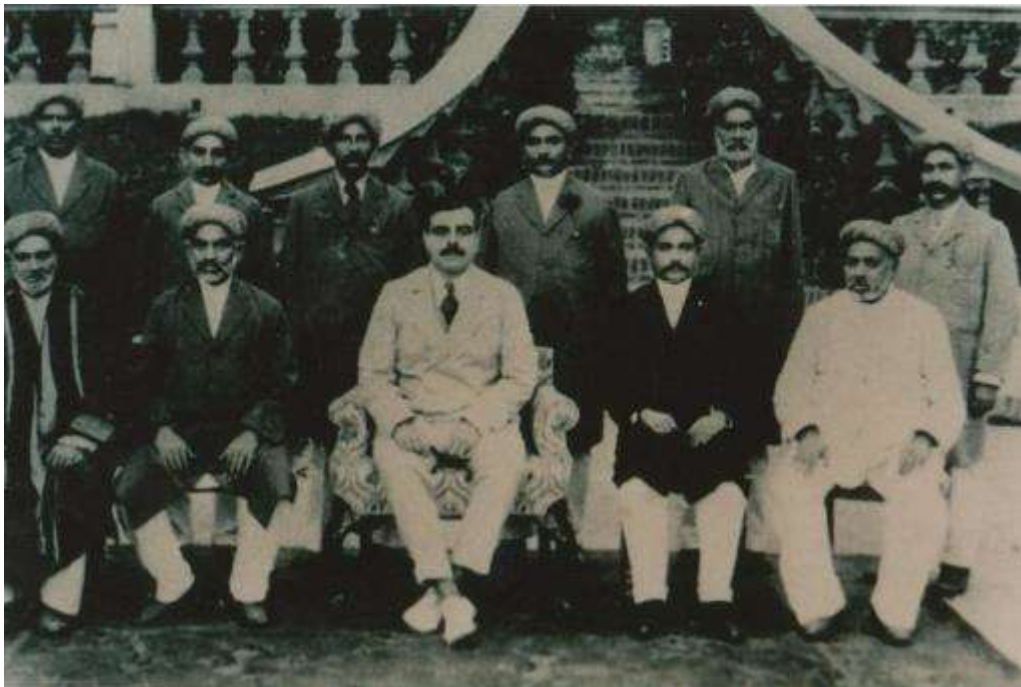
12: Imam Speaks of Burmese Patriotism; Memorial Plate at Jamatkhana Honours 31 Ismaili Lives Lost in WWII Bombardment

The photos are from the archives of Mr. Anwar Virani of Ottawa, Canada. Details have been compiled from Mr. Virani's recollections and other sources, as noted.

BURMESE PATRIOTISM

In speaking at the dinner of the Aga Khan Student's Union in London in June 1951, Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, advised his followers in Asia and Africa that the countries they chose to make their homes were the ones they owed their loyalty and affection. They must, he, said, identify themselves with those countries if they wished to prosper in the years to come. He then gave the example of the Burmese Jamat:

"Take as an example for your patriotism, your brothers in Burma, They have identified themselves 100 percent with Burma. They don't look across the border. Whatever country you choose to live in, work for it, mix with its people, achieve its outlook and keep religion in its proper place – in your soul. If you do this, you will find many of your problems solved. When you live in a country you become a member of that country." (reported in The East African Standard, Nairobi, 8 June, 1951).



The photo shown above is of the 48th Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan III, with leaders and some members of his Burmese Jamat (community). It is most probably from his visit to the country in February 1914, when the Imam would have been around 36 years of age. About this visit to Burma, the Imam wrote as follows in his *“Memoirs of Aga Khan”* (London, 1954):

“The early months of 1914 found me on another visit to Burma. I then took a step of some importance in respect of my Ismaili followers. I advised them to undertake a considerable measure of social and cultural assimilation. Burma, although annexed to the British Empire, and at this time under the control of the India Office, was a country in which national, patriotic sentiment was strong, and nationalism a spontaneous, natural, and continuous growth. I was convinced that the only prudent and proper policy for my followers was to identify themselves as closely as possible with the life of Burma socially and politically, to give up their Indo-Saracenic names, habits, and customs, and to adopt, permanently and naturally, those of the people alongside whom they lived, and whose destiny they shared.” (p. 130)

This would suggest that the photograph is from 1914.

TRAGEDY

By the 2nd World War many Ismailis had already assumed Burmese names. A great tragedy befell the Jamat when the British launched heavy bombardment on Rangoon. The resulting outcome was heavy damage to the Jamatkhana located at Mughal Street, which resulted in the loss of 31 innocent Ismailis on April 15, 1943. The Imam crowned the martyrs with the title of *Shahids*. When the war ended, one of the leading Jamati members, Wazir U Kan Gyi, undertook the responsibility for the Jamatkhana renovations which were completed in 1949.

The official opening ceremony of the renovated Jamatkhana was performed on January 5, 1950 by Thakin Nun, the then Prime Minister of Burma.



The renovated Jamatkhana completed in 1949. Thirty one Ismailis died in Rangoon during bombing in the 2nd World War. Photo: Anwar Virani archives

The photo above is a more recent photo, but shows how the Jamatkhana has stood since the earlier renovations.

Later, the Imam sent a message saying how much he thought of the persons who were martyred during the war and recommended that a memorial plate bearing their names should be placed outside the wall of the Jamatkhana or in the library (see next page).

Plaque has names of the "Shahids" who died from the bombing on 19th April 1943 and also includes names of others who lost their lives during the war. Photo: Anwar Virani Archives.

The photo above shows the plate bearing the names of the 31 persons who died in the bombing as well as (9) others who died during WWII. Note the Burmese names adopted by Ismailis, with their aliases. The transcript at the top of the plaque is as follows:

“IN SACRED MEMORY OF OUR HEROIC MARTYRS WHO LOST THEIR PRECIOUS LIVES IN THE SAHADAT OF OUR HOLY MOSQUE ON THE 19TH APRIL 1943 AND ALSO DUE TO ACTIONS OF WORLD WAR II IN BURMA”

The last visit by Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah to Burma was made between January 20, 1951 and January 26, 1951.

Note: Burma is officially known as Myanmar since 1989. The former capital, Rangoon, is now called Yangon.

IN SACRED MEMORY OF OUR HEROIC MARTYRS WHO LOST
THEIR PRECIOUS LIVES IN THE SAVADAT OF OUR HOLY
MOSQUE ON THE 13TH APRIL 1943 AND ALSO DUE TO ACTIONS
OF WORLD WAR II IN BURMA

U Tin Mahla (alias) Keshari
Daw Lay Tin (alias) Mrs. Khattiga Alybbhai
Maung Ba Sein (alias) Razabali Alybbhai
Ma Khin Kyi (alias) Golhama Alybbhai
Ma Hla Shwe (alias) Noorjahan Alybbhai
Maung Ba Tin (alias) Sadruddin Alybbhai
Ko Soe Than (alias) Abdul Sultan Alybbhai
Ma Hla Hla (alias) Mrs. Muleik Sultan A. Sultan
Maung Hla Mg (alias) Abdul Mahomdi A. Sultan
Maung Thang Po (alias) Noordin A. Sultan
Ma Tin Kyi (alias) Shah Sultan A. Sultan
U Sein (alias) Gulam Hussain M. Koorery
Ko Khin Mg. Sein (alias) Razakali G. Hussain
Maung Hla (alias) Shabudin Ebrahim
Maung Than Mg (alias) Kananali Ebrahim
U Aung Gyi (alias) Ramzanali Hassan
Daw Pwa Yin (alias) Mrs. Motibai Ramzanali
Maung Ba Khin (alias) Sabban Ramzanali
Maung Tha Din (alias) Tajdin Ramzanali
Ma Aye Kyi (alias) Shurinkhan Ramzanali
Ma Aye Myint (alias) Rehemet Ramzanali
Maung Ba Yin (alias) Noorallah Ramzanali
Ma Aye Mya (alias) Zarina Ramzanali
Daw Khin Sein (alias) Mrs. Jannabai Jannabhai
Maung Sein (alias) Jafferai Easa
Daw Mya Sein (alias) Mrs. Motibai Jiva Ahmed
Daw Mya (alias) Mrs. Santokbai Razabali Jetha
Maung Ba Din (alias) Badruddin Haji Sherah
Ko Tun Shwe (alias) Hoosain Mahomed Koorery
Mg Shwe Than (alias) Sultanali Hoonain
Ko Aye Maung (alias) Karamaly Jadavji
Maung Sein (alias) Hassanaly Nazaraly
Ma San Tin (alias) Saker Hassam Jeewa
Maung San Lwin (alias) Roohanaly A. Rahman Kheraj
Ma Phin Nyun (alias) Noorbanu R. Khan Mahomed
U Han Gyi (alias) Hirjee Sunderjee
U Ba Thai (alias) Pirbhai Alybbhai
Ko Soe Mg (alias) Sabban Alybbhai
Ko Soe Myint (alias) Sadruddin Moosa Kheraj
Ko San Mg (alias) Ismail Ahmed

13: The 48th Ismaili Imam at the Ritz: “Calm Mind, Clear-Thinking and Wise”, A Reporter’s 1933 Story



1906 photo of The Ritz, London. Wrote Prince Sadruddin in the London Times in a birth centenary tribute to his father “the older staff at the Ritz in London...might recall the Aga Khan facing Mecca at prayer time on one of the balconies, completely oblivious to the stares of surprised bystanders.” Photo: Archives of The Ritz, London. Copyright.

Excerpts from a correspondent’s dispatch to *Star of India*, Calcutta, June 12, 1933

It is an unpardonable sin to fall back upon proverbsas the one about some people are born great, some become great and some have greatness thrust upon them.

And yet I cannot find anything better to describe His Highness the Aga Khan than to say that in his case His Highness has been born great and that he has become great and that greatness has been thrust upon him. It is a unique position that His Highness occupies in the world. His name is a household word in the three continents...the bright star of Aga Khan’s popularity is seen ever shining.

And this adulation is not confined to the followers of the Aga Khan to whom, of course, he appears in a far more divine light. Many must have pondered over the sway that His Highness has exercised over men of

various religious, political and social classes. Many have envied him his wealth, his intelligence, and his learning, but few can wholly account for his eminence through any of these qualities.

It was not, therefore, in a confident mood that I presented myself to His Highness at the Ritz Hotel. The tempers of smaller men than the Aga Khan are known to be erratic. It was [the Persian poet] Sadi who said that the princes exalt the humble one day only to abase him the next. Caprice dictates their every act. The thing about the Aga Khan is that though he is a Prince, he is not capricious; though he is wealthy, he is not arrogant or extravagant; though he is a religious head, he is not fanatic; though he has power, he meets a humble man on equal terms.



His Highness the Aga Khan was popular with the Ritz hotel staff. The porters looked upon him as their special charge. Here he is seen pictured with the Greek head porter Georges Faroutakis (left) at the Ritz Hotel, London, in 1950 (Photo by Popperfoto/Getty Images, Copyright)

The Ritz Hotel to the Indians is known as the place where the Aga Khan stays. His Highness has a suite which is permanently associated with his name.

As I sat waiting the call to his suite, I could see why it was that His Highness was so popular with the hotel staff. The porters looked upon him as their special charge; I was almost going to say as a member of their own family. Every mention of his name, and mostly it was in French, was allied with something affectionate, something human.

The Aga Khan was not just a client staying at the hotel, like so many hundreds of others. He was one who was interested in them and who was as solicitous of their welfare as they were in duty bound to be of his.

‘The Aga Khan has sent my boy to a college’, confides one to me.

'The Aga Khan always asks about my wife who has been ill so long', says the other.

And how many men in much humbler walks of life can find time for such things, or have the inclination to bother about them?



1906, "The Palm Court", The Ritz, London. Photo: Archives of the Ritz, London, Copyright.

Treading on silken Persian carpets, my feet sinking into their softness and my heart sinking into my shoes, I left the gorgeous vestibule of the hotel in company with a perky young man, smartly dressed, who called himself a page. The lift went up gracefully. There was no vulgar hurry in that palatial building.

Still following the gentle hints as to the direction from my confident guide, I found myself lost in the maze of corridors, where hung crystal chandeliers and soft lights peeped in from the concealed lighting system.

His Highness's suite was ultimately reached and my reverie ended. The charm seemed, however, to grow more potent, and the nearness of His Highness seemed to exude from the place. Unostentatious and simple was the furniture of the place. It was decorated with that care which, by its very simplicity, is all the more impressive. The Islamic severity and austerity were imprinted on the sparseness of the rich colours.

The drawing room in which His Highness received me looked more like the work-room of a busy philosopher than the room of the Prince whose name is to be conjured with in the racing and sporting world. On a table were piled documents and books, and at the moment of my hesitating entrance, I noticed His Highness busy with his correspondence. But that engrossment did not prevent him from rising from his seat and greeting me, true Muslim-wise, with *As-Salaam-u-Alaikum*, and from his offering me most courteously a seat near him. I was lucky in finding His Highness alone. Not more than a minute had elapsed before I was at my ease and talking to him with a freedom of thought and expression I had not imagined possible.



His Highness the Aga Khan and the Begum pictured at the Ritz Hotel in London in 1950 (Photo by Popperfoto/Getty Images; Copyright)

As His Highness sat there, I cast a glance at him. Here was a massive head, broad shoulders and a strong frame. He was if anything more serious than at the other occasions I had caught a glimpse of him. And yet in his eyes was a glow of satisfaction as if he had, though after a great deal of effort, at last achieved results that satisfied him. I asked His Highness to give me a message to the Muslims of Bengal.”

[The following, in italics, are excerpts of the message]:

The importance of Bengal Muslims has only recently come to be fully appreciated. I have always held that the Muslims there are equal in importance for the cause of the Faith that they profess to the Muslims of all the Provinces put together. Bengal Muslims have now a very great opportunity to prove to the world that the efforts that we, as their spokesmen, have made in this country have not been in vain and that they are alive to the needs of modern times.

The Bengal Muslims have been maligned as backward in education. Now is the time for them to use the power in the government that the reforms are bound to give them to remove the stigma of being backward in education. Private efforts can never combat illiteracy. In this country the right of every man for a free and useful education is recognized and respected. And in Bengal, too, there must be education by the State for all, and not restricted to those who can afford to pay.

Bengal is the brightest Islamic jewel and it is up to the Bengali Muslim to prove that it is so still, and will continue to be.

When the Muslims are properly equipped with education there will be no power that can impede them in their march to their rightful place.

The Bengal Muslims hold the key to the entire Islamic problem. If they can come out successful and strong, the difficulties of the whole of Muslim India will be solved. They are at the far-end of India and theirs is a great responsibility...”



8th October 1947 – the 48th Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan III seen leaving the Ritz Hotel in Paris for a walk. (Photo by Keystone/Getty Images, Copyright)

Continuation of the correspondent's dispatch:

Let no one run away with the idea that His Highness spoke continually. There were pauses; there was emphasis laid; there were my questions and there was, above all, the calm mind of a clear-thinking and wise man behind these words. It shows how much His Highness moves with the times for him to exhibit the true value of journals in modern life [sic]. Here in this country one sees so many examples of the might and the power of the press that one wonders how it was ever possible in days gone by to do without newspapers.

A man who can personally see to his enormous racing studs, write articles and books, deliver speeches, and conduct the affairs of one of the most wealthy communities... and his own enormous personal estates, and all of them with great success must be possessed of an exceptionally active brain and a great fund of human sympathy and understanding.

Notes

1. Article Source: *Star of India*, Calcutta, 12 June 1933. The evening paper began publication on 19 January 1933 by the Muslim Press and Publications and played a crucial role in moulding the Muslim mind because of its high editorial and production standards. It had better news coverage than any other Indian Muslim newspaper. It brought to its readers the latest news of the day and reproduced significant articles, editorials and letters to the editor which appeared in other papers around India.
2. All photos shown above are copyright and published in this website under a licensing agreement with Getty Images and The Ritz, London as applicable. The copyright owner is noted in the captions.
3. Notations within square brackets [] are by Simerg.
4. The correspondent's dispatch and the Aga Khan's message to Bengal is published in full in *Aga Khan III Selected Speeches and Writings of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah*, Ed. K.K. Aziz, Volume II, pages 927-930, pub. Kegan and Paul, 1997.

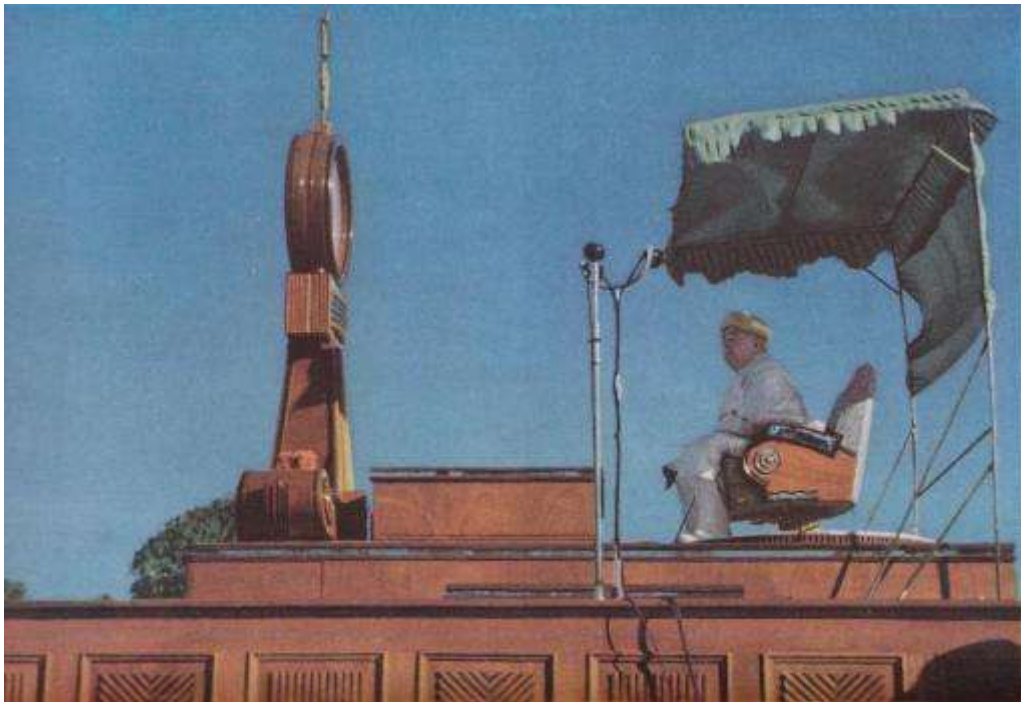
14: Ismailis Celebrated Longest Imamat in History with Three Magnificent Jubilees

I: THE GOLDEN JUBILEE – FIFTY YEARS OF IMAMAT (1885 to 1935)

...The late Aga Khan was determined that his Golden Jubilee be marked by the launch of something that would remain forever. After much discussion, the Jubilee Insurance Company was formed and when some leaders complained that they knew nothing about insurance, His Highness replied: 'If you want to build a factory, you don't do it yourself, you get experts to do it'....Diwan Sir Eboo

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE JUBILEES OF AGA KHAN III

The leadership of the 48th Ismaili Imam, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, lasted a total of 72 years – the longest in Ismaili history. Among the most eventful years of his Imamat were the years of the Great Jubilees – the Golden, the Diamond and the Platinum – which were marked to commemorate his 50, 60 and 70 years of Imamat respectively. The Aga Khan had assumed the hereditary leadership – the Imamat – at the age of only eight years in 1885. He passed away on July 11th 1957, leaving the hereditary leadership to his grandson, Prince Karim Aga Khan (or His Highness the Aga Khan) who has been on the throne now for 52 years.



10th August 1946 - The Aga Khan at the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Dar-es-Salaam. Photo: David Carnegie for The National Geographic, March 1947

The Jubilees of the late Aga Khan were often described in fantastic terms by the media around the world for their pomp and the precious metals that were used to weigh him. They were equated with golden jubilees of other potentates in India, who were weighed in gold, as was customary. The Ismailis, however, saw these celebrations as a symbolic affirmation of the spiritual ties that linked them with their beloved Imam. The Imam had guided them in spiritual and temporal matters for decades and had been responsible for their material and spiritual advancement, keeping them on the course of the straight path (*Siratal Mustaqim*). While the first half of the 20th century resulted in significant development for the Ismaili community under the leadership of the 48th Imam, the greatest impact resulted from the proceeds that the Imam gave back to the community from the Jubilee events of weighing him in gold, diamond and platinum.



The late Prince Aly Khan displaying a Platinum Plaque which he received on behalf of his ill father, Aga Khan III, on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in Bombay in February 1957.

Numerous institutions for social and economic development were established in South Asia and in East Africa. In India and later Pakistan, social development institutions were established, in the words of Aga Khan, “*for the relief of humanity.*” The Diamond Jubilee Trust and the Platinum Jubilee Investments Limited which in turn assisted the growth of various types of cooperative societies were formed. Diamond Jubilee Schools for girls were established throughout the remote Northern Areas of what is now Pakistan. In addition, scholarship programs established at the time of the Golden Jubilee to give assistance to needy students, were progressively expanded during subsequent Jubilees.



August 1946: Vast crowds of Ismailis from all over the world had gathered in Dar-es-Salaam for the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of their 48th Imam, Aga Khan III. Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa

In East Africa, major social welfare and economic development institutions were established. Those involved in social welfare included the accelerated development of schools and community centers, and a modern, fully-equipped hospital in Nairobi. Among the economic development institutions established in East Africa were companies such as the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust (now Diamond Trust of Kenya) and the Jubilee Insurance Company (see box below for an interesting background about its origins), which are quoted on the Nairobi Stock Exchange and have become major players in national development.

The perception of the Jubilees has changed over time, even in the more popular media. What were seen as flamboyant celebrations are viewed today as celebrations that led to the transformation of the Ismaili community into a modern, dynamic and enterprising community.

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS IN BOMBAY AND NAIROBI; THE FORMATION OF THE JUBILEE INSURANCE COMPANY

1. Bombay: 19th January, 1936



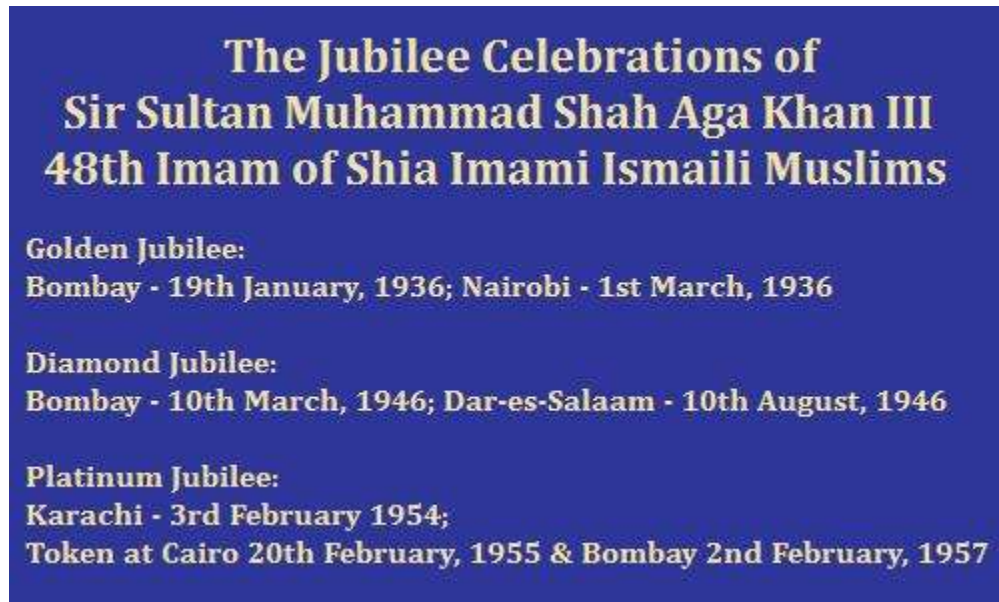
The 48th Imam of the Ismailis being weighed in gold on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee in Hasnabad, Bombay, on 19th January 1936. Pir Sabzali is seen on the extreme right. The Imam weighed in at 220lbs with the gold valued at \$125,000 - a vast amount for that time.

In August, 1935 Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah completed fifty years of his spiritual leadership and the Ismailis decided to pay a memorable tribute to their Imam by weighing him against gold and making a present of it, as a mark of their love and gratitude, and as an acknowledgement of his leadership which had not only brought them worldly prosperity but spiritual strength as well.

Bombay was the venue for the celebrations in India. The actual celebrations took place on 19th January, 1936 but for several preceding weeks there was intense activity in the community all over India and among Ismailis in other countries. Vast crowds in festive and solemn mood had gathered at the historic Hasanabad grounds to witness the unique occasion.

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah and the Begum (Andrée Carron, the late Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan's mother) arrived promptly at 10.35 a.m. to receive one of the most spectacular ovations from a crowd of over 30,000 Ismailis. Every inch of space in the vast grounds was taken up. Those who could not get in lined the roads and streets nearby.

Reaching the dais, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah took his seat on the *gadi* (throne) embroidered in real gold with the coat of arms of his family. To his right sat Lady Aly Shah, the proud mother, and to his left sat the Begum.



Before the weighing ceremony, Mr. Gulamali Merchant, Vice-President of the All India Golden Jubilee Committee, requested the Imam's permission as follows:

"Most reverently and respectfully I request that Your Highness will allow yourself to be weighed in gold on this happy and auspicious occasion, and accept the gold so weighed as a humble token of our love, devotion and gratitude to Your Highness for all the unbounded bounty and benefits that Your Highness' followers have derived during Your Highness' Imamatus for the last 50 years."

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah rose from his "*gadi*" – moved towards the weighing scale and took his seat on rich soft cushions placed for him. Although the Imam was only 5ft 5in, he tipped the scales at 220lbs and the donations added up to \$125,000 – a vast fortune in 1936. The ceremony of sitting on the scales with the gold made a great impression on the British public at the time. In the west, this was seen as some sort of fantastic ceremonial, and this was because India at the time was ceremonial.

Replying to the address and weighing ceremony, the Imam said:

"I accept with great pleasure the gold my dear spiritual children have offered me and give them my loving and paternal spiritual blessings. I have decided to use the gold for the uplift of the spiritual children and appoint Mr. Gulamali G. Merchant to devise the best means of applying not only the income of this gold

but the corpus also for intensive uplift work by way of all kinds of scholarships, relief by emigration from congested districts, infant welfare and other beneficial works.”

2. Nairobi: March 1, 1936



Aga Khan III, the 48th Ismaili Imam in a joyous mood at the Golden Jubilee weighing ceremony in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 1, 1936. He weighed in with the gold value of \$111,248 (22,773 Sterling pounds). Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa

The Golden Jubilee celebrations in Nairobi on 1st March 1936, were also as grand as those in Bombay.

East African Railways ran special trains called Aga Khan Specials, taking Ismaili travelers to Nairobi for the Jubilee. These trains were decorated with flags, played festive music and offered a special rate.

Before and after the Jubilee, Mawlana Sultan Mohamed Shah visited many places in East Africa and made farmans for the progress of the community.

For the Nairobi ceremony, Mawlana Sultan Mohamed Shah wore a sherwani with golden colour turban. The Begum wore green and red sari. The Jubilee message from the All Africa Jamat was presented in a very beautifully carved ivory casket. Kenya's Acting Governor placed the first gold bar on the scale and the whole jubilee ceremony was serene and beautiful. Once more the precious metal was presented to the Imam by his murids as a token of their love and affection and once more the Imam returned the gift, with his blessings, for the welfare and progress of the Ismaili community. He had weighed in with the gold value of \$111,248 (22,773 Sterling pounds)

These two jubilee celebrations were a major step in laying the foundation of the community's economic strength.

3. A Golden Jubilee Vision of the 48th Imam Led to Establishment of the Jubilee Insurance Company Seventy Two Years Ago

Some Glimpses into the Origins of the Jubilee Insurance Company

From those small beginnings seventy years ago when the infant Company was launched with a share capital of only Shs 500,000, it has developed into a major insurance group with assets almost touching Shs 18 billion as at 2007.

In 1937, East Africa was in the grip of a world recession and the threat of world war was looming in Europe. Several businesses had collapsed and the confidence of the business community was at its lowest ebb, and many had lost their pioneering spirit. It was at this time that Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, encouraged the East African Ismailis to start an insurance Company. All the insurance companies at that time were foreign based and it was a bold step indeed to incorporate a company locally.

The first employee of the Company received a salary of 250/= (shillings) per month and the first General Manager received a salary of 700/= per month and looked forward to an annual increase of 30/=. The furnishing requirements for the Company's first office in Mombasa comprised of 2 tables, 6 chairs, a typewriter and a single filing cabinet. From those small beginnings, seventy years ago, when the infant Company was launched with a share capital of only Shs 500,000, it has developed into a major insurance group with assets almost touching Shs 18 billion as at 2007.

The Aga Khan had commented on the fact that the community was entirely reliant upon insurance companies controlled from Britain and India for its entire insurance

needs with the result that significant sums of money were being diverted from Ismaili hands instead of being funnelled into enterprises that would enhance community development.

A three day meeting was then held at the Jamatkhana in the then Government Road (present day Moi Avenue in Nairobi) in which the Aga Khan listened patiently to the ideas that were being put forward. He interjected with suggestions from time to time and finally a decision was made to create an Ismaili insurance company following a unanimous vote.

At once, the Aga Khan asked for volunteers willing to serve as directors of the fledgling company, and seven of the delegates offered their services. The directors were drawn from all over East Africa, with six from Mombasa, four from Zanzibar and its neighbouring islands and one each from Nairobi, Masaka (Uganda), and Dar es Salaam.

The decision was made to operate from Mombasa, most likely because that was where several of the Directors resided. The urge to serve the community at large was strong with the result that two directors were dispatched on a tour of Kenya, Uganda and present-day Tanzania with the intention of establishing agencies in each of the major towns. It was further resolved that each Director would subscribe to a minimum of five hundred shares, and place life assurance business of Shs 20,000/= with the fledgling company. In fact, Life Business combined with fire risk only, was to be the mainstay of Jubilee, deferring other forms of insurance until a later date.

The search began for a suitable office in Mombasa, and this was resolved when a premise comprising of two rooms was identified in Kilindini Road (present day Moi Avenue in Mombasa). It had been previously been occupied by the South British Insurance Company Limited. On 3rd August 1937, the Jubilee Insurance Company was incorporated with an authorized share capital of Shs 1million made up of 50,000 shares of Shs 20 each. An Executive Committee was set up tasked with finding staff, determining salaries and generally handling all matters concerning day-to-day management and, on 30th December 1937, the Life Department commenced operations.

Within a few months Jubilee had issued over 1,200 life policies and, in 1938, appointed agents in several towns throughout East Africa. On 3rd February 1939, what proved to be a momentous event in the Company's history occurred with the

appointment of the late Sir Diwan Eboo Pirbhai, to the Jubilee Board.

Years later, Sir Eboo was to recall the early days of Jubilee thus:

‘The late Aga Khan was determined that his Golden Jubilee be marked by the launch of something that would remain forever. After much discussion, the Jubilee Insurance Company was formed and when some leaders complained that they knew nothing about insurance, His Highness replied: ‘If you want to build a factory, you don’t do it yourself, you get experts to do it’.”

Later that year, Jubilee opened a full branch office in Kampala. In 1940, an office in Bombay, (present day Mumbai) was established and its ceremonial opening was performed by the Aga Khan’s son, the late Prince Aly Khan, who also bought 300 shares in the company.

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15: Lakhpaty's Intriguing Poster for 48th Ismaili Imam's Diamond Jubilee Shows Artistic Ingenuity



An intriguing poster created in the 1940's by Major Lakhpaty. [Link to high resolution file provided at bottom of page.](#)

Poster from the Abdulmalik Thawer Collection. Photo Scan by: Guy Martin Studio, Ottawa

by Abdulmalik J. Merchant, Editor, Simerg

Editor's Note: The image above is that of a poster which was designed and published by the late A. J. Lakhpaty during the Diamond Jubilee of Aga Khan III. It was an individual effort, as he notes, for the love of his Imam. By producing this image, Simerg does not endorse the contents of the poster or its accuracy. Its publication here is meant to illustrate some of the ways by which members of the Ismaili community sought to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of their Imam in their own individual ways.

In this series on Aga Khan III, we have invited viewers to submit anecdotes and photos related to the 48th Ismaili Imam, and several local Jamati members in my hometown, Ottawa, as well viewers from abroad responded generously. Abdulmalik Thawer and his family invited me over to their home to check out a very old reprint of the poster that was designed and published by Major A. J. Lakhpaty of Bombay, India, some 65 years ago to celebrate Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's Diamond Jubilee. Having previously seen poorly reproduced prints and electronic images of the same, I was apprehensive and almost declined their invitation. But Abdul and I have a great friendship going back some 25 years and he is also one of the most generous and sincere persons I have ever met. I could show up at his place anytime, without any notice or

forewarning, and not feel uneasy. And once (anyone) is at the Thawer home one is invited to stay for the best part - and you guessed it - *the food!* So it would have been silly of me not to accept his sincere calling, considering there was no detour for me to take to get to his home, as my place is only a little further away.

Major Abdullah Jaffar Lakhpaty

Major Abdullah Jaffar Lakhpaty (1884 – circa April 13, 1947) is regarded as the founder of the Ismaili Volunteer Corps. He discharged his duties most devotedly and courageously and was a tower of strength to the movement. He was also a literary figure and possessed intellectual flair and wisdom. His attendance at literary gatherings was taken as granted. Major Lakhpaty was also a brilliant painter, and many of his works adorned covers of periodicals of the time. The poster shown here is one of the many he produced during his lifetime. He died on Sunday, April 13, 1947 at 8.20 a.m. in the hospital at the age of 63 years. His death caused widespread grief and was mourned by all communities. He was laid to rest in the midst of thousands of mourners.

As I entered the Thawer residence, I was guided to Major Lakhpaty's work that hung prominently on a wall in the hallway. At first glance, from some distance, I still carried that sense of misgiving and apprehension about the poster's quality. But as I drew my eyes as close as possible to the frame, I realized how *well* the Thawers had looked after it. The intriguing details in the poster started unfolding one by one and to my amazement I began observing layers upon layers of graphics and images embedded with verses from the Quran and Hadith, historical and theological notes and slogans, references to dozens of Prophets, some of whom I had never heard of, concentric circles containing small diamond circles representing the forty eight Imams and so on. The center of the poster features a remarkable portrait of Aga Khan III within a diamond setting, and also includes a cap in the shape of a diamond on top of the Imam's head. There is, I must say, an incredible wealth of information in this painstaking work that was done some 65 years ago! Only Major Lakhpaty or one of the associates working with him would be able to share all the details and features that went into this stunning piece of art work. The Major writes at one side of the poster that it was done "*In Love to Thee and Thy Holy Descendants.*"

The Thawer print, due to its age, could not be extracted from the frame without possibly damaging it. A photograph I attempted to take had to be discarded because of poor quality from the reflected glass. So I resolved to do what I had done with the framed Golden Jubilee Stamps – give it to a professional studio.

Despite the rush for Christmas and New Year's that is now underway, Guy Martin and his team in Orleans at Ottawa's East End worked on it in their studio for several hours and the result of their photographic talent is shown here. What Guy produced, I think, finally does justice to the art work Major Lakhpaty

created in the 1940's. Please view the poster on your screen carefully and note the many artistic and textual details that make the composition of this poster unique and quite intriguing.

16: The Diamond Jubilee: “An Incomparable Occasion in the World”

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE – SIXTY YEARS OF IMAMAT (1885-1945)

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah in a message to the *Aga Khan Legion Central Committee*:

Sixty years have passed to the enthronement of the Imam, which is a unique occasion. It is an incomparable occasion in the world. No occasion ever occurred in the world history like it.

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah in a message to the *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*:

The Ismailia history has passed through several stages of development. My Diamond Jubilee marks such a stage in the present times. With it a phase of consolidation and co-operation has been achieved among my spiritual children in various countries, and now lies ahead a period of goodwill and expansion. With the Diamond Jubilee dawns a new era, full of hopes and opportunities for economics, educational, social and religious uplift of my beloved spiritual children all over the world. It is a time to go ahead and leave a mark on the world history like the glorious Ismailis of the past. Let the Diamond Jubilee message for my spiritual children be that of doing their best and devoting their best in the best cause of their beloved faith....



The Aga Khan speaking at the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in Dar-es-Salaam. From Madagascar to Central Asia, Ismaili pilgrims converged on the city for the weighing ceremony on August 10, 1946 in Dar-es-Salaam. Five months earlier many saw a similar weighing in Bombay. Both ceremonies raised over 640,000 British pounds each in the Aga Khan's weight against diamonds.

Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, writing in his *Memoirs of Aga Khan*:

...The sixtieth anniversary of my inheriting my Imamatus and ascending the "Gadi" fell in 1945. But in the troubled conditions at the end of the Second World War it was neither possible nor suitable to arrange any elaborate celebrations of my Diamond Jubilee. We decided to have two ceremonies: one, including the weighing against Diamonds, in Bombay in March 1946, and another five months later, in Dar-es-Salaam, using the same diamonds.

When the time came, world conditions were only just beginning to improve...my followers gathered for a wonderful, and to me at least, quite an unforgettable occasion. There were Ismailis present from all over the Near and Middle East, from Central Asia and China; from Syria and Egypt; and from Burma and Malaya, as well as thousands of my Indian followers. Telegrams and letters of congratulation showered in on me from all over the Islamic world, from the heads of all the independent Muslim nations, and from the viceroy; I was proud and happy man to be thus reunited with those for whom across the years my affection and my responsibility have been so deep and so constant....



Aga Khan III Diamond Jubilee Decorated Arch

Sixty years of the benevolent reign of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, gave his followers a chance to celebrate his Diamond Jubilee. On December 31, 1945, while speaking to his community's Legion Central Committee, the Aga Khan said:

“Sixty years have passed to the enthronement of the Imam, which is a unique occasion. It is an incomparable occasion in the world. No occasion ever occurred in the world history like it.”

Ten years earlier the Ismailis had marked the Golden Jubilee by weighing their Imam in gold - the sum of which was presented to the Imam only to be returned to them for their economic growth.

The Ismailis saw an opportunity to celebrate the jubilee like they had done before, and this time weighing their Imam against diamonds. Two weighing ceremonies were set for 1946 – the first one in Bombay, on March 10th and the second exactly five months later, on August 10th, in Dar-es-Salaam.

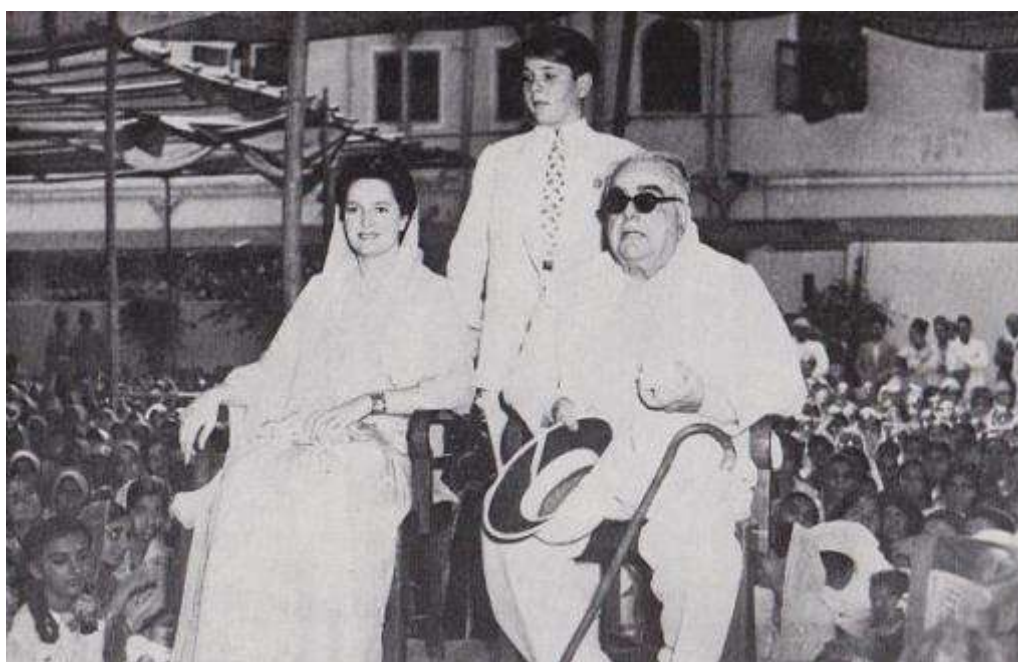


At his residence in Bombay, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah examines some of the diamonds before the day of the Diamond Jubilee Ceremony at Bombay's Brabourne Stadium

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS IN BOMBAY AND DAR-ES-SALAAM; A DIAMOND JUBILEE SPEECH IN DAR-ES-SALAAM; SOME DIAMOND JUBILEE PROJECTS

1. Bombay, Braboune Stadium, 10th March 1946

At a quarter past five on the afternoon of Sunday, March 10, 1946, a deep hush fell upon the Brabourne Stadium in Bombay. Here over 100,000 people, from various parts of the world had come to witness one of those magnificent ceremonies which arouse wonder and amazement in the minds of men. It was on this day, and at this hour, that His Highness the Aga Khan was to be weighed in diamonds to celebrate the sixtieth year of his Imamate. Seldom before can Bombay, even in its pageantry and glory, have looked upon such pompous ceremonies, such splendour and colour. Vast congregations of people lined the routes and filled the great stands surrounding the central platform and figure. The huge multitude present in the ceremony included fourteen ruling princes, among them the Maharajas of Kashmir and Baroda and the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar.



Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah with Begum Om Habiba, Mata Salamat, and Prince Sadruddin at a Mulaqat with the Karimabad Jamat during his Diamond Jubilee visit to Bombay

The flags waved and the colours of His Highness – green and red – draped the buildings. For hours before the event the procession passed through the streets of Bombay to the Stadium to await the arrival, first of all, of the high notabilities and personalities who had come to pay homage and to look upon the magnificent spectacle, and then at 5.15 the Aga Khan with his retinue preceded by Her Highness the Begum Om Habiba

Mata Salamat, wearing diamond studded sari, gems glittering in the gorgeous sunlight, strode into the arena, mounted the platform and took his place.



The value of diamonds was 640,000 British pounds at the Bombay weighing ceremony attended by 100,000 people.

Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection

One by one the caskets of diamonds were raised on high and shown to the public, then placed on the scales. The scales tipped when 243k lbs. weight of diamonds were so placed. These diamonds were worth 640,000 British Pounds – a gift to His Highness from his many followers in India. His Highness received the gift and in his turn returned it, adding his blessing and his advice that the large sum of money should be used for the betterment of his followers.

Later that night, a magnificent display of fireworks was given at the sea-front.

In a message to *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Year Book*, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah said:

“The Ismailia history has passed through several stages of development. My Diamond Jubilee marks such a stage in the present times. With it a phase of consolidation and co-operation has been achieved among my spiritual children in various countries, and now lies ahead a period of goodwill and expansion. With the Diamond Jubilee dawns a new era, full of hopes and opportunities for economics, educational, social and religious uplift of my beloved spiritual children all over the world. It is a time to go ahead and leave a mark on the world history like the glorious Ismailis of the past. Let the Diamond Jubilee message for my spiritual children be that of doing their best and devoting their best in the best cause of their beloved faith.”

2. Dar-es-Salaam: 10 August 1946

From *The Khojas*:

The flash of diamonds – thousands of diamonds – in small hermetically sealed glass containers, tantalized the huge gathering seated around the high platform erected in the middle of grounds that had been converted into “Diamondabad” in the city of Dar-es-Salaam....The crowd watched spellbound as container after container put on the scale shook the hand and forced it upwards...

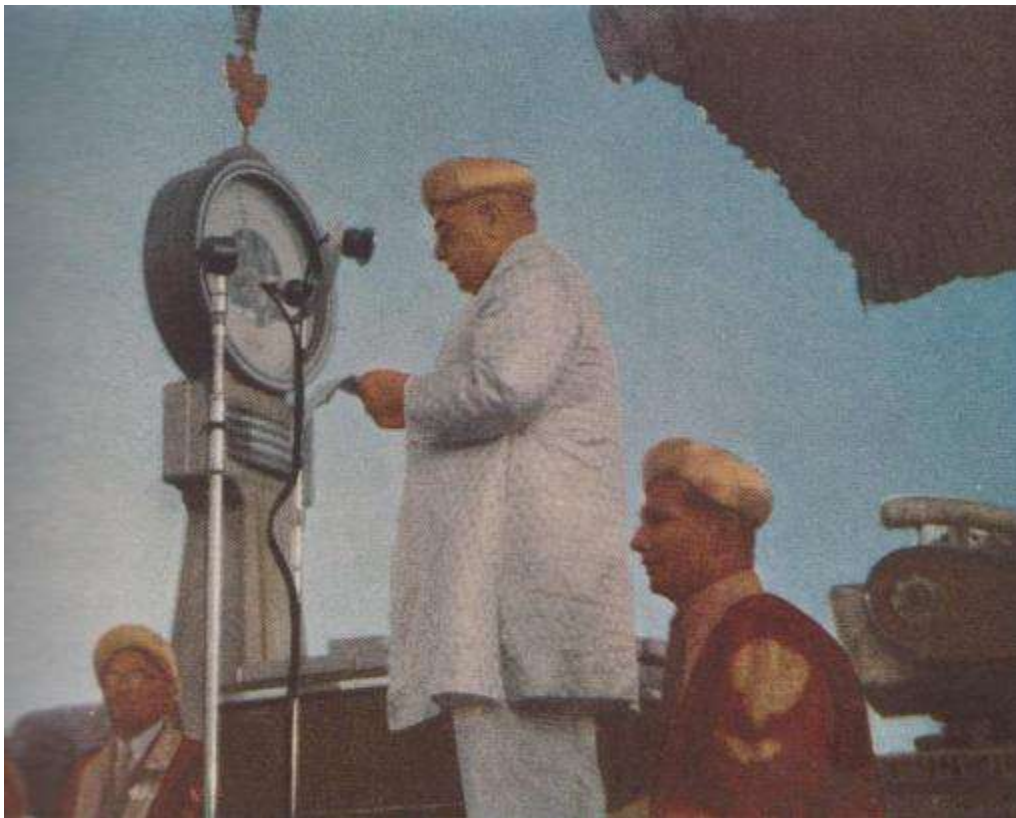


Fezzed Tanganyika Police Keep Order and Guard a Fabulous Diamond Treasure.

Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa. Photo, not as clear, also appeared in the National Geographic, March 1947

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Dar-es-Salaam followed in August, 1946. Thousands of people came from all parts of the world, especially India, Europe and the Middle East. Hundreds made the journey by air,

thousands by train, by car and by lorry, from all parts of Africa, many enduring hardships as they travelled from Belgian Congo and Uganda. Convoys of cars came from South Africa. The specially chartered mail boat, *S.S. Vasma*, flying the Ismaili flag, brought many thousands of Ismailis to Dar-es-Salaam. The celebrations lasted 10 days, opening with a ceremony in which Her Highness the Begum, accompanied by Lady Battershill, cut the tape at the official opening of the Jubilee Exhibition Park. Here there were pavilions showing fine needlework and other forms of local craftsmanship, including paintings, woodwork and toy-making. Other pavilions were on health, hygiene, child welfare and domestic science, and others catered to Scout and Girl Guide displays. The lighter side of the Exhibition took on the features of a grand country fair. Merry-go-rounds and miniature railways delighted the young and kept the old entertained. A day was also dedicated to a large procession, which included decorated floats, and a portrayal of the history and activities of the Ismailis.



Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah speaks into a "Mike" at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Dar-es-Salaam. His weight in diamonds was the equivalent of over 640,000 British pounds Photo: David Carnegie for the National Geographic, March 1947

However the highlight of the celebrations had to be the morning of August 10, 1946 when 70 000 pairs of eyes, mesmerized by the hand on the large round dial of an enormous weighing scale, watched as it inched its way up and up. The flash of diamonds – thousands of diamonds – in small hermetically sealed glass

containers, tantalized the huge gathering seated around the high platform erected in the middle of grounds that had been converted into *Diamondabad* in the city of Dar-es-Salaam.

The first boxes of diamonds were placed on the scales by those who had contributed the highest amounts...Following this there were presentations by school children, bearing banners from all the African territories.

The crowd watched spellbound as container after container put on the scale shook the hand and forced it upwards. Some craned their necks, others squinted, and all focused on the dial, willing more and more diamonds onto the scale as the hand moved clockwise, very slowly towards its target – the weight of the regal person seated at the end of the platform, serenely awaiting the outcome. The Imam's weight in diamonds would represent a fortune and the weighing-in was a sumptuous display of wealth, power and charity in one spectacular event.

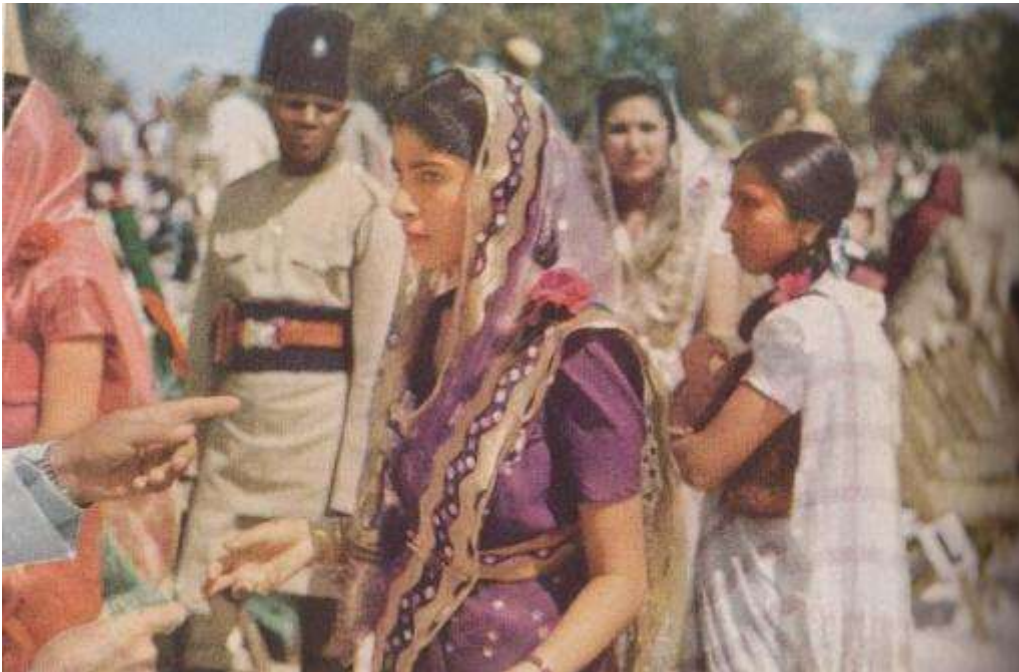
Ismailis from all parts of the world sat tense with suppressed excitement. Finally the weight on the scale matched the weight of the Imam and a tremendous cheer broke from their lips in praise of their leader on the platform, His Highness, Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan. He had succeeded to the Imamate at the age of eight in 1885 and they were celebrating his sixtieth anniversary as Imam.



Bulletproof caskets of transparent plastic rest on the scale. These contain industrial diamonds on loan from London for the weighing. The setting was Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, East Africa, a stronghold of the Ismailis. Scarlet-robed members of the Aga Khan Legion surround the Imam. Photo: National Geographic, March 1947

The Aga Khan, moved by this presentation, explained how the gift would be used.

"As everyone is well aware, the value of these diamonds has been unconditionally presented to me on this occasion. I do not wish to take this money for myself but to use it for any object that I think is best for my spiritual children. After long reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the very best use that I can make of it is that after expenses of these celebrations, in the wider sense of the word, have been paid for, then the whole of the residue must be given as an absolute gift to the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust."



March 10 1946: "A dark eyed beauty" was how the National Geographic described this lady in a caption, adding that "her tolerant leader champions women's education; opposes their segregation in purdah." Photo: David Carnegie, National Geographic, March 1947

He told them that the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust had been created to build up "a totally new financial outlook among the Ismailis. Co-operative Societies, Corporations, and, I hope and believe very soon, Building Societies, too, will draw from the Investment Trust sums equal to their capital but at a level of three per cent. And they are not allowed to charge more than six per cent under any conditions from their borrowers."

With this internal banking system, the Aga Khan was setting up the means to ensure financial security for all his people. Stirred by his wisdom and his concern for them, his followers felt reaffirmed in their faith and in their leader. It was an occasion each individual would cherish forever.

After the weighing-in, the Aga Khan joined his family on the dais where the ceremony continued with speeches and special acknowledgment of the outstanding work of individual Ismailis in the fields of health, education and economic development in various communities throughout the world.



Obverse of a medal commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of Aga Khan III. Photo: Nizar Noorali Collection, Pakistan *Reverse of a medal commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of Aga Khan III. Photo: Nizar Noorali Collection, Pakistan*

3. Speech, *The Folly of Hate and Fear*, Dar-es-Salaam, on August 10, 1946, at the Exhibition Theatre

Now one word, if I may be allowed to say it, of general advice to inhabitants here, whatever their race, colour or creed.

I have had some experience of the causes of strife and I was a very active member of the League of Nations and of the Disarmament Conference for some seven years. Why did it fail? Ultimately because of hate. And yet why did people hate each other? Fear. Where there is fear there is no love, but hate easily enters through the windows even if the door is shut.

I appeal to all of you, Africans, Europeans and Indians — do not fear each other. Work together. The country is big enough. There is virgin soil which has hardly been scratched. Unlike China, India and Europe, the population is still very small. We have no need to struggle for existence here for a century at least, so why foresee trouble for your great-grandchildren. There may be none. Thanks to the atom bomb and the progress

of knowledge and science. And if things take a turn for good instead of evil, then the new forces of nature, we are certain, will make human relations easier and give each and all security.

To-day, strife here on racial lines is imaginary. The onlooker sees most of the game, and I have been here an onlooker. There is no getting away from it — if you will throw fear out of your minds and you will soon realize that white, black and brown are complementary members of a common body politic.

4. Diamond Jubilee Projects

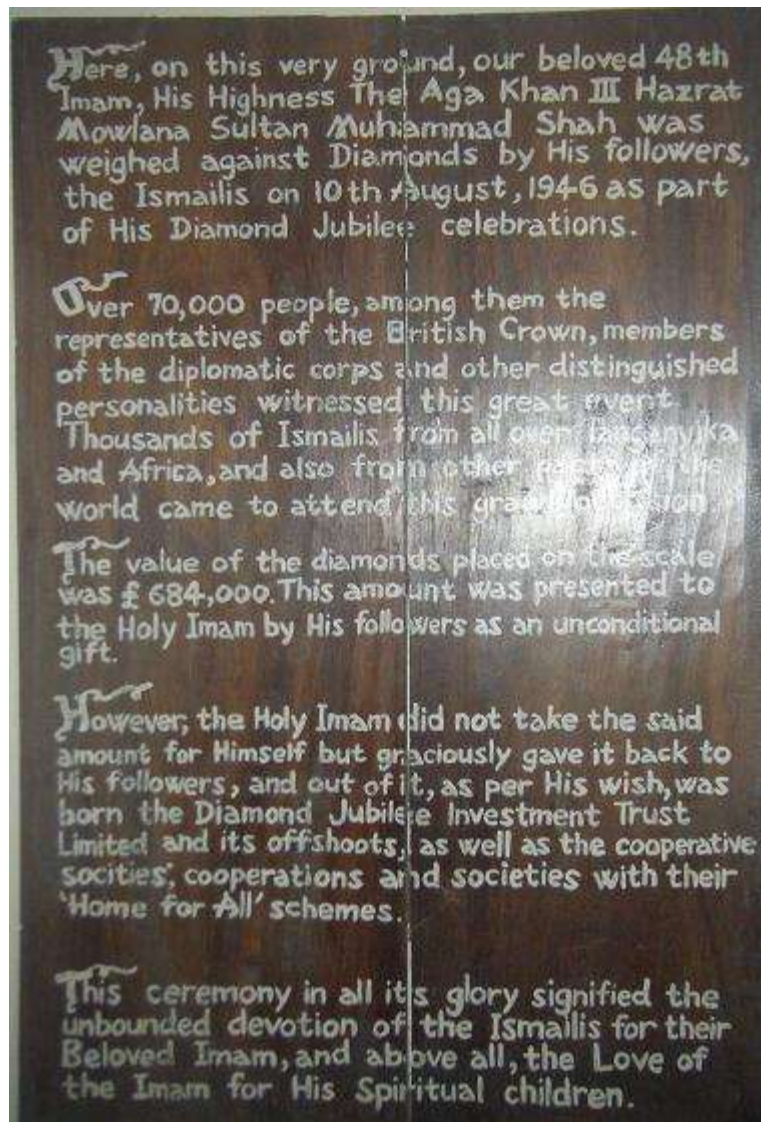
His Highness the Aga Khan speaking at the *Aga Khan Academy* Foundation Ceremony, Karimabad, Hunza, May 13, 1983:

My Silver Jubilee is a celebration of years which have passed, but it is fitting that it should be commemorated by laying foundations for the future. As Ahmedali Merchant has reminded us, it was here that My Grandfather, Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan, initiated our education network for the Northern Areas. He did this with faith in the future. It therefore gives Me great pleasure that today we are inaugurating a completely new development in the system he originated...

Wrote Pakistan's Dawn Newspaper:

...The single-most important factor that transformed the educational scene in Hunza was the contribution of Aga Khan III, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah. It was in 1946 that some 16 schools were established. They were called the Diamond Jubilee schools and they set the right momentum for bringing changes to education in Hunza....

(a) What is now known as the Diamond Trust Bank of Kenya was incorporated in 1946 as the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust (DJIT) to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the ascension to the Imamate by the late Aga Khan III. DJIT's shares were subscribed by the Ismaili Community as well as the Aga Khan.



Diamond Jubilee Plaque from Dar-es-Salaam celebrations...one of the memorabilia at Upanga Jamatkhana in the city.

As the plaque states, the Imam wished the amount to be dedicated to Jamati projects including the Diamond Jubilee

Investment Trust. Photo Al-Karim Pirani Collection, Ottawa

(b) In 1947, following India's Independence from the British, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, established the Diamond Jubilee High School for Boys. Over the years, the School has established itself as an institution offering quality education to children of varied backgrounds and cultures.

(c) The Diamond Jubilee High School in Hyderabad, a co-educational English medium school, currently educates 1040 students from pre-primary through grade 10. The Primary School is situated at Nampally Station Road while the main school building is located at Chirag Ali Lane, beside the Collectorate office. The School was established in 1949 by the Youngmen Ismailia Education Board.

(d) Those that are familiar with the difficult terrain and relatively scarce resources in Hunza would be pleasantly surprised to know that the literacy rate in Hunza is around 77 per cent. This must have been unthinkable when the first primary school was established there in 1913 by the British in India. The single-most important factor that transformed the educational scene in Hunza was the contribution of Aga Khan III, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, who convinced the then Mirs of Hunza state to place greater emphasis on education.

It was in 1946 that some 16 schools were established. They were called the Diamond Jubilee schools and they set the right momentum for bringing changes to education in Hunza. Diamond Jubilee Schools for girls were also set up throughout the remote Northern Areas of Pakistan. In addition, scholarship programmes established at the time of the Golden Jubilee to give assistance to needy students were progressively expanded.

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17: 48th Ismaili Imam's Platinum Jubilee: World Evolved from Candle Lights and Horse Carriages to Nuclear Physics and Jet Travel

The Platinum Jubilee – Seventy Years of Imamat (1885-1955)

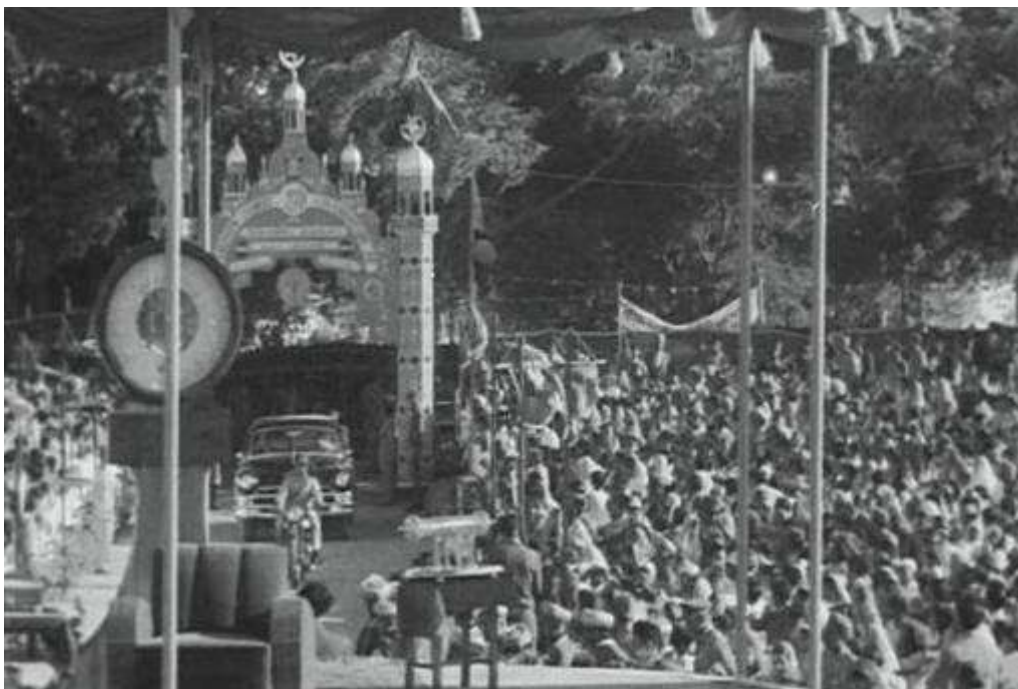


The 48th Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan III, acknowledges the affection of his followers who had gathered in their thousands to mark his Platinum Jubilee celebration in Karachi.

THE PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS IN KARACHI WITH SPEECHES AND MESSAGES; TOKEN
CEREMONY IN CAIRO WITH SPEECHES AND MESSAGES;
THE PLATINUM JUBILEE HOSPITAL, NAIROBI; TOKEN CEREMONY IN INDIA

1. Karachi, February 3, 1954

To mark the completion of the Aga Khan's seventy years of Imamatus, the Ismailis decided to weigh their 48th Imam, who had guided them through seventy years of benevolent rule, in platinum. The preparations were set afoot to surpass all the celebrations of the previous two Jubilees but Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah gave explicit orders not to over spend on illuminations and festivities.



February 3, 1954: The Karachi Platinum Celebration was witnessed by 50,000 people.



Wishing a Long Life to the Imam of the Socio-Economic Revolution, whose reign of 72 years was the longest in Ismaili history.

The Platinum Jubilee was celebrated in Karachi, the birthplace of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, on 3rd February, 1954 in the presence of 50,000 Ismailis.

The Imam appeared in a ceremonial high-walled black cap, a white tunic and a brown, embroidered robe. Mata Salamat Om Habibah and Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Ali were also present for the ceremony.

Being the costliest metal, it was determined that every one once would represent 14 pounds in weight. The scales were adjusted accordingly and Wazir Ibrahim Manji, the President of the Platinum Jubilee Association, placed a total of 15 ounces of platinum to match the Imam's weight of 215 pounds. The weighing ceremony itself was brief, lasting ten minutes. Once again, as had been the case with the Golden and Diamond Jubilees to celebrate 50 and 60 years of Imamatus respectively, the sum gifted to the Imam was returned for the community's Finance and Investment Corporations.

2. In Karachi Speech, Imam Asks Ismailis to be Patriotic, Hardworking, United and to Abide by Tenets of Faith

...Work if carried out intensively, is service to God and Fatherland. Make your daily labour, labour of love howsoever difficult and hard it may be...If every Ismaili living in Pakistan remembers and interprets his citizenship, howsoever humble his contributions may be, with the spirit of courage and devotion, then indeed I am happy to think that after many years of surgical operations and illness, I am still alive to give you this fatherly advice....though you must firmly stick to the tenets of your Faith, yet you should not forget what I have always considered the most beautiful of all Muslim prayers namely, that Allah Almighty in His infinite mercy may forgive the sins of all Muslims.



The 48th Imam, blessing the Ismailis during the historical celebration in Karachi marking his 70th Imamatus anniversary

“I am proud and happy that I was born in Karachi, the city which had the honour of being the birth place of the Father of the Nation, the late Quaid-e-Azam, whose untimely and early death we all so deplore and whose loss I particularly feel with personal grief, for shortly before his death, he had asked me to take up the general direction and supervision of Pakistan representation in Europe and America, which alas, then my health was so bad that not only myself but all my doctors and family expected my death before his.

“You Ismailis know perfectly well that it is a fundamental point in your religion that wherever you be, whatever the state where life and honour are protected, you must give your entire loyalty and devotion to the welfare and service of that country. You who have the honour of being citizens of Pakistan, to you, I give this advice: do not interpret your citizenship purely in a passive form but patriotism and loyalty must be active and productive.



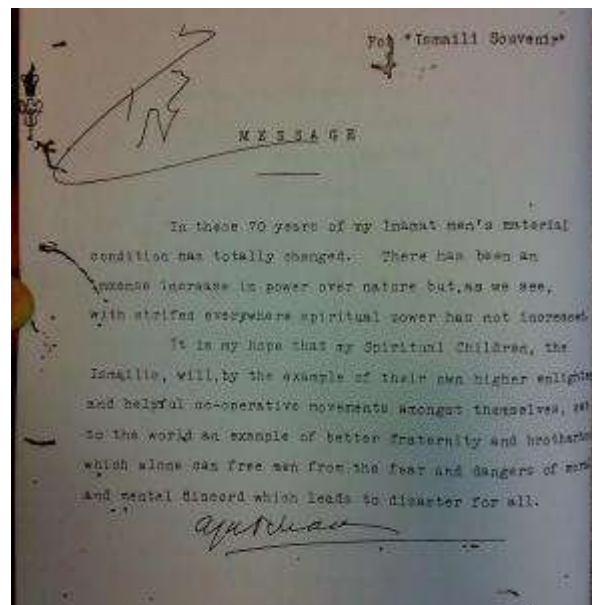
A magnificent day for the Imam and his Murids who marked his 70 years of Imamah by weighing him in Platinum. The Karachi ceremony was the only full-fledged event. The ceremonies in India and Africa were token ceremonies.

“I realize fully that the overwhelming majority of the population have to look after their means of livelihood and the up-bringing of your children, but work if carried out intensively, is service to God and Fatherland. Make your daily labour, labour of love howsoever difficult and hard it may be. Do remember that in a democracy, voting and the rights of citizenship should be used with care and attention with serious thought howsoever humble with the full realization to the best of your ability that not personal, parochial or provincial interests are to be served but the greater good and the welfare of the population as a whole and the security of the state as such. If the people of a nation are united and self-sacrificing, any amount of difficulties and overwhelming misfortunes can be overcome. We have seen how Turkey has come out stronger than ever after a hundred years of misfortunes and disasters. There are two other cases which should be an example and should not discourage anyone in the face of difficulties. Germany and Japan after

the greatest defeats known to history have by hard work and devotion raised themselves to be honoured, respected and powerful members of the comity of nations. If every Ismaili living in Pakistan remembers and interprets his citizenship, howsoever humble his contributions may be, with the spirit of courage and devotion, then indeed I am happy to think that after many years of surgical operations and illness, I am still alive to give you this fatherly advice.

“From the religious point of view, though you must firmly stick to the tenets of your Faith, yet you should not forget what I have always considered the most beautiful of all Muslim prayers namely, that Allah Almighty in His infinite mercy may forgive the sins of all Muslims.”

3. Commemorative Souvenir Carries Imam's Special Message (please click images to enlarge):



A message by the 48th Ismaili Imam published in the Platinum Jubilee Souvenir Issue asks his followers to set examples of fraternity and goodwill. Credit for souvenir images: Nizar Noorali Collection, Pakistan

Transcript of the message:

In these 70 years of my Imamate men's material condition has totally changed. There has been an immense increase in power over nature but, as we see, with strifes everywhere spiritual power has not increased.

It is my hope that my spiritual children, the Ismailis, will, by example of their own higher enlightenment and helpful co-operative movement amongst themselves, set to the world an example of better fraternity and brotherhood which alone can free men from the fear and dangers of moral and mental discord which leads to disaster for all.

Aga Khan



The cover page of the Special Souvenir in which Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's message was produced

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The souvenir, as seen in the contents above, covered many aspects of the 48th Imam's life

ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION SOUVENIR COMMITTEE	
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The names of members responsible for producing the souvenir issue

4. Africa, Cairo, February 20th 1955

Due to the Imam's ill-health – he was 78 – the ceremonies in Africa and India were restricted to token ceremonies. For the Africa Jamat, the token ceremony took place in Cairo on 20th February, 1955. Earlier, on May 28th 1954, the Aga Khan had sent a special Platinum Jubilee message from Paris to the Africa Jamat:

As you all know it is my greatest desire that by 1960 each family should be owner of their own house, flat or shop-residence and for this purpose you must continue to develop and create more and more co-operative societies and corporations. The middle and upper class should join with the poor class to buy their shares and every effort should be made towards this end.

The following are Egyptian newspaper clippings and photos of the ceremony held in Cairo as well as the address that was presented to the Imam on behalf of the African Jamats:



Saturday, February 12, 1955: A story concerning the Imam's health makes the headline in the French paper, "La Bourse Egyptienne", a week before the Platinum Jubilee in Cairo. Credit: Motani Collection, Ottawa.



Saturday, February 12, 1955: A complete version of story shown above.



February 20, 1945: Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam, with Begum Om Habiba Mata Salamat and Prince Aly Khan at the Platinum Jubilee ceremony in Cairo. The Platinum coins are placed on the cushion. Photo: Motani Collection

In the Huzur Pur Nur Dhani Salamat Datar
Mowlana Hazar Imam Highness the Right Honourable
SIR SULTAN MOHAMED SHAH AGA KHAN
P.C. G.C.M.G. G.C.V.O. G.C.S.I. G.C.I.E. LL.D., etc.

May it please Your Gracious Highness ;

WE the Members of Your Highness's Africa Legion, Your Highness's humble spiritual children of Africa on this unique and historic occasion most reverently offer our dutiful homage and sincerest felicitations for the completion of the seventy years of your holy Imamate during which period you have so remarkably guided our destinies.

We were all very anxious to actually weigh Your Highness against platinum in East Africa and had made all elaborate preparations in respect thereof. But due to Your ill health and on the advice of your doctors, and in spite of your own very strong desire to come to East Africa, on our own request we have been able to prevail upon you not to take the risk to come to East Africa for the said ceremony. Instead thereof we are very happy to assemble here today to perform a token symbolic ceremony of presenting Your Highness with the token platinum.

We are very happy to perform the ceremony in Cairo, Egypt, where Your Highness's ancestors have contributed their sterling services to Islam as great Fatimide Caliphs distinguishing themselves as great patrons of Art, Science, Literature and Philosophy, whose great works includes the first model University in the World the Al Azhar University. Today Egypt is the leading Muslim country in the World.

Your Highness is our 48th Imam as the direct descendent of our first Imam Hazarat Ali, son-in-law of our Holy Prophet (may blessings of Allah be upon him). Your Holy Imamate shall remain for ever and we as your spiritual children are very fortunate to receive your blessings; Amen.

To propagate the light of Islam has been the particular concern not only of Your Highness but of Your Ancestors. Your services towards Islam through out the world are well known. Your princely gifts and contributions to the East African Muslim Welfare Society and the Muslim Institute of Mombasa needs no reference. As a result of which through the E.A. Muslim Welfare Society over 200,000 persons have embraced the faith of Islam. The Muslim Institute will in future serve a useful purpose as the Al Azhar and the Aligarh Universities.

Under the fostering care and personal interest that you have so zealously taken for our welfare, we are proud to say that our community, with your blessings, takes a place of pride amongst the advanced communities of the World. Under your guidance and financial support, we have Councils for our social affairs, Schools, Maternity and Nursing Homes, Hospitals, Child Welfare Centres and many other institutions throughout Africa wherever Ismailies have settled and made their homes. In our economical sphere the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust Limited; the Jubilee Insurance Company Limited, and various Corporations and Cooperative Societies established with your advice and support in East Africa play a great part in the upliftment of Ismailies in Africa. Your earnest desire that all Ismailies in Africa should have their own Homes by 1960, will we trust, soon materialize. Your Highness's concern over the health of your spiritual children is well manifest in Your Highness's substantial contribution to erect a most modern and well equipped hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, which may also be used by our other Moslem brethren. In this hospital project, the Kenya Government has also very kindly consented to share its costs. We have also to express our deep sense of gratitude to the British and all East African Governments who have been most cooperative and sympathetic in all the requirements of the Ismaili settlers of these territories.

All the members of the Africa Legion have voluntarily contributed and collected a fund to present to Your Highness unconditionally and absolutely in gratitude for the countless benefits which we as your most humble spiritual children have derived during the seventy years of your glorious Imamate and as a token to mark Your Platinum Jubilee of the Imamate. We most humbly and respectfully request Your Highness to accept the said sum of three hundred thousand pounds sterling.

On this auspicious day, it is our humble and earnest prayers to the Almighty Allah that he may bless Your Highness and our beloved Mata Salamat and Your Highness's Royal family with long life and everlasting good health so that you may guide us and serve Islam and humanity at large.

With due respect and homage and craving for your blessings
we beg to remain your most humble spiritual children

*President and Members of the
Africa Legion,*

Cairo Egypt, 20th February, 1955.

The text of the address delivered by the Aga Khan's Africa Legion at the Imam's Platinum Jubilee in Cairo

Credit: Motani Collection, Ottawa.



The ivory gift set and the addresses presented by the Legion members are elegantly displayed.



Monday, February, 21, 1955: Front page photo in the English Daily "The Egyptian Gazette", following the token Platinum Jubilee ceremony held in Cairo the previous day.

Credit: Motani Collection, Ottawa.



Story accompanying next photo, below. See also full transcript below.



Monday, February 21, 1955, "The Egyptian Gazette": A report of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in the English daily, page 5.

The following is the transcript of the report published in "The Egyptian Gazette" (see corresponding image above):

Ismaili sect acclaims its leader

The Cleopatra Lounge of the Semiramis Hotel yesterday afternoon witnessed an impressive ceremony when the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismaili sect, was symbolically 'weighed' in the presence of a large number of his followers.

At 4 p.m. the Aga Khan, dressed in a dark grey suit and carrying a walking stick, entered the Lounge amidst the applause of the Ismaili representatives. He took his seat on a special rostrum, with the Begum on his right and his son, Prince Aly Khan, on his left.

The ceremony opened with the recital by Count Hassa Hassi [sic] Lakha of Uganda of the opening chapter of the Koran (Al Fatiha). The Aga Khan, after thanking those present for coming to Egypt to attend the ceremony, expressed his gratitude to the Government of Egypt for its hospitality and announced that he was donating L.E. 1,000 for the poor of Cairo. Speeches were made by two leading members of the Ismaili sect.



Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah being presented with an ivory gift set containing 48 platinum pieces which included the names of his 47 predecessors inscribed on them.

Ivory scales

The Aga Khan was then presented with ivory scales and 48 pieces of platinum with the names of his 47 predecessors inscribed on them. On top of the scales were three small platinum balls bearing the inscriptions “Silver Jubilee,” [sic] “Golden Jubilee”, and “Platinum Jubilee.”

Members of the Ismaili sect in turn kissed the Aga Khan’s hand and presented him with a platinum medal with his effigy on one side and the date of the ceremony on the other side.

On behalf of his father, Prince Aly Khan made a speech in which he described the projects that had been carried out with the help of the money collected during the past two weighing ceremonies.

5. In Cairo Platinum Jubilee Speech, Imam Alludes to a Balanced Life and Says, that by Necessity, the Consequence of Spiritual Enlightenment is Love, Tenderness and Gentleness Towards All

“On this unique occasion when you make this wonderful offering of platinum and its equivalent as an unconditional gift, I must immediately tell you that I give it to the Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust as further addition to its capital. You have referred to my seventy years Imamatus which, indeed, is unique in the history of the forty eight Ismaili Imams by its long duration, but also it began in another world, the world of horse carriages and candle lights, and today we are in the world of nuclear power, physics, jet air-travel and serious discussion amongst the most learned as to how and when we can visit the stars and the moon.



Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, the Begum and Prince Aly Khan at the Cairo Ceremony

“But, as I have explained in my Memoirs for the whole world to understand there are two worlds — the world of material intelligence and the world of spiritual enlightenment. The world of spiritual enlightenment is fundamentally different from the world of material intellectualism and it is the pride of the Ismailis that we firmly believe that the world of spiritual enlightenment has come as a truth from the inception of Islam to this day with the Imamate and carries with it as one of its necessary consequences love, tenderness, kindness and gentleness towards firsts our brother and sister Muslims of all sects and, secondly, to those who live in righteousness conscience and justice towards their fellow men. These religious principles of Ismailism are well known to you for you have heard them from me and through your fathers and grandfathers and from my father and grandfather until I fear that by long familiarity with these teachings some of you forget the necessity of re-examination of your heart and religious experience.

“But, as I started by telling you, there is also the world of matter and intellect which go side by side with reason and deductive and inductive powers. I have never, as you say in your own address, neglected to encourage schools and universities, and by welfare societies for the health of children, maternity, and more and more up to date needs that you may have, as far as it is possible in the areas in which you live, to get both mental and physical training that will make you capable of meeting the more and more difficult conditions of life and competition....”

6. In Message to Ismailis from Cairo, Imam is Categorical About Treating Every Muslim with Respect Despite Differences in Interpretation – No One Must Be Publicly Condemned or Abused

THE AGA KHAN'S MESSAGE TO THE ISMAILIS

Though Ismailis [sic] have been always staunch and firm believers in the truth of their own faith in the Imamat Holy Succession, they have never, like some other sects, gone to the other extreme of condemning brother Muslims who have other interpretations of the Divine Message of our Holy Prophet (S.A.S.).

Ismailis have always believed and have been taught in each generation by their Imams that they hold the rightful interpretation of the succession to the Holy Prophet, but that is no reason why other Muslims, who believe differently, should not be accepted as brothers in Islam and dear in person and prayed for and never publicly or privately condemned, leave alone abused.

I hope that in these days when the Muslims have to hold together in view of all the dangers, external and internal, from all quarters, I hope and believe and pray that Ismailis may show their true Islamic charity in thought and prayer for the benefit and happiness of all Muslims, men, women and children of all sects.

"The Spirit of Unity in Islam", Platinum Jubilee message to Ismailis, Cairo, 20 February, 1955.

7. The Platinum Jubilee Hospital, Nairobi



The Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Hospital was built with funds raised by the Ismaili community, together with a contribution from the Kenya Government, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the installation of His Highness Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah as the Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili community. Photo: Agakhanhospitals.org

The following is an excerpt from “*Nothing but the Truth*” by Yusuf Kodwawala Dawood

...As I started working in the [Platinum Jubilee Hospital] hospital and getting to know it better it also became obvious to me that it was ahead of its time. Strangely enough its origins were both archaic and radical. The money had come from members of the Ismaili community in East Africa who had weighed their late Imam in platinum to celebrate seventy years of his spiritual leadership. The community had previously used gold and diamonds to appropriately celebrate the length of time he had acted as sheppard of the flock. He had now been weighed in the most precious metal and the full official name of the hospital was therefore the Aga Khan Platinum Jubilee Hospital. The revolutionary part was the Aga Khan's decision on how best to utilize this philanthropic gesture on the part of his community. In his wisdom he decided to build a modern hospital in Nairobi which was open to all races.

Unfortunately he died before the hospital was built and it fell upon his chosen successor and grandson, Karim Aga Khan, to open the hospital in 1958. This was indeed a great step, because until then, hospitals in Nairobi and other big towns catered for the needs of one ethnic community only. Into this compartmentalized health care, the entry of the well built, well equipped and well staffed Aga Khan Hospital with its multi-racial concept was a progressive move....

Editor's Note: In this book the author provides some interesting details about being offered a position to work at the hospital while he was in the United Kingdom, and the soul searching he did before finally accepting the position. He found the current Imam very considerate in the concerns that he raised about moving to Kenya given the situation he was facing at the time. Dr. Dawood further gives an interesting picture of the hospital in its early days, the challenges it faced and how the hospital came to gain credibility over a period of time. An interesting account is also given of a very sick lady whom the Imam visited at Dr. Dawood's request, just before she passed away.

Note: The Hospital is now part of the Aga Khan Development Network and is known as the Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi.

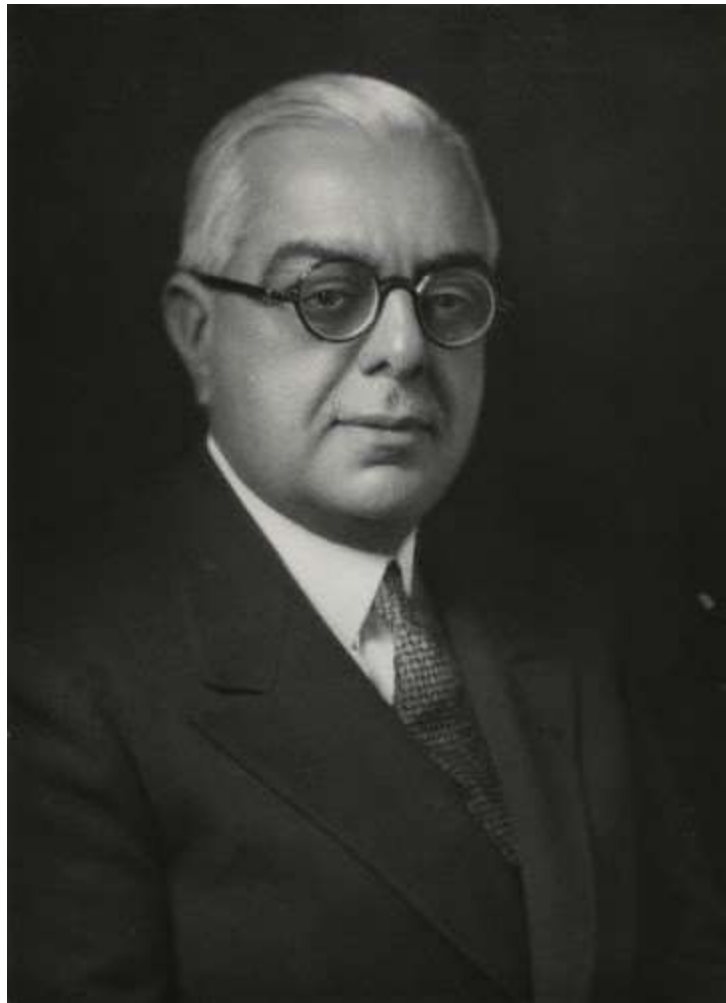
8. The Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in India



February 2, 1957: Prince Aly Khan displays the Platinum Plaque which he received on behalf of his father, Aga Khan III, on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Bombay

Because of the Imam's ill-health, the Platinum Jubilee ceremonies in India were officiated by Prince Aly Khan, and these were again restricted to token presentations. The Bombay ceremony was held on February 2, 1957 followed by ceremonies at eleven other centers from February 20 to 26.

18: Long Reign Ends



Portrait of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam whose reign of 72 years was the longest in Ismaili history. © Photo: The National Portrait Gallery

In the early afternoon of 11 July, 1957, after an Imamate spanning seventy-two years, the 48th Imam, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, passed away in Geneva.

In a leading article published the following day, *The Times of London* offered condolences “to the millions distributed over the length and breadth of the Islamic world”, recognizing the Imam as “a great force working for understanding and harmony between east and west”; the obituary in *The Times* was titled: *The Aga Khan: A Citizen of the World*. On July 12, 1957, the will of the 48th Imam was read at *Villa Barakat* in Geneva with the whole family present. In his will, the Imam stated:

“I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my son, Aly Salomone Khan, to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers.”



His Highness the Aga Khan IV, Shah Karim al Hussaini, becomes 49th Imam and Pir of Shia Imami Ismailis according to the will of his grandfather. He is pictured above at the Memorial ceremony held for the late Imam at the Woking Mosque outside London. Photo: Reg Speller/Fox Photos/Getty Images, copyright.

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's Burial in Aswan

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah had expressed a wish to be buried in Aswan in Egypt. The Imam had a special place for Egypt ever since his first visit to the country in 1935. In his *Memoirs*, the Imam writes:

"On my way home to India I visited Egypt for the first time. Those who have not experienced it, who have not been lucky enough to fall under Egypt's spell, will find it difficult, I suppose, to realize the sheer magic of the first sight of Egypt. And that my first sight was on a perfect early winter day, and need I say that all

my life since then I have had a special corner in my heart for Egypt, and that I have returned there as often as I could."



