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Nāṣir-i Khusraw

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SALIENT ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE QĀ’IM ACCORDING TO NĀṢIR-I KHUSRAW

The Qur’ān outlines certain fundamental elements of the Islamic faith. These include belief in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day (2:177, 285; 4:136). The Last Day, understood to be the Qā’im,1 is thus among the central beliefs of Islam.

According to the Qur’ān (3:19), Islam is Allāh’s religion, also called fitratu’llāh or Allāh’s nature (30:30). He has created humankind on the basis of His nature. A comparison of Allāh’s religion with His nature and His nature with humankind demonstrates that His religion is dynamic and progressive, passing through several stages of progress and perfection. In this connection, God further says in several verses: “Verily your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then established the equality (istawā) on the throne” (7:54).

In verse (50:38), after repeating the above words, He says: “And no weariness touched Us (wa mā massanā min lughūb)” and in verse (10:3) He says: “He repeats the command (yudabbiru’l-amr)”. Furthermore, the verse (3:27) shows that Allāh, through His omnipotence, is creating things from their opposites, such as day from night, night from day, the living from the dead and the dead from the living. All such verses show Allāh’s omnipotence in that He creates things from their opposites and His creativeness (khāliqiyyat) continues without pause or

*I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Shafique Virani of Toronto University for reviewing this article and for his useful suggestions.

1 Here by the Qā’im is meant the Qā’im al-qiyāma, in whose time there will be great changes both in the physical and the spiritual worlds, as the Qur’ān says: “Soon We will show Our signs to them in the horizons (the universe) and in their souls until it becomes clear to them that he (the Qā’im al-qiyāma) is the True” (41:53), otherwise every Imām of the time is the Qā’im of his own time as change continues; Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Shish Faṣl or Six Chapters, ed. and trans. W. Ivanow (Leiden, 1949), pp. 41–42.
hindrance. He creates the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh He establishes equality. These seven days together make a week of religion (usbu'u 'ud-din (Arabic), hafta-yi din (Persian)) and the seventh day is the symbol of Qā'īm in a special sense. About his paramount importance, the Prophet said: "Even if there remains of time but a single day, God will prolong it until there emerges a man from my descendants, who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it is (now) filled with oppression and injustice." This hadith of the Prophet shows the paramount importance of the Qā'īm. Islam would reach true perfection in his time. Allāh's address to His Prophet in verse (5:3): "Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favours upon you and chosen for you Islam as religion," thus implies that Islam achieved potential perfection in the Prophet's lifetime, and would achieve actual perfection at the completion of the cycle. Had this not been the case, the Prophet would not have prophesied that "the earth will be filled with equity and justice as it is (now) filled with oppression and injustice."

Lexically, the word Qā'īm derives from the Arabic root qāma yaqumu qiyām, which means "to resurrect," and the present participle, qā'īm, on the measure of fa'il, means the resurrector, the one who causes the resurrection (qiyāma) to take place. The function of the Qā'īm is explained in the Prophet's own words in the hadith quoted above.

The doctrine of the Qā'īm or the Saviour to come at the end of time, is found in virtually every religion. Thus, there is the concept of the Messiah in Judaism and Christianity, Kalkī or Nakalankī in Hinduism, Saoshyant in Zoroastrianism, and others. Within Islam, in addition to the Qā'īm, the term Mahdī is often used synonymously with it. Mahdī is used widely by both the Sunnīs and the Shi'ah. The term Qā'īm, or the Qā'īm-i āl-i Muḥammad, i.e. the Resurrector from the progeny of Prophet Muḥammad, however, is much more specific to

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7 Ibid., pp. 12–14, 19; Dictionary of Religions, p. 127.
Shī'ah Islam. The expression necessitates that the Qā'īm be from the Prophet’s progeny, whereas this is not the case in Sunnī Islam.

According to the Qur’ān, the knowledge of qiyāma is as difficult as it is extensive. The difficulty of having access to the knowledge of qiyāma is obvious from the following verses, which show that it is Allāh’s prerogative, as He says to His Messenger: “They question you concerning the Hour, when is its fixed time? Say: The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. None shall reveal it at its proper time, but He. It is heavy in the heavens and the earth. It comes not to you save unawares. They question you as though you are well informed of it. Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allāh, but most of humankind know not” (7:187) and “The people question you concerning the Hour. Say: The knowledge of it is only with Allāh. What makes you know? Haply the Hour is nigh” (33:63).

In their Rasā'il (Epistles) Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', the Brethren of Purity, write extensively on this subject. They explain that there are approximately one thousand and seven hundred verses in the Qur’ān describing the states and conditions of the qiyāma. Expressions referring to this include yawma’l-qiyāma (the day of resurrection, 2:85), yawmī yub‘athīn (the day they are raised up, 7:14), yawmī’iddīn (the day of judgement, 1:4), yawmī’l-faṣl (the day of decision, 37:21), yawmā yaqūmū l-ḥisāb (the day of reckoning, 14:41), yawmā’l-āzīfa (the day of imminence, 40:18), yawmā’t-tanād (the day of mutual calling, 40:32), yawmā’t-taghābun (the day of mutual disillusion, 64:9), yawmī’l-ḥashr (the day of gathering together, 50:44),10 yawmā yakhrujūnā [mina ‘l-ṣā’ā] (the day they come forth [from the tombs], 70:43), yawmā taqūmū s-sā’a (the day when the hour comes, 30:12),11 and so on. These and other such verses demonstrate the inevitability of the coming qiyāma. God further emphatically says: “The Hour is going to come and there is no doubt about it” (22:7; 40:59) and “We have prepared a blazing fire for those who belie the Hour” (25:11).

Other verses, however, attest to the fact that the qiyāma is a spiritual matter. Its coming will be concealed, and people in general will be unaware of it:

Regarding the differences of opinion about the doctrine of the Mahdī between Sunnī and Shi‘ah Islam, differences within their sub-sects, his ethnic origin, the geographical locations of his advent, his features, his rule, his relations with Jesus Christ and his encounter with the Antichrist, etc., and also for the claimants who appeared as Mahdī in history, see the articles: D. B. Macdonald, “al-Mahdī,” EP, vol. V, pp. 111–115; W. Madelung, “al-Mahdī,” EP, vol. V, pp. 1230–1238; D. S. Margoliouth, “al-Mahdī,” in Hasting’s Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. VIII, pp. 336–340; Kamran Scot Aghaie, “Messianism in the Muslim Tradition,” Encyclopaedia of Religion, 2nd Edition, pp. 5979–5983. These studies have ignored the Qur’ān and have focused mainly on ḥadith literature, which is mostly self-contradictory and on its own leads to no satisfactory conclusion.

10 Adapted from verse (50:44): Yawmā tashaqqaqu’l-ardū ‘anhum sirā ‘an dhālika hashrun ‘alaynā yasīr: “The day the earth will split asunder they will come out hurriedly. That will be a gathering together.”

