

BRAHM PRAKASH
A TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

by
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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to examine Brahm Prakāsh, a qinān-religious poem - from the literary heritage of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī community of the Indian Sub-continent. The Brahm Prakāsh is a didactic poem, composed in a mystical vein. It seeks to guide an Ismā'īlī murīd <believer> from stage to stage of spiritual progress toward the attainment of the darśan <vision> of the Lord within one's own self-hood.

The study reveals that the Brahm Prakāsh, in describing the mystical path appears to find its basis in an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon, the Tantric tradition. This thesis, therefore, examines how the Brahm Prakāsh reconstructs and restructures the Tantric element, by super-imposing upon the Tantric frame-work a Shī'ī form of Islam.

Résumé

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Cette thèse vise à examiner le Brahm Prakāsh, un qinān-poème religieux qu'a produit l'héritage littéraire de la communauté Nizārī Ismā'īlī du sous-continent indien. Le Brahm Prakāsh est un poème didactique composé dans une veine mystique. Il essaie de conduire un murīd <croyant> Ismā'īlī d'une étape à une autre dans un progrès spirituel qui parvient finalement au darśan <vue> du Seigneur au dedans de soi-même.

L'étude montre que le Brahm Prakāsh, en décrivant le sentier mystique, se fonde manifestement sur un phénomène religieux indigène- la tradition tantrique. Cette thèse examine, donc, comment le Brahm Prakāsh reconstruit et reforme l'élément tantrique par l'imposition d'un Islam d'un caractère Shī'ī sur la charpente tantrique.

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The support and encouragement which I received from my parents has been tremendous. I am particularly indebted to my sister, Almas, whose constant support and motivation has enabled me to see this study through the end. And it is to her that I dedicate this thesis.

Finally, I must acknowledge my colleagues, Diamond Rattansi and Derryl Maclean in particular who rendered their time and valuable assistance towards the completion of this thesis. I am also grateful to Miss Salma <Sr.> Lakhani for typing most part of this thesis.

Transliteration

The transliteration scheme followed in this thesis , for Arabic and Persian terms is that which has been devised by the Institute of Islamic Studies. For words derived from Sanskrit and those belonging to the Hindu tradition, they have been transliterated as they appear in Benjamin Walker's, Hindu World <see the Bibliography>. The sub-script and the super-script for . are indicated by , and ~ respectively. In order to preserve the attractiveness of the thesis the recurring foreign words such as da'wa, qinān pīr etc., have been under-lined only upon their first appearance.

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Introduction

Shi'ī Ismā'īlism claims a long history. In the course of its 1200 years of history, the Ismā'īlī movement became sub-divided into series of separate developments. These developments of Ismā'īlism, W.Ivanow maintains, are divided into 'phases', some running parallel to others and some developing in sequence directly or after a certain time-period.¹ Thus, the Carmatian band of Bahrain which horrified the Islamic world during the fourth century - the Fāṭimid Caliphate of Cairo with its highly civilized capital and its advanced intellectual life - the encyclopaedist brotherhood of Ikhwān as-Ṣafā which, in the fifth century attempted to popularize learning and philosophy among the masses - the dreaded Assassins of Syria and Persia in the fifth and the sixth centuries are all different facets of the same movement.² This may be put in B. Lewis' words, "Ismā'īlism was expressed in infinite forms both doctrinal and organisational."³

Of these different 'phases' of the Ismā'īlī movement, its growth and development in the Indian Sub-continent, especially in its Nizārī form, has by far received the least

attention.⁴ This phase presents yet another characteristic evolution in the history of Ismā'īlism, particularly its adjustment to Hinduism. This is evidenced by the presence of a widely scattered Ismā'īlī community - more popularly known as the Khôjâ community - not only in the Indian Sub-continent, but spread during recent years to the African and the North American continents. These Khôjâs consider themselves to have been a product of the Ismā'īlī movement which spread in the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

Satpanth, "the Path to the Truth", is the name of a sect by which Nizârī Ismā'īlism was spread into the Indian Sub-continent by various Nizârī dâ'īs and pīrs who are alleged to have arrived there for da'wa purposes during the medieval era.⁵ The present day Nizârī Ismā'īlīs or Khôjâs consider themselves to have been converted from Hinduism to Islam by the da'wa activities of these Nizârī dâ'īs and pīrs.

As a sub-sect of Shī'ī Islam the Nizârī Ismā'īlīs hold that after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, the divine power, guidance and leadership, manifested themselves in 'Alī as the first Imām and that religious authority is transferred by inherited right to his successors.⁶ Over a period of time, the Shī'ī sect divided into several branches depending on the person in the main line of descent to whom they gave their allegiance. The Ismā'īlīs get their name from the fact that

as a result of a split in the 8th century, they gave allegiance to Imâm Ismâ'îl, while the majority considered Imâm Ismâ'îl's brother Mûsâ Kâẓim as the successor to Imâm Ja'fâr al-Şâdiq. They came to be known as Ithnâ-'Asharîs.

Similarly, in the 10-11th centuries, at the death of the Fâtimid Caliph al-Mustanşir, another major split occurred. The followers of al-Mustanşir's eldest son, Nizâr, established their stronghold at Alamût and came to be known as Nizârîs, while the followers of his younger brother, Musta'îf, who succeeded al-Mustanşir, as the Fâtimid Caliph in Egypt, came to be known as Bohrâs. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community of the Indian Sub-continent, also known as Khôjâs, trace its origins to this Nizârî Ismâ'îlî branch of Shî'î Islâm established at Alamût. Presently, they are the followers of Aghâ Khân IV, whom they consider Imâm, because of his claims of direct lineal descent from 'Alî.

Although this Khôjâ community considers itself as a pròduct of the da'wa activities of the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs during the medieval era, the coming of these Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs was not the first time that the Ismâ'îlî element had entered upon the Indian soil. The Indian Sub-continent, as is well-known, has been an area of concern for the nascent

Ismâ'îlî da'wa from pre-Fâṭimid times.' The emergence of Ismâ'ilism in the Indian Sub-continent can, therefore, be seen into two phases:

- a> Fâṭimid and pre-Fâṭimid period i.e. till 1094.
- b> Nizârî and post-Nizârî phase.⁸

It is alleged that the earliest contact which the Ismâ'îlî element had with India came prior to the establishment of the Fâṭimid Caliphate, from the time of dawr al-satr, when one wing of the da'wa was to work in Hind and Sind. Muḥammad bin Ismâ'îl, the seventh Imâm of the Ismâ'îlîs is himself supposed to have fled with his sons and to have taken refuge in Sind.' S.M. Stern however, doubts the authenticity of the information provided by Juwayni regarding such early Ismâ'îlî activities in the Indian Sub-continent.¹⁰

The Ismâ'îlî sources, on the other hand, first make mention of the establishment of Ismâ'îlî activity in Sind in the 9th century, by a certain dâ'î named al-Haytham.¹¹ This penetration eventually led to the establishment of a Fâṭimid principality in Sind, when it is maintained that the Fâṭimid Caliph, al-Azîz, sent al-Shaybân with a military escort, which took Multan in 977 <in the medieval era Multan and Uchh constituted Upper Sind>. The khutbah of the Fâṭimid Caliphs continued to be read there for several decades.¹² This was the situation in Sind until raids of Maḥmud of Ghazna

temporarily brought Sind under the domination of the Ghaznavids. When the Ghaznavids' rule rapidly degenerated, the Fâtîmids who for a while had succumbed, again seized authority over Sind and ruled the province for more than a century until the final conquest of Sind by the Ghûrids in 1175 compelled the Ismâ'îlî movement to go underground.¹³

The subsequent history of the Ismâ'îlîs is generally associated with the resurgence of the Sumra dynasty, which is alleged to have had Carmation inclinations. One continues to find, maintains J. Hollister, through two centuries, occasional references to these Malâhidah or Carmation activities in the Sub-continent.¹⁴ But, apart from this questionable information regarding Ismâ'îlî activities in Sind, nothing can be attested about them until the appearance of the Nizârîs on the scene. This Ismâ'îlî movement is believed to have begun, as mentioned above, by various Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs, who are supposed to have arrived to the Indian Sub-continent at least from the thirteenth century onwards.

Although, the Nizârî movement, in fact, can be considered a continuation of the same Ismâ'îlî movement previously existing in the Indian Sub-continent, there are a few factors which make the Nizârî movement stand out as a distinct phase in the history of Ismâ'îlism. Earlier Ismâ'îlî as well as non-Ismâ'îlî historical sources attest to

Ismâ'îlî domination in Sind at least until the Ghûrid invasion in 1175. This information together with the fact that the Nizârî pîrs began their da'wa activities in Sind, suggests that the Ismâ'îlî element had not been obliterated completely from Sind.¹⁵ Their presence could have facilitated the penetration of the Nizârî da'wa into the northern parts of the area, and that, in turn perhaps, led to the rise and development of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism. However, there is no specific evidence to establish if there was any connection between the two Ismâ'îlî movements. Moreover, the Khôjâs with whom we are concerned in this study consider themselves to have been converted from Hinduism to Islam by the arrival of the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs to the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

Our study concentrates on this second phase of Ismâ'îlî movement whose da'wa activities resulted in the rise of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism in the Indian Sub-continent. However, our aim is not to cover the entire movement as it developed in the Indian Sub-continent. But, seeks to examine an aspect of the thought of Satpanth Ismâ'îlism as it was conveyed to the converts by the Nizârî dâ'îs and pîrs in the Indian Sub-continent.

II

An attempt to study any religious aspect of Satpanth or.

Nizārī Ismāʿīlism must necessarily begin by an examination of the community's major religious literature, the gināns. The ginān literature constitutes almost the entire corpus of indigenous literature preserved by the community. The term ginān is a collective appellation given to a body of literature constituting several devotional compositions composed in Indian vernacular languages. This ginān literature is attributed to the authorship of various Nizārī dāʿīs and pīrs who are believed to have carried on daʿwa activities in the Indian Sub-continent, on behalf of the Imāms of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī sect of Persia.

The nature of Satpanth or Nizārī Ismāʿīlism can be best reflected by examining the ginān literature, since the gināns are seen as a product of Satpanth religion. However, to examine the literature in its entirety falls beyond the scope of this study. Our study seeks to study a ginān called the Brahm Prakāsh <Divine Illumination> from the ginān corpus. It has been made the focus of our study for two reasons:

a> the ginān Brahm Prakāsh is attributed to the authorship of Shams al-Dīn, a Nizārī pīr who is alleged to represent the initial phase of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī daʿwa in the Indian Sub-continent. The Brahm Prakāsh would, therefore, represent the earliest efforts of the pīr to project Satpanth or Nizārī Ismāʿīlism to new converts from Hinduism in a new environment and situation.

b> the Brahm Prakāsh deals with a mystical concept of sumiran <contemplation> which exhibits the essence of Satpanth Ismā'īlism. Although this concept is echoed in some manner in the entire ginān literature, it is dealt with in an elaborate and consistent manner in the Brahm Prakāsh. Hence, the Brahm Prakāsh is an important composition for understanding a fundamental spiritual aspect of Ismā'īlism, as it was conveyed by the Nizārī pīr to the new converts in the Sub-continent.

Yet, another reason for our dealing with this ginān is that the concept of sumiran occupies a significant place among the present day Nizārī Ismā'īlī religious system. The religious system to which an Ismā'īlī murīd <believer> adheres as a member of the community, by virtue of birth or otherwise, imposes upon him a set of religious duties and obligations formulated for the practise of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī faith. All these religious obligations are supposed to be observed in their jamā'āt khāna <House of Assembly> established for the purpose. Among the various duties, performance of the dū'ā <ritual prayer> ; paying the dashond <tithe> etc., are made incumbent upon an Ismā'īlī murīd. Some of these duties, although not obligatory, have been institutionalised - as a part of the religious ceremonies to be held in the jamā'āt khāna - by what is termed within the community religious organisation, a mandlī or majlis.¹⁶

Among the various mandlis into which an Ismā'īlī murīd initiates himself, principally on his own accord, initiation into a special mandlī, known as the bayt al-khyāl <chamber of contemplation> assumes the highest significance. This mandlī is set up for dhikr practises which are believed to aid a murīd in progressing spiritually towards the attainment of Illumination <darśan>. The attainment of darśan forms the basis for his mokṣa <liberation> from human life on earth. For this practise of dhikr, also known as bandaqi, an Ismā'īlī murīd is given a bol or ism 'āzam <the great Name> by the Imām i-zamān <the Imām of the Time>, which henceforth remains personal to him. The initiate is supposed to practise, i.e. meditate on his bol, in order to develop his bāṭini <inner> self towards the attainment of spiritual Illumination. Hence, the Brahm Prakāśh forms an important composition to study the basis of a fundamental practise among the Indian Ismā'īlīs.

The ginān Brahm Prakāśh consists of 150 couplets, composed in a mixture of old Gujarati and Hindi. It is composed in a mystical vein, discussing the various mystical states and stages towards the realization of the mystical experience and contains instructions on how to attain it. The ginān begins by an emphasis on the divine properties of sat śabda <True Word>, the ism 'āzam of the sūfis. It then breaks off to give a fairly detailed account of the uselessness of various ascetic practises which are not

centred on attaining the brahm sukh <divine bliss>. It then continues to name several adepts who in their time attained brahm sukh, by their absolute absorption in the sat śabda. The last section of the work deals with the ecstatic experience with the divine Lord in the unfathomable depths of one's own self-hood, that results from the contemplation of the sat śabda.

Chapter One of our study seeks to offer a background to the introduction of Satpanth or Nizārī-Ismā'īlism into the Indian Sub-continent and an introduction into the nature and structure of the ginān literature. This chapter will form the basis for understanding the type and nature of Ismā'īlism which evolved in the Indian Sub-continent.

Chapter Two of the study offers a translation of the text of the Brahm Prakāsh into English. Chapter Three is divided into two sections. The ginān Brahm Prakāsh, while describing the various mystical states and stages of the mystical path structures a peculiar esoteric vocabulary which is found to belong largely to a well-formulated system of thought, namely the Tantric tradition, an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon. Therefore, section <a> offers a brief background into that aspect of the Tantric tradition whose vocabulary appears similar to the ginān Brahm Prakāsh. Section examines how the ginān Brahm Prakāsh restructures the Tantric element in its framework, so as to make it an

integral aspect of Ismā'īlī thought, still retained and esteemed among its adherents.

The Text

The copy of the ginān Brahm Prakāsh was made available to us by the Ismailia Association of India.¹⁷ Initially two texts were obtained from the India Association. The first one is a photocopy of the text published by Lālji Devrāj in 1921.¹⁸ The second was published by the Ismailia Association for India in book form with a few other major gināns of several dā'īs and pīrs. This book is published with the title "Pavitra Ginānāno Sangrah", or Compilations of Holy Gināns, 1st edition, 1966.

We have used the Lālji Devrāj copy for our study, since it is the earlier version available to us.¹⁹ Yet, another reason for our choice is the significant variations of content between the two versions. For instance, in the copy published by the Association, the terms referring to the Imām in the ginān have been rendered as 'Alī, the name referring to all the Imāms in general, whereas the Lālji Devrāj copy retains different word-terms. As we do not have access to the manuscript copy, we are not in a position to determine which of the two is closest to the original, but references in several private publications show the use of the Lālji Devrāj copy. Thus, indicating that the version published by

him was extensively used before the publication task was taken over by the Association in the early nineteen-seventies. The Lālji Devrāj copy is written in Gujarati script, as has been the case with almost the entire gīnān literature, which has been transliterated into the Gujarati script from the original Khōjkī script for the convenience of Ismā'īlī readers who do not read Khōjkī.

Notes to Introduction

¹W. Ivanow, Ismâ'îlî Literature, A Bibliographical Survey, <Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1963>, 5.

²B. Lewis, Origins of Ismâ'ilism, <Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., 1940>, 1.

³Ibid.

⁴Of the few studies that have been undertaken, Azim Nânjî offers us an excellent historical background of the Nizârî movement in his work: The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan sub-Continent, <Delmar: Caravan Books, 1974>. For a good background of Ismâ'îlî penetration into the Indian Sub-continent see, Derryl Maclean, "Religion and Society in Arab Sind," <Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1984>. A few interesting studies have also been undertaken on the qinân literature. See our Bibliography.

⁵W. Ivanow, "The Sect of Imâm Shâh in Gujarat," Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XII <1936>, 20.

⁶H.H. The Agakhan, The Memoirs of Aqa Khan, <London: Simon and Schuster, 1954>, 178-79.

⁷D. Maclean, "Religion and Society, 316.

⁸G. Khakee, "The DasâAvatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic and Literary Evidence of the Early Development of Ismailism in Sind," Sind Quarterly Vol.VIII, No.2 <1980>, 44.

⁹S.M. Stern, "The Early Ismâ'îlî Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurasan and Transoxiana," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. XXIII <1960>, 85-87.

¹⁰S.M. Stern, "Ismâ'îlî Propaganda and Fâtîmîd Rule in Sind," Islamic Culture, Vol. XXIII <1949>, 298.

¹¹G. Khakee, "The DasâAvatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic, 44.

¹²W. Ivanow, "Satpanth," Collectanea, Vol. I <1948>, 6-8.

¹³J. N. Hollister, The Shia of India, <London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1953>, 346.

¹⁴Malâhidah is a collective term denoting sectarians, probably Shi'is, but more particularly extremists like the Carmatians. The alleged association of the Carmatian with the

Ismā'īlīs well known. See J.N. Hollister, *The Shia*, 348.

¹³J. N. Hollister maintains, that in the thirteenth century, one comes across activities of the Alamūt Assassins in the Indian Sub-continent, when the Ghūrid ruler, Alā al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh Khwarazm is alleged to have been assassinated by the Alamūt emissaries. Yet, another episode is believed to have taken place in 1236 in Delhi during the reign of Queen Radiyya. This incident claiming to show a continuity of Carmatian activity with that of the Nizārīs, reports a group of Carmatians under the leadership of one Nūr Turk who gathered at Delhi. They, it is alleged, attacked the masjid and a riot ensued. It is suggested by some scholars that the Nūr Turk referred to in this account is the same as Nūr Satgur, who according to the Nizārī sectarian accounts is considered the first Nizārī missionary to have come to the Sub-continent. However, nothing authentic can be established regarding this connection. For details on the controversy see, *The Shia*, 348-350.

¹⁴For details see, "Our Religious Rites and Rituals," Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Book VII, 1975.

¹⁵The text used for this thesis is published by Mukhī Lālji Devrāj, Brahm Prakāsh, A Ginān by Pīr Shams al-Dīn, Bombay, 1921.

¹⁶We tried to obtain the manuscript copy of the text which we were informed is available at the Ismailia Association Library in India. But, due to certain policies of the India Association, we have been unable to obtain the same.

¹⁷We were informed that Mr. Lālji Devrāj who was in charge of the Recreation Club, an Ismā'īlī religious organisation based in India, took upon himself the task of compiling the qināns found in the Khōjki script and transliterated all the available manuscripts of the qināns for the first time into Gujarati script. Since then, the copies of the qinān texts used by the community are those made available by Lālji Devrāj. For certain reasons, Lālji Devrāj is believed to have destroyed all the Khōjki manuscripts in his possession. Consequently, the Ismailia Association, which replaced the Recreation Club, has taken up the task of verifying the Gujarati texts from manuscripts found elsewhere. Presently a catalogue of Khōjki manuscripts which is available at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London is being prepared by Mrs. Zawahir Muir.

Chapter I

Brief Background of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent and the Nature and Structure of the ginān Literature

To study an aspect of the literary tradition of movements such as the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of the Indian Sub-continent, it is fundamental that the characteristic features of the movement and the place this literature holds in its thought and history, be understood clearly. It is only in this way one can hope to appreciate the assumptions reflected in any particular aspect of the movement. For this reason this chapter concerns itself with the spread and development of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent by way of presenting a brief sketch of the pirs and dā'īs whose da'wa activities are alleged to have resulted in the creation of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī literary heritage, the gināns.

The sectarian sources of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of the Indian Sub-continent view their history as beginning with the split between the Nizārīs and the Fāṭimids, an event which was to separate the course of the Ismā'īlī movement dramatically. In the 13th century, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs,

after the schism over the issue of succession to al-Mustaṣṣir were undergoing a change of fortune. The split between the supporters of Nizār and Musta'li in 1094 led to the establishment of three major spheres of Ismā'īlī activities during the medieval era. The first was the Fāṭimid Caliphate which continued at Cairo until it was finally put to an end by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 1171. The second was the Ṣulayḥid dynasty of Yemen which associated itself with the adherents of Tayyibī Ismā'īlism. And the third was Nizārī Ismā'īlism which established its stronghold at Alamūt and which under the leadership of Ḥasan-i-Ṣabbāḥ entered in the words of B. Lewis "a period of intensive development in doctrine and in political action and for a while played an important and dramatic role in the affairs of Islam."¹

It was at Alamūt that a significant event took place which was dramatically to separate the Fāṭimids and the Nizārīs. This event was the proclamation of the Qiyāmah <ressurrection> in 1164 by Ḥasan (alā dhikriḥi al-Ṣalām, the 23rd Imām of the Nizārīs.² The event of Qiyāmah marked a shift in certain key roles of the doctrine of Imāmah. Ḥasan (alā dhikriḥi al-Ṣalām established once and for all the priority of the Imām and the institution of the Imāmah.³

According to the classical doctrine, as it was built under the Fāṭimids, the Ismā'īlī religious philosophy was based on a cosmic scheme.⁴ The origins of all existence were

seen in the form of a hierarchy emanating from the Supreme Godhead who is "unknowable, inaccessible, ineffable, unpredicable." Through his amr <command> and through the process of ibdâ <origination> God brings into existence the world of Intelligences, the first of which is called al-Aql al-Awwal. Below these there came a series of Intelligences, which together constituted what was termed as the 'Âlam al-Ibdâ' <the Universe of Intelligences>.⁶

At another level the hierarchy of Intelligence was made to correspond to the 'Âlam al-Dîn' <the Universe of Religion> in order to provide a religious hierarchy among human beings. Within the Ismâ'îlî system, this scheme was represented by Hudûd al-Dîn <hierarchy of worshippers>, the lower among whom corresponded in turn to the lesser cosmic principles.⁷ The higher ones constituted the first three Intelligences mentioned above. These came to be identified with the Prophet, his Wâsî and the succeeding Imâms respectively. Thus, for the Fâṭimids, the Prophet Muḥammad, 'Alî and the Imâms after him were the epiphanic representatives, the maẓhars of the three Intelligences on the earth.⁸

A fundamental principle underlying this cosmic scheme was that the full chain of hierarchies existed as a part of a single indivisible process. These existed and had meaning only in as much as they formed an integral aspect of the

whole system. The various components stood in relation to the preceeding phase in terms of being less perfect than the phase coming before. For example, the second Intelligence was considered less perfect than the first Intelligence, but at the same time was superior to the third Intelligence and so on.' For man, the religious hierarchy was the path he would have to traverse in order to ascend towards the first Intelligence which formed for him his goal i.e. attaining unity with God.

As a conjunct to this cosmic scheme of vertical hierarchy, the Ismā'īlī theosophy developed a typological view of history on the horizontal scale. It was represented on the horizontal scale by a scheme of Cycles of Prophecy. Each cycle began with a Prophet and his Wāṣī. There had been six cycles already and the Prophet Muḥammad had inaugurated the seventh. Each of the cycles was closed by a Qiyāmah marking the passage from one Revelation to another Revelation, and the seventh would end with a Qiyāmat al-Qiyāmah <the Grand Ressurrection>. This would also mark the advent of the Qā'im with the power to abrogate the Sharī'a and herald a new religion.¹⁰

The proclamation of Qiyāmah by Hasan 'alā dhikrihi al-Salām marked the end of the primacy of the Sharī'a and the beginning of the new era in which the spiritual life of the soul was placed in prominence. The religion of Qiyāmah

established the priority of the Imâm and his office. The Imâm who was seen as the second Intelligence in the Fâtimid scheme, now corresponded to the first Intelligence, the epiphany of the creative word <kun> itself.¹¹ The Imâm had the authority to make law rather than simply guard it. Consequently, the goal of a believer, traversing the spiritual path, was to 'know' the Imâm. For to know the Imâm was equal to knowing God. The religious outlook of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs, thus, focussed on absolute devotion to the Imâm, taking on a more personalised form.

The doctrine of Qiyâmah in its strongest assertion of the priority of the Imâmah set the Nizârîs not only against the Orthodox but also distinguished them from the general stream of Shî'î Islam.¹² Along with this, the defeat of their political base at Alamût by the Mongols in 1256 decided the fate of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs. They fell victims to the devastation of the Mongols. Their stronghold at Alamût was taken and reduced to rubble. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs survived but went underground for several centuries. The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî Imâms went into the phase of satr or concealment. The remnants of the sect appeared henceforth in the guise of şûfis in order to avoid further persecution.¹³ With this background, we now come to an area, namely, the Indian Sub-continent where the Ismâ'îlî movement, although not the initial penetration of the Ismâ'îlîs, traces its origin historically and doctrinally to the Nizârî branch of Persia.

It constitutes a distinct phase from the earlier Ismâ'îlî movement in the Indian Sub-continent.

It is from Alamût and Persia that the Nizârî Imâms are supposed to have sent pîrs and dâ'îs to the Indian Sub-continent for da'wa purposes. The history of the origins and development of the da'wa activities in the Sub-continent is full of controversies and complications. According to W.Ivanow, the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî pîrs, in order to avoid persecution and to avoid making their aims and ambitions overtly apparent, appeared in şûffî guise. As a result there is hardly any mention of these pîrs or their activities in non-Ismâ'îlî historical sources.¹⁴ The only means available to obtain information pertaining to their history are the sectarian Ismâ'îlî accounts.¹⁵ But since the sectarian accounts were written basically for religious purposes and to provide moral and ethical teachings to the converted masses, they are woven together with myth and legend to a large extent. However, since these sectarian accounts are the only source of information, reliance on them becomes incumbent.

The spread and the development of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent can be seen into three phases: The establishment of the da'wa is associated with two figures, Nûr Satgur and Shams al-Dîn. The sectarian sources credit these two personalities with having begun the da'wa in Sind, Multan and Gujarat. This phase was followed

by the consolidation of the Nizârî da'wa with its massive conversion and organisation of the Nizârî community by the 15th century. The third and the final phase was marked by schism of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs into two branches: The Khôjâs and the Imâm Shâhîs; this phase led to the termination of the institution of pirâtan <office of pîr>.

Khôjâ sectarian accounts mention the first Nizârî missionary coming to India, in the person of Nur al-Dîn, who took the name of Nûr Satgur, the name meaning teacher of the true light.¹⁶ A layer of confusion surrounds the arrival of this foremost personality who almost appears as a legendary figure in the history of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Indian Sub-continent.¹⁷ It is difficult to ascertain the time of Nûr Satgur's arrival or the period of his activities, which makes it difficult to determine the actual period of the establishment of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Sub-continent.

The sectarian sources furnish us with certain dates regarding Nûr Satgur, but it hardly need be mentioned that they are dubious. It is variously alleged that Nûr Satgur was sent either by al-Mustanşir, the Fâtimid Caliph, to preach on behalf of his son Nizâr in the Sub-continent¹⁸ or that he was sent at a much later date by Ḥasan 'alâ dhikrihî al-Salâm, the 27th Imâm of the Nizârîs.¹⁹ Furthermore, a shrine alleged to be that of Nûr Satgur at Navsari in

Gujarat, mentions the year of his death as 1094.²⁰ This date coincides with the date of the death of al-Mustanşir, the last Caliph before the Nizârî-Musta'lian split. W. Ivanow is of the opinion that this was probably concocted by one of the branches of Pirânâ Sayyids established at Navsari after the split in the community during the 15th/16th centuries.²¹

If information regarding the personality who is credited with having established the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa in the Sub-continent is shrouded, details regarding the second personality in the da'wa remains all the more obscure. Shams al-Dîn, the second figure in the da'wa line, is supposed to have carried on Nizârî da'wa activity basically in Sind and Multan.²² This is evidenced by the presence of a large community in Upper Sind who call themselves 'Shamsis', converts at the hands of the Nizârî Pîr Shams al-Dîn Sabzavâri. Presently they recognise the Âghâ Khân as their spiritual leader.²³ Since it is to him that the ginân Brahm Prakâsh, the object of our study is attributed, we will deal with him in detail.

Traditions surrounding Shams al-Dîn Sabzavâri has acquired for him many identities. Among the various identities, there has been a confusion of two other distinct

personalities, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Nizārī Imām and Shams-i-Tabrizī, the mentor of Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī.

In attempting to trace the cause of this confusion of identities, the earliest sectarian source available to us is a ginān Satveniji Vel.²⁴ This ginān is attributed to Nar Muḥammad Shāh, an active figure in the later phase of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī da'wa. This ginān confuses Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the 28th Imām of the Nizārīs with Pīr Shams Sabzavāri. The astonishing statement in Satveniji Vel equates Shams al-Dīn Sabzavāri with Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Nizārī Imām. The ginān says that Imām Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad abdicated the Imāmah in favour of his son Qāsim Shāh and travelled to India for da'wa purposes. This particular ginān is attributed to Nar Muḥammad Shāh, the son of Imām Shāh, who seceded from the main line of the Nizārī da'wa in the 15th/16th centuries, claiming the Imāmah for himself. Since the institution of Imāmah in Ismā'ilism is hereditary, it was fundamental for Nar Muḥammad Shāh to establish a direct lineage in order to authenticate his claims. By making Pīr Shams al-Dīn the same person as Imām Shams al-Dīn and claiming direct descent from Pīr Shams, he could then assert his own right to the Imāmah.²⁵

As for the identification of Pīr Shams with Shams-i-Tabrizī, it has also been due to the confusion with Imām Shams al-Dīn. Imām Shams al-Dīn is supposed to have

lived in Tabriz for a period of time which could be the cause for confusing the two. Further, the identification of Pīr Shams with Imām Shams, in due course resulted in the amalgamation of these three distinct personalities.²⁶

With regard to the period of Pīr Shams' da'wa activities in the Sub-continent, there are apparently three versions. The first is a Shajra <genealogical tree> found in the custody of the mutawallī of the shrine of Pīr Shams in Uchh, Multan. The Shajra says that Shams al-Dīn was born in Ghazni on the 17th Rajab 560/1165 i.e. about a hundred years before the fall of Alamūt. The Shajra makes him come to Multan in 598/1201 and permits him to live till 675/1276. He is said to have come into contact with the ṣūfī celebrity Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā, who is supposed to have died in 1276.²⁷

The second version is obtained from the gināns attributed to Shams al-Dīn himself. They refer to his activities during the early part of the 12th century. Surbhān Vel, one of the longer gināns attributed to Shams al-Dīn, mentions his arrival in Samvat 1175/1118.²⁸ Yet, in another of his gināns, Chandrabhān Vel, his arrival in Chenab is given as Samvat 1200/1143.²⁹ However, when we come across the name of the Imām on whose behalf Shams al-Dīn is supposed to have carried on da'wa activity, the name of Imām Qāsim Shāh is mentioned.³⁰ Imām Qāsim Shāh belongs to the post Alamūt period. Alamūt, as is well-known, was razed by the

Mongols in 1256, and after that the history of the Nizāris and their Imāms enters a new stage. The child of the last Imām of Alamūt, Rūkn al-Dīn Khūr Shāh, is said to be Shams al-Dīn. In the Ismā'īlī genealogy Qāsim Shāh is the name of the Imām who succeeded Imām Shams. Thus, if Qāsim Shāh was the Imām of the time, then the period of Shams' activity would extend into the 14th century.³¹

It is proposed that this confusion can be attributed to a little known schism which took place upon the death of Imām Shams. Two branches of the Ismā'īlīs were formed, one of them giving allegiance to Qāsim Shāh. The attempt to associate Pīr Shams with this Imām was perhaps the assertion of a group in India of its support for Qāsim Shāh.³²

Yet, another layer of confusion was added in the modern sources linking Pīr Shams to the Nūrbakhshīya sect in Kashmir. The Nūrbakhshīya Order was introduced into Kashmir by one Shams al-Dīn, the son of Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh, who represented Shāh Qāsim.³³ Shams al-Dīn began his work in Kashmir in 1502. Since Pīr Shams is supposed to have travelled through Tibet and Kashmir, it appears that a confusion occurred equating the two distinct personalities.

The confusion is further clouded by the fact that the mutawallīs of the shrine of Pīr Shams claim themselves to be Ithnā 'Asharis, followers of Mūsā Kāzīm. They also claim that

Pir Shams came to the Indian Sub-continent in order to make Ithnâ 'Asharî da'wa.³⁴

Despite all the clarifications offered, the historical personality of this pîr remains obscure. The personality who is credited with having set the Nizari Ismâ'îlî da'wa into motion and to whom is also attributed a large ginân corpus remains an enigma. Thus, the initial phase represented by Nûr Satgur and Shams al-Dîn remains shrouded in doubt.

The figure in the da'wa development to whom a key role is attributed is Pîr Şadr al-Dîn. From this period onwards there is sufficient information available to establish Şadr al-Dîn as a historical personality. He is considered as a şûfî in non-Ismâ'îlî sources, one who made valuable contributions towards the interaction of the Hindus and the Muslims in the 14/15th centuries.³⁵ The Khôjâ sectarian sources credit Şadr al-Dîn with having consolidated the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî da'wa and with having organized the community. He is said to have established congregational houses <jamâ'ât khâna> for the community and called converts by the title, Khwâja.³⁶ The term Khôjâ in current use for a Nizârî Ismâ'îlî is a corruption of the word, khwâja. Pîr Şadr al-Dîn was succeeded by his son Ḥasan Kabîr al-Dîn. Nothing is recorded of his activities. In the Satvenîjî, the

date of his death is given as 1449.³⁷

The consolidation phase of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī da'wa was followed by a major schism in the 15th/16th centuries. This split occurred because of the claims by Imām Shāh, the son of Kabīr al-Dīn over pirātan. According to the Nizārī sectarian accounts, Kabīr al-Dīn was succeeded by his brother Tāj al-Dīn as a pīr. It is alleged that Tāj al-Dīn was not accepted as a pīr by a section of the community and his death at an early age on the one hand, <perhaps, due to the shock arising from the allegation of the community that he had kept for himself the najrānā or offerings to be submitted to the Imām of the time> and the claims of Imām Shāh for pirātan on the other hand, plunged the community into crisis.³⁸

The Nizārī sources mention that Imām Shāh was never endowed with pirātan by the Imām. Nevertheless, he established himself at Gujarat and carried out his da'wa activities. However, it was his son, Nar Muḥammad Shāh, who perhaps taking advantage of the turbulence within the community at the death of Pīr Tāj al-Dīn, set up an independent line and organised the Imām Shāhī sect in Gujarat. The Imām al-Mustanṣir II, in response to this schism dispatched a book, the 'Pandiyāt-i Jawānmardī' <Maxims of Fortitude> condemning the Imām Shāhīs and exhorting the community to accept the book as a pīr.³⁹ To avoid further crisis in future, the structure of the da'wa was changed with

the Imâms appointing Vakils <agents> to administer the community. With the crisis and the split, the age of the pîrs and of massive conversion came to an end.⁴⁰

The split separated the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community into two branches. The name Satpanthis, from that time onwards, is used specifically to indicate the Imâm Shâhî line, while the followers of the Nizârî Imâms are known as Khôjâs. Although the Imâm Shâhîs possess the same ginân literature as the Khôjâs, they do not consider themselves to have any connection with the latter.⁴¹

With regard to the nature of the da'wa teachings in the Indian Sub-continent, the Nizârî pîrs faced a critical problem. They had to present Islam in a form which would be appealing to the new converts from Hinduism. W. Ivanow states, that "the pîrs separated the meaning and spirit of Islam from its hard Arabic shell."⁴² He further states:

They explained the high ideals of Islam in the familiar terms of the ancestral religion and culture of the new converts Hinduism, striving to make of them good mu'mins, sincere adepts of the spirit of Islam, rather than muslims, i.e. those who formally profess Islam, often without paying attention to its spirit and implications.⁴³

The attempts of the pîrs was to project Islam as the crowning phase of the whole development of Hinduism.

According to them, the Qur'ân was the last and the final Ved, completing, abrogating, and superseding the earlier revelations. In this theory, Hinduism was merely a preparatory phase, just as Christianity, Judaism, etc., in the revelation of the only true religion, Satpanth.⁴⁴

By following this strategy, the pîrs constituted a 'bridge' between Ismâ'ilism and Hinduism which permitted new ideas to enter that entirely different world of Hindu mentality.

One of the critical ways in which the idea of Islam as the culmination of Hinduism was projected came through utilization of the Dasa Avatâra <Ten Incarnation> theory of the Hindus as upheld by the Vaishṇavas. The Lord Viṣṇu, according to the Vaishṇavas is incarnated in various forms in different ages <yuga>. In this Kali yuga <present age> the Vaishṇavas have been awaiting the last Avatâra known as Naklanki or Kalki <stainless> to manifest himself. It was apparently, Pîr Shams who first utilized this theory for the da'wa purposes <which can be seen, apart from the other ginâns attributed to Shams al-Dîn, in the Brahm Prakâsh as well>. He preached that the last incarnation of Viṣṇu was indeed 'Alî, manifested during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. By so doing, he superimposed the Shî'î form of Islam upon a Hindu Vaishṇava sub-structure.⁴⁵

Apart from incorporating the basic Dasa Avatâra theory, the pîrs also made use of Hindu mythological figures, and by relating them to Islamic figures, attempted to project a continuity of Hindu tradition into Islamic tradition. For instance, the figure of Brahma the creator, was identified with that of the Prophet Muḥammad, the figure of Saraswatî as the daughter of Brahma with that of Fâtimah, the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁴⁶

The result was, as W. Ivanow states, that the pîrs succeeded "in welding the two cultures into one, and laying the foundation to a new cultural group which in itself bore the seeds of further great progress and potentialities."⁴⁷ One of the major resulting elements was the creation of an innovative synthesis in the form of a new literature geared for new converts from Hinduism projecting the true path <Satpanth>. These various long and short compositions consisting of devotional hymns, basically didactic in nature, came to be termed as ginâns.

The word ginân is a popularization of the Sanskrit word jñāna, which is commonly defined as "contemplative or meditative knowledge."⁴⁸ In the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî tradition, the word ginân refers to those Ismâ'îlî writings whose authorship is attributed to their various dâ'îs and pîrs who came to the Indian Sub-continent for preaching and conversion. The ginân literature constitutes almost the

entire corpus of indigenous literature preserved by the community. Consequently, it forms the most important source for the study of any aspect of the development of the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî community in the Indian Sub-continent. The present day Ismâ'îlîs regard ginâns as sacred literature. Most of the ginâns are still recited as a part of the religious ceremonies conducted in their jamâ'ât khanâ. W. Ivanow provides a fairly detailed list of the ginâns.⁴⁹ He records 800 ginâns of varying length, believed to have been composed by the Ismâ'îlî dâ'îs and pîrs at least from the 13th century until the early part of this century when the composition process ceased and the ginân corpus was frozen.⁵⁰

It is maintained by the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs that the ginâns began as oral tradition. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain when writing of the ginâns actually began. The manuscripts in which the ginâns are recorded are available at the Ismailia Association for Pakistan. The oldest manuscript dated is mentioned to have been copied in 1736. Since this manuscript, like several others, is mentioned as having been copied from older ones, it is believed that the task of recording ginâns could have been undertaken at least from the 16th century.⁵¹

The manuscripts of the ginân literature have survived in the khôjki or khwâja Sindhi script. This script represents the earliest form of Sindhi writing in proto-Nagari

characters. The khôjki script appears to be unique to the Nizârî Ismâ'îlîs in the history of Indo-Muslim literature. This script, it is believed, was used by the Nizârî Ismâ'îlî pîrs in order to preserve Ismâ'îlî doctrines within the community and 'also, perhaps, to foster a sense of communal identity.⁵² Presently the ginâns, at least those recited for religious ceremonies, have been transliterated into Gujarati script, as most of the present day Ismâ'îlîs do not read the Khôjki script.

At least six Indian languages are used in the ginâns: Multani, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Hindi, and Kacchi. The languages used in the ginâns reflect the areas from which the manuscripts of the ginân may have originated. As to the form of ginâns, they are composed in the style of the popular devotional type of literature characteristic of most religious literature emerging during the medieval era in the Indian Sub-continent.⁵³ The ginâns are of varying lengths, usually written in a pada <verse> form. Each stanza is either in the form of chaupâi <quatrains> or of dohâ <couplets>.

Stanzas containing more verses do exist in the ginân literature, but on the whole they reflect these two forms. The longer ginâns called granths are usually given a title. Several long compositions contain a form of appendix called Vel while a few also exist in a minor <nindo, nano> or major

<moto, vadho> version, a possible indication that one of them was a later composition modelled on the other.⁵⁴ One of the main characteristic feature of the ginâns is that each ginân ends with the bhanitâ or a signature, identifying the composer of the ginân. This feature is common to the developing devotional literature in north India.⁵⁵

Ginâns are meant to be sung and recited. Râga <music>, therefore, is one of the main features of the ginâns. Râga is a name given to a class of melodies which constitutes the highest expression of Indian classical music.⁵⁶ Each râga is believed to create a special emotional effect which colours the mind of a listener and puts him into a certain mood. This is the reason why each ginân has a particular râga and is meant to be sung on specific occasions for a specific ritual or as an aid to meditation on the spiritual path.

The ginân literature is generally arranged according to its composers so that ginâns attributed to a particular pîr are compiled together. A complete subject or doctrinal-wise classification, which would prove useful for categorizing or indexing the ginâns has not yet been attempted. This is true partly because each ginân has a number of themes running through it, which accordingly precludes classification of the ginâns.

However, a preliminary classification attempted in a

survey work may be offered in the absence of a detailed investigation of the ginân literature. The classification is as follows:⁵⁷

i> Ginâns that can be termed as conversion ginâns. The ginâns belonging to this category reflect the incorporation of Hindu themes and concepts to explain the Satpanth religion, i.e. Nizârî Ismâ'îlism. The basic concept used was the Avatâra theory of the Vaishṇava Hindus. The Vaishṇavas believe in the descent of Vishṇu in ten forms to the earth. Nine Avatâras of the Lord Vishṇu have manifested themselves and the people were awaiting the manifestation of the tenth Avatâra of Lord Vishṇu to redeem them.⁵⁸ The Nizârî Ismâ'îlî pîrs showed Satpanth Ismâ'îlism to be a completion of this Vaishṇava belief, by portraying 'Alî, the first Imâm of the Ismâ'îlîs, as the tenth awaited Avatâra.

The accounts of traditional figures of Hindu mythology can be included in this category. Figures such as Harischandra, Draupadî and the Pândava brothers are considered as models of proper behavior and conduct for the Hindus. These figures are constantly idealized in the Hindu tradition. These mythological figures are seen lifted and incorporated in the ginâns. For example, in one of the small ginâns of Pîr Shams, the figure of Draupadî, is carried over from the Hindu tradition, where she is a model of chastity and righteousness, into the Ismâ'îlî tradition, where she

becomes the model of an ideal believer who sacrifices herself for the sake of religion.''

ii> The second category of the ginâns are those that deal with cosmological and eschatological theories. Here again we find a variety of theories both from Hinduism and Islam. For instance, in the ginân "Âd unâd kî vâñî", a Hindu cosmological theory is incorporated within the Ismâ'îlî framework.''' In yet another ginân "Dhan dhan sâmf Râjo Tu Sîrjanhâr", an Islamic theory has been utilized. Both these are attributed to the authorship of Pîr Shams al-Dîn.''

iii> The third category would include ginâns which are moral and ethical in nature, aimed at instructing converts from Hinduism to lead a moral and religious life. The ginâns 'So Kriyâ' a hundred obligatory acts, 'Bâwan Bodh' or fifty two advices can be included in this category.''

iv> The fourth category includes those ginâns meant to be sung on specific occasions, such as Navrûz, the ascension of an Imâm, Milâd al-Nabî or for certain religious ceremonies such as ghaṭ-pāṭ.''

v> The fifth and the last category includes those ginâns which are mystical in nature. The ginâns belonging to this category deal with mystical relation-ships to be developed between the Lord and a murîd. This is exemplified

in the *ginâns* as a spiritual relation-ship between the *Imâm* and a *mûrid*, who as we have seen above, according to the post-*Alamût* developed concept of *Imâmah*, stands in fundamental spiritual relation-ship with a *murîd*.

In this category, one comes across theories similar to those found in both *şûffî* and Hindu mystical traditions. The fundamental emphasis of these mystical compositions, as mentioned above, is on the establishment of a personal and interior relation-ship between the *Imâm* and a *murîd*, in order that the latter might attain the divine vision <*darśan*>. For to attain the divine vision of the Lord is equated with the attainment of *mokṣa* <liberation> from human life on earth. The *ginâns* of this category, therefore, describe the path a *murîd* would have to traverse in order to attain the vision of the Lord and contain instructions of how to attain it. To this category belong the *Bujh Niranjān* and the *Brahm Prakāsh*.⁶⁴

And it is to the *Brahm Prakāsh*, that we now turn our attention. Chapter II offers a translation of the text of the *Brahm Prakāsh* into English. Chapter III focusses on analysis of the *Brahm Prakāsh*.

Notes to Chapter I

¹B. Lewis, The Assassins, <London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967>, 36.

²For details on the significance of the Qiyamah event both from the doctrinal as well as historical point of view see M.G.M. Hodgson, The Order of the Assassins, <The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1955>, 148-159.

³H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany and Spiritual Birth in Ismailian Gnosis," in Papers from Eranos Yearbooks, Vol.V, Bollingen Series, XXX, <New York: Pantheon Books>, 127-128.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 95.

⁶A.Nânjî, The Nizârî, 107.

⁷H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany, 74.

⁸Ibid.

⁹W. Ivanow, Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismâ'ilism, <Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952>, 47.

¹⁰A. Nânjî, The Nizârî, 108.

¹¹H. Corbin, "Divine Epiphany, 129.

¹²The Nizârî da'wa came to be characterized as the da'wa al-jadîd <new da'wa> in contrast to the da'wa al-qadîm <old da'wa> of the Fâtîmids which confined in Cairo after the schism.

¹³For details see, M.G.M. Hodgson, "The Ismâ'îlî State," in The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5, edited by J. A. Boyle, <Cambridge: At the University Press, 1968>, 465-466.

¹⁴W. Ivanow, "The Sect, 22.

¹⁵The sectarian accounts of the Indian Ismâ'ilîs would broadly comprise two sources: a> the orally transmitted tradition which the Ismâ'ilîs themselves maintain concerning the history of their own pîrs. During the last few decades a new literature in Gujarati has sprung up by the Ismâ'ilîs themselves attempting to explain the history of the Nizârî Ismâ'ilîs. Such for instance are the Khôjâ Komno Itihâs <1908>, a History of the Khôjâs, by Jaffer Rahimtoola Kadru; Momîn Komno Itihâs <Bombay, 1936>, a History of Imâm Shâhîs, by Miyanjî Noormahomed Roohkash; "Ismaili" <a Bombay weekly>,

by Ali Mahomed Janmahomed Chunara and Noorun Mubin <Bombay, 1936> by the same author.

The significance of these works lie in the incorporation of hitherto unrecorded oral tradition.

b> a large body of religious literature, the qināns of which we have dealt in details further below in this chapter.

¹⁶J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 351.

¹⁷A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 60-61.

¹⁸A. Chunara, Noorun Mubin, Revised by Jaffarali Muhammad Sufi, Third edition, <Bombay: Ismailia Association for India, 1951>, 215-216.

¹⁹J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 351.

²⁰W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 6-8.

²¹Ibid., 11.

²²J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 333.

²³Aziz Ahmad, An Intellectual History of Islam in India, <Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964>, 24-25.

²⁴"Satveñijī Vel," in Imām Shāh na qināno, Published by Mukhī Lālji Devrāj, n.d., verse no.72.

²⁵A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 62-63.

²⁶Ibid., 64.

²⁷W. Ivanow, "Shams Tabrez of Multan," in Professor Muhammad Shafi Presentation Volume, edited by S.M. Abdullah, <Lahore: Majlis-e-Armughan-e-Ilmi, 1955>, 116.

²⁸"Surbhān," in Pīr Shams na Grantho, Published by Mukhī Lālji Devrāj, n.d., verse no.5.

²⁹"Chandrabbhān," in Pīr Shams na Grantho, Published by Mukhī Lālji Devrāj, n.d., verse no.6.

³⁰A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 63.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 65.

³³Ibid., 64.

³⁴G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara as Linguistic, 44.

³⁵M. Hidayetullah, Kabir: The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity, <Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1977>, 45.

³⁶the term "Khawāja" means "the honorable or worshipped converts". For details on the term and its usage, see K. B. Fazalullah, Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. IX, part 2, <1899>, 36-49.

³⁷J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 357.

³⁸A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 85.

³⁹J. N. Hollister, The Shia, 362.

⁴⁰Ali Asani, "The Ismā'īlī qinān Literature: Its Structure and Love-Symbolism," <Honours Essay submitted to Harvard University, 1977>, 15.

⁴¹W. Ivanow, "The Sect, 43.

⁴²W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 20.

⁴³Ibid., 18.

⁴⁴Ibid., 24.

⁴⁵G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic, 46.

⁴⁶A. Schimmel, "Reflections on Popular Muslim Poetry," Contributions to Asian Studies, Vol. 17<1984>, 18.

⁴⁷W. Ivanow, "Satpanth, 27.

⁴⁸See B. Walker, "Knowledge" in The Hindu World: An Encyclopaedic Survey of Hinduism, <New York: Frederik A. Praeger, 1968>, Vol. I, 555.

⁴⁹W. Ivanow, Guide, 174-181.

⁵⁰It is maintained by the Nizārī community that qināns were composed till the turn of this century. The last composer is said to be Sayyidna Imām Begūm, who lived in Karachi. After her death in early 1940's the composition process ceased and the qinān corpus was frozen.

⁵¹Ali Asani, "The Ismā'īlī qinān, 13.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 20.

*Ibid.

*C. Vaudeville, Kabir, <Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974>, 62.

*B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol. II, 266.

*for this section we have drawn freely upon Ali Asani, "The Ismā'īlī qinān, particularly, 13-18.

*Ibid., 14.

*Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, A Collection of Gināns by the Great Saint Pīr Shams, Bombay, 1952.

*Ibid.

*Ibid.

*for listing of these qināns see, W. Ivanow Guide, 174-81.

*the term is a compound of two Sanskrit words ghat and pāt. At present time in the Nizārī Ismā'īlī ritual, ghatpāt, refers to a ceremony where a vessel containing holy water is placed on a pat or a low table. After prayers the Ismā'īlīs partake of this holy water.

Numerous references to this ceremony of ghatpāt, also known as pāval signifying that which purifies, are found in the qināns. The Persian term āb-i-Safa <water of purity> is also used by the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs.

*The text of the Bujh Nirānjan is published by the Shia Ismailia Association for India, in "Pavitra Ginānno Sanghra," Bombay, 1962. For an interesting thesis on Bujh Nirānjan worked upon recently see Ali Asani, "Bujh Nirānjan: A Critical Edition of a Mystical Poem in Hindustani with its Khojki and Gujarati Recensions," <Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1984>.

CHAPTER II

A Translation of the gīnān Brahm Prakāśh <Divine Illumination>

The sat śabda <True Word> is our guru <master>, the world does not recognise it. 1

Reflect on the sat śabda, utter pīrshāh frequently. 2

Meditate through the tongue first, recite pīrshāh pīrshāh day and night. 3

For three months it stays upon the tongue, then gets absorbed in what is named Brahm. 4

On uttering the Name, love sets ablaze, Thence emerges self-conviction. 5

Say! O brother, what kind of love is this, I shall reveal the hidden secret for you. 6

Overwhelmed, the ripple of love arises, In that state the sweetness of the mouth escapes. 7

It oozes out at the intimation of ensuing love, In the midst of that state, the mind gets absorbed. 8

As the current of love moves along its <the mind's> banks, captivated by love, he gets intoxicated. 9

Astonishingly he babbles and his speech becomes dauntless, this is the sign of having reached farther. 10

In what manner, can I extol the 'divine bliss', Its majesty is greater than which can ever be expressed. 11

He who relates from books and leaflets,
will not have access to that bliss. 12

A matted hair mendicant impressing himself as a
bhagvân <divine>,
that bliss remains hidden from him. 13

A mendicant applying ashes and possessing no material
assets,
he did not even brush the surface of the secret to
that bliss. 14

Being an ascetic, yet not immersed in asceticism,
that bliss remains concealed from him. 15

Worshipping to the jaṅgam <Hindu deity> day and night
and keeping devout faith in it, will never attain that
bliss. 16

Attaining bodily immortality, yet not comprehending its
value,
Say, how will he have access to that bliss? 17

Performing sixty-eight pilgrimages and bathing the
body for purification,
he will not have heard of that bliss. 18

The pious one performing the six important sacrificial
rites,
<Yet> that bliss remains distinct from him. 19

Nurtured by milk alone, a Saivite hermit,
without that bliss, his physical body is desolate. 20

Worshipping stones, ringing bells,
those will not <even> dream of that bliss. 21

Singing and playing loud on instruments,
those did not realize the value of that bliss. 22

Carrying volumes of books for many people to notice ,
without that bliss, they remained worthless. 23

All the literates become vain for their accomplishments,
<they> became oblivious of the path itself to that bliss. 24

Attaining bodily immortality through medicinal herbs,
those will never attain that bliss. 25

Many prepare medicinal water,
those did not discriminate the austerity toward
that bliss. 26

Many play fair and foul dramas,
in the name of that bliss, merely satiated their
material desires. 27

Spreading witch-craft and sorcery successfully,
that bliss remains distinct from him. 28

Founding assemblies, making himself the excellent one,
he did not attain the assets of that bliss. 29

Performing ten million horse-sacrifices,
he will not discover the dwelling abode of that bliss. 30

He who buries his body alive into the earth,
he forgot the passage itself to that bliss. 31

He who forsake taste and consumed roots,
he did not obtain the taste of that bliss. 32

Digging a cave and burying himself into the earth,
he also did not attain this bliss. 33

Balancing into the air and burying into the earth,
both the means prove useless, if that bliss is not
achieved. 34

- One who goes to Kashi and tortures himself,
he will not have obtained the least knowledge
of that bliss. 35
- Going to the Himalayas to bury his limbs,
he could not bury himself into that bliss. 36
- One who scorches his own self,
the subject of that bliss remains unique to him. 37
- One who becomes a roaming derwish and explores
portions of the earth,
that bliss remains farther remote to him. 38
- He who is fortunate in life and He who has material plenty,
without reciting One Name, that bliss remains
distinct from him. 39
- I showed to you, the asceticism of those who did
not attain,
now, I shall explain to you of those who have attained. 40
- Siva, Sankâdik attained that bliss,
and liberated themselves from the cycle of coming
and going. 41
- Sûkha dev, Vyâsa merged into the bliss,
they will never fall into the cycle of returning. 42
- Dhruva, Pralhâd merged into that bliss, and relieved
themselves from the bondage of eighty-four cycles of
rebirth. 43
- Kabîr, the slave and Râmânanda the master,
attained that bliss and rejoiced in it. 44
- Nâmdev after attaining that bliss,
fulfilled his mission absolutely. 45

Pipa, Dhannâ and Rohidâs,
attaining that bliss made it their abode. 46

And Nânak Shâh attained,
he attained it by concentrating on the One Name alone. 47

Viśan, Surijan and Mâdhavdâs,
all made their dwelling into that bliss. 48

Dâdû, Rajab, Parsa and Gîyânî,
attained that bliss only through firm meditation. 49

Raňka, Vaňka, Kalu and Kuňbhâ,
they also drowned themselves in that bliss. 50

Khetâ, Gaṭṭe, Sajná and Sena also,
immersed themselves into that bliss. 51

Agar, Kîlijan and Tulsi attained,
they also found themselves in harmony with that bliss. 52

Morardâs and Maluk jaňgî,
they were also in harmony with that bliss. 53

Haridâs and the humble Bajindâ,
they also merged in the current of that bliss. 54

That same bliss Esar Tuňbar attained,
uttering the name, absorbed himself into it. 55

The philosophers and the ascetics,
by attaining that bliss became fortunate. 56

That bliss Gorakh attained undoubtedly,
understanding asceticism earned the reward
of his austerities. 57

The ascetics, Gopichand and Bharthari,
they were also fortunate to attain that bliss. 58

All who attained were revealed to you,
Yet, there is no end to those who attain. 59

In innumerable eras those who contemplated on the Name
found themselves in harmony with that bliss. 60

Now for six months the meditation is centered
in the 'heart',
every breath repeatedly contemplating just One Name. 61

One day greets with astonishment,
'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'. 62

For nine months the Name is held,
in the same state of meditation and in the same abode of
happiness. 63

From the 'west', it begins to rise upwards toward the
'sky',
reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show. 64

Without rain where the sky thunders,
without a visible place where one dwells. 65

Without clouds where it rains,
where dwells a 'person' without a human form. 66

Say, in what manner does the sky thunder?
Say, how does one dwell without a dwelling? 67

Say, in what manner does it rain?
Say, in what way does a 'person' dwell without a
human form? 68

In an awful <anâhata> unconstrained manner, the sky
thunders,
the mind sits at the trio place <trikuti>. 69

In the sukhmanâ the rain trickles,
where dwells the 'faultless' without a human form. 70

There is no trumpet, yet there is a melody!
there is no sun, yet it is bright! 71

There is no source for a river, yet there flows
the Ganges!
there is no inmate, yet there is a friend! 72

Say! what would you call a melody?
Say! what is this brightness? 73

Say! what would you call the Ganges?
Say! whom would you call a friend? 74

Where the trumpet strikes anâhata nâda,
where the sun rays radiate sharply. 75

The creation is in the sukhmanâ ganga,
where the surati śabda unite together. 76

And I can talk of the world easily,
<but> the significance of that place cannot be expressed. 77

Indivisible śabda cannot be impaired,
day and night remains in its pristine form. 78

Immortal śabda never ceases,
becoming surati, is absorbed in the śabda. 79

Incomprehensible śabda held through meditation,
'easily' the burden of salvation is resolved. 80

Immortal śabda I say, never perishes,
uniting with Brahm assumes immortality. 81

Timeless śabda is where there is no bondage of time,
day and night, surati is absorbed in it. 82

Indivisible śabda visualised in meditation,
he terminates the process of coming and going. 83

Unwritten śabda expressed through asceticism,
due to surati, <he> attains the fruits of salvation. 84

Unshaken śabda, nothing can tilt it,
the śabda is immeasurable, who can then weigh it? 85

The unfathomable śabda, who can find its limit?
the śabda is boundless, who can estimate its depth? 86

Where the surati śabda dwells,
there is neither the earth nor the sky. 87

When the surati śabda overpowers, <unmani> mind,
then the fear of life and death vanishes. 88

Where the iṅgalā, piṅgalā and the sukhmanā
arteries run,
there the śabda unites with them. 89

One who perceives the śabda within the limits of the
human form,
did not understand the meaning of surati śabda. 90

The surati śabda unites in a knot
just as water merges into water. 91

Even if in a moment death occurs,
the knot of the surati śabda will never break. 92

The word perceived as 'faultless' by anyone,
will not then perceive it in the limits of
physical vision. 93

The śabda cannot be perceived through physical vision,
those who try to visualize, do not have the eyes
for the śabda. 94

The Creator and the Doer of Ours,
Who is seen as the all-Pervading One. 95

The Lord <saheb> distinct from everyone,
meets only those fewer ascetics through their asceticism. 96

Whoever visualizes the 'faultless' in such a manner,
frees himself from the bonds of perpetual returns to
the earth. 97

Where the nectar trickles forth,
in the happy abode of the sukhmanā, he plays
in the bliss. 98

In the sukhmanā bliss, the surati gets absorbed,
and he speaks without fear. 99

Everybody comprehends the external experience,
none comprehend the paracā <divine experience>. 100

Why is there apprehension for the divine experience?
without himself being revealed of it, who can
grasp the divine secret? 101

Where the tide of happiness is at its height,
there amidst the Brahm he gets absorbed. 102

One's mind gets absorbed in his own inner most self,
then, the pain to be cast again in the womb does
not arise. 103

In his inner most self, he sees his own self,
he, then, attains immortality existing. 104

What can I talk about the excellent one's inner self!
Anything I utter puts my mind to shame. 105

The alert eyes will discover the jewel,
the ignorant will not bring faith. 106

If the diamond is tied in a knot,
what does it matter, if the ignorant believes or not? 107

Without having heard, I related what I personally
experienced,
I simplified and explained to you. 108

The way I attained, so I explained,
before reaching, I did not believe in its reality. 109

Whoever wanders through the three worlds,
without reciting One Name will never attain salvation. 110

The name of the Lord is enchanting and affectionate,
it is the boat to cross the great ocean. 111

Whoever practices the way I explained,
will recite 'thou' 'thou' in one flow. 112

Day and night if one recites 'thou alone',
will inevitably traverse the great ocean. 113

Whoever recites the Name of the Lord,
that slave will attain the Lord himself. 114

Life is squandered in vain, without reciting the Name,
Contemplation makes his life worthwhile. 115

He who eliminates pride whilst meditating on the Name,
eliminates for himself accounting for his actions of the
three ages. 116

All those who have contemplated, and are contemplating,
even if they be of low-caste will be amongst
the elevated. 117

In the Sat yuga, Tretâ yuga,
Dvâpara yuga,
And in the fourth the Kali yuga, I say, my brothers. 118

The ascetics who are liberated or will be liberated,
will have done by eliminating pride and praying to
the Reality. 119

The Lord has innumerable Names,
whoever forsakes slander and recollects, is a
real saint. 120

The Agam - Nigam <sacred Vedas>, the Purâna <Hindu
mythological texts>, the Qur'ân,
and Nânak also extols the glory of the Lord. 121

The Lord alone knows his own essence,
the wisdom of Reality is perceived by none. 122

In a fraction of a second, He creates the universe,
and in a fraction absorbs the universe again. 123

The wisdom of the Reality can never be written,
listen, O believers, O! my brothers. 124

- Eliminate all other doubts from the self,
and engrave just One Name within. 125
- While meditating do not drift in other thoughts,
restraining deviation, meditate on the Name firmly. 126
- Meditating on the Name, <he> attains the Named,
annihilating the self replaces the self. 127
- In yourself, you will hold the all-Pervading One,
the body, the universe will be overwhelmed. 128
- The 'attributeless' has many attributes,
if you comprehend and see, one supercedes the other. 129
- The formless Reality takes a form and descends,
This is liked by the lovers of the Lord. 130
- Innumerable eras and days passed,
In these souls were liberated, who overcame ignorance. 131
- Extolling his glory,
One can never exhaust it. 132
- In the Sat yuga, he manifested into four forms,
four saints reached the heights. 133
- Listen, O my brothers, Pralhâd the redeemer of
five crores,
was of this era who attained liberation. 134
- In the Tretâ, he manifested into three forms,
Harischandra was the true one to attain the heights. 135

In the Dvāpara, he manifested into two forms,
the redeemer of nine crores Pāndava recognised him. 136

In the Kali yuga he has taken the form of a Naklanki,
of all the souls, he is the sole ruler. 137

One day he will play a trick,
and will put an end to all deceit and fraud in the
world. 138

When Imām Mahdī extends his protection,
twelve crores and innumerable souls will then attain
liberation. 139

The attributes of the attributeless are too heavy,
He is the sole enacter of his own drama. 140

Shams Dariyā, searches the river,
and preaches in the form of a derwish. 141

The manner various people comprehend,
he explains to them in a manner comprehensible to them. 142

Shams, the master, discloses the secret,
only the true believers attain the Lord. 143

Whatever has happened, is happening and will
continue to happen,
the world worship the 'gurnar' alone. 144

This is why I related about Him,
for whoever remains with the Lord. 145

They will all witness the Omnipresence of Alf,
whoever searches the Brahm Gyān <divine light>. 146

He will develop firm conviction,
he who engrosses in attaining the knowledge of
the Divine.

147

Whoever studies, understands and meditates on the Name,
that believer attains paradise.

148

This is the essence of the true path,
Shams Dariya has related and explained.

149

May the Lord fulfill everyone's desire,
prays the person who related to the people
the 'knowledge of the divine'.

150

Chapter III

Brahm Prakāsh, An Analysis

section <a>

Background to the Tantric Tradition

The two gināns, the Brahm Prakāsh <Divine Illumination> and the Bujh Nirānjan <Knowledge of the Attributeless Deity> that we mentioned in the previous chapter deal with a similar theme which is highly mystical and spiritual in nature. The Khôjās view both these gināns as directives for a murīd's spiritual progress on the spiritual path. These gināns include description of mystical 'stages' and 'states' and contain instructions on how to attain them.

But, while the Bujh Nirānjan is composed in a ṣūfī vein, dealing with mystical stages and experience similar to those contained in ṣūfī manuals, the Brahm Prakāsh, appears to find its basis in an indigenous Indian religious phenomenon, the Tantric tradition.¹ The technical terms which describe the mystical stages in the Brahm Prakāsh are similar to those dealt with in the Tantric esoteric teachings. Although, it would be interesting to draw parallels between the two approaches - the Brahm Prakāsh and the Bujh Nirānjan -

chiefly because of their representing a single tradition, our study focusses on the Brahm Prakāsh itself, one of the reason being, a recent study on the Bujh Nirānjan questions the Ismā'īlī origins of the ginān itself.² If this is true, then the Brahm Prakāsh would be the only other long composition available in the corpus in which the mystical theme of contemplation has been dealt with in an elaborated and in a consistent manner. More important, the key Tantric terms which form the basis of the Brahm Prakāsh are found used in several other gināns in the corpus.³ A study of the Brahm Prakāsh will, therefore, not only aid in obtaining an overall understanding of what the Tantric terms imply in the gināns, but will also determine to what extent Tantrism has found expression in the Nizārī Ismā'īlī system of thought in the Indian Sub-continent.

Our aim in this chapter is, therefore, to examine the nature of the relation-ship between the Tantric tradition and the ginān tradition of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs. However, our intention is not to deal in detail with either of them, but will be limited to examining those aspects of Tantric tradition which appear to find similar expressions in the gināns. It is essential to take into consideration the Tantric background, as the key terms used in the Brahm Prakāsh to express mystical stages and experience appear to be a part of the elaborated Yoga discipline, namely the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition. Hence, we will discuss

primarily the Haṭha Yoga framework. Then on the Haṭha Yoga basis, we shall attempt to explain how the mystical experience is expressed in the gināns, specifically in the Brahm Prakāsh. First, however, a short note on the Tantric tradition is appropriate.

Tantrism - a pan Indian phenomenon of extreme complexity - is essentially a Yoga discipline <sādhana-śāstra>.⁴ It appears that this Yoga tradition had been popularized in northern India at least from the 10th century, initially in its Buddhistic form and later in its Śaivite form by the Sahajiyā Siddhas and the Nāth-panthī Yogīs. Both the Siddhas and the Nāth Yogīs were propagators and exponents of some form of Haṭha Yoga which had its origins in Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁵ It was apparently through the Nāth Yogīs, the Śaivite counter-parts of the Siddhas, that the Tantric tradition and some of its esoteric jargon spread in the northern and the central parts of the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era.

These Nāth Yogīs are also known as Gorakh Nāth Yogīs, after the name of their foremost Guru Gorakhnāth and also as kānpaṭa Yogīs on account of their split ears.⁶ Although the dates of Gorakhnāth cannot be ascertained, scholars agree that he may have lived between the 9th and 12th centuries in northern Punjab.⁷ It is alleged that it was from this period that the Nāth Yogīs achieved popularity. The influence of

these Nāth Yogīs appears to have been quite profound during the medieval era on the emerging mystical traditions both among the Hindus and the Muslims. Among the Hindus two mystical traditions namely, the Bhakti and the Sant tradition are alleged to have been affected by the Gorakhnāth panthīs. C. Vaudeville maintains that the so-called nirgunī Bhakti, whose chief exponent was Kabīr, appears to be so heavily indebted to the Nath-panthī form of Yoga that the sayings of some of the Sants such as Guru Nānak, Nāmdev etc. can hardly be understood without referring to the Nath-panthī esoteric vocabulary.'

Similarly, the ṣūfis, especially those belonging to the Chistiyya and the Shattārī Orders, seem to have found compatability of ṣūfī doctrines with those of Nāth-panthīs. This is evidenced by the writings of some of the ṣūfis of the medieval period which show a marked influence of Nāth-panthī thought in them.' Likewise, examining the gināns, we find a large portion of their mystical structure to reflect Nāth-panthī esoteric jargon. There are numerous references in the gināns to terms such as jogī, abadhu <avadhūta>, titles of Nāth Yogīs. The liberal use of their terms indicate that Tantrism has sufficiently found expression in the ginān literature of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs.

The ginān Brahm Prakāsh, besides using the key Tantric terms to express the mystical experience, which itself

suggests a connection between the two traditions, also makes references to several personalities. The ginân mentions them as those having received the mystical experience by having following the spiritual path as outlined in the Brahm Prakâsh.¹⁰ Personalities such as Kabîr, Guru Nânak, Bhartari, Gopî, Nâmdev etc., mentioned in the ginân are those belonging to the Sant tradition who are alleged to have had been either disciples of Gorakhnâth or to have come into contact with Gorakhnâth.¹¹ The Brahm Prakash mentions Gorakhnâth as one who has liberated himself:

That bliss Gorakh attained undoubtedly,
Understanding asceticism earned the
reward of his austerities.¹²

Besides the Brahm Prakâsh, references to Gorakhnâth are also found in a few other places in a ginân attributed to the same pîr.¹³ There is no possibility, however, of ascertaining whether Shams al-Dîn, the Nizârî pîr to whom is attributed the ginân Brahm Prakâsh, had any direct connection with Gorakhnâth himself. But the similarities found in their works certainly indicate a link between the two traditions which seems to have begun with Shams al-Dîn and carried on till recently since the ginâns composed by the last author, Sayyidnâ Imâm Begum,¹⁴ strongly reflect Tantric jargon. Hence, we shall proceed to examine the Haṭha Yoga of the Nâth-panthi cult.

Haṭha Yoga or kuṇḍalinī-śakti Yoga

As mentioned above, Haṭha Yoga is believed to have developed from the 7th century onwards as a kind of off-shoot of Mahāyāna Buddhism which has gradually impregnated most schools of popular devotion, both Vedāntic and Buddhistic.¹⁴ The word Haṭha is formed of two words, ha means the sun <sūrya> and ṭha, the moon <chandrāma>; their union is called Yoga. The word signifies, however, 'difficult Yoga' since extremely strenuous bodily exercises and difficult postures of body are usually <although not always> associated with it.¹⁵

The basic conception behind the Yoga practices is identical in all the Tantric schools. The aim of a Yogī, whether Buddhist or Śaivite is to attain sahaja -a Supreme, transcendent state. The sahaja state, a Yogī maintains, is to be attained within the body itself, since the human body is conceived as a microcosm, wherein all spiritual truth is to be 'realized'. To realize the sahaja state, therefore, primarily requires an understanding of the human body and its esoteric aspects. Secondly a sādhana <practise> as an aid in the 'realization' of sahaja within the human body. Through the sādhana, a Yogī is said to attain the sahaja state, which is equated with the attainment of bodily immortality.¹⁶

As the Nāth-panthī Yogīs are Śaivites, their form of

Haṭha Yoga is characterized by the prominence attached to Śakti, the female energy of the Supreme Divinity Śiva.¹⁷ In this form of Haṭha Yoga, Śakti is worshipped as the active female principle, whereas the male principle, represented by Śiva, is viewed as inactive. The Nāth-panthī sādhana is aimed at realizing the union of Śiva and Śakti, which is 'sahaja' for them. Basing themselves on the general Tantric frame-work, the Nāth Yogīs maintain that the union is to be realized within the body itself.

In order to realize this merging, the Haṭha Yoga lays emphasis on the kuṇḍalinī <serpent> power, identified with Śakti. It is pointed out that kuṇḍalinī is that part of Haṭha Yoga in which the creative sustaining Śakti of the whole body is actually and truly united with the Lord of consciousness, i.e. Śiva.¹⁸ For this reason Haṭha Yoga is also called kuṇḍalinī-śakti Yoga. The essential feature of this Yoga is that it requires the help of a mantra, 'word' or 'spell' for its success.¹⁹ However, as the kuṇḍalinī and the mantra play a vital role in the human body itself, the peculiar 'geography' of the body and its esoteric aspects form the basis of Haṭha Yoga both in theory and practice.²⁰

Accordingly, the main axis of the human body is the spinal cord called meru-daṇḍa <by analogy with Mount-Meru, considered as the pivot of the universe>. Along the meru-daṇḍa are super-imposed a series of chakras

<nerve-plexuses> in the shape of lotuses. These chakras are popularly considered to be six in all.²¹ They are regarded as centres of vital forces. Hence they become objects of concentration in themselves, and in them are to be discovered the mysteries of creation. Each chakra is in itself conceived as a state of 'bliss' or of ecstatic experience.

Thus, the first chakra and the lowest of all is the mūlādhāra-chakra, situated at the extreme end of the meru-daṇḍa, which is between the anus and the genitals; whilst the sixth called the ājñā-chakra is situated between the eyebrows; above it stands a cavity within the skull. The top of the skull is occupied by the sahasrāra - the thousand petalled chakra, also known as gagana-maṇḍala.²² This gagana-maṇḍala is also called the 'moon', since it is a receptacle of ambrosia <amṛta>, which oozes from its pericap. It is conceived as the dwelling place of Param-Śiva or the Supreme Being. To reach the gagana-maṇḍala is the goal of a Yogī, as the attainment of this stage is equated with the attainment of sahaja and bodily immortality.²³

Furthermore, the human body is said to contain thousands of nāḍīs <arteries> which are essentially channels of vital breaths.²⁴ Out of these, three nāḍīs in particular play an important role in the Haṭha Yoga. The idā or iṅgalā and piṅgalā are situated on the left and the right sides of the meru-daṇḍa. Idā and piṅgalā, through which the 'two main

breaths are moving, are identified as the 'sun' <sūrya> and the 'moon' <chandrama> and as the Gangā and the Yamunā rivers respectively.²⁵ Suṣumnā or Sukhmanā, the third channel is deemed the most important. It is identified with the spinal cord or more properly as the inner most extremely narrow channel situated within the spinal cord. It is said to extend from the mūlādhāra, that is, the lowest point of the meru-daṇḍa to the vacuum below the hole of the sahasrāra in the skull.²⁶ Iḍā, piṅgalā and the sukhmanā are said to have their source in the lowest chakra and to meet finally in the sahasrāra. The confluence of these three nāḍīs in the skull is known as trivenī.²⁷ It is claimed by the Yogīs that "he who bathes at that sacred confluence reaches to the highest place and attains mokṣa <salvation>."²⁸

In this peculiar geography of the Haṭha Yoga, the cosmic energy, considered the vital energy, is conceived as a female snake, the kuṇḍalinī, the coiled one; so called because she is said to remain coiled in the lowest chakra, where she is in a dormant state.²⁹ The various exercises pertaining to the technique of Haṭha Yoga aim at waking up the kuṇḍalinī-śakti and at forcing her upwards along the meru daṇḍa through the central channel known as sukhmanā. In her progress upwards, the kuṇḍalinī aims to reach the sahasrāra. Reaching to this highest point, the kuṇḍalinī unites with

Param-Śiva, in the gagana-maṇḍala. Here, the efforts of the Yogī are rewarded : he is able to drink the ambrosia juice, and he attains mahāsūkha or 'supreme bliss' which is the supreme sahaja state.¹⁰

However, the activation of the kuṇḍalinī, essentially requires the flow of iṅgalā and piṅgalā in one direction, so that they unite with the sukhmanā in the trivenī. This regulation of the breath, according to the Nāth Yogīs needs a mantra for its sādhana. A mantra is a 'spell' or a 'word'. According to C. Vaudeville, the Yogic mantras or spells are composed of phonemes called bīja, 'germ-syllables' or akṣara, 'potent syllables', each of which is endowed with a particular energy.¹¹ When repeated outwardly and inwardly, the bīja mantras reproduce the mysterious state that they express. The repetition of this mantra is called jāpa. But jāpa as merely a repetition <uccara> is not fruitful except as a beginner's exercise.

The jāpa becomes meaningful when it is interiorized as smarana or sumiran, memorization, which is called ajāpajāpa or silent jāpa. The Nāths pay special respect to the sacred syllable haṁ-sa, which according to them is the perfect jāpa.¹² The intention behind ajāpajāpa is to curb the wandering mind and achieve total concentration on the mantra itself. Hence the mantra itself is the chief focus of the Nāth Yogīs. Once the jāpa becomes ajāpajāpa, the activation

of the kuṇḍalinī begins.

The kuṇḍalinī is lifted through smaraṇa of the mantra from the place where she lies coiled up in the mūlādhāra, the lowest base. The aim is to make the kuṇḍalinī reach the sahasrāra. But to reach the highest state, the various chakras are involved. These chakras, as mentioned above, are super-imposed on the meru-daṇḍa. Thus, they all lie in the path of the kuṇḍalinī as she passes through them on her way upwards through the sukhmanā, the central channel of the meru-daṇḍa. Each chakra symbolizes a type of reality, a specific experience or ecstasy, and the fixation on each secures reactions which are interpreted in terms of degrees of spiritual progress attained.³³ At each chakra, the individual soul drinks the nectar of the crescent moon which oozes from the pericap of the sahasrāra.

The whole process of Haṭha Yoga or kuṇḍalinī-śakti Yoga is characterized by a persistent effort directed both toward 'inwardness' and 'upwardness'.³⁴ Therefore, in Haṭha Yoga emphasis is laid both on strenuous bodily exercises <known as mudrā, āsana, bandha -appropriate gestures, postures and control methods> which aim at holding all the vital winds within the body and at breathing techniques. The Yogis maintain that the reversal of the breathing process leads to control and ultimately to the paralysing of the mind <man>. The man is conceived as the controller of the senses. The

man, therefore, is considered to be the greatest obstacle in the Yogī's progress toward attaining liberation. Through the control of the mind, which the Yogīs call "killing of the mind"- unmani, the Yogī is said to reach the highest state. The unmana or unmani stage, which results from the Yogī's final victory over his enemy, the man co-incides with the attainment of the sahaja state.' And this is to be attained by proper breathing techniques. Hence repetition of the mantra plays a significant role in the success of Haṭha Yoga practices.

Having outlined the basic frame-work of the Haṭha Yoga, an important aspect remains to be considered. How is the experience actualized and what is the nature of the experience. This we shall examine below in the light of the gīnān works, chiefly focussing on the Brahm Prakāśh.

Notes to Chapter III

Section <a>

¹The Tantric tradition is followed by certain so-called left-hand Hindus and Buddhists. This tradition is believed to have spread during the medieval era in the Indian Sub-continent. For details see below.

²Ali Asani, "Bujh Niranjan.

³The following is a short list of qināns found to have been composed within the Tantric frame-work: Avadhūta, <O! jogī make asceticism your begging bowl>; Tame japājo dīn raat ke, <meditate on the jāpa day and night>; Sakhī mahāpad kerī vāt, <O friend! few comprehend the significance of that stage>; Sī harfī, <thirty golden words>; Ajampiya tano hardam dhariye dhyān, <Through ajāpajāpa hold every breath>; Hardam karo abhiyas, <Study thyself constantly>; Ajampiya jāpa jena ghat mahe, <Whosoever holds the ajāpajāpa within his self>; jogī so jugā jug jogī, <He is a true Yogī who has been a Yogī through the ages>.

Besides these, there are numerous allusions to Tantric terms in the qinān corpus. These qināns are attributed to the authorship of various dā'is and pīrs beginning with compositions attributed to Shams al-Dīn until the use of Tantric vocabulary is found in the works attributed to the last of composers, Sayyidnā Imām Begum after whom the qinān corpus became frozen. For translations of the above-mentioned qināns see, Gulam Ali Allana, Ginans of the Ismaili Pirs, <Karachi: Ismailia Association for Karachi, 1984>; and "Some Specimen of Satpanth Literature-The Garbi Songs," translated by Vali Mohamad N. Huda in Collectanea I <1948>, 55-85.

⁴S. A. Rizvi, Alakhbānī or Rushd Nāmā of Shaykh Abd ul-Quddus Gangohi, in Hindi, <Aligarh: Adarsh Press, 1971>, 117.

⁵C. Vaudeville, Kabīr, 121.

⁶One of the characteristic features of the Gorakh Nāth Yogīs is the practise of having the cartilage of their ears split. At the time of initiation, as it is alleged to be still in practise, the ear of a novice is split for the insertion of huge ear-rings. It is maintained by the Nāth Yogīs that the ears contain a net-work of nāḍīs <arteries> connecting them with the inner organs of perception. The splitting of the ear is believed to open a mystical channel in order to assist in the development of Yogic powers. See, S.A. Rizvi, The History of Sufism in India, <New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Press, 1978>, 332.

⁷C. Vaudeville, *Kabîr*, 86-87.

⁸*Ibid.*, 120.

⁹Aziz Ahmad, Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, <Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964>. 137-38.

¹⁰See our translation of the *Brahm Prakâsh* above, particularly verses 41-58. Henceforth the translation will be referred to as BP.

¹¹See articles on "Gorakhnâth", "Kabîr", "Nânak" etc., in B. Walker, *Hindu World*, 2 vols.

¹²BP., verse No.57.

¹³Two other references are found in the *qinân* "Hañs Hañsali ni varta," in *Pîr Shams na Grantho*, published by Mukhî Lâlji Devrâj, n.d.

¹⁴C. Vaudeville, *Kabîr*, 122.

¹⁵G.W.Briggs, Gorakhnâth and the Kânphata Yogîs, <Calcutta: Motilal Banarasidass Press, 1973>, 274.

¹⁶C. Vaudeville, "Kabîr and Interior Religion," History of Religions, Vol.3 II <1964>, 194.

¹⁷S. A. Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, 334.

¹⁸G.W. Briggs, *Gorakhnâth*, 274.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰C. Vaudeville, *Kabîr*, 130.

²¹The six centres or *chakras* are: *mûlâdhâra* <at the base of the spinal column>; *svadhîsthana* <at the root of the male organ>; *manîkpûraka* <in the region of the navel>; *anâhata* <the heart lotus>; *viśuddha* <in the throat> and *âjñâ* <between the eyebrows, within the skull>. The *chakras* or lotuses are chief characteristic element of *Haṭha Yoga*. A few of these are referred to in the *qinâns* as well. For further details see M. Basu, Tantras, A General Study, <Calcutta: India, 1976>, 125-127.

²²C. Vaudeville, *Kabîr*, 130.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴G.W.Briggs, *Gorakhnâth*, 308.

²⁵C. Vaudeville, *Kabîr*, 131.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 131-32.

²⁰Ibid., 129.

²¹Ibid.

²²C. Vaudeville explains "The migratory bird haṁ-sa, in Vedic tradition, symbolizes the Supreme Being. In the Tantric Saiva tradition, it represents Siva. But it also, designates the individual soul <jīva> especially in its purified state, when it merges into the Universal soul, paramhaṁ-sa." Kabīr, 129. For details also see, G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnāth, 307.

²³G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnāth, 322.

²⁴C. Vaudeville, Kabīr, 132.

²⁵Ibid.

Section
Tantric Element in the gināns,
specifically in the Brahm Prakāsh

In the last section we surveyed the chief characteristic features of Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition, for it was maintained that the key technical esoteric terms of this tradition appear similar to those found in the ginān Brahm Prakāsh. It was also maintained that these key terms occur prominently in the entire ginān corpus, which goes to suggest that Tantrism seems to have found expression in the Nizārī Ismā'īlī system of thought to a large extent. This section, therefore, opens with a look at the basic conceptions outlined in the mystical category of the gināns, of which the Brahm Prakāsh is seen as a major composition. It then proceeds to examine these conceptions within the context of Haṭha Yoga. As we proceed, our study will reveal that the Brahm Prakāsh seems to super-impose a Shī'ī form of Islam upon the Haṭha Yoga frame-work of the Tantric tradition.

In our discussion on the nature and the structure of gināns in chapter one above, we classified the gināns as broadly falling under five categories. It was maintained

that amongst these, the esoteric aspect of Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism largely falls under the fifth category termed as the mystical category of ginâns. The essential feature underlying this category of ginâns, is the development of an interior and personalized form of relation-ship between an individual murîd and the Lord in order to attain the divine vision i.e. union with God.¹ <Mokṣa or salvation consists of bringing oneself within this pattern of harmony with God>. This is exemplified in the Ismâ'îlî system by the emphasis on the relation-ship between the spiritual reality of a murîd and the spiritual reality of the Imâm, who, as we have seen above, stands in fundamental relation-ship with an Ismâ'îlî murîd.² The culmination of this relation-ship is seen as a spiritual union between the inner reality of a murîd and the inner reality of the Imâm i.e. union with God.³

The mystical ginâns are, therefore, primarily expressions at various levels of a spiritual relation-ship between a murîd and the Imâm. This category of ginâns may be further classified into three sub-groups: those ginâns which are seen as guides leading towards the mystical or esoteric path and containing instructions on how to attain it; ginâns which are expressions of mystical experience arising out of

the establishment of a spiritual relation-ship; and, finally, those ginâns which in popular devotional literature of the Indian Sub-continent are termed as 'lamentations' <giryâzârî> and 'pleas' <venti> of an individual murîd for the attainment of the vision of the Lord.⁴

We are here specifically concerned with the first sub-group of ginâns which basically focus on the realization of mystical experience. They describe the various mystical 'stages' and 'states' which a murîd would experience on the spiritual journey. These ginâns, therefore, act as guides leading a murîd to tread on the esoteric path. The following verses of a short ginân from the corpus offer us a glimpse into the type of relation-ship to be cultivated between a murîd and the Lord:

Pîr Sadr al-Dîn says,
Know that the Lord is ever-present;
the eternal status can be achieved,
if you encounter the nûr <light> within...

the darśan <vision> can be attained through the 'vigil,
when you search for the 'Attributed One'.⁵

This type of references to the path are found in various places in the ginân corpus.⁶ However, the Brahm Prakâsh, as a major composition of this category not only outlines the esoteric path implied throughout the ginân corpus but also contains detailed instructions about how to follow it. Hence, we shall focus mainly on the Brahm Prakâsh.⁷ It is in

the discussion of the esoteric path described in the Brahm Prakâsh - the various mystical stages and the resulting ecstatic experience due to the establishment of a spiritual relation-ship between a murîd and the Lord - that reference to the Tantric tradition becomes inevitable. The key terms such as iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ, sukhmanâ etc., used in the text to describe the mystical experience, as we have seen above, occupy a significant place in the Haṭha Yoga theory of the Tantric tradition. Our purpose in the pages below is primarily to outline the underlying theme of the Brahm Prakâsh. The latter portion is devoted to demonstrating the mystical path outlined in the Brahm Prakâsh to determine how have these esoteric terms employed in the ginân and what meaning have they been eventually given in the text.

As the title of the ginân suggests, the Brahm Prakâsh deals with a mystical aspect concerned with the Illuminative knowledge of the divine Lord. The attainment of divine vision by an individual in order to attain mokṣa is the central idea on which the Brahm Prakâsh seems to have been based. The text attempts to explain how this vision is acquired by an individual and thereby seeks to guide a murîd from stage to stage of mystical experience to eventual absorption in the unfathomable depths of one's own inner self-hood to experience the divine. The emphasis of the Brahm Prakâsh is on the mystical practise of the sat śabda <True Word> as a means to attaining the vision of the Lord.

The ginân deals at length with the divine properties of the sat śabda. The sat śabda is presented as being both transcendent and immanent. It is transcendent in the sense that it stretches beyond time and space and is thus formless, not perceived by the power of human intellect. As it states:

Timeless śabda is where there is no bondage of time, day and night, surati is absorbed in it.

The unfathomable śabda, who can find its limit?

The śabda is boundless, who can estimate its depth?

...BP 82,86.

At the same time, the sat śabda is all-Pervading at every level of existence; in particular all the ontological stages of the self are viewed as being overwhelmed by the sat śabda. Hence, in order for a murīd to experience the transcendence and the immanence of the sat śabda, the ginân maintains that the self must be submerged in the sat śabda through contemplation. Consequently it results in the attainment of salvation.

Incomprehensible śabda held through meditation, 'easily' the burden of salvation is resolved.

...BP 80.

In other words, the sat śabda itself forms the ultimate focus, the centre around which a murīd's inner energies are organised. For this reason, the sumiran <contemplation> of the sat śabda forms a significant practice which seems to

underlie the Brahm Prakâsh. Sumiran of the sat śabda or the dhikr of ism â'zam by the şûfîs is a means shown in the Brahm Prakâsh through which a murîd is initiated into developing his bâtîni self in order to experience the divine within one's own self-hood. Focussing on this fundamental idea, it discusses at length how the mystical practise of sumiran develops a murîd's inner self and leads him from stage to stage of mystical experience to eventual absorption in the unfathomable depths of one's own inner self hood to experience the divine. Hence, it is the sat śabda which is shown as leading a murîd towards the establishment of a relation-ship between himself and the Lord and which culminates in the realization of the experience of union with the Lord.

As mentioned above, in Satpanth or Nizârî Ismâ'îlism the relation-ship between a murîd and the Lord is exemplified as an establishment of a spiritual relation-ship between the inner reality of a murîd and the inner reality of the Imâm. We shall, therefore, see below how the Brahm Prakâsh characterizes this aspect. A verse in the ginân says:

Reflect on the sat śabda,
utter pîrshâh frequently...

...BP 2.

The śabda, pīrshāh appears as a dhikr word in almost the entire ginān corpus. Numerous references are found in the gināns where the pīrs give the jāpa <word> of pīrshāh to the new converts.* Pīrshāh literally stands for pīra <guru> and shāh <nara>. Therefore, pīrshāh would be equivalent to qurnar.'

In Nizārī Ismā'īlism, the word pīrshāh is seen as an epithet referring to 'Alī, the first Imām of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs.¹⁰ Since 'Alī¹⁰ is considered to represent the institution of Imāmah in essence, the word pīrshāh, would then refer to all the Nizārī Ismā'īlī Imāms.¹¹ Taken in context the allusion to pīrshāh in the gināns must necessarily refer to the relation-ship between a murīd and the Imām. Hence when the ginān states:

Reflect on the sat śabda
utter pīrshāh frequently...

...BP 2.

It implies that as a murīd meditates on the given word which is the Name of the Lord, he, at the height of his spiritual maturity, attains the Named, as it states:

Meditating on the Name, <he> attains the Named...

...BP 127.

Since it is established that the śabda pīrshāh refers to the Imām, it follows from references to pīrshāh in the text that at the height of his spiritual progress a murīd attains the Named i.e. attains the inner reality of the Imām. This attainment in the Ismā'īlī system signifies attaining union with God. However, it remains to be seen how the Brahm Prakāsh establishes the identity of the śabda through the mystical path which it elaborates and how it leads a murīd toward its realization.

In order to actualize this experience of the vision of the Lord within one's own self-hood, the Brahm Prakāsh lays down the practise and contains descriptions of various mystical states and stages in the form of providing instructions to a murīd treading on the esoteric path. The explanation of the mystical path is structured in a curious manner in the ginān. The first 10 verses speak of the practise of the śabda and the resulting ecstasy due to intense concentration on the śabda. Then the ginān suddenly breaks off into describing the uselessness of various so-called ascetic practises which are not centred on the sat śabda. It continues then to name adepts who during the ages have attained the divine bliss due to their focus on the name of the Lord in contemplation. The discussion of the mystical path begins again abruptly from verse no. 61 and culminates

in discussing the resulting ecstasy and realization of the experience of the divine within one's own inner self-hood. Excluding the intermediate verses i.e. verse 11 to 60, one gets a fair outline of the mystical path illustrated in the *Brahm Prakâsh*.

Our concern here is to focus on the mystical path as it has been illustrated in the *Brahm Prakâsh*. As we proceed, we shall see several technical esoteric terms which describe the mystical path and the experience. Although reference to similar esoteric terms is found in several *ginâns* in the corpus, its meaning is, however not clear. It is important to obtain a clear idea of what is the significance of these various technical terms in the mystical path. As this vocabulary is part of the esoteric vocabulary of the *Haṭha Yoga* theory of the Tantric tradition, reference to the Tantric Yoga becomes inevitable. It appears that the *ginân* incorporates a similar vocabulary to explain its mystical path in terms of principles similar to those of the *Haṭha Yoga* of the Tantric tradition. The following illustration of the path will, therefore, demonstrate to what extent the *ginâns* conform to the *Haṭha Yoga* theory and what meaning these key technical terms have been given in the *Brahm Prakâsh*.¹²

Demonstrating the mystical path, the beginning verses of the *Brahm Prakâsh* state:

The sat śabda <True Word> is our guru <master>,
The world does not recognize it.

Reflect on the sat śabda,
Utter pīrshāh frequently.

Meditate through the tongue first,
recite pīrshāh pīrshāh day and night.

For three months it stays upon the tongue,
then gets absorbed in what is named as Brahm...
...BP 1,2,3,4.

The tone of these first few verses is that of exhortation. It says that the sat śabda is our guru <master>, for anything which communicates a vision or a glimpse of reality is considered the task of a guru. Since a guru is the only guide who can lead a murīd on the mystical path towards the realization, the focus should be the guru i.e. the sat śabda itself. This path, it maintains, should be initiated through dhyān <meditation> focussed absolutely on the śabda. Therefore, sumiran of the śabda forms the most significant practise of the mystical path. Indicating the method by which the śabda should be practised, the ginān says that the practise of the śabda is primarily a conscious repetition through the tongue. The verbal repetition is interpreted as a breath upon breath technique.

Such an allusion to the practise of śabda is clearly stated in a ginān from the corpus which says:

Through every breath
meditate on the jāpa of pīrshāh,
meditate constantly...¹³

After the śabda is repeated constantly it becomes internalized, i.e. it is no longer a conscious repetition but a sub-conscious process, when every breath contemplates the śabda. The internalization of the śabda is referred to as ajâpajâpa or silent repetition. One of the verses in the corpus states:

O Thee! Hold every breath of meditation
 through ajâpajâpa,
 Hold every breath in meditation
 O thee! Control the mind through meditation,
 focussing on the Satgur...¹⁴

The objective behind the constant practise of the śabda through every breath is to focus on the śabda, which would control the mind from deviating. Once the dhyân is internalized, it goes down to the heart, as the Brahm Prakâsh states:

Now for six months, meditation is centred in the 'heart', every breath repeatedly contemplating just One Name.

One day greets with astonishment,
 'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'.

For nine months the Name is held,
 in the same state of meditation and in the same abode
 of happiness.

From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards towards
 the 'sky',
 reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show...

...BP 61,62,
 63,64.

The following verses of the Brahm Prakâsh say that after the śabda is meditated upon verbally, which would take three

months of practise, it leads a murīd to the second stage as the dhyān is internalized and reaches the heart.¹⁵ Here the śabdā, is held through ajāpajāpa, i.e. silent jāpa for six months. And from the heart it goes down to the nābhi <navel> where the dhyān stays for a period of nine months. It is from nābhi that the dhyān rises from the 'west' to go towards the 'sky'. In other words, the method which the Brahm Prakāsh suggests is that of 'inwardness' and 'upwardness' of the dhyān.

The mystical stages described in the Brahm Prakāsh appear similar to the chakras, which as intimated earlier, play a significant role in esoteric aspect of the human body according to the Haṭha Yoga theory. To reiterate, in the peculiar geography of the body, the main axis of the human body is the spinal column known as meru-daṇḍa upon which are super-imposed a series of chakras, the lowest and the highest chakra being located on the extreme ends of the meru-daṇḍa. Thus, the heart, the navel or anāhata, nābhi etc., mentioned in the ginān are various centres in the human body. In the Yoga practise, the aim of a Yogī is to reach the highest point of the meru-daṇḍa. Reaching to this highest stage, a Yogī is said to achieve the sahaḥa- a state which is equated with attainment of bodily immortality. The various chakras which are super-imposed on the meru-daṇḍa are, therefore, considered stages of progress or indicators of the level of progress achieved.¹⁶

In the Tantric Yoga system the aim of a Yogī is to attain saḥaja. The vital urge of a Yogī to realize the saḥaja is personified in the symbol of a kuṇḍalinī, 'serpent' that lies coiled up at the base of the spinal column. The kuṇḍalinī is viewed as the personification of energy <Śakti> within the human body through which the mystical experience is actualized. The aim of a Yogī in the Tantric system is, therefore to raise the kuṇḍalinī from the place where it lies in a dormant state. Once it is aroused from its sleep, it begins to climb the ladder of the chakras finally to reach the highest chakra and attain saḥaja.¹⁷ The whole process of the Haṭha Yoga is to actualize the experience of the kuṇḍalinī. The practise of a Yogī is characterized by a persistent effort both towards 'inwardness' and 'upwardness' to attain saḥaja.¹⁸

It appears that the under-lying principle of the functioning of the kuṇḍalinī-śakti of the Haṭha Yoga forms the basis of the mystical path illustrated in the qinān. For the allusion to the dhyān of a murīd passing internally from stage to stage until it reaches the nābhi appears to refer to a process similar as the one advocated in the Tantric system. The inwardness of the dhyān is to wake the kuṇḍalinī and force it from where it lies in a dormant state. Similarly the Brahm Prakāśh, leading a murīd on the path, explains that as the śabda is internalized...

One day greets with astonishment,
'easily' the meditation reaches the 'navel'...

For nine months the Name is held,
in the same state of meditation
and in the same abode of happiness...

...BP 62,63.

The stage nâbhi or navel is, therefore, of vital importance where the dhyân reaches and remains for a longer period of time. The importance of this mystical stage is expressed in the following manner in one of the giñâns:

O Thee! Keep the mûl-lotus steady,
and awaken the nâbhi-lotus,
Meditate constantly...¹⁹

This verse says that the mûl-lotus, also known as mûlâdhâra, the lowest centre should be kept firm, and the attempt should be to awaken the nâbhi. In the Haṭha Yoga the nâbhi is regarded as the centre of the human body.²⁰ The two main nâḍis <arteries> iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ considered to be channels of vital breath meet with the suṣumnâ or sukhmanâ the central nâḍi in the nâbhi. It is maintained by the Yogis that the meeting of these three nâḍis in the nâbhi forces the kuṇḍalinî 'upwards' to pierce through the ladder of chakras to eventually experience the divine in the sahasrâra, the highest point of the meru-daṇḍa.²¹ Therefore, in the nâbhi itself the dhyân remains until such time that the concentration on the śabda is absolute. Such an intense concentration on the śabda results in uniting the three nâḍis namely iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ and the sukhmanâ in the nâbhi. This

merging, as mentioned above, forces the kuṇḍalinī upwards through the ladder of chakra. As the following verse of the ginân maintains:

From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards towards
the 'sky',
reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show...
...BP 64.

No specific reference can be found in the ginâns which shows what the paschim or paccham <west> means in the Brahm Prakâsh. The only allusion is found in a verse from the corpus:

When it rises from the nâbhi,
it takes the route of the spinal column,
the object is to reach the trivenī,
which is the opening in the tenth door...²²

This verse may mean that the dhyân rising from the nâbhi through the west to reach the sky takes the route of the spinal column. Thus, it is the spinal column which is considered the west path of the inward journey.

Seeing this reference within the Haṭha Yoga theory, the 'west' refers to the suṣumṇâ, the central route of the meru daṇḍa.²³ According to the Haṭha Yoga theory the kuṇḍalinī can ascend through any of the three principle nâḍīs, namely iṅgalâ, piṅgalâ or the sukhmanâ. It is the sukhmanâ which is considered the path of the inward journey. This is because iṅgalâ and piṅgalâ are said to pass round the meru - daṇḍa

while the sukhmanā pierces through it and reaches the highest point. It is this route in the spinal column through which the kuṇḍalinī is supposed to travel in order to reach its destination which is in the gagana-maṇḍala. Hence, reference to the west route in the Brahm Prakāśh like-wise alludes to the route of the kuṇḍalinī in the sukhmanā. Taking the west route it reaches the akaśa, or the sky, and witnesses an 'incomprehensible show'. What the akaśa is and what type of show the person experiences need elaboration. The following verses of the Brahm Prakāśh state:

From the 'west' it begins to rise upwards
towards the 'sky',
reaching there witnesses an incomprehensible show

Without rain where the sky thunders,
without a visible place where one dwells.

Without clouds where it rains,
where dwells a 'person' without a human form.

In an awful <anāhata> unconstrained manner,
the sky thunders,
the mind sits at the trio place <trikūṭi>.

There is no trumpet, yet there is a melody!
there is no sun, yet it is bright!

There is no source for a river, yet there flows
the Ganges!
there is no inmate, yet there is a friend!

...BP 64,65,66
69,71,72.

As the dhyān of a murīd rises from the nābhi, it reaches the akaśa <sky>. Here he is said to experience an inexpressible show. The above verses of the gīnān refer to various types of experiences which are manifested to a murīd

as he progresses through his dhyān and reaches the akaśa. For instance, various types of sounds are heard. He hears: the sound of a distant river; then a thundering; the sound of a water-fall; then a flute etc. Accompanying this is the experience of seeing a light and the presence of a purukh or person. But before considering what these religious experiences signify, it is essential to know primarily what the akaśa is where the experience is said to occur?

In the Tantric Yoga, once the kuṇḍalinī is aroused, it begins its inward journey up the sukhmanā. The ascending kuṇḍalinī successively pierces the chakra and reaches the akaśa.²⁴ Akaśa or vacuum, is the space above the throat, where according to the Tantric system, limitation of the sense is removed. When a Yogī has succeeded in making the kuṇḍalinī reach the highest point, he is said to experience in a vacuum surrounding the brain and the spinal cord known as akaśa.²⁵

Associated with the awakening of the kuṇḍalinī are various experiences which are manifested, among others, by different stages of awareness as each chakra is pierced. Among the various reactions which are taken as indicators of success for a Yogī in the Haṭha Yoga theory are certain sounds and colors.²⁶ Sound called nāda is said to be latent in the body and is supposed to be heard within. Different sounds are heard in the various centres or chakras

super-imposed upon the meru-daṇḍa, as the kuṇḍalinī passes through them in order to reach the highest point. Nāda, is vibration which in its highest and purest form becomes anāhata nāda or unstruck sound.²⁷ Referring to the verses of the gīnān quoted above, they speak of similar effects as experienced by a Yogī as he progresses upwards through his sādhana. The verses above maintain that initially the practitioner hears the sound of a flute which is melodious. Then, in an unconstrained manner the sound becomes loud and intense. By and by the sound becomes subtle and it becomes less and less intense until it becomes what is known in the Haṭha Yoga as anāhata nāda.²⁸

Together with nāda, which is regarded as an indicator of the level of progress achieved, there is yet another type of reaction secured during contemplation. During contemplation, in the Yoga terminology:

one sees not with his eyes, as he does the objects of the world but various colors... Sometimes stars are seen glittering and lightning flashes in the sky. But these visions are maintained to be fleeting in their nature. At first these colors are seen in greatly agitated waves which project the unsteady condition of the mind; and as the practise intensifies, the mind becomes calm, and these color-waves become steady and motionless and appear as one deep ocean of light...²⁹

The Brahm Prakāśh is not explicit about this type of reaction. It does point to the experience of a certain type of brightness. There is, however, a verse in a gīnān from

the corpus which says:

In the triveni there is an eternal light,
there sparkles the light;
as if it rains pearls...

This verse suggests that as a person progresses he feels as if there is light. The brightness initially appears as a pool of light which then seems to sparkle in front of the eyes. After the mind loses its waywardness and has become calm, the practitioner is said to have reached the highest state. Various experiences are manifested to him as he reaches the highest state. In the Yoga theory these experiences chiefly constitute anâhata nâda and a bright light appearing as one deep ocean of light. Similarly the Brahm Prakâsh says:

Where the trumpet strikes anâhata nâda;
where the sun rays radiate brightly...

...BP 75.

Reaching to the realm of akâsa, a practitioner is said to have succeeded in focussing both his breath and mind on the śabda itself. For a verse in the Brahm Prakâsh states:

In an awful <anâhata> unconstrained manner,
the sky thunders,
the mind sits at the trio place <trikuti>.

...BP 69

It maintains that where the sky thunders in anâhata manner the mind sits calmly at the trikuti. The reference to trikuti, would in accordance with the Hatha Yoga refer to the

triveni or the confluence of iṅgalā, piṅgalā and the sukhmanā. These nāḍis, as shown above, are the three nāḍis which meet in the nābhi to finally meet at the highest point of the sukhmanā. This point is the hole above the sahasrāra in the skull. It is also known as the gagana maṇḍala, referred to as the centre of creation. As the Brahm Prakāśh indicates:

The creation is in the sukhmanā ganga,
where the surati śabda unite together...

.BP 76.

Although the word surati occurs in numerous places in the giṇāns, its meaning is not clear. A verse in a śloko attributed to Shams al-Dīn states:

The True guru says,
he whose heart is pierced by the arrow of love,
how can he visualize anything else;
his body roams the lower earth,
and his surati goes up towards the sky...³¹

The meaning of surati is not clear even in the Haṭha Yoga manuals. C. Vaudeville, attempting to explain the various technical terms of the Haṭha Yoga theory, says that surati is perhaps a synonym for śruti or audition; since in Haṭha Yoga hearing of sound or nāda is a characteristic feature of a Yogi's practise. The meaning of surati would, therefore, come closer to śabda or nāda. The fact that surati-śabda Yoga is used in the Nāth-panthi writings would suggest such an equivalence to śabda-Yoga.³²

A somewhat clear explanation has been offered by S.A. Rizvi, who says "...the ancient name of the Nāth-panthī tradition was śabda-suratī Yoga, and it is such a path in which the nada <sound> is a sādhana."³³ This nada is heard in the viśūdhā and ājñā chakras. Hence the aim of a Yogi is to develop himself to hear the nāda, which as was maintained above, in its purest form becomes anāhata nāda. Anāhata nāda is heard in the highest state of a Yogi's progress. This state, it is maintained by the Nāth Yogis, is pervaded by the 'Attributeless One'.³⁴ He further maintains, suratī-śabda, infact, is that śabda which introduces consciousness in the practise of the śabda, so that both mind and breath are concentrated on the śabda alone, in order that the Yogi attain sahaja and thereby attain mokṣa. In a like manner, the Brahm Prakāśh says:

When the suratī-śabda overpowers <unmani> mind,
then the fear of life and death vanishes...

...BP 88.

These verses suggest that where the suratī and the śabda merge, i.e. when the mind and the breath are focussed absolutely on the śabda itself, the murid has reached the highest state. To have reached this state is interpreted as having eliminated for himself the fear of life and death. The attainment of liberation from the bonds of life and death, in the Yoga terminology is equal to the attainment of sahaja.

This state, however, according to the Brahm Prakāśh is pervaded by the śabda itself. Thus it states:

and I can talk of the world easily,
<but> the significance of that place cannot
be expressed...

Indivisible śabda cannot be impaired,
day and night remains in its pristine form...

...BP 77,78.

According to the Brahm Prakāśh, a murīd at the height of his spiritual progress attains the śabda itself. And attaining the śabda, he is said to have crossed the ocean of life, eliminated fear of life and death etc.

Hitherto, it has been seen that the mystical path or the inward journey elaborated in the Brahm Prakāśh is based on the Haṭha Yoga frame-work of the Tantric tradition. In accordance with the path underlined in the Brahm Prakāśh, a murīd on his inward journey conducted through the practise of the śabda passes through stages and states similar to those a Yogī would pass through in his sādhana towards attaining saḥaja. He initiates the path through the śabda practise, which in the Yoga theory is closely connected with breath control technique. This ~~is~~ control, it is maintained, eventually results in the tuning of the mind and focussing breath absolutely on the śabda. Such a process results in a certain kind of ecstasy or religious experiences expressed in a like manner in both the Haṭha Yoga and the gīṇān Brahm

Prakāsh. Experiencing the highest sort of ecstasy, a Yogi is said to attain sahaja.

However, the Brahm Prakāsh, referring to a path and results similar to a Yogi's sahaja, maintains that the highest state is pervaded by the śabda itself. The śabda, therefore, brings us to a reconsideration of what the śabda signifies. A murīd according to the Brahm Prakāsh initiates the path through śabda, progresses through śabda, and the experience culminates in a state pervaded by śabda itself.

As intimated earlier, the śabda which is given as a sumiran word is pīrshāh. The gīnān maintains that as a murīd meditates on the given word, at the height of spiritual maturity he attains the Named, and that is mokṣa for him. It remains to be seen at this point how the Brahm Prakāsh super-imposes a Shī'ī form of Islam by pervading the sahaja state of the Yogis with that of the śabda, i.e. the Named.

The Brahm Prakāsh establishes the identity of the Named by using the Dasa Avatāra theory of the Vaishṇavas. The gīnān says that the Lord <saheb> whose Name is the object of quest has manifested himself for the sake of his creatures through several yugas. As seen above one of the major Hindu cosmological theories holds that the world is created in several yugas and kalpas.¹⁸ There are four yugas. According to the Vaishṇava theory the Lord Viṣṇu manifests himself in

ten incarnations during the four yugas. Conforming to this theory the Brahm Prakāsh says that in the Sat-yuga, the saheb manifested himself in four forms. Likewise in the Tretā and the Dvāpara he manifested himself in three and two forms respectively.³⁶ In the present age known as Kali-yuga the Vaishnavas are expecting the tenth Avatāra known as the 'Naklanki' to manifest himself.³⁷ The Brahm Prakāsh maintains that the tenth Avatāra has manifested himself into Islam, and he is none but the first Imām of the Shī'ah.

In the Kali-yuga he has taken the form of Naklanki...
...BP 137.

Corresponding to the idea of Naklanki who is the 'expected One', the Brahm Prakāsh says:

When Imām Mahdī extends his protection,
twelve crores and innumerable souls
will then attain liberation...

...BP 139.

According to the Shī'ah, as is well-known, the Mahdī is considered to be the expected Imām, and when he manifests himself, he liberates the souls. The concept of Imāmah in Ismā'ilism makes all the Imāms equal in essence. Hence the Mahdī is none but 'Alī the Imām in essence.³⁸

In the Brahm Prakāsh the śabda which is given as a sumiran word is pirshāh. In Nizārī Ismā'ilism the word refers to 'Alī the first Imām of the Ismā'ilis. Since 'Alī is

supposed to represent the institution of Imāmah in essence, the word pīrshāh then refers to all the Nizārī Ismā'īlī Imāms in general. Therefore, if the sumiran word is given as pīrshāh, and if the epithet of pīrshāh refers to 'Alī or the Imāms of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, then references to pīrshāh in the ginān must necessarily refer to a spiritual relationship between a murīd and the Imām. Consequently, as a murīd meditates on the given word, which is the Name of the Lord, he, at the height of his spiritual maturity witnesses as the Brahm Prakāsh concludes:

They will all witness the Omnipresence of 'Alī,
 whoever searches into the Brahm Gyān <divine light>...
 ...BP 146.

Notes to Chapter III
Section

¹Ali Asani, "The Ismā'īlī qinān, 15-16.

²A. Nānjī, The Nizārī, 121.

³Ali Asani, "The Ismā'īlī qinān, 16. .

⁴For the qināns belonging to the first category see Note 2 in section <a> above.

To the second category belong: Satgur miliyā mune āj ānand hū pami, <I have met the Satgur today>; Satgur bhetiya kem janiye, <How would you know when you have met the Lord>;

The third category of qināns seem to appear predominantly in the corpus. They are: Hure piyasi āsh tori, <I am craving for thy vision>; darśan diyo mora nāth, dasi teri, <grant me thy vision, for I am a slave of thee>; Tum ku sadhare, <It has been a long time since you have parted from me>.

These are but a few examples of the various types of qināns found in the mystical category. For translations of a few of the above-mentioned qināns see, Gulam Ali Allana, Ginans.

⁵These two verses, I was informed, are still recited traditionally in the jamā'at khana of the Khōjās, associated with the practise of bandaḡi <meditation>. The first verse quoted is found in the Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Pir Sadardinna qināno, Bombay 1971, 32. As for the other verse, we have been unable to locate it in the qināns available to us.

⁶See our listings of the texts of the qināns in the bibliography.

⁷A translation of the text of the Brahm Prakāsh has been offered in Chapter II above.

⁸G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of the Satpanth Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pak," <Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1972>.

⁹Ibid., 110.

¹⁰Ibid. According to G. Khakee, the word pirshāh has been replaced not too long ago by Ya 'Alī Ya Muhammad. However, the Imām Shāhī branch still use the word pirshāh. They even call the jāpa of pirshāh, like the Tantrikas, as bija mantra or magic seed. These Burhanpur Satpanthis interpret bija mantra as the dual mantra; the pir represents

the guru who is Imām Shāh and shāh is used for the incarnation of 'Alī.

¹¹W. Ivanow, Brief Survey, 57-58.

¹²Description of the various processes of the Haṭha Yoga is limited to the more important details, sufficient to elucidate the mystical path outlined in the Brahm Prakāśh.

¹³Sayyid Imām Shāh tatha biḥ Sayyidona qināno, <Bombay: Ismailia Association for India, 1973>, 136.

¹⁴Ibid., 140.

¹⁵It is interesting to note that even the time period specified for meditation in the qinān is in accordance with the initial period of the Yogic practises.

¹⁶For a detailed explanation see section <a> above.

¹⁷R.D. Shariff, "Beliefs and Practices of the Ismā'īlī Gnosis <Irfan>," Ilm, Vol.IV 2<Dec., 1978>, 4.

¹⁸C. Vaudeville, Kabīr, 120.

¹⁹Sayyid Imām Shāh, 136.

²⁰G.W. Briggs. Gorakhnāth, 307.

²¹Ibid.

²²Sayyid Imām Shāh, 123

²³Jodh Singh, "Raj Yoga", in Guru Nanak and Indian Religious Thought, edited by Taran Singh, <Patiala: Punjabi University, 1970>, 21.

²⁴B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 574-575.

²⁵G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnāth, 321.

²⁶see G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnāth, 341-47.

²⁷C. Vaudeville, Kabīr, 129.

²⁸B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 574-575.

²⁹G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnāth, 342.

³⁰Ibid., 342.

³¹Shia Imami Ismailia Association for India, Pir Sadardinna qināno, Bombay, 1971, 28.

³¹"Śloko Moto," in Pir Shams na Grantho, published by Mukhi Lalji Devraj, n.d.

³²C. Vaudeville, Kabir, 135.

³³S.A. Rizvi, Alakhbani, 126.

³⁴Ibid., 127.

³⁵For explanation of these terms see, John Dowson, A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature. 10th edition, (London: Routledge and Regan Paul, 1961), 381-383.

³⁶BP, 135-137.

³⁷For details on the Dasa Avatara theory into the ginans see, G. Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara."

³⁸W. Ivanow, Brief Survey, 56-59.

Concluding Remarks

We have examined the Brahm Prakāsh, one ginān from the religious corpus of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs, which forms only one aspect of the thought reflected in the gināns. Nevertheless, the aspect we have dealt in this thesis is important since not only does the concept of sumiran appear predominantly in the entire corpus, but also since this concept constitutes a significant practise - bayt al-khyāl - within the present day Nizārī Ismā'īlī religious system.

This study has led to revealing the incorporation of indigenous Indian religious thought into the Brahm Prakāsh. The striking feature which comes to the surface in the text is the similarity of Tantric terms to those used in the Brahm Prakāsh. The analysis above has revealed that the esoteric vocabulary which describes the mystical path - the various states and stages - in the Brahm Prakāsh appears to find its basis in the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric school of thought. On its face the Brahm Prakāsh strongly projects a purely Hindu religious doctrine, which implies that the fundamental practise of bayt al-khyāl, within the religious system of the Indian Ismā'īlīs seemingly finds its basis in a Hindu school of thought.

However, before a conclusion can be reached there are a few observations which need to be considered. Firstly, we attempted to show that the Brahm Prakāsh super-imposes on the esoteric vocabulary of the Tantrikas a Shī'i form of Islam. The use of a specific aspect of the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition, namely, the technical vocabulary which illustrates the path for a Yogī, brings to light a fundamental difference between the ginān and the Tantric tradition. As maintained above, Tantrism spread and gained popularity in the medieval era through the Nath Yogīs who were basically Śaivites. Their form of Yoga focussed on the establishment of the union of Śiva, the Supreme God-head, with Śakti, the female energy of the Lord Śiva. A Nāth Yogī through his sādhana aims at attaining the union of Śiva and Śakti within his own body, which is sahaja for him. A transcendent state which is equated with the attainment of bodily immortality.

On the other hand, it is important to note that, while the ginān, Brahm Prakāsh, reflects the use of Tantric jargon, it appears to do so by using a Vaishṇava sub-structure instead of the Śaivite base on which the Haṭha Yoga of the Nāth Yogīs is found. A murīd, it was shown, traversing the mystical path initiates the path through the practise of śabda, progresses through the śabda and the experience culminates in a state pervaded by the śabda itself. This śabda the ginān maintained is the name of the Lord. Thus, at the height of his spiritual maturity, by meditating on the

name, a murīd attains the Named. We have seen above that the Brahm Prakāsh establishes the identity of the Named by utilizing the Dasa Avatāra theory of the Vaishṇavas. Lord Viṣṇu, according to this theory incarnates himself in ten Avatāras. Of these, nine are believed to have been manifested in past yugas, and the Vaishṇavas are awaiting the manifestation of the tenth Avatāra known as Naklanki. The ginān maintains that this tenth Avatāra has already manifested himself and that he is none but 'Alī, the first Imām of the Ismā'īlīs. Taking into consideration this significant difference between the ginān and the Tantric tradition, it appears that the Brahm Prakāsh restructures the Tantric element by super-imposing upon the Tantric frame-work a Shī'ī form of Islam.

Second, the Brahm Prakāsh is a ginān from the corpus, therefore it is essential to see it within the context of the gināns generally. The Tantric technical vocabulary which is found to be the basis of the Brahm Prakāsh occurs prominently in the entire ginān corpus. Had the Brahm Prakāsh been the only text to use the Tantric vocabulary, it would have been easier to reach clear conclusions. But, because of the prominent appearance of these terms in the mystical category of gināns, it seems that Tantrism, like the Dasa Avatāra theory in the gināns, has played an important role in shaping the doctrines of the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs in the Indian Sub-continent. This is evidenced from the gināns found in the

corpus. Tantric vocabulary is found in the gināns beginning with compositions attributed to Shams al-Dīn, the alleged author of the ginān *Brahm Prakāsh*, until the use of Tantric vocabulary is found in the compositions attributed to the last of composers, Sayyidnā Imām Begum. After her death in early 1900's the composition process ceased and the ginān corpus was frozen.

An attempt to understand why Tantrism appears to have found expression in the gināns calls for a consideration of the technical vocabulary itself. Since the underlying principle of the functioning of the kuṇḍalinī-śakti Yoga which is found to be similar in both the Haṭha Yoga and the gināns, is expressed in a specific esoteric terminology. This peculiar esoteric vocabulary of the Tantric tradition is known as sandhabhaṣa, explained as 'twilight language' or more appropriately as "a symbolic language used to signify something different than what is expressed by the words."¹ Various attempts have been made to interpret the key Tantric terms and concepts literally, but many uncertainties and discrepancies originate from the texts themselves which make it difficult to render an accurate version of any aspect of the Haṭha Yoga theory of the Tantric tradition.

To cite one common example, *idā*, *piṅgalā* and the *sukhmanā* are the three principle nāḍīs in the esoteric aspect of the human body in the Haṭha Yoga theory. These nāḍīs as we

have seen above, are said to play an important role in the realization of the mystical experience within the human body. However, commentaries on the technical vocabulary of the Tantras offer several other interpretations of these nâḍis. For instance in the Tantric system, man is conceived as a microcosm reflecting the greater cosmos. It is maintained by them that "whatever exists in the outer universe exists in us." These nâḍis, therefore, assume a symbolic interpretation. The idâ is referred to as the Gangâ of the subtle body, the piṅgalâ as the Yamunâ and the sukhmanâ as the Saraswatî. Thus, according to them for example, if the Gangâ is within the body then clearly pilgrimages are unnecessary. From this follows that all forms of formal religious practises are useless. Since the Gangâ is within him, a man should develop himself to control these natural forces within him.² Yet, at another place, the term idâ has been interpreted as symbolizing the sun <surya> etc.³

In the Brahm Prakâsh these key terms are used in connection with their importance in the esoteric aspect of the body, in order to realize the mystical experience. It is difficult to know what other symbolic meaning these terms could have in the ginâns. But the cryptic nature of the Tantric language itself suggests why Tantrism appears to have found expression in the Ismâ'îlî ginâns to such a large extent. Chapter one above on the spread of the Nizârî da'wa into the Indian Sub-continent attempted to show how the da'wa

sought to penetrate into Indian society. It was maintained that after the fall of Alamût, when the Nizâris entered upon the Indian soil, the pîrs and the dâ'is faced a critical problem. They had to present Islam in a manner which would be appealing to the society into which it sought to penetrate.* The attempts of the pîrs was to project Islam as a crowning phase of the whole development of Hinduism. Consequently, the efforts of the pîrs resulted in the critical integration of Hindu-Muslim thought which in turn led to a creation of a new literature called the ginâns. The ginâns as discussed above were basically geared to convey Ismâ'ilism to converts from Hinduism to Islam. Hence, one easily finds parallelism of thought reflected in the ginâns with those found in Bhakti and şûfi works of the Indian Sub-continent.†

Taking Tantrism into account, which is the basis of the thought reflected in the Brahm Prakâsh, there is evidence that Tantrism had been popularized by the Nath Yogîs in the Indian Sub-continent during the medieval era. Since it was during the medieval era that the Nizârî pîrs are alleged to have begun their da'wa activities, the popularity of the Nâth Yogîs and also their cryptic vocabulary perhaps, proved to be yet another tradition through which the pîrs and dâ'is could convey Satpanth Ismâ'ilism.

Moreover, there are evidences that the society into

which Nizārī Ismā'īlism sought to penetrate was already under the influence of mystical trends. These mystics appear to have been largely under the influence of the Tantric tradition. References in the text of Brahm Prakāsh suggest that it is perhaps composed in line with the mystical trend of thought prevalent during the medieval era. Nearly one-third of the ginān focusses on showing the uselessness of various ascetic practises which are not centred on contemplation of the name of the Lord. Then it continues to mention several personalities who seem to have attained the mystical experience by following the mystical path elaborated in the Brahm Prakāsh. Personalities such as Kabīr, Guru Nānak, Nāmdev, Gorakhnāth, etc. are those whose works evidence Tantric influence in them.⁶ Hence, if the pīrs attempted to penetrate such a society it was inevitable that they use the mode of expression which was popular.

Yet, another factor which perhaps indicates that Tantrism may not have been entirely an alien thought upon which the Nizārī pīrs super-imposed a Shī'ī form of Islam. Reference of an earlier Ismā'īlī work, Umm al-kitāb show a marked similarity of thought with the Tantric Yoga system.⁷ Reference to a 'interior ascent of the spirit' similar to the Tantric Yoga system is alleged to have been advocated in the Umm al-kitāb.⁸ Our study being limited in its scope to study the Brahm Prakāsh within the Indo-Muslim society has not extended to make a comparison of the thought reflected in the

Umm al-kitâb and the ginâns. Yet at another level, it would be of interest to examine the nature of relation-ship between the thought forwarded in the Umm al-kitâb and the Haṭha Yoga of the Tantric tradition.

However, examining the ginân Brahm Prakâsh in the Indo-Muslim context, the use of the Tantric vocabulary and also the presence of these terms in the entire ginân corpus strongly indicate that the ginân finds its basis in a Hindu school of thought. The study further reveals that the Brahm Prakâsh restructures the Tantric element in its frame-work so as to make it an integral aspect of Ismâ'îlism. An aspect which is still reflected in a fundamental practise of the Indian Ismâ'îlîs, namely the bayt al-khyâl.

Notes

¹ P.C. Bagchi, Studies in the Tantras, <Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1975>, 27-28.

²B. Walker, Hindu World, Vol.II, 68-69.

³P.C. Bagchi, Studies, 62-73.

⁴A, Nânjî, The Nizârî, 133.

⁵Ibid., 132

⁶see C. Vaudeville, Kabîr, 86-119.

⁷Umm al-kitâb, the mother <or Archetype> of the Book is an ancient work dating probably Xth -XIth centuries A.D. It is alleged to be an Ismâ'îlî piece of work of the Central Asiatic origins. For details see, W. Ivanow, "Umm'l-kitâb," Der Islam, 1936<23>, 1-132.

⁸Pio Fillappani-Ronconi, "The Cosmology of Central Asiatic Ismâ'îlism," in Ismâ'îlî Contribution to Islamic Culture, edited by S.H. Nasr, <Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977>, 101-119.

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