

ISLAM IN
SOUTH ASIA
I N P R A C T I C E

Barbara D. Metcalf, Editor



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Satpanthi Ismaili Songs to Hazrat Ali and the Imams

Ali S. Asani

Among the Muslim communities of South Asia, the Nizari Ismailis constitute a distinctive minority. As Shia Muslims, they believe that after the Prophet Muhammad authority over the Muslim community was inherited by imams who are direct descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661). Currently, they acknowledge Shah Karim al-Husseini, Aga Khan IV, as their forty-ninth Imam, or spiritual leader, on account of which they are sometimes referred to as Aga Khanis.

Residing predominantly in western India (Gujarat and Maharashtra) and in southern (Sind) and northern Pakistan, they have also settled in East Africa, Europe, and North America. The Nizari Ismailis and the Aga Khanis are well known in contemporary South Asia for their philanthropic activities and their prominence in the financial and commercial sectors. In the political sphere, the present Aga Khan's grandfather, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III (d. 1957), played a leadership role among Muslims in pre-Partition India and in the creation of Pakistan. In addition, he served for a short time as president of the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, also has his ancestral roots in this community.

This chapter examines two literary genres of this small but influential Muslim community: the *ginan* (a hymn of wisdom, from the Sanskrit *jnana*) and the *git* (a song of praise). The *ginans* are attributed to one of several medieval preacher-poets, referred to as *pirs* and *sayyids* whom, traditions assert, Ismaili Imams, then living in Iran, sent to the subcontinent in order to propagate Ismaili doctrines from the tenth century onwards. In the process, they composed songs as a way of providing instruction on a variety of doctrinal, ethical, and mystical topics. Eventually, these songs crystallized into the corpus known as the *ginans*. Today, the corpus is "frozen," with the last *ginans* being those composed in the mid-nineteenth century by the female *sayyida*, Imam Begum. Although written several hundred years ago,

ginans are recited daily in *jama'at khanas* (houses of congregation) wherever Nizari Ismailis from the subcontinent have settled. In contrast to the ginans, gits are songs composed by individual Ismailis to express their devotion to the imams and are usually sung during religious celebrations and festivals. They are a less formally constituted genre representing a “living” tradition of devotional expression.

Background

The strand of the Nizari Ismaili tradition primarily associated with the ginans and gits developed in the western regions of the subcontinent, specifically in Punjab, Sind, Gujarat, and Rajasthan. In this area, the pirs and sayyids preached their doctrines under the name *satpanth*, an Indic term meaning “the true path,” rather than “Nizari Ismaili” or “Ismaili,” both terms being conspicuously absent in their compositions. Historically, the Satpanthis, as they were known, came to be further divided into various caste-like subgroups such as the Khojas, Momans, Shamsis, Nijyapanthis (Nizarpanthis), and Imamshahis. Over the centuries, Satpanthis have defined and redefined their identities, beliefs, and practices. The most significant redefinition took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when various Satpanthi groups realigned their religious and caste identities within the new frameworks prevalent in colonial and postcolonial South Asia. Today, most Khojas, for example, identify themselves as Nizari Ismaili Muslims, while those who broke away in the “reform” movements in the early twentieth century consider themselves to be Ithna Ashari (Twelver) Shia or even Sunni Muslims.

The central concern in the propagation of Satpanth was the expression of Nizari Ismaili beliefs and rituals within local religious and cultural frameworks. Wherever the Ismaili tradition has developed, it has engaged itself with the tools of various philosophical and religious systems as a means of articulating fundamental aspects of its theology. Consequently, the tradition has been remarkably adaptable to different religious and political environments. It is true that acculturation may have been a form of *taqiyya* (dissimulation of religious beliefs) traditionally used by Shia groups in order to avoid persecution. And yet, the impulse to acculturate seems to have been innate in the ethos of Ismaili tradition. Thus, in the ninth and tenth centuries, when Ismaili Imams ruled over the Fatimid Empire centered in Cairo, Ismaili philosophers drew on elements from the Gnostic, Neoplatonic, Manichean, and Zoroastrian traditions to formulate their conceptions of the imam.

Not surprisingly, in the subcontinent, the pirs and sayyids exhibited the same ethos when they presented the Satpanth tradition within the frameworks of a variety of indigenous religious and philosophical currents—such as the Bhakti, Sant, Sufi, and yogic traditions. The classic example of this formulation was the creation of an ostensible equivalence between the Vaishnava Hindu concept of *avatara* and the Ismaili concept of *imam*. Kalki, the messianic tenth incarnation (*dasa avatara*) of Vishnu, renamed in the Satpanth tradition as Nakalanki, “the stainless one,” was identified with Ali, the first Shi'i Imam. The pirs represented themselves as guides

who knew the whereabouts of the long awaited tenth *avatara* of Vishnu, meaning the Ismaili Imam, thus portraying their path as the culmination of the Vaishnavite Hindu tradition. In this manner, they were able to create a synthesis that was uniquely Satpanthi. Although drawing from seemingly disparate traditions, the worldview of the ginans is remarkably coherent. However, in contemporary South Asia religious identities have been so highly politicized and cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims so rigidly polarized that pluralistic doctrinal formulations such as those of Satpanth have been difficult, if not impossible, to sustain.

The Ginans: Hymns of Wisdom

The corpus of ginans consists of nearly one thousand compositions, of varying length, in a variety of languages indigenous to Punjab, Sind, and Gujarat. Employing local or folk poetic forms and meters, the ginans are meant to be sung in specific melodies or ragas. The ginans were composed during two periods: the first, from approximately the middle of the eleventh century to the end of the fifteenth century, is the period of the “great” pirs about whom there is, unfortunately, little reliable historical information; the second, the period of the sayyids, was initiated when the imam in Iran, Mustansir bi’llah II (d. 1480), designated a Persian book, the *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi* (The counsels of chivalry) as a pir, rather than appointing a person. As a result, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, sayyids, respected as descendants of the family of the Prophet, guided Satpanth communities and continued the tradition of composing ginans.

Traditionally, many Nizari Ismailis have accorded the ginans a scriptural status, regarding them as conveying, in the vernacular, the inner meaning of the Arabic Qur’an. This understanding is reflected in their tendency, even today, to match gnan verses with Qur’anic ones. In this sense, the ginans play a role similar to that of “scriptural” vernacular poetic texts such as Rumi’s *Masnawi* among Persian-speaking Muslims, or Shah ‘Abdu’l Latif’s *Risalo* and Bullhe Shah’s poems among Sindhi and Punjabi speakers, respectively.

Singing ginans alongside the performance of prescribed ritual prayers is one of the principal forms of worship. Usually, a solo singer leads the singing with the congregation joining in so that the act of singing becomes a communal act of worship. A gnan recitation can evoke powerful emotions, particularly when there is a large congregation singing in unison. Indeed, community tradition records the redemption of one Ismail Gangji (d. 1883) of Junagadh, who on one occasion was so moved by this singing that he tearfully sought forgiveness of his sins. Frequently, entire ginans, or a selection of verses from specific ginans, are associated with particular rituals. Certain ginans are also designated for religious festivals such as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, of imams, and so on. