

# A Living Branch of Islam

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# Introduction

Islam is a dynamic religion. This means that it is constantly in motion and changing according to time. All Muslims believe in one God and the role of Prophet Muhammad as the final Prophet. However, Shia and Sunni Muslims differ in who the legitimate spiritual authority after the demise of the Prophet is. During the time of the Prophet, Islam was a single, united community. In this presentation we will go in depth into the history of Islam and we will focus on all the major changes and splits that contributed to the formation of the diversity of interpretation in Islam today.

# Religion is compared to nature

- ❖ A tree is one of the best examples in nature, it grows from a single seed containing the entire tree (30:30)
  - Roots
  - Trunk
  - Branches
  - Leaves
  - Buds
  - Flowers
  - Raw and Ripe fruit
  - The new seed
- ❖ And the cycle continues



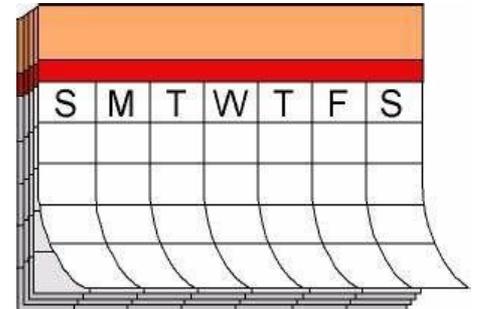
# Religion is compared to nature: CONTINUED

- ❖ In a tree, all the features don't appear at once. They gradually appear in different stages. The same is true with the evolution of religion.
  - It began with the teachings of the Prophet. In his lifetime, his followers remain united, but after the Prophet passed away, the followers split into different groups
  - Referring back to the example of the tree, the tree splits into multiple branches, starting from the seed.



# Religion is compared to a week

- ❖ Islam is a continuation of God's message to humankind whose revelation began with Hazrat Adam and continued through Hazrat Nuh, Hazrat Ibrahim, Hazrat Musa, Hazrat `Isa, and finally Hazrat Muhammad (2:213; 3:19; 42:13)
  - These six Natiqs each brought a new law and Book to humankind
- ❖ Religion is compared to a week consisting of 7 days
  - The first 6 days are for work which are represented by the 6 Natiqs, and the 7th day is the reward and retribution , represented by the Qa'im.
  - The sixth day is the day when the time of Prophethood comes to an end.
  - The last day is the start of the cycle of *qiyamah* or resurrection



History

# History of Islam

- ❖ The followers of the Prophet were originally a single UNITED community
- ❖ After his death, there were some differences concerning the legitimacy of Imamat, but Muslims still remained politically united.
- ❖ However after the death of Caliph Uthman the Muslim community split into two branches
- ❖ Sunnis consider Hazrat Ali as their fourth caliph, whereas Shia Muslims regard Mawla Ali as the first Imam immediately after Prophet Muhammad

# The Two Branches

## ❖ Shi'at Ali

- The Shi'at Ali have not changed their name for 1400 years
- Those who believed in Hazrat Ali
- Ismailis belong to this branch

## ❖ Shi'at Mu'awiyah

- Those who believed in Mu'awiyah
- The Shi'at Mu'awiya did change their name
  - After the Abbasids defeated the Ummayyads, only one individual from the latter survived. He moved to Spain, and started a dynasty there. The Abbasids who were previously Shi'a joined with the remnants of the followers of Mu'awiya and took a new name *Ahl al-sunnah wa'l-jama'ah* (aka Sunnis)

# The branches in Shi`at Ali

- ❖ In the course of history, the Sunnis subdivided into many groups based on differences in jurisprudence
- ❖ Shi`at Ali also gradually split up into different groups because of disagreement about the rightful successor
  - The name *Isma`iliyyah* came into existence after Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, where the Imami Shi`a split into different groups named after his two children
    - Those who followed Isma`il al-Mubarak were known as Shia Imami Ismailia
    - Those who followed Musa al-Kazim were known as Shia Imami Musawiyyah
      - When the 12th Imam went into occultation, they became known as the Twelvers (Ithna ashariyyah)
  - ALL Shias believe that there is an Imam
- ❖ What is the real name of our religion?
  - Da`wat-i-Haqq → The True Religion