“Indeed, the Hour is coming, but I will keep it hidden, that every soul may be rewarded for that for which it strives” (20:15) and “Are they waiting for aught but the Hour, which will come upon them suddenly while they are unaware?” (43:66). This is further testified to in a hadīth of the Prophet in which he held the index fingers of his right and left hands immediately next to and touching each other, and said: “I and the Hour are sent like these two.” Some Sunnī sources mention the index and the middle fingers.\(^{12}\) The fact that a physical resurrection has yet to occur makes it difficult to understand this hadīth in an exoteric sense.

Though it is emphasized that knowledge of resurrection is Allāh’s prerogative, there is no absolute despondency, because He grants His chosen servants even those things which are His prerogative. For example, He says: “[He is] the Knower of the unseen (ghayb), and He discloses not His unseen to anyone, save unto every Messenger with whom He is well-pleased” (72:26–27). In light of such verses, some of the Muslim communities have tried to penetrate the secrets of the Qur’ān, whereas others have contented themselves with the literal meaning of Allāh’s message.

The seekers of the meanings of the Qur’ān and the hadīth can be broadly divided into two groups: the exotericists (ahl-i zāhir, ahl-i tanzīl) and the esotericists (ahl-i bāțīn, ahl-i ta’wil); the former try to solve their difficulties by recourse to the literal sense, whereas the latter go beyond the literal meaning to seek the inner meanings or dimensions.

This article attempts to present the salient aspects of the doctrine of the Qā’im as expounded by the famous Persian sage, traveller, and poet, Naṣīr-i Khusraw. Naṣīr-i Khusraw belonged to the Ismā‘īlī Imāmī Shi‘ah, one of the two main branches of the Imāmī Shi‘ah. After the demise of Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the Imāmī Shi‘ah split into the Ismā‘īlī Imāmī Shi‘ah and Musawwī Imāmī Shi‘ah, named after his sons Ismā‘īl al-Mubārak and Mūsā al-Kāzim. After the occultation of their twelfth Imām, the latter group came to be known as the Ithnā ‘asharī Imāmī Shi‘ah, or Twelvers. The Imamate of the Ismā‘īlī Imāmī Shi‘ah still continues, and their present Imām is Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī. Ismā‘īlīs are sometimes called Sab‘īyya or Seveners, that is, those who believe in seven Imāms, in contrast to the Ithnā ‘asharīyya or Twelvers, those who believe in twelve Imāms. This is a grave misunderstanding. While Ismā‘īlīs do give importance to the concept of seven Imāms constituting a minor cycle (dawr ṣaghīr), they do not believe that there are only seven Imāms. Their present Imām is the 49th in the line of Imām ‘Alī in the cycle of Prophet Muḥammad.

Two points are taken into consideration in presenting Naṣīr’s exposition of the doctrine of the Qā’im: first, he was the last of the highly learned dā‘īs of the golden age of learning of the Fāṭimid era before the community split into Nizarī Ismā‘īlī and Musta‘alawī I:ma‘īlī branches after the demise of the Imām

Mustansir bi’l-lah (d. 487/1094). Secondly, he was not a born Isma’ili, but accepted the faith as a result of a long personal search for the truth. Not only did he accept the Isma’ili faith as the truth, but he also became one of its staunchest and most vigorously active da’is and rose to the rank of hujjat, a lofty rank next to the Imam himself. Na’ir is also an excellent example of those who commit themselves to tawbatu’n-naṣūḥ (the sincere repentance referred to in the Qur’an, 66:8), that is, he sacrificed material luxuries and amenities for the sake of spiritual happiness and intellectual peace, never returning to the former until his dying breath. In his works, he was not ashamed of describing his previous trespasses and shortcomings openly.

This article is divided into three parts: the first will deal with Na’ir’s affiliation with the Isma’ili da’wa and includes a brief life-sketch, the second part will deal with salient aspects of the Isma’ili doctrine of the Qā’im, and the final part with Na’ir’s own exposition of the salient aspects of this doctrine.

1. Na’ir’s affiliation with the Isma’ili da’wa and a brief life-sketch:

Na’ir-i Khusraw was a member of the Isma’ili da’wa, or ecclesia. The Fāṭimid Imam, al-Mustansir bi’l-lah I (d. 487/1094), appointed him as the hujjat-i Khūrāsān, the “proof” of Khurasan, or the šāhib-i jazīra-yi Mashriq, “the lord of the island of the eastern lands.” In the da’wa terminology, a hujjat or šāhib-i jazīra is one of twelve dignitaries who oversee the world’s twelve jazī’ir (islands, sing. jazīra). Even today, centuries after his death, his memory is revered in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, China, Chitral, and the Northern Areas of Pakistan, including Gilgit, Puniyal, Ghizr, Yasin, Ishkoman and Hunza. In these areas he is known as Ḩaḍrat-i Pīr or Sayyid Shāh Na’ir-i Khusraw.

His full name was Abū Mu’in Ḩamīd al-Dīn Na’ir b. Khusraw b. Ḥārith-i Qubādiyānī, Marwāzī, Māzandarāī, Yumgī or Yumgānī. He was born into a family of landowners and officials in 394/1004 in Qubadiyan on the right bank of the Oxus River. There is no dearth of literature about the various aspects of his multi-faceted life. A number of scholars have elucidated the main episodes of his career, such as his education, government service, the visionary experience that led him to change his life and resign from his post, the ensuing seven-year journey from 437/1045 to 444/1052 that was immortalized in his celebrated Safar-nāma, his arrival in Cairo and discussions with the senior Isma’ili luminary, al-Mu’ayyad fi’l-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), his audience with the Imam al-

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13 This term is used very widely for God Himself, the Prophet, the Imām and his subordinates, the hujjats or naqīths and their subordinates the dā’īs. In a specific sense, it is used for the last rank of the hierarchy, that is, under the Imām of the time there are twelve hujjats and under each of them there are thirty dā’īs.
Mustanṣīr bi’l-lāh I, his appointment as hujjat of Khurasan and return to his native land of Balkh in 444/1052, the beginnings of his da’wa activities and initial successes, the opposition of his adversaries, his taking refuge in Yumgan and spreading the Ismā‘īlī da’wa there and in the surrounding areas, his works and his death.\(^{14}\)

In common with so many other outstanding personalities, over the course of history Nasīr’s life has become enveloped in a halo of legends and myths. While it is beyond the scope of this article to analyse this apocryphal material, a brief account of Nasīr’s life, as described in his own works, is given here.

Nasīr’s writings show that he received a sound education in his youth, which afforded him entry into government service. Despite his success in this coveted position, he felt a certain hollowness. His ethical, spiritual and intellectual dissatisfaction with his earlier life rings clear in his \(\text{Dīwān}\) of poetry, in which he writes:

\begin{align*}
\text{An kardī az fasād ki gar yādat āyad ān} \\
\text{Rāyat siyāh gardad-ū fīra shawad ḍamūr}\end{align*}\(^{15}\)

You once wrought such mischief that were you to call it to mind
Your face would be blackened [by dishonour], your heart darkened [by disgrace].

Similarly, at the beginning of his \(\text{Safar-nāma}\), his travelogue, citing the Prophetic tradition “Speak the truth, though it be against yourself,”\(^{16}\) he ruefully admits to his former addiction to drink. His internal turmoil precipitated a crisis. One night, at the age of 43, he had a dream that was to transform his life forever. He writes:

One night I was approached in a dream by someone who chided me, “How long will you drink this brew that destroys human intellect? ’Tis better to be sober!” I responded, “The sages have failed to find a better elixir to drive away the sorrows of the world.” He said, “Never has drunkenness brought peace of mind.


\(^{15}\) Naṣīr-i Khusraw, \(\text{Dīwān}\), ed. M. Minuwī and M. Muḥaqqiq (Tehran, 1974), p. 102; hereafter cited as \(\text{Dīwān}\) (Minuwī edition).

\(^{16}\) Naṣīr-i Khusraw, \(\text{Safar-nāma}\), ed. Muḥammad Dābir-i Siyāqī (Tehran, 1984), p. 2; hereafter cited as \(\text{Safar-nāma}\).
Can one who leads people to stupor be called a sage? Seek that which increases intellect and wisdom!” I asked, “Where can I find such a thing?” He replied, “He who seeks, finds.” And then, pointing in the direction of the qibla, he fell silent.\textsuperscript{17}

Našir rose, the vision still vivid in his mind. He lamented to himself: “I have woken up from last night’s dream. But now I must awaken from a dream that has lasted forty years!”\textsuperscript{18} He resolved to forswear his self-harming ways, knowing that he would never attain true happiness until he did so. Resigning from government service, on Saturday, 6 Jumādā II, 437/12 December, 1045\textsuperscript{19} he set out on his famous journey, returning only seven years later, on Tuesday, 26 Jumādā II/23 October, 1052.\textsuperscript{20}

The oracle had pointed him in the direction of the qibla, which was also the direction of Cairo, the capital of the Fāṭimid Caliphate and centre of the Ismā‘īlī da‘wa. After his arrival on Sunday, 1 Šafar 439/28 July, 1047, he met many Ismā‘īlī dā‘īs, including al-Mu‘ayyad fi’l-Dīn Shīrāzī, the hujjat of Fars, who was the head of the da‘wa at the time. Našir was duly impressed with al-Mu‘ayyad, whom he regarded as rīdwān,\textsuperscript{21} the warden of paradise.

Našir describes Cairo in glowing terms in his Dīwān and Safar-nāma, not only as a splendid metropolis, but even more so as the spiritual city \textit{par excellence}; the city of knowledge and wisdom of the Imam. He writes in his Dīwān:

One day I reached a city to which the heavenly bodies and spheres themselves were subservient. Its plains were embroidered like brocade, its walls made of emerald and its water pure and sweet like the spring of kawthar in paradise. In this city there are no mansions save excellence, no fisr trees in its gardens save intellect. It is a city in which the sages wear brocade that is neither spun by women nor woven by men. Upon my arrival my intellect intimated to me, “Go no further! Seek here what you need.” I went to the warden of the city and told him my tale. He said, “Fear not, for your mine has now transformed into gems.” His discourse, so sweet and pregnant with meaning, convinced me that he was none other than rīdwān, the warden of paradise. According to the ta‘wīl, paradise is naught but the da‘wa of the Prophet’s progeny. I told him of my soul’s grief and frailty, urging him not to look at the strength of my body, or the redness of my cheeks. Never would I touch a medicine without proof and demonstration, said I. He reassured me that he was a physician of that city and encouraged me to describe my illness to him.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{21} Dīwān (Minûwi edition), p. 511.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 511–512; Safar-nāma, pp. 88–101.
I then posed all the questions that ailed me, causing my intellectual sickness. He said he would give me medicine with proof and demonstration, but first would place a mighty seal on my lips. I consented to this and so he sealed my lips. He presented two witnesses from the external and the internal worlds (āfāq and anfūs), for my nourishment. Thus my treatment began gradually. Lo! My illness vanished. He removed the seal from my lips and allowed me to speak. Finally, he took me to the Imām of the time, [al-Mustanṣīr bi’llāh] to perform the oath of allegiance (bay‘a).

In the Diwān, evoking imagery of the oath sworn by the Prophet’s companions centuries earlier, Nāṣir describes his own experience:

_Dastam ba kaf-i dast-i nabī dād ba bay‘at_
_Zīr-i shajar-i ālī-yi pur-sāya-yi muthmar._

He placed my hand in that of the Prophet,
A pledge made under the lofty tree, shady and fruitful.

It suffices here to say that the course of his life changed forever. Henceforth he devoted himself to the service of the Imām of his time. He expresses his gratitude for the Imām’s favours in the following words:

_Har jā ki buwam ta bi-ziyam man gah-ū bīgāh_
_Bar shukr-i tū rānam qalam-ū miḥbar-ū daftar._

Wherever I may be, so long as I live, time and again,
My pen, inkpot and parchment will bespeak my gratitude to you.

Nāṣir rapidly climbed the ladder of the religious hierarchy (ḥudūd-i dīn) until he was appointed the ḥuijat of Khurāsān. He left Cairo on Tuesday, 14 Dhu‘l-Ḥijja 441/9 May, 1050, arriving back in Balkh in 444/1052. Here and in the surrounding regions he began to preach the Ismā‘īlī da‘wā. Both his Diwān and Abu‘l-Ma‘ālī’s Bayān al-adīyan reveal his initial successes. However, this soon drew the attention of adversaries who instigated the mobs against him. They persecuted him and burned his house down. Fleeing Balkh he took refuge in Yumgan, which was then ruled by an Ismā‘īlī prince, ‘Alī b. al-Asad. From his newfound home he actively and peacefully spread the Ismā‘īlī da‘wā. As he says:

_Har sāl yakā kitāb-i da‘wat_

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23 Literally food and water, which symbolize tanzīl and ta‘wil, Wajh, p. 250.
25 Ibid., p. 513. Here the rhyme requires muthmīr to be muthmar.
26 Ibid., p. 515.
Every year a book of da‘wat
I send to the corners of the world

He lavishes praise on Yumgan for giving him refuge and as a centre of the da‘wa:

\[ \text{Garchi zindān-i Sulaymān-i nabī būda ast} \]
\[ \text{Nīst zindān bal bāghist marā Yumgān} \]

Though Yumgan was Solomon’s prison
'Tis not so for me—it is a garden.

\[ \text{Kān-i 'ilm-ū khirad-ū ĥikmat Yumgān ast} \]
\[ \text{Tā man-i mard-ī khiradmand ba Yumgānam} \]

So long as a sage like me is here
Yumgan is the mine of knowledge, intellect and wisdom.

\[ \text{În jāst ba Yumgān turā dabistān} \]
\[ \text{Dar Balkh majūš na dar Bukhārā} \]

Right here in Yumgan is the school [of wisdom] for you
Seek it not in Balkh, nor Bukhara.

Nāšir wrote most of his works in Yumgan and passed away there after 469/1076. Among his extant works are his \text{Dīwān} (Collection of Poems), \text{Zād al-musāfirīn} (Provision of Travellers), \text{Wajh al-dīn} (Face of the Religion), \text{Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn} (Compiler of the Two Wisdoms), \text{Khwān al-ikhwān} (The Brethren’s Dining Table), \text{Gushāyish wa rahāyish} (Opening and Relieving), \text{Rawshanā t-nāma} (The Book of Illumination), \text{Safar-nāma} (The Book of Travels) and \text{Gharā‘ib al-ḥisāb wa ‘ajā‘ib al-hussāb} (The Wonders of Arithmetic and Marvels of Mathematicians).

2. Salient aspects of the Ismā‘īlī doctrine of the Qā’im:

Ismā‘īlī Imāmī Shi‘ism belongs to the esoteric branch of Islam. In fact, one of the titles given to the community by its opponents is \text{al-Bāṭiniyyah} or the Esotericists, because of the emphasis on the \text{bāṭinī} or esoteric aspects of Islam. Shi‘ah Islam, and Ismā‘īlimism in particular, has certain characteristics in its interpretation of faith that permeate all its teachings and particularly its concept of the

\[ \text{Dīwān} \] (Minuwī edition), p. 221.
\[ \text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 412.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 196.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 406.} \]
\[ \text{For this title see my new edition and translation to be published by the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.} \]
\[ \text{Abd al-Karīm Shahristānī, \textit{al-Mīlāl wa-al-nīhal}}, \text{ed. M. F. Badrān (Cairo, 1956), p. 172.} \]
Qā'īm and the *qiyyāma*. Thus, in order to understand the doctrine of the Qā'īm, it is important to have a clear idea of these characteristics. Among these, the most important are the perennial need for the innate human intellect's (ʾaql-i gharīzī) nurture with true knowledge and the continuity of a Divinely illumined and designated Teacher to fulfil this need. Just as the human body requires fresh physical food for its growth and health, in the same way the innate human intellect requires fresh spiritual and intellectual knowledge and guidance for its spiritual and intellectual growth and health. These two characteristics are based on the obvious fact that the God-given innate intellect is not self-sufficient in the knowledge of God. It is capable of learning and has some rudimentary knowledge, but is itself not learned (ʿālim). One of the eminent dāʿīs, Abū Yaʿqūb Sījistānī (d. after 360/970), many of whose works survive, considers the innate intellect the Creator's first messenger to human beings. However, its knowledge is insufficient for the true recognition of the Creator. Therefore the Creator sends another Messenger blessed with perfect knowledge to teach and perfect it.³⁶

Another eminent dāʿī, Hibatu’lllāh al-Muʿayyad fīʾDīn Shīrāzī, (470/1078) referring to this insufficiency of the innate intellect on its own, says:

*Kam nāzīrin bi-ʾaynihi lā yuḥṣiru
Wa-muḥṣīrin bi-l-qalbi lā yastabṣiru
Wa-naẓāru l-marʾi lahu sharāʾiṭu
Tārikhā fiʾz-ṣulmātī khābīṭu
Wa-tilka an yuṭada šamsun aw qamarun
Aw shuʿalun aw lā fa-lā yughniʾn-naẓāru
Ka-dhālikaʾl-ʾaqlu ladaʾr tabaṣṣuri
Bi-dhāṭīhi fī ḥayyīzīʾt-tahayyuri
Illā bi-nūrin ʾādīdin min khārīji
Faʾinda hu yaʾruju fīʾl-maʾārījī³⁷*

Many are the observers who cannot see with their eyes;
Many are the reflectors who cannot reflect with their intellects.
Because man's eyes have certain requirements
He who abandons them, fumbles in the darkness(es).
And those [requirements] are to find a sun or moon
Or flames, otherwise the eyesight does not suffice.
Similarly, while reflecting by itself,
The intellect is bound by perplexity,
Except when it [reflects] with a helping light from outside
Then it ascends the ladders [of reflection].

In the above verses, the innate intellect is compared with human eyes, which have the capacity to see. However, no matter how sound and healthy the eyes may be, they cannot see without external light. In the same way, although a human being may be very intelligent, his intellect cannot duly recognise the Creator on its own. Equally, even if there is abundant sunlight, it is useless for someone who does not have sound eyesight. Therefore God has sent His Messengers only to those who have a sound intellect. The Divine message does not apply to human beings who do not have a sound rational faculty, such as children, the unconscious (like people asleep), or the insane. That is, the first messenger and the last Messenger have to work in tandem. Although the last Messenger is superior in status, he cannot work with those who are not granted the innate intellect as the first messenger. Thus, God has addressed only those who have a sound rational faculty or the innate intellect. There is no doubt that the innate intellect, by receiving true knowledge from the perfect intellect, which the last Messenger embodies, eventually becomes like the perfect intellect, but without his upbringing it remains imperfect. The last Messenger in the Isma‘īlī da‘wa is described as Kāmilun fi dhātihi wa-mukammilun lī-ghayrihi (“He within himself is perfect and he perfects others”).

Thus, from the very inception of creation, in view of the perennial need of the innate intellect, God appointed Adam as His khalīfa (vicegerent) by breathing into him His own Spirit (15:29–31; 38:72–74), and gave him His own knowledge by teaching him His names (2:31). Thus, his knowledge is the source of every kind of knowledge. Al-Mu‘ayyad writes: “As far as the belief of the people of truth (al-mufîqûn) is concerned, all sciences, including the intellectual ones (al‘aqîyyûn), which they (the philosophers) claim, are gathered together in the sciences of the Prophets, from which they have branched out and ramified.”

Adam’s appointment as khalīfa and Divinely illumined Teacher (mu‘allim) was not confined to his time. Rather, in view of the perennial need of nurturing human intellects, God continued to appoint both Prophets and Imāms in the cycle of Prophethood (dawr-i nubuwwat) and Imāms in the cycle of Imamate (dawr-i imāmat) throughout human history till the cycle of Resurrection (dawr-i qiyyāmat). Thus, this chain of Divine appointments continues from Adam till to-

39 These and other such Qur’ānic verses relevant to the continuity of Divine guidance can be found in the works of Qādī Nu‘mān’s Da‘ā‘īm al-Islām, Ja‘far bin Manṣūr al-Yāman’s Sarā‘ir al-nuṭqâqâ’ and al-Shawāhid wa-al-bayān, Sijistānī’s al-Iftikhār, al-Mu‘ayyad’s al-Majālīs and Naṣīr’s Wajh al-dīn, etc.
41 “Both” in the sense that, in the cycle of Prophethood, the Prophets need to share their burden of giving esoteric interpretation or ta‘wil of the Divine message, which they bring in an exoteric or tanzilī form. See Qur’ānic verses (20:25–32).
day in an unbroken line, as He says: “Verily, Allah chose Adam and Noah, and
the descendants of Abraham and the descendants of 'Imrān above (all His) crea-
tures. Offspring one of another” (3:33-34). Further, with reference to the pres-
ence of the Imām in every time, He says: “The day We will invite every people
with their Imām” (17:71). More emphatically still, God says: “They intend to
extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah refuses but to perfect
His light, though the infidels may detest it. He it is Who sent His Messengers
with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all reli-
gions” (9:32-33). The last two verses are extremely important and relevant to the
Shī'ah understanding of the doctrine of the Qā'īm, as the perfection of God’s
light and making His religion prevail over all religions, belong to the time of the
Qā'īm, as we will see later on. The preceding verses, which the Ismā’īlī dā'īs
quote in their works, establish the necessity and continuity of a Divinely illu-
minded Teacher.

Regarding the teaching of the innate intellect, the fact that people are diverse
and have different capacities demands that the Teacher not impart knowledge to
all of them in a simple, monolithic way, but in a comprehensive manner that, on
the one hand is inclusive of all of them and, on the other gradually reveals the reali-
ties to deserving individuals until the advent of the Qā'īm, in whose time all the
realities will be divulged. In order to do this, when a nāṭīq comes, by God’s com-
mand he uses two processes to convey His message: the tanzīl and the ta’wil.

Tanzīl literally means “sending down” or “bringing down.” It is the process
by which intelligible spiritual realities are explained in the form of perceptible
material parables and allegories. Ta’wil literally means “to take something back
to its origin.” It is the process by which the veils of parables and allegories are
gradually removed from the realities until the time of the Qā’īm when they will
be divulged completely. Tanzīl is the transformation of the subtle (la’tīf) into
dense (kathīf), and ta’wil is the reverse process. The former gives a physical
form to spiritual realities while the latter gives spiritual meaning to physical pa-
rables and allegories. Each requires the other for the fulfilment of its purpose.
Nonetheless, tanzīl is likened to the husk, body or brackish water, whereas ta’wil
is compared to grain, soul and lustrous, precious pearls in the ocean’s depths.

Describing these aspects of the Qur’ān, Nāṣir says in his Dīwān:

Daryā-yi sukhanhā sukhan-i khūb-i khudā’yst
Pur gawhar-i bā-qīmat-ū pur lu’lu’-yi lālā

42 For the names of the Imāms from Adam, God’s Vicegerent up to Imām Abū Ṭālib, the
father of Imām ‘Alī, see Ja‘far bin Mansūr al-Yaman’s Sarā’ir al-nuḥaqā’, particularly pp. 27–
87; See also Shahristānī’s al-Milal, pp. 189–195, where he mentions how the light that desc-
cended to Imām Ismā’īl from Prophet Ibrāhīm continued in his progeny secretly.
43 Ismā’īl al-Mu’izz li-Dīnillah, Ta’wil al-sharī’a, Ms in my private collection, fols. 113–
115; ‘Allāmah Nāṣīr Hunzai, Qurrratu’l-ayn (Karachi, 1991) pp. 81–86; Nāṣīr-i Khusraw,
God’s Word is the Ocean of Words, 
Brimful with precious, lustrous pearls.
Its tanzıl is like the ocean’s brackish waters 
While its ta’wil is like pearls for the wise.
As the pearls lie scattered in the ocean’s depths 
Why do you scamper along its shores? Seek a diver!
When you are searching for the meaning of revelation, 
Do not be content with speech like a donkey braying aloud.44

Elsewhere in his Dīwān, he again says:
Dīn rā tanast zāhir-ū ta’wil rūḥ-i īst
Tan zinda juz ba-rūḥ ba-gūr kujā shudast
The [Qur’ān’s] exoteric aspect is religion’s body, the ta’wil its soul
Where in the world is a body alive without the soul?45 Ta’wil

is necessitated not only by the different strata of people, but also by the very nature of God’s speech, where some verses are related to the world of command (‘ālam-i amr) and some to the world of creation (‘ālam-i khalq), some to the perfect men like Prophets as in verses (53:3–4; 8:17; 48:10) Allah considers the Prophet’s speech, action and hand as His own, and some to ordinary people. However, if these subtleties are disregarded they lead to preposterous consequences. For instance, if verses such as (76:30): “And you do not will except that which Allah wills,” which refer to great souls liberated from the interference of carnal desires, are applied to ordinary people who are prone to perpetrate all kinds of wrong and evil acts, then God Himself will be responsible for their actions and His ordinances will be meaningless. Naṣir referring to such consequences says:

‘Uqūbat muhālast agar but-parast
Ba-farmān-i īzid parastad șanam
Sitam-gār zī tū Khudā’yst agar
Ba-dast-i tū û kard bar man sitam

It is preposterous to punish an idol-worshipper
If he worships the idol by God’s command.

If I am oppressed by your hand, 
According to you, the oppressor is God Himself!\textsuperscript{46}

In addition to the Qur’ān there are certain ahā[dīth of the Prophet, which also do not make sense without \textit{ta‘wil}, as al-Mu‘ayyad referring to a ḥadīth about the blessings of the \textit{Laylatu ‘l-Qadr} shows the difficulties and absurdities of its literal meaning. The \textit{ḥadīth} states: “On this night the devils are in fetters and in prison and every harmful thing is prevented.” He says: “If this is understood in a literal sense, as people tend to do, it has no meaning (\textit{ḥaqīqa}), because on that night the infidels, who are the followers of the devils, neither refrain from their disbelief, nor do they abandon their harm, just as the vicious and poisonous beasts and reptiles do not cease their stinging nor their harming. Thus, the reality of this is with respect to its meaning or \textit{ta‘wil}, not with respect to its exoteric words, because it is only those who are attached to that noble \textit{ḥadd} [i.e., the bāb of the Qā‘im as we will see later on] who are secure and protected from the insinuations of the devils who slander and harm the souls, just as the poisonous animals harm the bodies.”\textsuperscript{47}

The impulse to seek a deeper, esoteric meaning in the Qur’ān is further spurred by the holy Book’s own words, such as, “Verily, We have struck for humankind in this Qur’ān every kind of parable” (30:58); “And those parables We strike for humankind so that they may reflect” (59:21). Further, the holy Prophet had also said of the nature of the Qur’ān, “Indeed, the Qur’ān has a zāhīr (exoteric form) and a bāṭīn (esoteric meaning), and every bāṭīn has seven bāṭīns,”\textsuperscript{48} according to another version of this \textit{ḥadīth}, “seventy bāṭīns.”\textsuperscript{49}

The preceding examples prove the necessity of the \textit{ta‘wil} of the Qur’ān. In Shī‘a Islam, in particular, the Qur’ān itself emphasizes not only the necessity of \textit{ta‘wil}, but also the incumbency of turning to those who are authorized to execute it, identified in verse (3:7) as the rāsikhūn fi‘l-‘ilm, those firmly grounded in knowledge. According to Shī‘a Islam, this verse establishes not only the \textit{ta‘wil} of the Qur’ān, but also the rāsikhūn fi‘l-‘ilm who know it.\textsuperscript{50}

Having a clear idea of \textit{tanzīl} and \textit{ta‘wil} from the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ī point of view, let us examine how they interpret the Qā‘im and the qiyāma. We have already seen how difficult the knowledge of qiyāma is. However, Ismā‘īlī dā‘īs assert that by duly obeying the Imāms of their time, who are the rāsikhūn fi‘l-‘ilm, and to whom God has vouchsafed the knowledge of the unseen (‘ilm al-ghayb, \textsuperscript{46} Diwān (Minuwī edition), p. 62. \textsuperscript{47} Al-Majāls, vol. III, p. 11. \textsuperscript{48} Badī‘u’z-Zamān Firūzanfar, \textit{Ahādīth-i Mathnawī} (Tehran, 1347 Sh.H.), p. 83. \textsuperscript{49} Qāḍī Nu‘mān, \textit{Asās al-ta‘wil}, ed. ‘A. Tāmīr (Beirut, 1960), p. 27. \textsuperscript{50} See my article “\textit{Ta‘wil} of the Qur’ān and the Sharī‘a according to Ḥakīm Nāṣīr-i Khūsraw” in \textit{Nasir-i Khosraw: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow}, ed. S. Niyozov and R. Nazariyev (Khujand, 2005), pp. 165–171.
they can receive the knowledge of the secrets of God's Book. Thus, Abū Ya'qūb Sījistānī, who has already been mentioned, says in his *Kitāb al-Iftikhār* (Book of Pride): “Among the greatest of matters in which the people of realities (*ahl al-haqā’iq*) take pride is the recognition of qiyāma, its causes, and the tokens and signs that follow these, about which the people of the exoteric (*ahl al-zāhir*) are in the dark.”

Many other dā’īs have written extensively about the qiyāma and the Qā’im. To mention a few, Sījistānī in his *Ithbāt al-nubū’āt* (The Proof of Prophecies), *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Unveiling of the Veiled), *al-Bāhira* (The Dazzling), Qādī Nu’mān (d. 363/973) in his *Ta’wil al-Da‘ā’im* (Esoteric Interpretation of the Da‘ā’im) and *Asās al-ta‘wīl* (The Foundation of Esoteric Interpretation), Ja‘far bin Mansūr al-Yaman (d. 380/990) in his *Sarā’ir wa-asrār al-muṭaqā‘* (Innermost Realities and Secrets of the nāṭiqs), Ḥāmid al-Dīn Aḥmad Kirmānī (d. after 411/1021) in his *Rāḥat al-‘āqīl* (The Peace of the Intellect) and *Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* (The Book of Meadows), al-Mu‘ayyad in his eight volumes of *Majālis*, Naṣīr in his *Wajh al-dīn* and others have all written about it. The gist and central theme of these works is that the qiyāma is like the “Recompense of action” (*pādāsh-i ‘amal*) and the Qā’im is going to compensate the people justly according to their deeds, good or bad.

In Ismā‘īlī interpretation, creation, as Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī says: “The creation according to Islam is not a unique act in a given time, but a perpetual and constant event” is continuous and accordingly resurrection as the recompense of action also continues. Further, as in creation there are small and big changes, in resurrection too there are similar changes. These resurrections are represented in diverse spans of time in the Qur’ān, such as the “twinkling of an eye” (16:77), “a day equal to a thousand years” (32:5) and “a day equal to fifty thousand years” (70:4). However, as already mentioned above, it is not an open, physical event. It is a hidden, spiritual event and therefore its portents (*ashrāṭ al-sā‘ā*) and all its catastrophic and pleasant consequences mentioned in the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* are spiritual events. Therefore, the aforementioned literature does not discuss the physical aspect of the Qā’im, such as his features, his appearance in the east or the west, his wars, his period of rule, etc., as is commonly found in non-Ismā‘īlī literature. If such matters are mentioned at all, they are taken in an esoteric *ta‘wil* sense. There is no doubt that one thing is emphasised: that he is going to be one from the continuing line of Imāms from the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, as prophesied by him. He will establish equality and fill the earth with justice and equity. He will do the work of resurrection on God’s behalf, just as many of His chosen servants have done and do His work, such as the Prophets, Imāms and angels.

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54 *Al-Iftikhār*, pp. 189–190.
To elaborate further, among all the synonyms of the *qiyāma* in the Qurʾān, the term *sāʿa*\(^{55}\) (Hour) perhaps explains its nature most vividly. The *sāʿa* conveys the concept of time from a moment faster than the twinkling of an eye (16:77) to countless spans of time. This suggests that there is one kind of *qiyāma* that constantly continues in this world. The combination of these short *qiyāmas* creates other *qiyāmas*, such as the *qiyāma* of a minute, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year, a century, a millennium and so on. It is on this basis that Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* have expounded the doctrine of *qiyāma* and the Qāʾīm. According to them, this is not a single event, but rather a continuation of events, which are called cycles, divided into major and minor ones. A major cycle consists of the six *nāṭiqs* and the Qāʾīm, each having a span of a thousand years approximately, totalling seven thousand years. A minor cycle is the cycle of one *nāṭiq* of one thousand years consisting of six Imāms, with the exception of the sixth *nāṭiq*’s cycle. The *nāṭiqs* and the Qāʾīm are each called “lord of the cycle” (*ṣāhib al-ḍawr*).\(^{56}\)

The best explanation of the *qiyāma* is exemplified by the *taʿwil* of the six days of creation and the seventh day of establishing the *musāwāt* (equality) on the Throne (*istawāʿ al-ʿl-ʿarsh*), as mentioned in several verses, such as: “Verily, your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established *musāwāt* on the Throne” (7:54). Al-Muʿayyad argues that, if this verse is taken literally, on the one hand, it removes omnipotence from God Who has the power to create a thing by simply saying “Be,” and, on the other, leads to the inconceivability of measuring days without the existence of the sun and the earth! Therefore, this verse is not related to the origination of the external world, which He created by the power of *Kun* (“Be!”). These are not physical days, they are the parables for the six *nāṭiqs* and the Qāʾīm of the world of religion. Each of the six *nāṭiqs* brings a *sharīʿa* (law) according to the needs and exigencies of his time and the people act according to it. Then comes the Qāʾīm, who takes account of the peoples’ deeds and recompenses them justly and establishes justice and equity.

Having established the Qāʾīm as the seventh day of the week of religion, al-Muʿayyad further elucidates his relationship with the Prophet and his sublime and mighty status in the true *daʿwa*. Explaining that the seven days of the week symbolise the seven lords of the cycles, he says that Friday (*al-jumuʿa*) symbolises Muḥammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and Saturday (*al-sabt*) symbolises the Qāʾīm (peace be upon his mention) from his descendants. The Qāʾīm receives all their powers and completes all their shares of *taʿyīd*. He is the

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lord of conspicuous, pure intellectual da'wa, and his cycle is the cycle of comfort, bliss and mercy.\textsuperscript{57} Also in the ta'wil of Ramaḍān and the Laylatu'l-Qadr which falls on the odd nights of the last ten nights, he says that by the Ramaḍān in which is revealed the Qur’ān, a guidance for humankind, clear proofs of guidance and the criterion, is the Prophet’s wasī (legatee) and in Laylatu'l-Qadr by Qadr (Power) is meant the Qā'īm-i ʿal-i Muḥammad, who is the lord of reward and punishment (ṣāhib al-thawāb wa'l-'iqāb). During his time the worth of those who do good and those who do evil will be identified, and by the night (Layl) of Qadr is meant his bāb (threshold) and ḥujjat (proof), who will precede him. The revelation of the Qur’ān in it refers to its reality and the knowledge of its ta'wil. Thus, the bāb of the Qā’īm is the lord of the universal explanation and the real unveiling (ṣāhib al-bayān al-kulli wa-al-kashf al-ḥaqiqi).

3. Naṣir’s Exposition of the Salient Aspects of the Doctrine of the Qā’īm:

It has already been pointed out that the Imam is the ultimate source of perfect knowledge. For any ḥadd under the Imam to claim knowledge as his own is a grave transgression of his bounds,\textsuperscript{59} since the ḥudūd receive it from the Imam of their time. Thus, all the elements contained in the works of Naṣir’s predecessors are also to be found in his. Among his predecessors he particularly praises al-Mu’ayyad in his Dīwān and it may appear as though he has taken everything from him and others. However, in the Isma’īlī ḥudūd, when someone reaches the level of a ḥujjat, he receives knowledge directly from the Imam. This is known as ta’yīd or spiritual help. In such cases, the similarity of ideas does not mean appropriating them from others, but that they are from the same source of knowledge. Since Naṣir had reached the rank of a ḥujjat, his knowledge was ta’yīdī knowledge, as can be assessed from his experience with the Imam, about which he writes:

\begin{quote}
Bar jān-i man chū nūr-i imām-i zamān bi-tāft
Laylu’s-sarār būdam-ū shamsu’d-ḥuḥā shudam
Nām-i buzurg imām-i zamānast zīn qibal
Man az zamān chū zuhra badū bar samā shudam\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

When the light of the Imam of the time shone upon my soul, Even though I was dark as night, I became the glorious sun. The Supreme Name is the Imam of the time; By which I ascended, Venus-like, from the earth to heaven.

\textsuperscript{59} Wajh, pp. 141–142.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 139.
He also alludes to the opening of his inner eye and says:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Gar man darîn sarây na-bînâm darân sarây} \\
&\text{Imrûz jâ-yi khwîsh chi bâyad ba$âr marâ\textsuperscript{61}}
\end{align*}
\]

If in this world I cannot see my place in that world

What use have I of these eyes?

Na$ir’s writings contain all those essential characteristics of Ismâ’îli Shi’ism, such as the position of the innate intellect as a special gift from God to human-kind and its need of upbringing with the true knowledge by a Divinely appointed Teacher, first given to Adam and continuing in his descendants, the Prophets and the Imâms. As Imam ‘Alî says: “The knowledge which Adam brought and all that by which the Prophets were distinguished is in Mu$âammad, the Seal of Prophets, and in his pure progeny. Where then are you misled, rather where do you go?”\textsuperscript{62}

As far as the innate intellect is concerned, Na$ir also considers it the first \textit{hujjat} or messenger, which requires the help of the second \textit{hujjat}\textsuperscript{63} or Messenger. Thus, he says:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Chashm-i sar bî a$fâb-i äsmân bî-kâr gasht} \\
&\text{Chashm-i dil bî a$fâb-i dîn chirâ bî-kâr nîst.}\textsuperscript{64}
\end{align*}
\]

If the head’s eye becomes useless without heaven’s sun;

Why not the heart’s eye without religion’s sun?

Having established the indispensability of Divine guidance, he emphasises the need to search personally and to submit to the Divine Guide in order to attain his light, as he says:

“Know that when I realized that I had dominion over other animals and that their lives were protected because of my oversight, such that the benefit of their creation was not lost by being destroyed by rapacious beasts, I came to know that the Creator has appointed someone to protect me so that the benefit of my creation would not be lost so long as I remained in his protection. Therefore, I searched for my sovereign and sought from him relief from the agony of ignorance and eternal perdition, like an animal that runs to its owner’s house to escape the torture of cold, heat and the fear of rapacious beasts. I found him; in relation to him I am as cattle in relation to humankind. He relieved me from the pain of ignorance and enabled me to reach the breeze of spring from the simoom (hot wind) of the speeches of deceivers. He liberated my soul from the venom of the

\textsuperscript{61} Diwân (Mînuwî edition), p. 12.

\textsuperscript{62} Da’â’im, vol. I, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{63} Na$ir-i Khusrâw, Khwân al-Ikhwân, ed. ‘A. Qawîm (Tehran, 1959), p. 29.

\textsuperscript{64} Diwân (Taqawi edition), p. 78.
people of taqtild (blind conformity), ta’til and tashbīh and quenched and sated my soul with soul-nourishing food and drink.66

More vigorously still, he says about the indispensability of the Divine Guide, the Imam:

Har ki nūr-i āftāb-i dīn jūdā gashṭah azū
Rūzhā-yi ā hamīsha juz shabān-i tār nīst68
He from whom the sun of religion’s light is separated,
His days are always nothing but dark nights.

Nāṣir also emphasises that the Qā’im is not separate from the line of Imamat, he culminates a great cycle as intended by God. As for the culmination of a cycle, the numerous examples of the number seven in the Qur’ān show that He completes things in seven stages, for instance the physical creation of humankind is described in (23:12–14) as: “Verily We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him of a [drop of] sperm, in a firm resting place; then We made it into a clot, then We made the clot into a lump, then We made the lump flesh, then We clothed the bones with flesh, thereafter We caused it to grow into another creation.” In the same way, the creation of the world of religion is completed in the cycles of the six nātiqān, while recompense takes place in the seventh cycle, that of the Qā’im. It is important to note that “another creation” (khalq ākhar) does not occur separately from the previous stages of the extract of clay (sulāla), sperm (nuṭfā), clot (‘alaqa), lump (mudgha), bones (‘izzām) and flesh (lahm). Nonetheless, “another creation” is the end and the rest are the means. Similarly, the chain of Prophets and Imāms is important, but the Qā’im is the completion of a Divine programme. His cycle is the seventh day of the week of religion.

We have seen earlier in this paper that, whereas the literalists consider the qiyāma or resurrection as a single cosmic event that will occur in the future, Ismā‘īlīs consider it a continuous chain of small and great events, which they call minor and major cycles. A major cycle consists of six nātiqān and the Qā’im, and a minor cycle consists of six Imāms between one nātiq and another, with the exception of the sixth nātiq. Thus, countless resurrections have taken place already and they will continue to occur in the future. As Nāṣir says:

65 Ta’īl: A concept that upholds the belief that the world is eternal (qadīm) and has no creator, rather the creator of its generated beings (mawāllīd) are the heavens and the stars, which have always existed.
66 Tashbīh: A concept which maintains that God possesses in a true sense all those human attributes mentioned in the Qur’ān.
67 Khwān al-ikhwān, p. 4.
68 Diwān (Taqawī edition), p. 78.
Huwa’l-awwal, huwa’l-akhir, huwa’z-zāhir, huwa’l-bātin, Munazzah māliku’l-mulkī ki bi-pāyān hashr dārad

He is the first, He is the last, He is the manifest, He is the hidden.

He, the pure Sovereign of the Kingdom, has endless resurrections.

In these endless qiyāmas, the cycle of the Qā’īm is the most important as the Divine programme culminates in his cycle and he is granted extraordinary power, as testified to in the Qurān: “A day when no soul has power at all for any (other) soul. The command on that day shall belong to Allāh” (82:19); “Whose is the sovereignty this day? It is Allāh’s, the One, the Overwhelming” (40:16). Nāṣir writes in his Shish Faṣl that all the previous Messengers came to give people the glad news of the Qā’īm’s glorious and blissful advent and warn them of his overwhelming power and strength. The great news (al-naba’ al-‘aẓīm) mentioned in the Qurān (78:1–3) belongs to him, which was emphatically prophesied by the Prophet as well.\(^\text{70}\)

In his Jāmi’, Nāṣir argues that the advent of the Qā’īm is an inevitable and necessary consequence of the creation of religion mentioned in numerous verses, such as: “God is He that created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days and then He established equality on the Throne (istawā lāl-‘arsh).”\(^\text{71}\) In his Wajh, he also emphasises the finality of the Prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad. He says that, since human beings have six sides, God sent six nāṭiqs representing each of these sides, i.e. Adam for the top, Noah for the left side, Abraham the back, Moses the bottom, Jesus the right side and Muḥammad the front. Each of them told the people to work and promised them that one day they would be recompensed for their work. Nāṣir continues that, since human beings have six sides with which to perform work and for every side a commander (kār-farmā) came to teach them to work, logically it entails that no other commander, or prophet, will come [to command them to work]. Once it is established that the sixth nāṭiq, i.e. Prophet Muḥammad has come and completed the purpose of Prophethood, the expectation of another nāṭiq becomes meaningless. Now, since it is the habit of people to demand recompense for their work, justice necessitates that someone must come to compensate them. This will be the Qā’īm, not as the lord of a shari‘a, but the lord of reckoning.\(^\text{72}\) That is, he will reckon the deeds of the people, good or bad, and recompense them accordingly.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., p. 134.
\(^{70}\) See Footnote 3.
\(^{71}\) Jāmi’, pp. 163–165; here Nāṣir takes to task the exoteric commentators for their ridicu- lous exegesis, particularly reading istawā instead of istawā—see Shafique N. Virani’s article “The Days of Creation in the Thought of Nasir Khusraw” in Nasir Khusraw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (Khujand, 2005), pp. 74–83.
\(^{72}\) Wajh, pp. 62–63.
In his *Jāmi‘* Nāṣir further emphasises that the meaning of *istawā‘ alā-l-‘arsh* is the execution of God’s command by the Qā’īm, as he is God’s Throne. After the six days of creation elapse, his day will appear and the command of God will be applied to the people by force, as he says: “This will be the day of establishing the truth and the people of intellect will be in bliss in every respect and the darkness of ignorance will vanish by the light of his knowledge”,73 as God says: “And the earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord” (39:69). However, the blessings on the day of *qiyyāma* will be for the believers only, while for the disbelievers it will be equally tortuous. There will be “magnanimity (*karāmat*) for the believers, but for the disbelievers there will be indemnity (*gharāmat*)”.74 In another example, he compares the Qā’īm to fire, which has both light and smoke—light is the share of the believers and smoke that of the disbelievers.75

To show the stark difference between the souls of the believers and the polytheists before and after the Qā’īm’s advent, Nāṣir gives an example of two trees, one fresh and green and the other dead with its roots shrivelled up. During winter, it is difficult to see the difference between them. However the one that is fresh and green looks forward to the spring, when it will sprout green leaves and fragrant colourful flowers and finally delicious fruit, whereas the one that is dried up will become darker and drier by the day until it completely shrivels up.76

With respect to religious practices, the intellectual *sharī‘a* (*sharī‘at-i ‘aqīl*) will continue and the conventional *sharī‘a* (*sharī‘at-i waqf*) will become superfluous. That is, the realities (*ḥaqā‘iq*), which were previously protected by the layers of allegories, will be accessible. There will no longer be a need for allegories and parables, and the *ta‘wil* will be given in its utterly pure form (*ta‘wil-i mujarrad-i maḥḍ*). Thus, very few practices will remain, and the *ta‘wil* knowledge will be available in its sublime form. The Prophet had prophesied such a time in saying: “You are in an age in which anyone of you who abandons one-tenth of what is ordered (to do), will perish. Then, a time will come when anyone of them who shall observe one-tenth of what is now ordered to do will be redeemed.”77

Finally, with respect to recognition of the Qā‘īm, on the basis of the *ta‘wil* of Ramaḍān and Laylatu‘l-Qadr occurring as one of the oddly numbered nights of its last ten nights,78 and of some other practices,79 Nāṣir writes in his *Wajh* that

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73 *Jāmi‘*, pp. 165–166.
74 *Wajh*, p. 176.
75 *Shish Faṣl*, p. 43.
76 Ibid., p. 43.
79 Ibid., p. 176.
the Qā'īm is one of the direct descendants of the Prophet's asās and his time will
be the most glorious with respect to knowledge. The believers will be so spiri­
tually advanced that they will be able to communicate with spiritual entities.⁸⁰

Nāṣir describes another difference between the previous Imāms and the
Qā'īm. An Imam’s son becomes his bāb or the supreme hůjjat, but in the case of
the Qā'īm al-qiyāma, his father will act as his bāb. The Qā'īm will not act openly,
rather he will work through his father and his recognition will be extremely
difficult, because he can be recognized only through the asās, Imām, bāb, hůjjat
and dā'ī. His father will apparently be the most glorious Imām among the Imāms
throughout the cycle. His position will be like the Laylatu'l-Qadr or the night of
power, which is better than a thousand months. That is, the bāb or the supreme
hůjjat of the Qā'īm will be superior to a thousand Imāms in knowledge.

To conclude, the doctrine of the Qā’īm is an universal doctrine couched in
different terms and expressed in varied forms. However, within the Islamic con­
text, according to Ismā‘īlī Shi‘ism, he is one of the Imāms in the chain of Proph­
ets and Imāms in whose time the Divine light becomes perfect, as promised by
God Himself in verses (9:32; 61:8). Indeed, the Divine light never increases or
decreases as such, therefore its perfection is in relation to people’s receptivity of
it. Just as the light of the physical sun does not increase or decrease, but changes
with respect to the earth’s position relative to it. The Ismā‘īlī doctrine of the
Qā’īm can be likened to the analogy of the sun and its effect on the planet earth
in different seasons from 21st December to 21st March and 21st June. Although
the sun is the same, its effect on the earth’s surface is different on these days, in
terms of the length of days and the heat generated by it. It is thus obvious that
Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s doctrine of the Qā’īm differs profoundly from those who fol­
low the Book and the šarī‘a literally.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 193.