



7 Pillars of Islam

A circular structure with seven classical columns under a blue sky with a bright sun. The columns are arranged in a circle, and the sun is shining through the center, creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue with a few wispy clouds on the right side. The overall scene is bright and uplifting.

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Introduction

There are two concepts of the pillars of Islam.

Some Muslims believe in 5 pillars of Islam and Shi`a Imami Ismailis believe in 7 pillars of Islam. Just as pillars support structures these pillars are what support Islam.

What are the 7 pillars of Shi`a Imami Ismaili Islam?

They are: Walaya, Tahara, Salah, Zakah, Sawm, Hajj and Jihad.



Walaya

Walāya, which is the office or position of the walī (master, guardian), means the belief that the Prophet and the Imam of the time from his progeny have a greater right over the believers than they themselves (Qurān 33:6), and it entails total devotion and submission to them.

According to Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir, ‘Islam is based on seven pillars. Walāya is the most excellent of them, because the recognition of the rest is reached through the walāya and the walī.’

The pillar of walāya is based on verse Qurān 5:55: ‘Indeed, your walī is God and His Messenger and those who believe and establish the ṣalāh and give zakāh while doing rukū’.’ Historically speaking, the one who gave zakāh in the state of rukū’ was Imam ‘Alī, and hence by ‘those who believe and establish ṣalāh and give zakāh while doing rukū’ are meant Imam ‘Alī and the Imams from his progeny.

Walaya

What does Walaya mean?

Walaya means total submission and devotion to the Imam

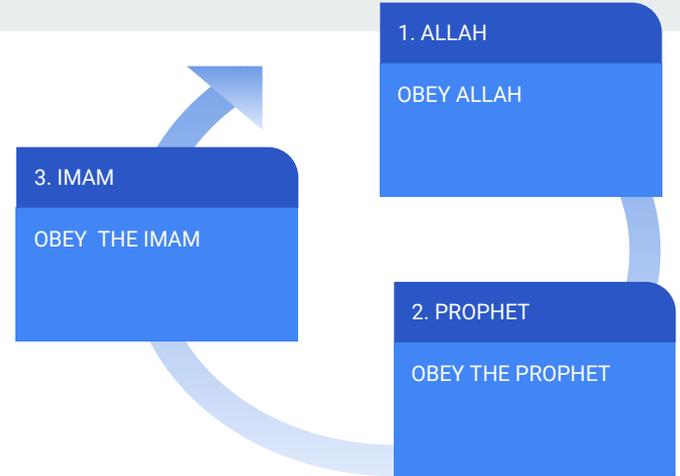
Why do we believe in Walaya?

Shi'a believe in walaya because they believe in Hazrat Ali as the true successor of the Prophet.

We cannot directly submit to or obey Allah because we cannot see Him, so we can obey the Prophet but he is not amongst us, therefore we must obey the Imam, who was designated and appointed by the holy Prophet.

Therefore, we recite the following verse of the Qur'an in our daily Du`a:

Yā 'Ayyuhā Al-Ladhīna 'Āmanū 'Aṭī' ū Allaha Wa 'Aṭī' ū Ar-Rasūla Wa 'Ūlī Al-'Amri Minkum = O you who believe obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those who possess the command from amongst you (Qur'an 4:59)





Tahara

What does tahara mean and why do we believe in tahara?

Tahara means purity of niyyat (intention), speech (qawl) and action (amal)

Do you know what the three types of purification are?

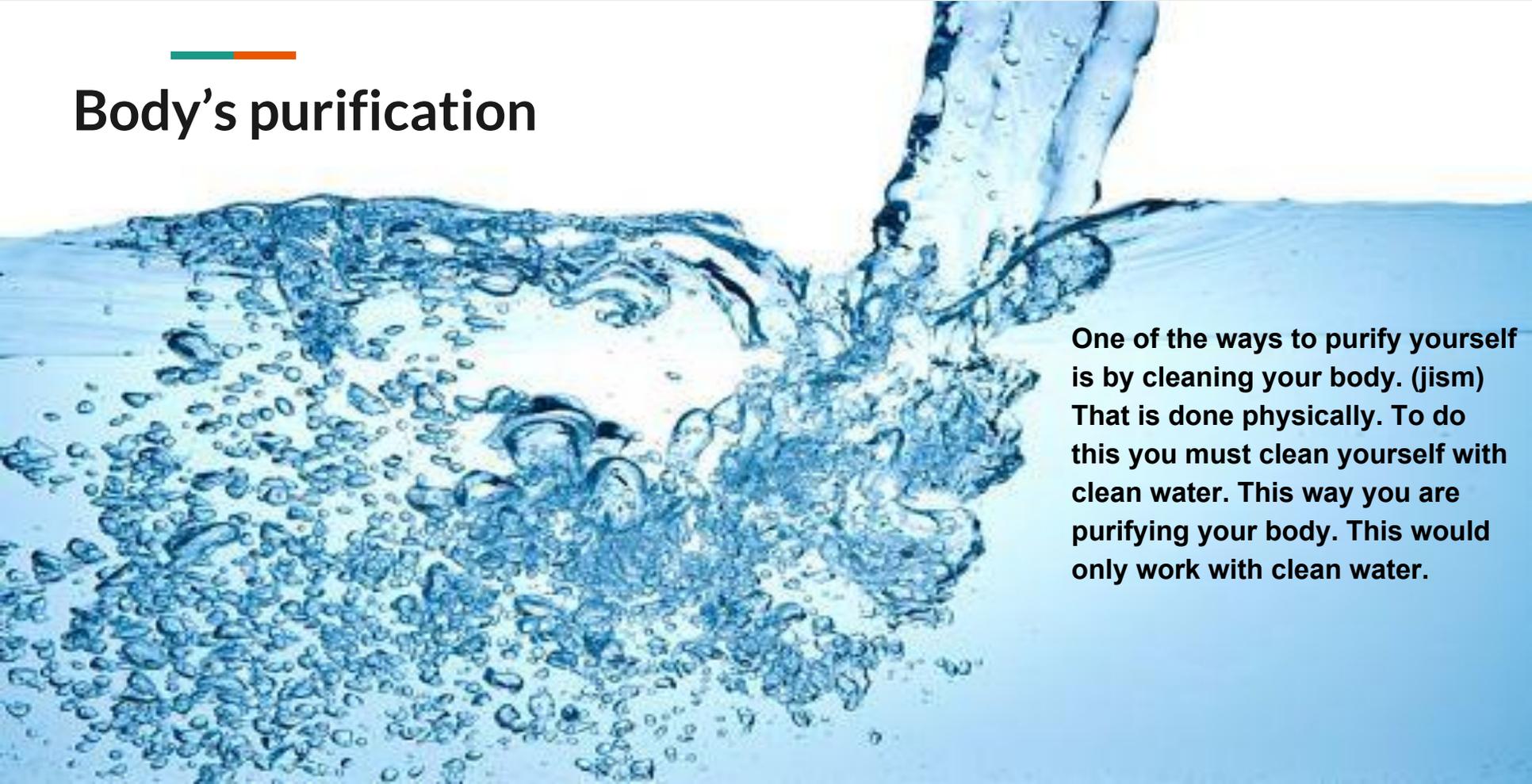
- Body (jism) - can be kept pure through washing with water
- Soul (ruh) - can be kept pure through zikr and good ethics and deeds
- Intellect (aql) - can be kept pure through haqiqi knowledge or `ilmu'l-yaqin

“... Within it are those who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves.” (9:108)

“Innamā Yurīdu Allāhu Liyudh/hiba `Ankumu Ar-Rijsa 'Ahla Al-Bayti Wa Yuṭahhirakum Taṭhīrāan = Allah’s wish is to remove uncleanness far from you, O the People of the House (ahl al-bayt), and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing” (Qur’an 33:33). This means that the Prophet and the Imams are pure and they purify us.



Body's purification



One of the ways to purify yourself is by cleaning your body. (jism) That is done physically. To do this you must clean yourself with clean water. This way you are purifying your body. This would only work with clean water.



Soul's purification

Another way to purify yourself is to purify your soul. This is spiritually. To purify your soul you must do zikr, munajat and girya-u zari and keep your soul clean. You have to do good deeds and do ibadat. This way you will get peace.



Intellectual purification

For intellectual purification you must gain knowledge of certainty (ilmu'l-yaqin) and share your knowledge with others as well. This way you are purifying your intellect



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	Tanzil or time of Shari'ah	Ta'wil or time of Qiyamah
Salah	5 times namaz a day	Remembrance of Allah all the time (3:191; 70:23)
Zakah	2.5 percent of savings	12.5 percent of earnings
Sawm	30 days of fasting from food etc...	Fasting throughout the year from unethical acts
Hajj	Visit physical house of Allah	To see the Spiritual House of Allah
Jihad	Physical struggles against enemies	To struggle against our carnal soul, which the holy Prophet said is the Jihad-i Akbar or the greatest Jihad.



Salah

In the time of Tanzil or Shari`ah, according to Sayyidna Nasir al-Din Tusi in his book “Rawzatu’t-Taslim”, obedience is performed within the confines of set timings and worship is immersed in fixed timings (i.e., five times a day), **but**

In the time of Ta’wil or Qiyamah obedience is performed with the removal of the fixed timings (i.e., believers are da`imu’z-zikr or in constant remembrance of Allah) and the entire time is immersed in a state of obedience.



Zakah

Zakah in the holy Qur'an is used in the meaning of purification and growth:

In Surah 9, ayat 103 Allah commands the holy Prophet to take sadaqah/zakah from the believers in order to purify them and make them grow (spiritually and intellectually):

“Take sadaqah from their wealth, so that you may purify them and make them grow and pray for them. Indeed there is peace for them in your prayers. And Allah is Hearer, Knower.”

In what ways can believers give zakah:

- Physically through wealth and other material resources as well as time
- Spiritually through prayers
- Intellectually through sharing knowledge



Sawm/Roza

The literal meaning of Sawm is 'to abstain from'. Believers can abstain from food and water and from all unethical acts, that is they can fast with all their senses and organs.

- Do you know the story of Hazrat Mariam?

In the holy Qur'an in Surah 19, verse 26, Hazrat Mariam is told: "So eat and drink and be consoled. And if you meet any mortal (human being) say Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent and may not speak this day to any mortal being."

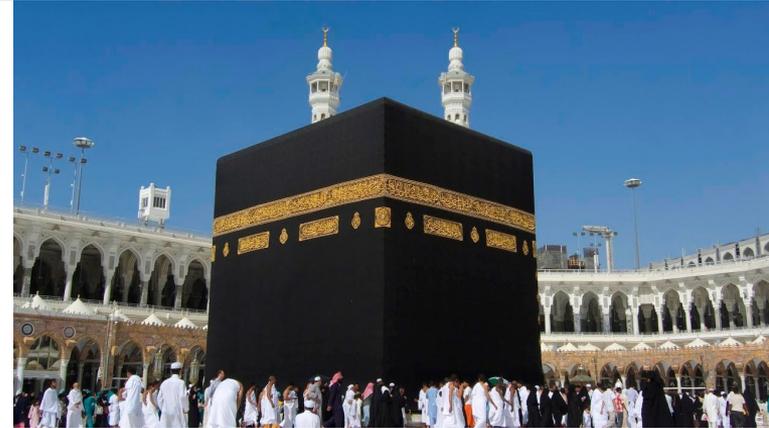
Mawlana Mustansir bi'llah II says in his farman: "The whole year you must fast, just as the exoteric people fast for one month. The meaning of this fast of the year is riyazat (spiritual exercise). Watch yourselves, keep away from bad qualities, evil and indecent actions and devilish acts, so that the mirror of you hearts may be gradually polished."

Hajj

What is hajj?

Hajj means pilgrimage to Makka Sharif to visit the Ka`ba, the physical House of Allah (Baytu'llah).

The ta`wili meaning of the Ka`ba is the living and speaking House of Allah, that is the Imam of the time who is the Mazhar of the Light (Nur) of Allah.





Jihad

What is the meaning of jihad?

Jihad, that is 'to struggle or to strive' is very significant in Muslim culture and it is very important that all Muslims participate in it.

How many types of jihad are there and what are they?

It is narrated that once the holy Prophet was returning victorious from a physical battle in the early days of Islamic history. His companions excitedly said that they had won a great battle. The holy Prophet at once said: "No we are returning from the jihad-i asghar (minor jihad). You all have to conduct the jihad-i akbar (greater jihad) throughout your lives against your carnal soul."

- Minor jihad→ To strive to save your religion from the enemies - limited in time and history
- Greater jihad→ To control your nafs (self) - a struggle which lasts a believer's entire life



Physical jihad

Physical jihad is jihad through sacrifice of life. Physical Jihad means to protect yourself and others from physical aspects such as war and the enemy. If you cannot participate in this Jihad with practiced skill, you should not be discouraged because there are other opportunities for the other forms of jihad, for example: spiritual jihad, jihad through knowledge, and jihad through property (material jihad).

What is an example of this Jihad?

There are many examples of such jihad from the early history of Islam when its enemies tried hard to make it extinct through physical wars, such as the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq etc.



Spiritual jihad

Spiritual jihad is done with intense zikr and tasbihats. It is done to protect us from satan and to defeat our bad habits and to fight against satan. In other words it is a holy war against our personal satan.

Doing zikr and being pure and humble is the true way to succeed in the fight against satan.

It is well known that the holy Prophet advised his followers to teach the tasbih of ***La hawla wa la quwwata illa billa hi'l-`alyyil azim*** to their children to save them from the waswasah (insinuations) of Satan.



Material jihad

Material jihad is service with money to help others. “Material jihad is inferior than sacrifice of life, however, when material sacrifice is necessary it can be as useful as the jihad through sacrifice of life” (40 Wisdoms of Jihad, point 7). Material jihad is jihad through property.

The best example in our community is the material sacrifice that Ismailis give to strengthen the Imamatus institutions, such as the Aga Khan University, Aga Khan Academies, Aga Khan Health, educational and other programmes and Focus Humanitarian, etc.



Jihad through knowledge

Jihad through knowledge is a form of jihad where all Ismailis around the world can participate. In this form, there is not only one activity rather hundreds of activities. Jihad through knowledge is when you get good knowledge then teach it to others. This may be secular knowledge and skills or more so spiritual or religious knowledge.

What is an example of Jihad through knowledge?

- The Time and Knowledge Nazrana of the Golden and Diamond Jubilees is a brilliant example of material knowledge Jihad.
- The many volunteers in the Jamat who have made it their mission to study the holy Qur'an and its ta'wil, the hadith literature and esoteric Ismaili literature and share it with their spiritual brothers and sisters.



References

- 40 Wisdoms of Jihad by `Allamah Nasir al-din Nasir Hunzai
- A Living Branch of Islam by Dr. Faquir M. Hunzai in Oriente Moderno, I, 2004