# Sabiyyah

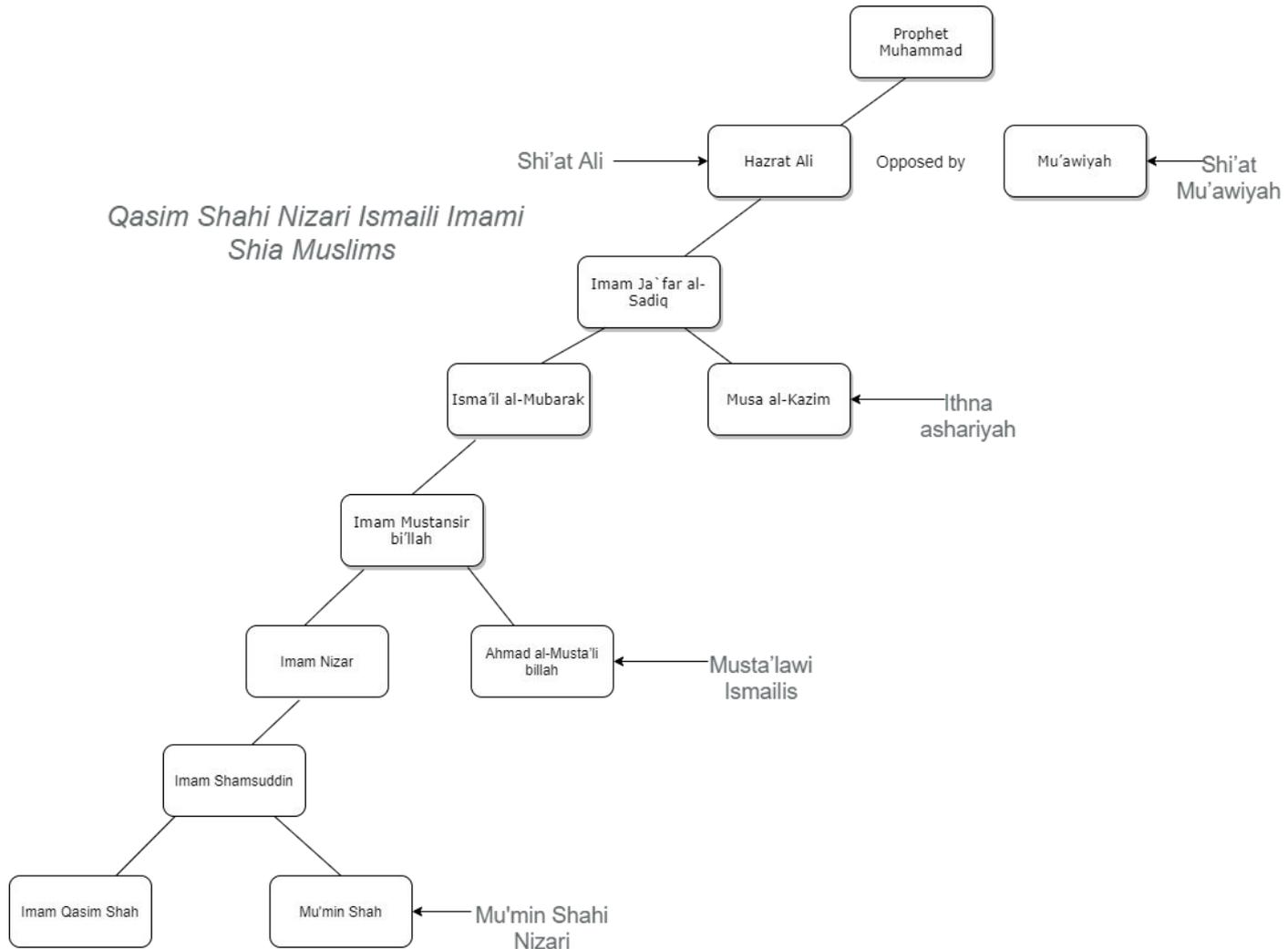
- ❖ Ismailis are sometimes called Sabiyyah or Seveners
  - This is the belief that Ismailis only believe in 7 Imams
  - This is a great misunderstanding
  - The Ismailis do give great importance to a set of seven Imams in the sense that they constitute a minor cycle (dawr-i saghir). However they do not believe that there are only seven Imams.
  - Their present Imam is the 49th in direct descent from the holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.a.s)

# The further split of Shi`at Ali

- ❖ After the demise of Imam Mustansir bi'llah the Ismailis further divided into two branches.
  - The Nizari Ismailis followed Imam Nizar
  - Musta`lawi Ismailis followed Ahmad al-Musta`li billah
- ❖ Imam Nizar was abducted by Musta`lawi's father in law from where he was saved by Hasan bin-Sabbah. Together they went to Alamut, where the Fatimid Empire continued.
- ❖ Imam Nizar was the Caliph and Imam of his time.

# The even further split of Shi`at Ali

- ❖ After the demise of Imam Shamsuddin, there was a further split again based on who was the rightful successor
  - The Qasim Shahi Nizari
  - The Mu'min Shahi Nizari (mostly situated in Syria)
- ❖ Thus the Ismailis' full name is *Qasim Shahi Nizari Ismaili Imami Shia Muslims*



# Excerpt of the Memoirs of Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah

*“The Shia school of thought maintains that while direct Divine inspiration ceased at the Prophet’s death, the need of Divine guidance continued and this could not be left merely to millions of mortal men, subject to the whims and gusts of passion and material necessity, capable of being momentarily but tragically misled by greed, by oratory, or by the sudden desire for material advantage”*

# The Cycle of Prophethood

# Appointment of Hazrat Ali

- ❖ Prophet Muhammad was the *seal* of Prophethood, the LAST Prophet
- ❖ The Prophet publicly appointed Hazrat Ali as the wasi TWICE.
- ❖ Hazrat Ali was first PUBLICLY appointed by the Prophet at *da`wat-i-ashiratu'l-aqrabin*
  - This was in front of 40 of their nearest kinsmen all descendants of Hazrat Abdu'l-Muttallib
  - Imam Ali was appointed by the Prophet as the wasi (legatee) and wali (plenipotentiary)
- ❖ Hazrat Ali's second PUBLIC appointment was at Ghadir Khumm. Here, the Prophet declared: ***"O People! Know that Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me. He is your Wali after me, therefore He whose Mawla (master) I am, Ali is his Mawla"***
- ❖ The Imam should always be present and living
  - This concept is present in almost every part of the du`a, when at the end of the part it is said ***"al-hadir al-mawjud"***
  - ***"If there is even a single moment without the Imam, the whole world would be shaken"*** (Hadith-i shariff)

# Everything comes in pairs

- ❖ Everything in God's creation is in pairs
  - Like a father and mother come in pairs
    - Just the way Mawlana Hazir Imam gives us his Paternal and Maternal blessings
  - Imam and Pir
  - Day and Night
  - Ta'wil and Tanzil → There is no ta'wil without the tanzil and vice versa
    - ***“Ali would fight for the sake of ta'wil as he, the Prophet had fought for the sake of tanzil”***  
(Hadith)

# The Prophet's mission

- ❖ According to Shia Islam, the Prophet had two Da`wahs (Missions)
  - The Da`wah of Tanzil → Completed during his own time
  - The Da`wah of Ta`wil → He entrusted to Imam Ali and the rope of Imamatus with this mission
    - This mission continues until today, as the Imam teaches us the Ta`wil and will continue until the day of Qiyamat
      - In the Quran 17:71 it says ***“On the Day when We will summon (nad’uu) all people through their Imam.”***
    - Their title is Rasikhun fi'l-`ilm (Well Grounded in Knowledge) (3:7; 7:52-53; 39:10; 41:53)
- ❖ The Imam's guidance is continuous and will never stop, because time and space are constantly changing
  - It is said in Mawlana Hazir Imam's Farman ***“The only constant is change”***
- ❖ Our source of guidance, is from the farmans of the Imam
  - Since time is constantly changing, the Imam changes his farmans according to time because Islam is a dynamic religion
  - Our religion is dynamic because we have a present and living Imam
- ❖ The Tanzil remains the same, however the Ta`wil changes in each generation according to the period and circumstances.

# The continuation of the lineage of Imammat

- ❖ Imammat continued under all circumstances, wherever it was possible to do so in the world, whether they had worldly power or not
  - For example during the Fatimid caliphate or Alamut period (worldly power)
  - Another example is when the Imams had to hide from their enemies to prevent persecution
    - These incidents have occurred several times throughout history. Such a time is known as Dawr-i Satr.
    - But even during these times the da`wah of the Imam continued
  - And as Mawlana Hazir Imam says in his Farman made on December 13th 1964 *“For hundreds of years, my spiritual children have been guided by the rope of Imammat. “*

# Ismaili Da`wat through Pirs and Da`is

- ❖ There have been a lot of difficulties and hurdles for Da`is and Pirs throughout history. Regardless of this, the Ismaili Da`wat still continued.
- ❖ Nasir-i-Khusraw's home had been burnt three times by his opponents.
  - He sought refuge in Yumgan where he continued to write his literature
- ❖ Nasir-i-Khusraw doesn't let the enemy stop him. He sent a book on *Da`wat* all over the world, to show his enemies that he is not sitting still, nor was he weakened by them
  - This is one of the many characteristics of the hujjats and pirs
  - His relentless efforts ensured that the Da`wat continued successfully

# Conclusion

In conclusion, through the major changes and splits between the branches of Islam, the true religion has continued, and ***“today the Ismailis are culturally and ethnically diverse living in more than 25 countries in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and North America in different physical environments,”*** learning how to live pluralistically through the ultimate guidance of our present living Imam, Mawlana Shah Karim Al Husayni Hazir Imam. And as Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV says in his address to both Houses of the Canadian Parliament and Senate, February 27, 2014, ***“From that early division, a host of further distinctions grew up, but the question of rightful leadership remains central. In time, the Shia were also sub-divided over this question, so that today the Ismailis are the only Shia community who, throughout history, have been led by a living, hereditary Imam in direct descent from the Prophet.”***

# References

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