The Aga Khan III mausoleum in Aswan by the Nile. In the foreground is the villa, Noor al Salaam.

© Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa

In an interview with the *Al-Ahram Weekly* (23-29 April, 1992), Mata Salamat, the Begum Om Habibah explained the choice of Aswan:

“...We had been coming here since 1935, when the place was not a touristic location at all but a health retreat and resort. We used to come for one or two months and stay at the Cataract Hotel and have lovely promenades on the Nile. We did not come to be cured of asthma or such things; it was just to enjoy the good weather and good air of Aswan.”

“During these visits to the hotel, one day my husband said: *‘I would like to be buried in Aswan.’*”

“He used to say *‘Egypt is the flag of Islam.’* And he wanted to be buried here. Then we looked around and one day while on the Nile in a felucca with the Director, who said: *‘But why do you insist on finding somewhere to be buried? You see that house?’* It was absolutely closed and neglected. *‘It is on sale. Why*

don't you buy it and enjoy yourself here?' My husband replied: 'But I agree. Provided I have the permission to build a mausoleum behind.' And we bought it."

The villa was named *Noor al Salaam*.

"He put the house entirely in my hands saying: *'You will choose the mausoleum. The style and everything else – do as you like. I want to be buried here.'*"

The Begum Describes the Task of Building the Mausoleum

"Now building the mausoleum was a great task for me. I was not sure of which style. But my husband had told me to see one of his friends at the American University, a British professor specializing in Islamic architecture. He took me all over Cairo and finally I made my choice, but if you see what I chose to copy, what inspired me, you may not see a resemblance."

"It is the al-Juyushi mosque. It is Fatimid and that is why I chose it; the piece that inspired me the most was the *mihrab*."

"And something that maybe nobody knows is that this monument was made entirely by hand. Most of the marble is carved from one piece. It is the only thing, coming from abroad Carara marble, a very special and rare pure kind of Carara. The remainder, granite and sandstone from Aswan."

First Burial Ceremony at Aswan in July 1957



July 19, 1957: The newly appointed Imam, Shah Karim al Hussaini, along with members of his family upon arrival at Aswan airport

On July 19, 1957, the Imam was laid to rest in a temporary place created in the grounds of the villa. A special service was held at a mosque in Aswan attended by Prince Aly Khan, Prince Sadruddin, Prince Amyn and the newly-appointed Imam, Shah Karim.



July 19, 1957: Prince Sadruddin, in a white skullcap, Prince Amyn and the newly-appointed Imam, Shah Karim, at a special service held at a mosque in Aswan. Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection



July 19, 1957: The coffin of the 48th Ismaili Imam being brought into a section of the villa, Noor al Salaam, for temporary burial.



July 19, 1957: His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th Ismaili Imam, seen holding the coffin of his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah who passed away on July 11, 1957. Photo: Jehangir Merchant Collection.



July 19, 1957: Left to right, Prince Sadruddin, Prince Amyn, Prince Karim, the new Imam, and Prince Aly Khan watch as the coffin is lowered at the temporary burial site in the villa, Noor al Salaam.

The following month, on 21 August, a special service was held at Woking Mosque, England, at which the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Scarborough, represented Her Majesty the Queen's government.



August 21, 1957: Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Scarborough, and the new Ismaili Imam, Prince Karim, at the memorial ceremony for the late Ismaili Imam, held at the Woking mosque outside London. Photo credit: Woking Mosque

In a letter sent by her Private Secretary, Her Majesty the Queen expressed the following sentiments:

“His Highness will be remembered by all for the wise guidance and selfless leadership which he has freely given during his many happy and eventful years. His energetic and devoted work for the League of Nations in a life dedicated to the service of his followers and to the welfare of mankind will long be remembered. In the arduous responsibility which you will be called on to bear as leader of your people, Her Majesty extends to you her sincere greetings and prayers that you may long fulfill your role as counselor to the Ismaili community who owe you their allegiance.”

The Final Burial Ceremony at Aswan in the Mausoleum in February 1959

On 19 February 1959, the 48th Imam was finally laid to rest in the mausoleum which had taken over 18 months to construct. A special tent was raised on the outskirts of Aswan and more than 2,500 people, including Ismailis from all parts of the world, attended the ceremony.



February 1959: Passengers at Luxor train station on a train bound for Aswan for the funeral of Aga Khan III. © Photo:

Motani Collection, Ottawa



February 1959: Over 2,500 Ismaili mourners from all over the world gathered in a tent city on the outskirts of Aswan.

© Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa



February 1959: The 49th Ismaili Imam in the tent city where he is seen with mourners who came to Aswan for the final funeral ceremonies of the 48th Ismaili Imam. © Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa



February 1959: The villa, Noor al Salaam, where the body of the 48th Imam lay temporarily buried before it was moved to its final resting place in the mausoleum. © Photo: Motani Collection, Ottawa



February 1959: The Aga Khan's body being carried from the villa to its final resting place. © Motani Collection, Ottawa

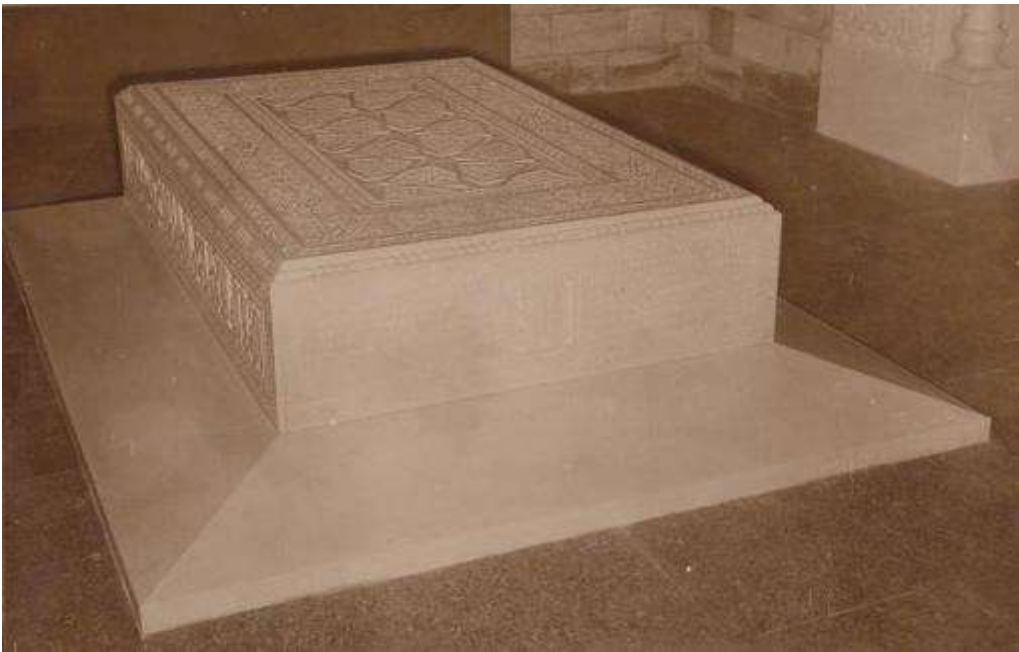


February 1959: The newly-appointed Imam, Shah Karim, left, his uncle Prince Sadruddin, right, and Prince Aryn at the back, carrying the shrouded body of the late Ismaili Imam from its temporary resting place to the mausoleum. Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection



February 1959: Mourners watch as the body of the late Ismaili Imam, Aga Khan III, is carried into the mausoleum.

Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection



The marble sarcophagus of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, 48th Imam of the Shia Imami Ismailis, under the granite dome of his mausoleum in Aswan. Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection.

LAST RESTING PLACE OF AGA KHAN III

ASWAN, Feb. 20.—The remains of the Aga Khan III, who died in Switzerland in 1957, were laid to rest in a new mausoleum beside the Nile here to-day. The body, in a silk and gold lace draped litter, was carried to the mausoleum by his grandson, the new Aga Khan, and other leading personages of the Ismaili sect of Muslims. More than 2,000 Ismailis, clad in white, chanted and burned incense, and many wept as their former leader was taken to his last resting place.—*Reuter*.

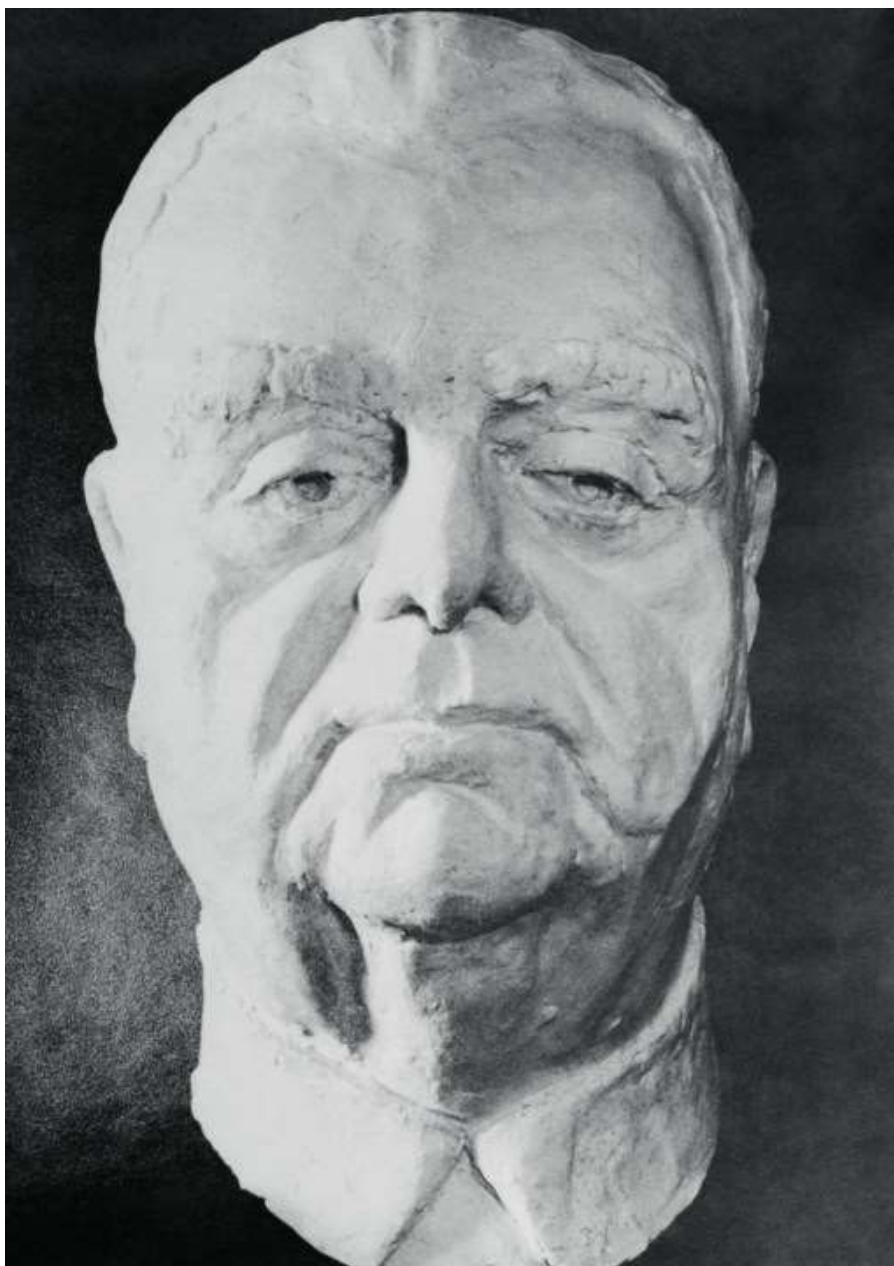


February 1959: Prince Sadruddin and Prince Ayn walking behind Prince Karim Aga Khan, successor to Aga Khan III



February 1959: The 49th Imam, Shah Karim, Aga Khan IV, is followed by his uncle, Prince Sadruddin (on left), and Prince Ayn (on right) at Aswan. Photo: Jehangir Merchant collection

19: The Face of Imamat



The thoughtful study of the late Aga Khan, 48th Imam of Shia Imami Ismailis, shown above was done in clay by his wife, the Begum Aga Khan, Om Habiba. Image by © Bettmann/CORBIS

THE FACE OF IMAMAT

"Ismailis have always believed and have been taught in each generation by their Imams that they hold the rightful interpretation of the succession to the Holy Prophet, but that is no reason why other Muslims, who believe differently, should not be accepted as brothers in Islam and dear in person and prayed for and never publicly or privately condemned, leave alone abused.

"I hope that in these days when the Muslims have to hold together in view of all the dangers, external and internal, from all quarters, I hope and believe and pray that Ismailis may show their true Islamic charity in thought and prayers for the benefit and happiness of all Muslims, men, women and children of all sects."

Quote of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, 48th Imam of Shia Ismailis

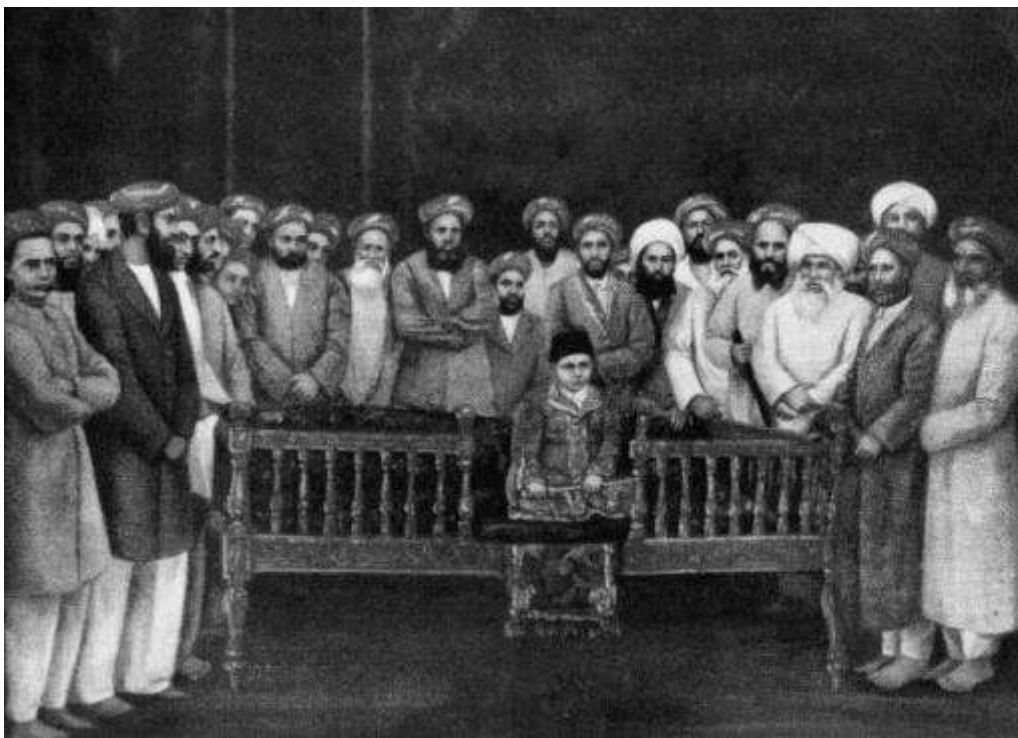
In his Platinum Jubilee message, shown in the above quote, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, had exhorted his Ismaili followers to *"show their true Islamic charity in thought and prayers for the benefit and happiness of all Muslims."* The beloved 48th Imam passed away two years later on July 11, 1957, after a reign of seventy two years, but not before giving his followers these and other thoughtful words to live by.

That the late Aga Khan was *"a great force working for understanding and harmony between east and west"*, as noted by *The Times* of London, is shown by the following messages of universal appeal that he conveyed:

"All men, rich and poor, must aid one another materially and personally. This fraternity is absolute, and it comprises men of all colours and all races: black, white, yellow, tawny; all are the sons of Adam in the flesh and all carry in them spark of the Divine Light. Everyone should strive his best to see that this spark be not extinguished but rather developed to that full Companionship- on-High."

To the Ismailis, in addition to the above Platinum Jubilee message, he made the following passionate plea:

"It is my hope that my spiritual children, the Ismailis, will, by example of their own higher enlightenment and co-operative movement amongst themselves set to the world an example of better fraternity and brotherhood which alone can free men from the fear and dangers of moral and mental discord which leads to disaster for all."



September 1885: The 7-year-old Aga Khan III at his enthronement ceremony as 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Ismaili Muslims in Bombay. He is surrounded by community elders and seated on the oblong wooden throne.

Photo: Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images, Copyright

The Aga Khan's death was mourned by people of all communities around the world. For his followers the loss of their long reigning Imam became an occasion to reflect about their traditional and historical understanding and belief about the Institution that he had led – the Imamate. During this mourning and trying period the famous tradition (*Hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad:

"I am leaving behind me two things: the Book and my Progeny. If you hold fast to them, you will never go astray,"

and the Qur'anic verses (3:33-34):

"Verily, God did choose Adam and Noah, the progeny of Abraham, and the progeny of Imran above all the worlds, descendants, one from the other: And God heareth and knoweth all things."

became comforting factors as Ismailis globally awaited the announcement of who had been designated to continue the hereditary Imamate.

The will of their beloved Imam was then read in front of the Imam's family at *Villa Barakat* proclaiming the successor. It said:

Ever since the time of my first ancestor Ali, the first Imam, that is to say over a period of thirteen hundred years it has always been the tradition of our family that each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants whether they be sons or remoter male issue.

In view of the fundamentally altered conditions in the world in very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place including the discoveries of atomic science I am convinced that it is in the best interests of the Shia Moslem Ismailian Community that I should be succeeded by a young man who has been brought up and developed during recent years and in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam.

I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my son Aly Salomone Khan to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers.



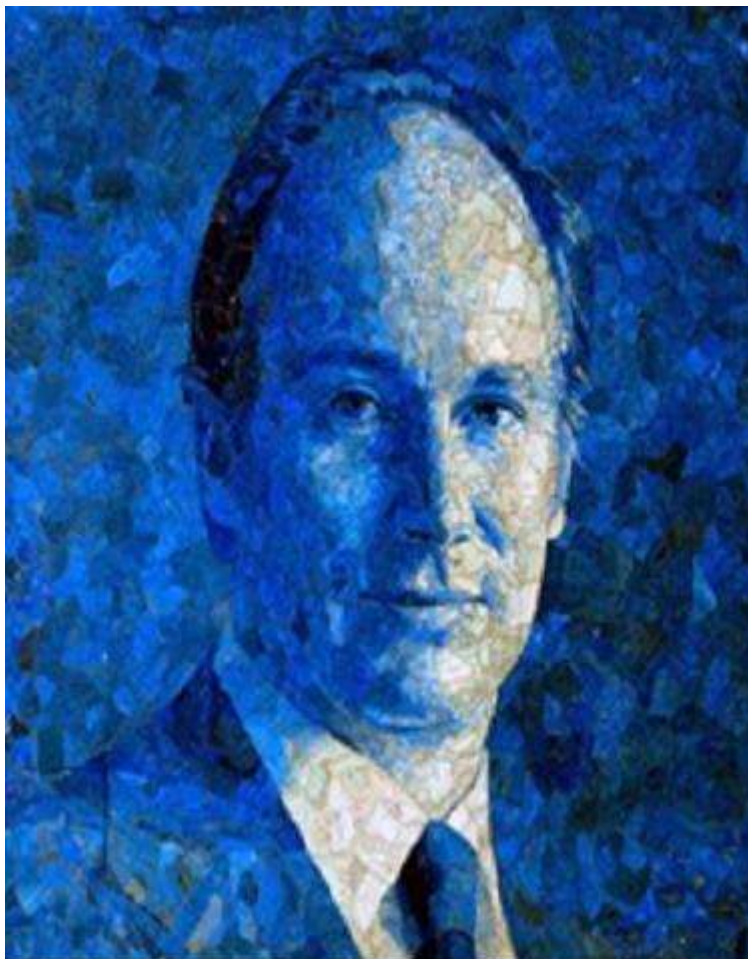
July 12, 1957: The newly enthroned 49th Imam, Shah Karim al-Hussaini, surrounded by Ismaili leaders and their spouses at Villa Barakat.

Through the special designation (or the Nass) of the late Imam, Shah Karim al-Hussaini became the 49th hereditary Imam of the Nizari Ismailis at the age of twenty.

Shortly after, the newly enthroned Imam met Ismaili leaders and representatives from around the world, and also made the following statement:

My grandfather dedicated his life to the Imamate and Islam, both of which came first, and above all other considerations. While I was prepared that one day I might be designated the Aga Khan I did not expect it

so soon. I follow a great man in a great responsibility and he could have given me no more appreciated honour than to bequeath me this spiritual leadership. My life, as his, will be dedicated to the service of my followers.



THE FACE OF IMAMAT

"Islam is a total religion touching on all aspects of a Muslim's life. It urges the individual to live a balanced life, one that strives to accommodate both material progress and spiritual well-being. Therefore the Imam, whilst caring for the spiritual well-being of his people, should also be continuously concerned with their safety and material progress. He is involved in the encouragement of enterprise, though in the spirit of Islam, he must warn that it is unacceptable without a social conscience."

Quote of His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th Imam of Shia Imami Ismailis

Shown above is a mosaic portrait in lapis-lazuli of His Highness the Aga Khan, made by the late Pakistani Ismaili artist,

Gulgee. Photo Source: Ismailimail.wordpress.com

20: Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah – An Astonishing and Extraordinary Personality



This thoughtful study of the late Aga Khan, 48th Imam of Shia Imami Ismailis, was done in clay by his wife, the Begum Aga Khan, Om Habiba. Image by © Bettmann/CORBIS

Editor's note: The following piece is an adaptation from Bashir Ladha's excellent tribute to the 48th Ismaili Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan III, which appeared in *Ilm*, Volume 3, Number 2 (November 1977, Special Centenary issue). Many of the themes in Mr. Ladha's original article, such as the Imam's Jubilees and his contributions to different causes and issues, were adequately covered in a special series on **H.H.The Aga Khan III** published on this Web site during November and December 2009. This adaptation includes some material that was not presented on this Web site earlier. Some repetition, though, is unavoidable.

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION

His Highness the Aga Khan III, Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, was born on Friday, 2nd November, 1877 at "Honeymoon Lodge" in Karachi. His birth was an occasion of immense joy for the family and particularly his grandfather, Hazrat Imam Hassanali Shah, Aga Khan I, who named him "Sultan Mahomed."

The young Aga Khan did not attend any public school, but his early education at home was intense. The scope of the curriculum set by his tutors and his far-seeing mother, Lady Ali Shah, covered Urdu, Persian, Arabic, English, French, Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry and Mechanics. He showed remarkable aptitude for learning. His natural intellect and interest also helped him to make remarkable progress in

Western literature as well as in the study of the history of the ancient and modern worlds. He also acquired proficiency in philosophy and theology.

Recalling his course of studies, the Aga Khan wrote:

“I had already been grounded in Arabic and Persian literature and history, and first inspired thereto in childhood, to this day I take a special interest in historical studies connected with the early Caliphs. Under my English tutors, I gained an attachment, which also remains with me, to the writings of the more stirring and eloquent of the English historians and of the foremost novelists—particularly Gibbon, Thackeray and Dickens.”

YOUNG IMAM EXHIBITS ABLE LEADERSHIP AND WISDOM



September 1, 1885: The 7-year-old Aga Khan III at his enthronement ceremony as 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Ismaili Muslims in Bombay. He is surrounded by community elders. Photo: Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images, Copyright

When Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah succeeded his father Imam Aly Shah as the 48th Imam of Ismaili Muslims on 17th August, 1885, he was only in his eighth year but even at this tender age he administered the affairs of his followers with a maturity of wisdom which was very surprising.

Long before he had reached the age of fifteen, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah proved himself an able administrator of the affairs of his vast following. He visited the Jamats and resolved disputes with a legal acumen seldom found in those who are not lawyers. The Aga Khan worked incessantly for the benefit of his followers and not being content to lead the Ismailis in religious matters, he strove hard for their moral and material welfare with the result that, in the course of only a few decades, the Ismailis earned a reputation of being a progressive and forward looking community.

A WELL INFORMED PERSONALITY



Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, photographed in 1911, Copyright: National Portrait Gallery

Though his range of reading was wide, Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's impressions of men and things were practical and not theoretical. His judgments were based not upon what he had read but upon what he had seen and heard. Lloyd George (Prime Minister of Great Britain during early 1920s) said of him:

“He is one of the best informed men I have ever met. His general information is astonishing. He is extraordinarily well read and possesses an intimate knowledge of international affairs in all parts of the world. He is widely travelled and is always moving round the capitals of Europe, in all of which he has influential intimates. His means of securing information were remarkable. He seemed to have touched upon all branches of literature and to be well versed in science. Altogether a very extraordinary person.”

A TRUE LEADER OF ISLAM; ALAS MUSLIMS DID NOT TAKE ADEQUATE HEED



Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, 48th Imam of Shia Imami Ismailis, in full regalia. Photo: Jehangir Merchant archives

Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah never tolerated anything that was detrimental to Islam and therefore he would not hesitate in the least to make his views known publicly. Islam was always foremost in his heart and he would always appeal to the Muslims in a beseeching and affectionate manner:

“My fellow-Muslims, I implore you, I beg of you, to work for the advancement of the whole of Islam, but never forget our intellectual debt to our Holy Prophet.”

Generally, very little heed was paid by the Muslims to Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's guidance and therefore, lamenting over this attitude, Qayyum A. Malick wrote in his book *Guide, Philosopher and Friend of the World of Islam*:

“Had world Muslims kept pace with the progressive views of Prince Aga Khan and had they showed some encouraging consciousness and appreciation of his leadership, the seeds of moral and material uplift sown by him almost half a century ago would have been bearing abundant fruit today. If the Muslims had thrown up a small body of trustworthy men, capable of working in unison according to a set program of general advancement under the leadership of His Royal Highness there should have been no occasion to bemoan our backwardness now.”

GHANDI'S CHOICE WORDS

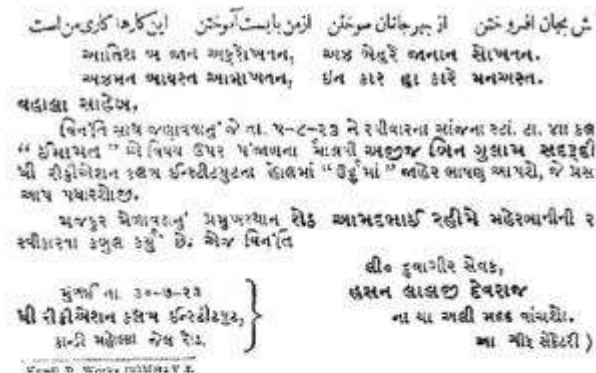
For the Ismailis, Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah's period of Imamate was an era which ushered in a complete transformation. A community hitherto unknown in any field, progressed rapidly to unimagined heights within a matter of a few decades. What happened to Ismaili Community during his Imamate is nothing less than a miracle.

In his role as the 48th Imam, Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, set about to advance and consolidate the position of Ismailis at all levels. Under his guidance, a great spirit of social service, philanthropy and love for one another became a notable feature of the community. This attitude of mutual help among themselves and the smooth working of the welfare state created by Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah won unmistakable admiration of the leaders of other communities. Mahatma Gandhi once observed to Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah:

“I have been striving for so many years for the attainment of Swaraj (independence), but you have already brought the blessings of Swaraj to your people.”

While the Imam created numerous institutions to advance and consolidate education, health and general state of happiness and well being among his follower, he upheld a high mark of abiding values. True to the traditional and historically acknowledged trait of his Holy House, he put the spiritual goal as the prime and foremost essential of human life.

RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE TO HIS FOLLOWERS COVERED IMAMAT, PRAYERS, UNITY AND
ATTRIBUTES OF A TRUE MU'MIN



Translation

**How to kindle a fire in the soul
and burn oneself for one's beloved
should be learnt from me
as this is one of my responsibilities**

The top portion of the image is a unique 1923 Gujarati invitation to a talk on Imamats. It includes a Persian quatrain on the top line. The quatrain had been handwritten by Aga Khan III in a personal diary belonging to Vazir Mecklai. The English translation of the quatrain, not part of the invitation, is produced beneath. Photo credit: A.M. Sadaruddin family collection of 'Africa Ismaili'.

His advices on religious matters to his followers were extensive and elaborate. The late Aga Khan touched on many themes during his seventy two years of Imamats including theology, spirituality, Imamats and ethics. Some of his messages to the Ismailis were:

“Qur'an was basic. Pir Sadardin [an Ismaili missionary] had come to their ancestors to lead them to the true faith. It was essential to have strong faith in the descendants of Prophet Muhammad and Hazrat Ali. If the faithful had love for the descendants of Ali, they had nothing to fear, and therein lay the whole mystery of faith. True faith was founded upon love and reason.

“The faithful should come and pray in the Jamatkhanas. Prayers must be said with understanding. Pray for others as this brings one nearer to God. By prayer one rises to a higher plane. If the faithful was far from Jamatkhanas he should say his prayers wherever he was. Even if the body was unclean, prayers could not be missed. The soul was pure. Unity in the Jamat was important. All his murids were spiritual children of their Imam, who was their spiritual father and mother.

“Harm done to another would cause immense pain to the Imam. Help each other. Serve the jamats. Service to jamats was service to their Imam. True mu'min (believer) was always happy and satisfied. True mu'min rejoiced at difficulties, for such sorrows and difficulties wiped away sins. True mu'min never feared death.”

And finally, “that a true mu'min would always thirst for Imam's Noorani Didar. True mu'min, after death, would earn salvation in Noor-e-Imamat.”

PASSING AWAY AND SUCCESSION

Forty minutes past midday on 11th July, 1957 Hazrat Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, His Highness the Aga Khan III, passed away peacefully at his villa in Versoix, Switzerland, at the age of eighty leaving behind him a memorable history of his glorious and eventful life. His reign of seventy-two years of Imamatus was the longest in Ismaili history.

The mantle of Imamatus was transferred by *Nass* in the loving care of Mawlana Shah Karim al-Hussaini Hazar Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan IV, by the following will:

“Ever since the time of my first ancestor Ali, the First Imam, that is to say over a period of thirteen hundred years it has always been the tradition of our family that each Imam chooses his successor at his absolute and unfettered discretion from amongst any of his descendants whether they be sons or remoter male issue.

“... I appoint my grandson Karim, the son of my son Aly Salomone Khan to succeed to the title of Aga Khan and to be the Imam and Pir of all my Shia Ismailian followers. “

The passing away of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah was a cause of great sorrow and sadness for Ismailis all over the world, but the loving care and guidance of Noor-e-Ilahi continues in Noor Mawlana Shah Karim al-Hussaini, our beloved 49th Imam, who is now in his 54th year of Imamatus.

© *Simerg.com*

21: Photos of the Mausoleum of His Highness the Aga Khan III in Aswan



By Sarite Sanders

Articles compiled by: Simerg.com

The late Aga Khan had expressed a wish to be buried in Aswan in Egypt. The Imam had a special place for Egypt ever since his first visit to the country in 1935. In his *Memoirs*, the Imam writes:

“On my way home to India I visited Egypt for the first time. Those who have not experienced it, who have not been lucky enough to fall under Egypt’s spell, will find it difficult, I suppose, to realize the sheer magic of the first sight of Egypt. And that my first sight was on a perfect early winter day, and need I say that all my life since then I have had a special corner in my heart for Egypt, and that I have returned there as often as I could.”

In an interview with the *Al-Ahram Weekly* (23-29 April, 1992), Mata Salamat, the Begum Om Habibah explained the choice of Aswan:

“...We had been coming here since 1935, when the place was not a touristic location at all but a health retreat and resort. We used to come for one or two months and stay at the Cataract Hotel and have lovely promenades on the Nile. We did not come to be cured of asthma or such things, it was just to enjoy the good weather and good air of Aswan.

“During these visits to the hotel, one day my husband said: ‘I would like to be buried in Aswan’.”

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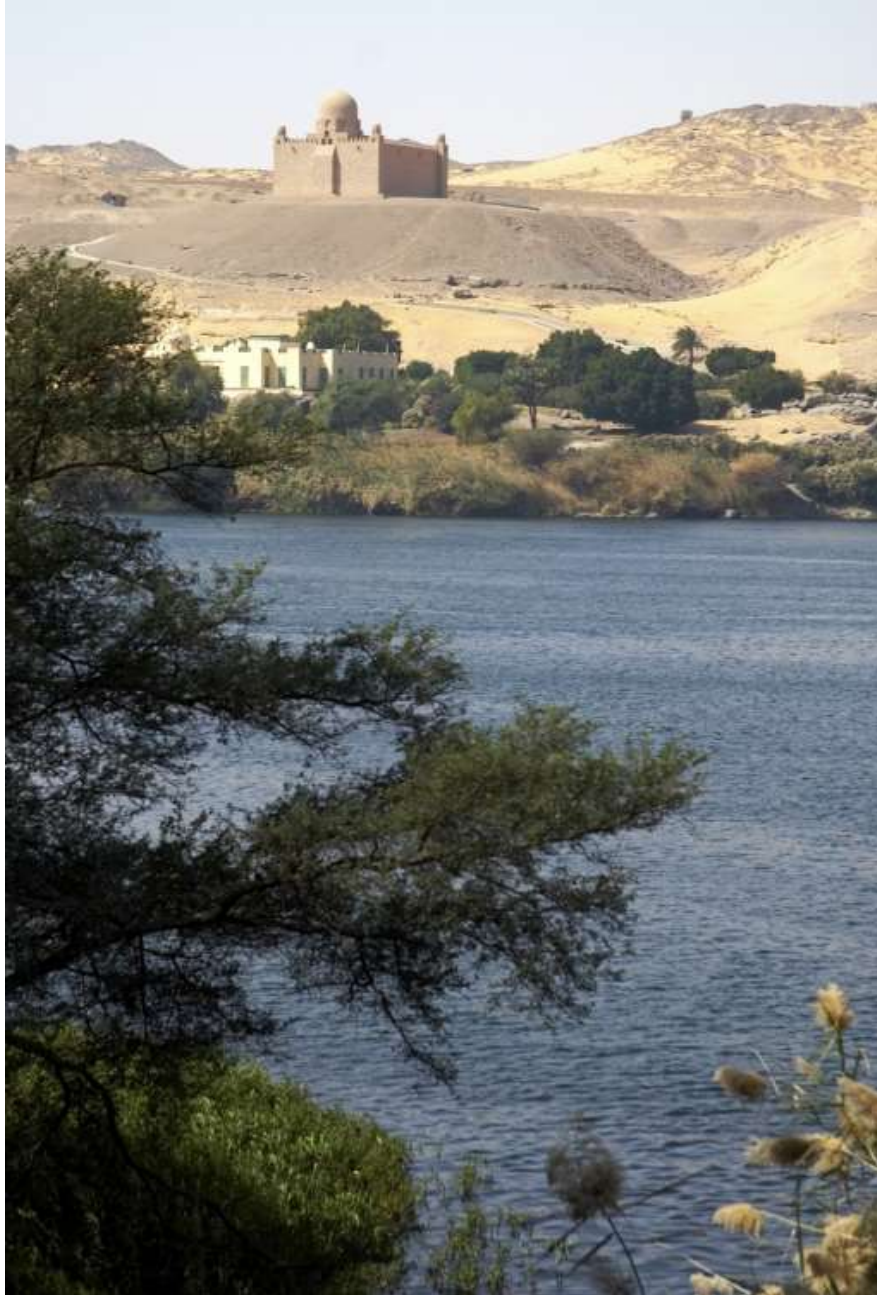
High up on the west bank of the Nile in Aswan stands the tomb of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan III, the 48th Imam of the Ismailis, who died in 1957, and of his wife the Begum, who died in 2000. The Mausoleum is a very elegant pink granite structure of late 1950 origin. The Aga Khan succeeded his father in 1885 when he was eight to become the 48th Imam. Upon his death on 11 July, 1957, he was succeeded to the Imamat by his grandson, Prince Karim Aga Khan, who celebrated his golden jubilee in July 2007. Photo: © Sarite Sanders

“He used to say ‘Egypt is the flag of Islam’. And he wanted to be buried here. Then we looked around and one day while on the Nile in a felucca with the Director, who said: ‘But why do you insist on finding somewhere to be buried? You see that house’? It was absolutely closed and neglected. ‘It is on sale. Why don’t you buy it and enjoy yourself here’? My husband replied: ‘But I agree. Provided I have the permission to build a mausoleum behind’. And we bought it.”

The villa was named *Noor al Salaam*.

“He put the house entirely in my hands saying: ‘You will choose the mausoleum. The style and everything else – do as you like. I want to be buried here’.”

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Aswan was the favourite wintering place of the Aga Khan and the Begum , and the family's white villa, Noor al Salaam, is seen in the garden beneath the tomb. This magnificent mausoleum of Aga Khan III was modelled on the Fatimid tombs in Egypt. Photo: © Sarite Sanders

“Now building the mausoleum was a great task for me. I was not sure of which style. But my husband had told me to see one of his friends at the American University, a British professor specializing in Islamic architecture. He took me all over Cairo and finally I made my choice, but if you see what I chose to copy, what inspired me, you may not see a resemblance.

“It is the al-Juyushi mosque. It is Fatimid and that is why I chose it; the piece that inspired me the most was the *mihrab*.”

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The mausoleum has an excellent view, including the Aga Khan's white villa below, and is near the Monastery of St. Simeons on the west bank at Aswan. His Begum, or wife, lived in the villa three months of the year. Every day that his widow was at the Villa, she placed a Red Rose on his white Carrara marble tomb. Omme Habibah, popularly referred to as "The Begum" or Mata Salamat by the Ismailis died on July 1st, 2000. The other months, a gardener filled this function. Photo: © Sarite Sanders

“And something that maybe nobody knows is that this monument was made entirely by hand. Most of the marble is carved from one piece. It is the only thing, coming from abroad Carrara marble, a very special and rare pure kind of Carrara. The remainder, granite and sandstone from Aswan.”

Photo Credits:

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22: Yakimour 1954: A Golden Moment for an Aspiring Student – An Audience with the 48th Ismaili Imam

By Ali Mohammad Rajput

Special to Simerg

“My child, you are going to UK, very different to your country of origin, always remember my words of advice and never forget as it is for your own good. Pick up their good principles and make them your own, and leave their vices and bad habits to them alone.”



Dr. Rajput at Yakimour, with Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah and Mata Salamat

I would like to share with my readers the personal feelings I have towards my Imam. Having been blessed with several opportunities to have audience with my 48th as well the present Imam, I have unforgettable memories in mind which have guided me through out my life. Here I describe an hour and twenty minute meeting; a murid in the presence of his Imam.

It would be useful to familiarize my readers with this writer: I belong to the Punjab Ismailia Jamat which was converted to Islam personally by the Imam himself. My father, Rai missionary Inayat Ali was amongst the first of 12 pioneers in this conversion. I have described this historical incident in my contribution on this Web site's series, *I Wish I'd Been There*, and I invite you to read **A Unique Moment in the Life of the Punjab Jamat**.

On pages 4 and 5 of his *Memoirs*, Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah makes a reference to the conversion as follows:

“As I look back, there is one memory, one piece of self-knowledge, which gives me the utmost satisfaction. I had myself, personal responsibility for the conversion to Islam of some 30,000 to 40,000 Hindus, many of them of the upper, professional classes. They had been a people without faith who now were introduced to this faith. Neither my father nor my grand father had been asked to attempt a religious task of this magnitude. Its fulfillment has had one important and interesting effect: had the great majority of these

converts remained Hindu, they would in all probability have suffered the mass displacement and destabilization that accompanied the Partition of Pakistan in 1947.”

I am happy to share, that through opportunities, both public and private, to meet the Imam of the age, I have felt him to play the role of a parent or grand parent, always giving right and sound advice to his spiritual children: he sometimes remembers your name and minute details of your problems for which he offers you sound counsel to solve them. He takes interest in all the problems both material and spiritual of his murids.

I stood up and lo! she brought the Imam in a wheelchair; I fell at his feet in prostration and then she left us alone and I heard a voice, “Stand up, bring that chair and sit beside me.”

The Imam visited Punjab Jamat at Lahore in 1948. During this visit, he was told that I, Ali Mohammad son of missionary Inayat Ali, age 22years, had achieved an MA Degree at highest levels at Punjab University. He then summoned me into his presence and ordered Aitimadi Hussain Ali Javeri, his private secretary, to allow me to proceed to UK for a doctoral education at the expense of the Imam. It took 6 years of correspondence with his secretaries to attempt securing this scholarship without result. Ultimately, during the Platinum Jubilee in 1954 in Karachi, the Imam recognized me in the crowd, welcomed me into his personal audience and furnished me the funds for my doctoral program to UK.

The first leg of my journey was by boat from Karachi to Egypt and the latter, was by train from the Italian port of Genoa to Liverpool in UK, in September, 1954. The train route took me along the French Riviera. When we arrived in Cannes, I remembered that this was where the Imam resided. Could I be blessed by his holy Deedar? I departed the train and telephoned Yakimour with my request. I suppose that a secretary was on the other side of the line; I was told this request was impossible as His Highness was in bed with temperature. I insisted, and he agreed for me to talk with Her Highness, the Begum. I felt very happy to hear the voice of Mata Salamat; her initial response was that a meeting would not be possible. But she said she would see His Highness in his room and convey to me on the phone, whatever firman was given for me. I was thrilled with the outcome and waited for a couple of minutes, and I heard the voice of Mata Salamat saying, “How fortunate you are, as His Highness has asked you to come straight away to Yakimour for a holy audience.”

The Audience:

Yak zamane suhbate ba auliya, Bihtar az sad sala ta'at bi riya – Rumi

A short time in the company of a 'Friend of Allah' is several time more fruitful than a thousand years of sincere devotional prayers to God

With a bouquet of flowers as token of a symbol of my utmost humble love and devotion, I hopped into a taxi. The next I remember, I was at the front door of *Yakimour* and Mata Salamat herself was opening the door. She took me into the lounge and said, "You may have to wait here in this lounge for a while before the Prince will see you. I will come back when he is ready."

After half an hour, she returned, "I will bring him in a couple of minutes, be ready." I stood up and lo! she brought the Imam in a wheelchair; I fell at his feet in prostration and then she left us alone and I heard a voice, "Stand up, bring that chair and sit beside me."

I stood up; the lounge lit up with the Noor of Imam. I did as asked and sat beside the Imam of the Age, lost in deep thought.

To calm me, the Imam gently asked, "How was your journey from Karachi to Yakimour?"

"Khudawand, it was very good, being my first trip to Europe; it has been very exciting for me."

"How are my Jamats in Punjab and Frontier?"

I replied, "Khudawand, they are doing well, although our Jamats are far behind in material strength including in education and need Mawla's material assistance as well as Imam's blessings."

"How is the political situation in Pakistan these days?"

"Khudawand, I am not a politician, but the country was quite normal when I left."

"I give dozens of scholarships for higher education to Pakistan Government. Why do our Ismaili students not take advantage of it?"

"Khudawand, there is no fair play in Pakistan, only those students who have some approach to the Government authorities receive the benefit", I replied.

He then said:

“My child, you are going to UK, very different to your country of origin, always remember my words of advice and never forget as it is for your own good. Pick up their good principles and make them your own, and leave their vices and bad habits to them alone. The good habits, you should adopt are their truthfulness, punctuality, sense of duty and the bad habits you must reject are, drinking, smoking, gambling and other vices. Your foremost duty is to attend to your educational activities and never forget your religious obligation.”

I responded, “Khudawand, Hazar Imam is very kind.”

There was *raz-o-niaz* between the Imam and his humble murid for some time. I looked at my watch and realized that I was in that exalted company for nearly one full hour. His humble servant who could not secure 5 minutes of Mawla’s time a little while ago, had exceeded his limits. I felt guilty of overstaying and with this thought in mind, I stood up from my seat to take my leave.

“Would you not like to have a photograph with your Imam before you leave?” he asked.

I was struck with awe, and humbly replied, “Khudawand, I dare not ask your Highness, but I would very much like to have such a remembrance for the rest of my life if Mawla pleases.”

“Call my chauffeur who is waiting outside.”

I went outside and called the chauffeur and Hazar Imam instructed him to fetch the camera and asked the Begum to come for a photo session. Hazar Imam said to me, “I will post the picture to you at your London address.” The photo reached me within a week.

Mata Salamat then wheeled the Imam to his room.

The audience of Mawlana Hazar Imam indeed changed my whole life. I was in the presence of Hazar Imam all alone and I saw my Mawla in full glory as *Hujjat-i-Khudawindi* on this earth. Although his station had been an exalted one, he never for a moment let me feel nervous: in His Person I felt engulfed within a palpable aura of Noor. He let me feel as if I was in the company of my loving grand- father, full of love and affection and naught else, the words of wisdom engraved on my heart and always a light in the *Tariqa*, the *Sirat al-Mustaqeem*.

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23: A Unique Moment in the Life of the Punjab Jamat

by Ali Mohammad Rajput

I want to be taken back in time when my late father, missionary Inayat Ali, played a crucial role in the early conversion of the Punjab Ismaili jamat, in the second decade of the last century. This was when our forefathers left the *gupti dharma* (practicing the faith with restraint and in concealment), and recognized Imam Sultan Mohammad Shah, Aga Khan III, as their 48th Imam.

My father described to me in vivid terms how the Imam of the time had invited the leaders of the Punjab and North West Province Frontier (NWFP) *gupti* jamats to an audience with him at the Imam's private residence in Mumbai. There were only a dozen or so of the *murids* who had been selected to go for this trip on behalf of the Jamat. My father was one of them. The time for the *Mulaqat* was set for midnight, and in total secrecy. The leaders were asked to wait in the garden of the campus in total darkness, and were separated and scattered in such a way that two delegates were not allowed to sit together. Complete silence was observed.

At the midnight hour, when the clock struck twelve, the delegates were summoned to rise and quietly proceed to the audience chamber of Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah. The experience and feelings that my father described is similar in all respects to the experience of the first *mulaqat* of Nasir-Khusraw or Al-Mu'ayyid fid-Din-Shirazi, who have left their account in the pages of history.

My father narrated to me that the delegates were briefed in advance about the etiquettes and manners they were supposed to observe. Our beloved 48th Imam welcomed the delegates, and spoke for nearly half an hour explaining the fundamentals and virtues of Islam. He explained how, for the past ten years, he had elaborated to the jamats of Panjab and NWFP about the truth and virtues of Islam, the *sirat-ul-mustakim* (straight path) and had allowed these jamats to observe *taqiyya* (practice the faith in concealment). He said there was no compulsion in matters of *Din* (religious matters). The period of probation was now over and that he would not be angry whatever path the *murids* chose to take and he had decided that he could now not allow the jamat to remain *gupti* (i.e. continue observing the *taqiyya*).

"You cannot have one leg in one boat and the second leg in another. Now what is your decision?" the Imam asked.

All the delegates with one voice responded in the affirmative, and the Imam then accepted the *Bayah* (oath of allegiance) of the delegates. When the turn of my father came, Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah asked him:

“What is your name?”

“Khudavind, my name is Guran Ditta,” replied my father.

“From this day your name is Inayat Ali,” said our beloved 48th Imam.

This remarkable day in our history was narrated in vivid terms by my father as he was an eye witness. He was an active faithful who always spent three months in a year in *Darkhana* in Bombay. It was an emotional moment for me, when he recounted this incident for me and *I Wish I'd Been There* for this most auspicious day in my father's life as well as the life of the Jamats in Punjab and NWPF.

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24: 13th-14th Century “Avatar” Discourses; 1885 – Aga Khan III Investiture; 1907 – Aga Khan III in New York

by Zahir Dharsee

“Avatar” Discourses

This word has all of a sudden in 2010, gained significant prominence as a result of it being the title for the Oscar nominated movie directed by James Cameron. The movie has given the word *Avatar* mass recognition similar to that of *Coca-Cola* or *Nike*!

Avatar is a Sanskrit word that when loosely translated into English means “the manifestation” or “the appearance”. This in turn can have various exoteric and esoteric interpretations – “Who is your *Avatar*?” – The *AVATAR* question can be brought down to a simple individual’s soul searching spiritual quest or yearning as to the “meaning or purpose of life”.

In the land of my forefathers, the Kutch Kathiawar district, in the present day State of Gujarat in India, sometime in the 13th and 14th Centuries, the *Avatar* philosophy and its principles, formed the fundamental basis by which the Pirs or Dais (Ismaili preachers) from Iran, provided proof to my ancestors as to the existence of the *Avatar*. They expanded on the belief of the *Das Avatar*. As a result, the word *Avatar* is recited in many of the hymns (ginans) they composed to entice the new believers into the fold by providing the proof of their point – a famous one is “*Eji Anand ananddiyo ... avatar ne, to jeevaro chute*”. The *Avatar* philosophy gave rise to a new community of believers who were given the title of *Khojas* (honorary converts) and came into the Ismaili fold of the Shia Muslim branch of Islam.

I Wish I had Been There to witness the discourses given by the Pirs and Dais to explain the *AVATAR* philosophy and concept to the new community!!.

1885: Aga Khan III is Installed as 48th Imam



September 1, 1885: The 7-year-old Aga Khan III at his enthronement ceremony as 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims in Bombay. He is surrounded by community elders and seated on the oblong wooden throne of Imamate. Photo:

Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images, Copyright

Toward the end of the 19th Century, in August 1885, a young boy age 7, Sultan Mohamed Shah, assumed the hereditary office of the 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. There is a famous picture taken of this event – the young Imam sitting amongst the leaders of his community. Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah's Imamate lasted 72 years to July 11, 1957. During his Imamate major social, economic and political changes occurred within and outside the Ismaili community and these set the foundation for its prominent position in the global world of today.

I Wish I'd Been There to witness the investiture of this young Imam at age 7.

1907: Aga Khan III in St. Regis Hotel, New York

In December 1906, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, arrived in San Francisco and started a two month train journey across the United States. He arrived in New York City in January 1907, and stayed at the St. Regis Hotel. In his *Memoirs*, His Highness gives a vivid description of

New York city in the early 1900's – *“the motor car was coming into its own, and was no longer the smelly despised toy it was a decade earlier.”*

In August 2005, almost 98 years later, I visited New York City and went to see the St Regis hotel and gave the Manager excerpts of the pages from the Memoirs of the Aga Khan where His Highness refers to his New York City visit!!

I Wish I'd Been There when His Highness and his entourage would have checked in at the St Regis hotel!

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25: Collection: "The Aga Khan's Horses" – 1938 Limited Edition,
Number 81, Signed by the Aga Khan



Collection: The Aga Khan's Horses, 1938, Signed by the Aga Khan

The first-ever book on the history of His Highness the Aga Khan III's horse breeding, training and racing activities was published in April 1938. Titled *The Aga Khan's Horses*, this book was authored by the horse racing writer, R. C. Lyle who, in his dedication, states:

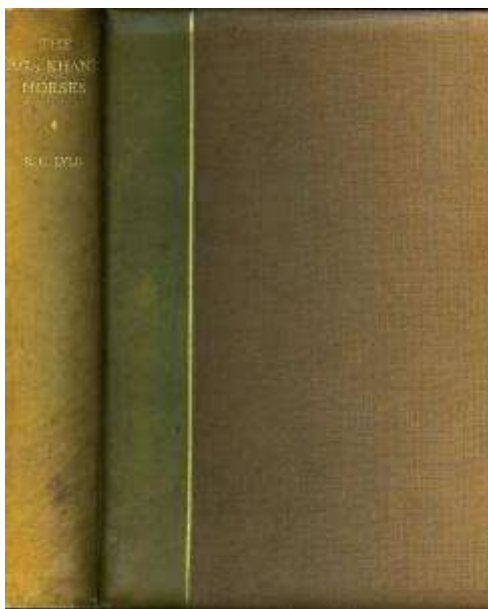
To H.H. Aga Khan

The only man living who has headed the Leading Owners' List seven times

1924 1929 1930 1932 1934 1935 1937

And the only man living who has won the Derby three times

1930 1935 1936



Cover binding of "The Aga Khan's Horses"

In his introduction, Lyle writes:

"It is a special pleasure and honour to thank His Highness the Aga Khan himself, both for his permission to enquire into all that appertains to his Stable and for the very helpful interviews that he has given."

Besides a general trade edition, a limited number of specially bound copies of *The Aga Khan's Horses* were also produced. This special edition was bound in a beautiful olive green half calf, with the boards covered in brown cloth (emulating the racing colours of Aga Khan III). The olive green calf is accentuated with a single gold line and gold text on the spine. The upper edges of the handmade paper are gilded, with the other edges being uncut.

This special edition contains 8 colour plates and 12 pencil sketches by the famous British painter Lionel Edwards, who specialized in painting horses, as well as 16 photographic illustrations.



Sketch of Bahram in "The Aga Khan's Horses"

Only 140 numbered copies of this limited edition were printed, of which 125 were made available for sale. A special and unique feature of these numbered copies is that they are signed by the author (R. C. Lyle), the artist (Lionel Edwards) and His Highness the Aga Khan.

Limited edition signed copies of *The Aga Khan's Horses* are extremely rare and most are in private or institutional collections.

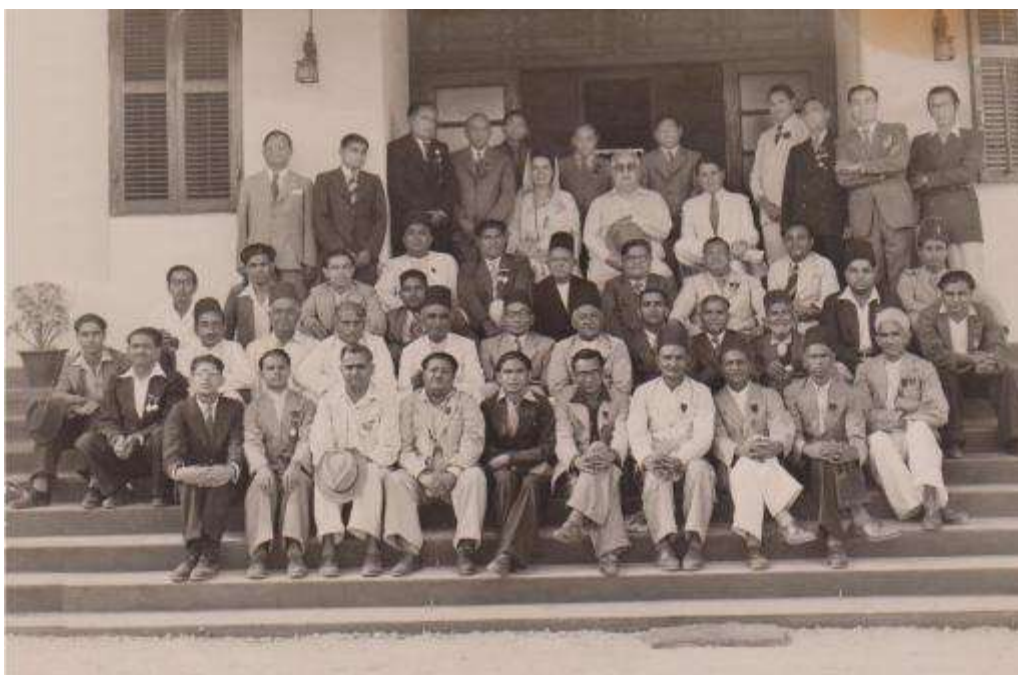


Signature page of a very rare copy of The Aga Khan's Horses

26: Photos of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan III



August 10, 1921: Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah Aga Khan III, 48th Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, who was granted the rank and status of first class chief with a salute of 11 guns in recognition of loyal service during the First World War is pictured on holiday at Deauville, France. Picture by: PA/PA Archive/Press Association Images. Copyright.

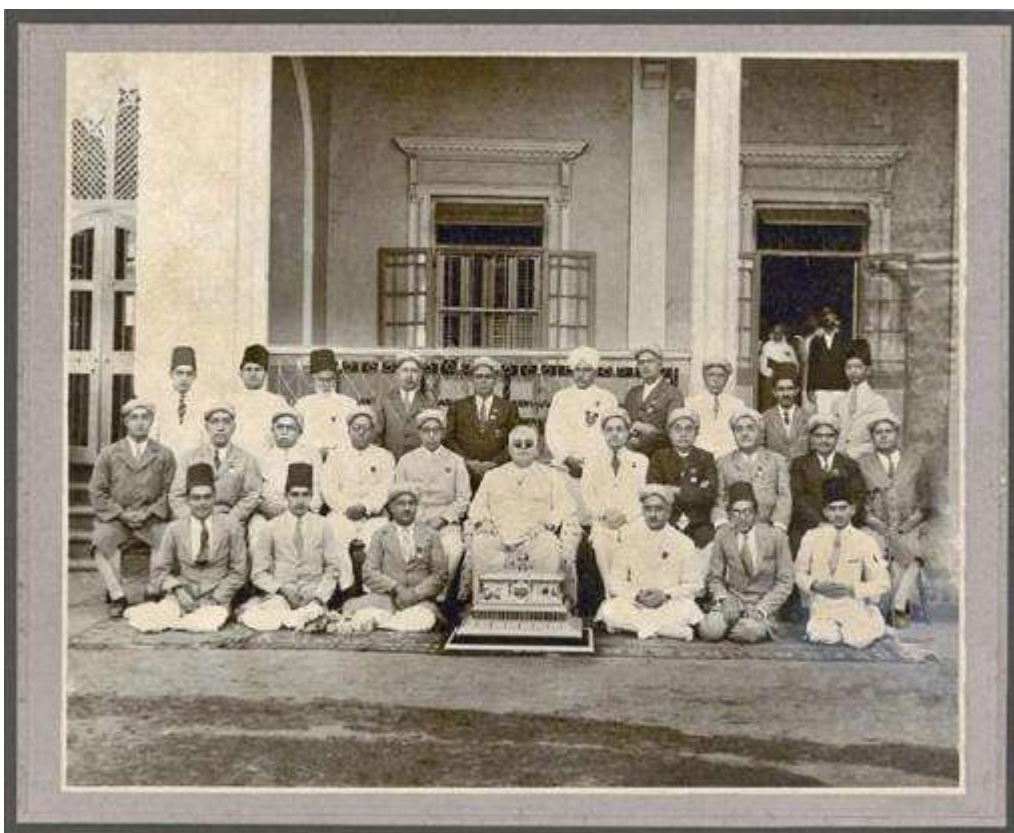


Imam Sultan Mahomed Shah, Mata Salamat and Prince Sadruddin in a group photo with Ismaili volunteers in Kenya. Mr. Nurmohamed Kassam of Kendu Bay, Kenya, is seated in front row, sixth from left. The exact date of this photo is not known but it appears to be from the mid 1940's. Photo: Nashir Kassam Family Collection



Zanzibar 1905: Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam, with Ismaili leaders (Click to enlarge) BACK ROW (left to right): Mohamed Bhanji, Gulamhussein Harji Sumar, Mohamed Rashid Alana, Alivalli Issa, Gulamhussein Karmali Bhaloo; CENTRE ROW (left to right): Peermohamed Kanji, Visram Harji, Varas Mohamed Remtulla Hemani, HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN III, Varas Saleh Kasmani, Fazal Issani, Gulamhussein Bhaloo Kurji; FRONT ROW (left to right): Mukhi Rajabali Gangji, Varas Kassam Damani, Varas Janmohamed, Rai Mitha Jessa, Bhagat Juma Ismail, Itmadi Jivan Lalji, Saleh Valli Dharsi, Janmohamed Jetha, Kamadia Fazal Shivji. Photo Credit: Nashir Abdulla Collection, Ottawa, Canada.

The image shown above was submitted by Nashir Abdulla of Ottawa. For the record, Rajabali Gangji and Fazal Shivji, who are both in the front row at either ends, were Zanzibar's first Mukhi and Kamadia.



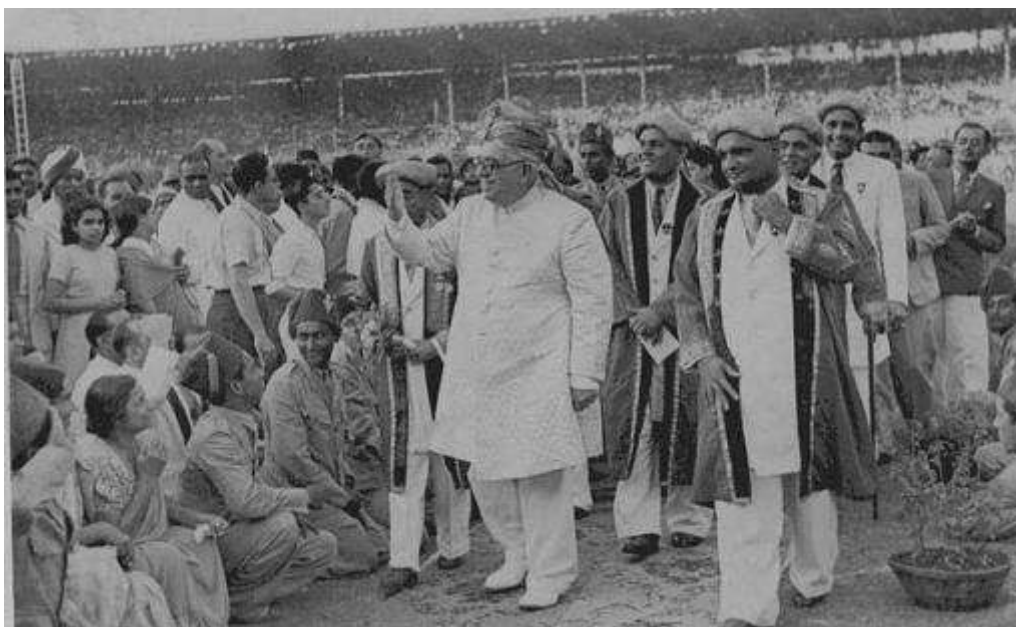
March 1936: This photo was taken in India on the occasion of the presentation of a casket by a group of Ismaili missionaries to His Highness the Aga Khan III to mark the occasion of his Golden Jubilee. The Casket was created and donated by 'Senior' Missionary Alijah Moloobhai Allarakhia Jangbarwalla. Unless otherwise noted we may assume that all the persons in the photograph are missionaries. STANDING BACK ROW Left to right: Noorali Bandali, Gulamhusein Juma, Sayyed Mohamed Shah, Jaffer Jivan, Alidina Mamu, Ebrahim J. Varteji, Tajjar Mukhi Mohamed, Damji Velji, Abdulla Esmail and Badrudin Nurmohamed. SEATED ON CHAIRS Left to right: Meghji Maherali, Husseini Pirmohamed, Alijah Molo Allarakhia (Donor of Casket), Chief Secretary Gulamhusein Virjee, President Alimohamed R Maklai, HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN III, President Alijah Esmail Mohamed Jaffer, Finance Secretary Tarmohamed Ravji, Alijah Sabza Ali Ramzanali, Jamal Virji and Hamir Lakha. SEATED ON CARPET Left to right: Kassamali L Wadiwalla, Amirali Khudabaksh, Hajimohamed Fazalbai, Mahmed Muradali, Madatali Rahemtullah Rajan and Juma Jiwa. Photographed by: Golden Art Studio; Photo: Ameer Janmohamed Collection, London, UK.

The photo as well as the caption was submitted by Ameer Janmohamed of London, England.



Nairobi, 1945 : His Highness the Aga Khan III and the Begum Aga Khan, walking behind him - second from right - at a joint Guides/Scouts rally in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1945. All photos from the Motani Collection, Ottawa (Copyright)





10 March 1946: 48th Imam of the Ismailis, His Highness the Aga Khan III, accompanied by smiling Ismaili leaders, walks by a cheerful and happy group of volunteers at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations held in Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium. The diamonds that he was weighed against were worth 640,000 British pounds and the money was returned by the Imam for the community's social upliftment programs. Photo Credit: Karim Jassani Collection, Ottawa. Mr. Jassani's late father, Itmadi Ebrahim Meherally Jassani, is seen at the right, and walking immediately behind him with a stick is Vazir Kassamali Javeri. In the centre is Varas Daya Vellji, holding an envelope.



10 March 1946: His Highness the Aga Khan III shows his appreciation and blesses the crowd after the diamond weighing ceremony at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium to mark his 60 years of Imamah. Credit for Photos: Karim Jassani Collection, Ottawa. Mr. Jassani's late father, Itmadi Ebrahim Meherally Jassani, is seen at the right of the scale.



Printed by "Samachar" 21st Feb. 1948

CABLE AND WIRELESS LIMITED
(INCORPORATED IN ENGLAND)

97-22

The first line of this Telegram contains the following particulars in the order named :-
Prefix Letters and Number of Message, Office of Origin, Number of Words, Date, Time
handed in and Official instructions—if any.

Circuit	Clerk's Name	Time Received	
MSA	DOMGO 29=12=48	1940	283

OFFICE OF ISSUE
S. 12. 11. 00

DZ131/XD49/YX53 MARSEILLE 25 29 1100
 NLT COUNT JINDANI ZANZIBAR
 OCCASION IMAMAT RECORD I CONFER ON YOU FOR ALL YOUR
 GREAT SERVICES TITLE DIWAN FOR FIRST TIME GIVEN IN
 AFRICA
 = AGAKHAN =

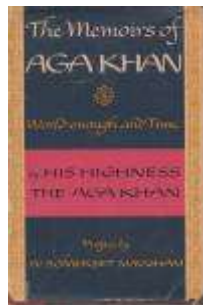
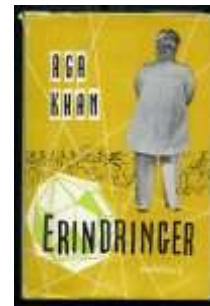
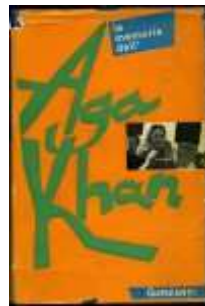
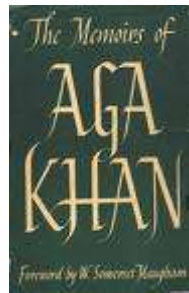
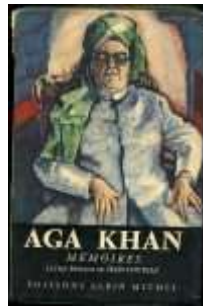
MARK YOUR REPLY "Via Imperial"

ANY ENQUIRY RESPECTING THIS TELEGRAM SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY THIS FORM AND MAY BE
MADE AT ANY OF THE COMPANY'S OFFICES.

29 December 1948: A telegram from Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, 48th Imam of the Ismailis, in the 63rd year of his reign, conferring the title of Diwan on (Count) Gulamhussein Mohamed Naser Jindani. Photo: Mohamed Jindani collection, London, UK

The image was submitted by Dr. Mohamed Jindani of London, England, son of the late Diwan Jindani.

27: “The Memoirs of Aga Khan” in Seven Languages



“I can only say to everyone who reads this book of mine that it is my profound conviction that man must never ignore and leave untended and undeveloped that spark of the Divine which is in him.”

The autobiography of the 48th Ismaili Imam, Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, was first published in London in 1954 under the title, *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time*.

In the Prologue to his autobiography, Aga Khan III writes that he had been “*urged by editors and publishers to write my memoirs, my own account of my life and experiences, of my beliefs and opinions, and the way in which they have been moulded.*” Further on, the 48th Imam states that while he has tried to do his best in all the years he has spent in public life, “*final judgment lies elsewhere.*” And in the last paragraph of the Prologue, the Imam provides a succinct perspective on his writing his memoirs:

“....since I have witnessed this rapid and all-enveloping process of change in every domain of human interest and experience – the technical and mechanical revolution of our time, man’s developing mastery of natural forces, the recognition of the importance of the subconscious, the vast increase in longevity, the rise

of new moral standards and the corresponding profound changes in outlook, and great political changes undreamed of in my youth – I hope in these coming chapters to give some picture of each epoch as it unfolded before the eyes and in the mind and heart of one who was usually an onlooker but sometimes and actively a participant.”



*The Aga Khan pictured with his son, Prince Sadruddin, and grandsons
Prince Karim (left) and Prince Ameen. This photo appears in various editions of the Memoirs*

The *Memoirs* was originally published in English (the British and American editions being published in 1954), and while these English versions were circulated widely in the English-speaking world, a remarkable fact is that the 48th Imam's autobiography was translated into several languages, both eastern and western. Besides translations into Gujarati, Sindhi and Urdu, *The Memoirs of Aga Khan* was translated into six European languages, all of which were published during 1954 and 1955. An interesting feature is that many of the illustrations in these translations are different to those that appear in the English editions.



Portraits of the Aga Khan in the German Edition.

The bibliographical details of the eight volumes are as follows:

1. Memoirs. UK English edition – *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time*.- Foreword by W. Somerset Maugham.- London, 1954.- xviii, 350 pages, colour frontispiece, illustrations.- Hardback, dust wrapper.
2. Memoirs. USA English edition – *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time*.- Preface by W. Somerset Maugham.- New York, 1954.- xiv, 367 pages, illustrations.- Hardback, dust wrapper.
3. Memoirs. French translation – *Memoires*.- Translated by Jane Fillion; with an additional preface by Jean Cocteau.- Paris, 1955.- xv, 422 pages, illustrations.- Paperback.



A portrait of the Aga Khan and Begum Aga Khan in the French Edition.

4. Memoirs. German translation – *Die Memoiren des Aga Khan: Welten und Zeiten*.- Translated by Hans B. Wagenseil.- Munich, 1954.- 448 pages, illustrations.- Hardback, dust wrapper.
5. Memoirs. Italian translation – *Le Memorie dell' Aga Khan*.- Translated by Sergio Uglioni.- Milan, 1954.- xi, 354 pages, frontispiece, illustrations.- Hardback, dust wrapper.
6. Memoirs. Spanish translation – *Memorias de S. A. El Aga Khan*.- Translated by J. Romero de Tejada.- Barcelona, 1954.- 372 pages, illustrations.- Hardback, dust wrapper.



The Aga Khan as a young boy in the Spanish Edition

7. Memoirs. Norwegian translation – *Erindringer*.- Translated by Karin Holst Hemsén and Anne-Margrethe Omsted.- Oslo, 1955.- 294 pages, illustrations, maps.- Hardback, dust wrapper.



A photo, in the Norwegian edition, of the Aga Khan and the Begum in Mashad, Iran.

8. Memoirs. Finnish translation – *Memoarer* - Translated by Knut Stubbendorff.- Helsinki, 1955.- 319 pages, colour frontispiece, illustrations.- Hardback.

28: The Memoirs of Aga Khan: A Translator's Voice

By Abdulmalik Merchant

Editor, *Simerg.com*

The autobiography of the 48th Ismaili Imam, Mawlana Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, was first published in London in 1954 under the title *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time*. While the English versions of the British and American editions were circulated widely in the English-speaking world, a remarkable fact is that the 48th Imam's autobiography was translated into several languages, both eastern and western. Besides translations into Gujarati, Sindhi and Urdu, *The Memoirs of Aga Khan* was translated into six European languages, all of which were published during 1954 and 1955 (for more details of these books, please click on link following article).

How accurate and well done are these translations? What was each translator's view of the project he or she undertook? What processes did the translator apply for the translation? Was the primary focus of the translator on the task at hand or did he try to identify with the subject of the book or its original author?

Dusty old and worn out Ismaili literary journals contain a wealth of information and insights, which I call *Khajana* (treasure). During a trip to Vancouver earlier this year, I grabbed a few old magazines from my parent's archives and brought them with me to Ottawa. As I started leafing through the pages of one specific magazine earlier this week - a 1966 Kisumu publication - I was pleasantly surprised to come across an article by the Gujarati translator of *The Memoirs*, the late Mr. Jyotindra Dave (1901 – 1980). Some of my concerns are well covered by his article, which is being produced below. Regrettably his name does not appear on the book cover page or on the inside title page and, then, only a passing reference is made to his spirited effort in an editorial note contributed by the President of the Ismailia Association for India.

I decided to use the internet to find out something about Mr. Dave. I learnt that during his lifetime Jyotindra Dave was acknowledged as one of the most outstanding humorists of Gujarati literature, and that he had also worked as an oriental translator with the Bombay Government. Later, he took to teaching literature and became principal of a college in Gujarat. He was also scholar of Sanskrit and English literature. The Ismailia Association for India which was commissioned to do the Gujarati translation certainly found the right person in Mr. Jyotindra Dave for the job. I am told that Mr. Dave's skill and brilliance of the Gujarati language are reflected in this translation of *The Memoirs*.

In my internet research I came across a very pleasant person, Urvish Kothari, who supplied me with an older photo of Mr Dave and his wife. He has been conducting research on Jyotindra Dave for the past eight years, and informed me that this article came as a big surprise to him as he himself wasn't aware of the translated

work. Upon his delight, he then sent the following photo accompanied by a very kind note which reads, “I couldn’t find how to share my joy of finding Jyotindra Dave’s article with you. Hence, I’m sending an unpublished rare photo of Jyotindra and his staff in the oriental translator’s office. The photo also bears the signature of Jyotindra Dave.”



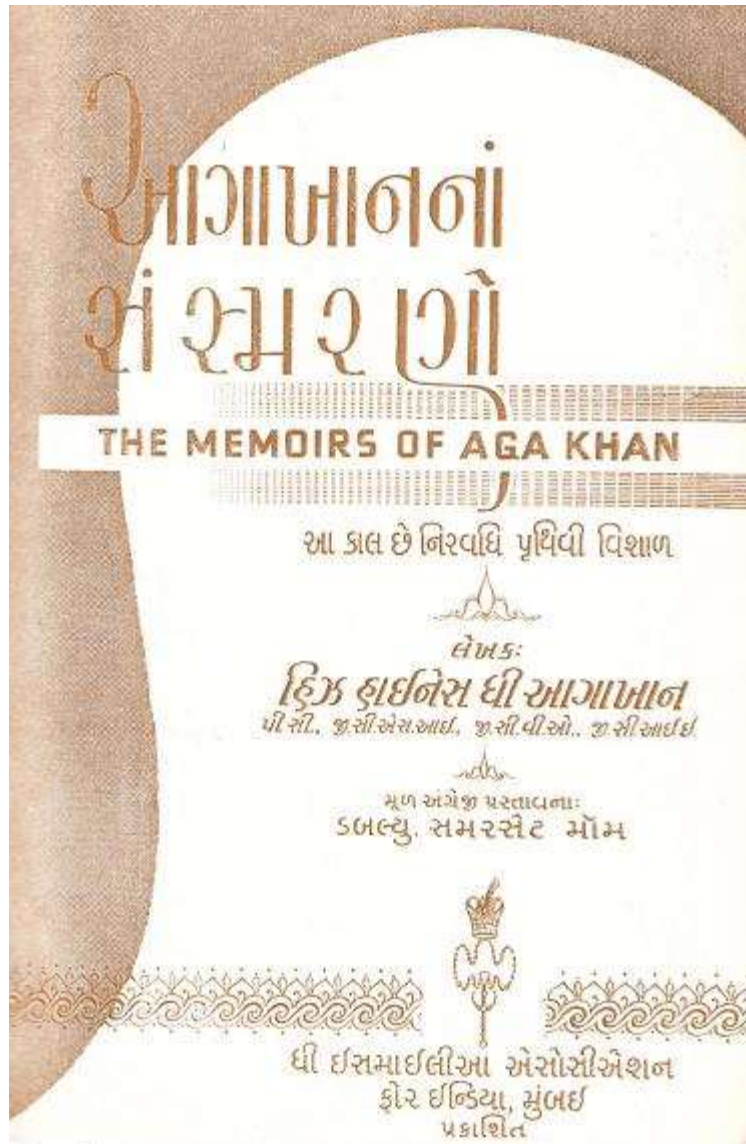
A rare and unique photo of members of the Oriental Translator's Office supplied to Simerg by Mr Urvish Kothari who is conducting research on Mr. Jyotindra Dave, translator of "The Memoirs of Aga Khan" into Gujarati. Mr. Dave is seated third from right. The photo also bears his signature at the bottom right, above his printed name. Photo Credit: Urvish Kothari. Copyright.

Before producing Jyotindra Dave’s reflections, may I offer a valuable piece of advice to Ismaili families. While I supported the functions of the local Jamati library in Ottawa as its project leader, many Jamati members would come and offer back issues of Ismaili magazines for the library – including some very rare and out of print journals - saying they had finished reading them and no longer needed the magazines. My response to them was plain and clear: “Unless you are donating these magazines because they are duplicate copies, I ask that you keep the magazines in your homes.” I would further urge everyone never to recycle our community magazines. Keep them. Children and grandchildren will marvel and use them as references many years down the road, learning about Imamat activities of the era gone, how the community lived before them

and how Jamati institutions functioned. Nothing is as joyful as holding and reading an actual book in one's hands. I am thankful to my parents for preserving these old issues, which are proving useful today. And another suggestion: When loose magazines become difficult to handle and are scattered all over the place, have them bound periodically. They will remain as proud possessions at any home library for generations.

Now, the *translator's voice* from 55 years ago.

“THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN”



The jacket of the Gujarati edition of "The Memoirs of Aga Khan," translated by the late Jyotindra Dave, who was held in high esteem in the Indian literary circles. Photo: Zul Khoja Collection, Ottawa.

By Jyotindra Dave

THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

On behalf of the Ismailia Association, Mr. Sultan, accompanied by the late Shri Mastafakir [another contemporary humorist, senior to Jyotindra Dave - *ed.*], came to see me with the English edition of His Highness the Aga Khan's *Memoirs*. I was requested to suggest names of persons who might be able to translate the book into Gujarati within a short time. I recommended a few persons, but the representative was not enthusiastic about my feedback, and ultimately insisted that I should undertake that task. I told him that I could not decide until I saw the book. I looked quickly through the pages of the copy that he provided me, and at first glance it appeared a very simple undertaking. My visitor then insisted I do the translation of the book, with the help of two gentlemen from the Ismailia Association.

I translated the first chapter of the book quite easily and I thought to myself that I was set to complete the whole book in a short time. But the difficulty started when I came to the second chapter of the book dealing with the principles of Islam. As I proceeded further, I was convinced that the task I had undertaken was going to be much more difficult than I had anticipated earlier.

The difficulty was not one of the English language. By and large, the language of the book is simple. His Highness the Aga Khan had no great love for high sounding words or unfamiliar expressions. His style was mature and simple and his language fluent, serious and easily intelligible to a reader. The reason for the difficulty in translation was quite different. His composition strewn with apt adjectives and having parenthetical sentences within the body of main sentences reminded us of *Victorian* prose. The adjectives he has used are so accurate and apt that their exact equivalents in Gujarati are often hard to find. And it is not very easy to arrange parenthetical clauses in Gujarati construction in the proper places, in a way that would preserve not only the original sense but the original stress as well.

However, the much greater difficulty was of a different nature altogether. This was the multicoloured personality of His Highness the Aga Khan and numerous facets covered by the book. The subjects His Highness talks about in his book range from the essence of the religious spirit of Islam to the Derbys; one then passes from highest realm of serious thoughts to the intricacies of politics, and from there on to the plains of races and thence to the palatial theatres. Along the route you find men and women reputed in these fields all over the world, and you have to wait for their acquaintance. It would not be surprising therefore for a person who embarks on such a long and arduous journey of translating to feel fatigued. Only one who is initiated in these subjects can get on with the task with interest. Even if a translator cultivates an interest and proceeds with the work, he has to strain his brain to the utmost to find the equivalents of technical terms of that subject in his own language. No authentic person had even written on these subjects in our language.

The translator such as myself, therefore, has to search out for these unexplored field terms, and specially the technical terms, which are intelligible and yet convey the original connotation.

THE TRANSLATOR ON HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

We all know the Aga Khan as the chief of a large denomination of Islam. He himself has claimed that his work in that connection, as their Imam, forms the most important part of his life. But he has made very little mention of that work in his *Memoirs*. As the leader of a religious sect, his purpose is not restricted merely to the spiritual uplift of his followers. He has made all possible efforts to promote their educational, economic and social progress. His followers are spread far and wide in many countries of the world and he has journeyed all over the globe to look after their welfare.

But unlike other religious heads his mission of life is not confined to his community alone. The part that he played in world politics of the past generation is well known to the students of history. Lovers of horse racing still remember his horses and the races they won. As the owner of horses he was not content with putting them in races or himself being a winner. He was equally interested in selection and breeding of the best horses and their training.



The late Jyotindra Dave, translator of "The Memoirs of Aga Khan", pictured with his surviving wife, Karsukh, who celebrated her 100th birthday recently. Photo Credit: Urvish Kothari, www.urvishkothari-gujarati.blogspot.com

This book is in many ways different from other autobiographical works of this type. On the first page of the book the Aga Khan has inscribed this maxim, "*World Enough and Time.*" The earth for him has really been wide, and his journey into the realms of his interest and work are wide. It has been said in the *Mahabharat*, "Have no doubts whether a king is the maker of time or the time is the maker of the king. *Certainly the king is the maker of the time.*"

This then means that the time is as good or bad as the king. Making a timely alteration, we can now say that instead of the king it is politics that is the maker of the time. In politics, which is thus the maker of the time,

the Aga Khan played a prominent part and became not only a witness to the history but became its component part. He has given an account of all this in this book. Giving the *raison d'être* of this book, he himself says:

“Since I have witnessed this rapid and all developing process of change in every domain of human interest and experience - the technical and mechanical revolution of our time, man’s developing mastery of natural forces, the recognition of the importance of the subconscious, the vast increase in longevity, the rise of new moral standards and the corresponding profound changes in outlook, and great political changes undreamed of in my youth – I hope in these coming chapters to give some picture of each epoch as it unfolded before the eyes and the mind and heart of one who was usually an onlooker but sometimes actively a participant.”

This picture of a whole epoch - this picture of various changes in so many spheres of life at that time – has been depicted by him in a way that fills the reader’s eyes and mind, but at the same time a faint yet distinct and distinguishable picture of his own personality is also revealed incidentally.

Normally the chief of a religious sect can hardly see beyond the limits of his own sect. He and his followers take those who believe in another faith for heretics. They emphatically propound that there is no place for these heretics in Heaven. There is no dearth of Muslims who believe that there is no place in Heaven for a *kafir* howsoever pious; of Hindus who say that if a *yavan* pollutes even with his mouth in this world, there is no place for him in Heaven: and of Christians who declare that however noble a life you lead the gates of Heaven will forever remain closed to you until you accept Jesus Christ. But the religious views of His Highness the Aga Khan was not restricted. It was very liberal. For example, he writes in his *Memoirs*:

“...I further pray that all who truly and sincerely believe in God, be they Christian, Jew, Buddhist or Brahmin, who strive to do good and avoid evil, who are gentle and kind, will be joined in Heaven and be granted final pardon of peace.”

Fanaticism was alien to His Highness Aga Khan’s nature. The *maulavi* who came to teach him Islam in his childhood was a fanatic, and he was disgusted to hear what the *maulavi* said. He writes:

“...Perhaps it was this early experience which for the rest of my life have given me certain prejudice against professional men of religion – be they mullahs or maulavis, curates, vicars or bishops.”

Somerset Maugham, the writer of the *Preface* to the book, has rightly said that His Highness the Aga Khan was a generous hearted man, and for him to say anything bad about others was contrary to his nature. In *The Memoirs*, His Highness the Aga Khan has given brief outlines of many people who came in contact with him. About all of them he has unequivocally said whatever he felt about them. Yet, while drawing the outlines of those with whom he had differences of opinion he has never allowed any bitterness to creep in.

He has also exposed the shortcomings that be found. But, generally, he has tried to show their merits and he has done all this with the minimum of words, and with the help of one or two appropriate adjectives or bringing to light some special quality hidden in the nature of the person concerned, with the dexterity of an artist who creates a picture with a few bold strokes of his brush.

That he possessed a lofty religious spirit and a philosophic mind is revealed when he provides the sum-total of human life. He writes:

“Life in the ultimate analysis has taught me one enduring lesson. The subject should always disappear in the object. In our ordinary affections one for another, in our daily work with hand or brain, most of us discover soon enough that any lasting satisfaction, any contentment that we can achieve, is the result of forgetting self, of merging subject with object in a harmony that is of body, mind and spirit. And in the highest realms of consciousness all who believe in a Higher Being are liberated from all the clogging and hampering bonds of the subjective self in prayer, in rapt meditation upon and in the face of the glorious radiance of eternity, in which all temporal and earthy consciousness is swallowed up and itself becomes the eternal.”

And he continues:

“Never in my long life – I may say with complete honesty - have I for an instant been bored. Every day has been so short, every hour so fleeting, every minute so filled with the life I love that time for me has fled on far too swift a wing.”

How many people can say this like His Highness the Aga Khan? And the life of those who can say this should undoubtedly be called successful.

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**HAZRAT IMAM SULTAN MAHOMED SHAH,  
HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN III  
(1877 – 1957)**



**THE IMAM OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVOLUTION**

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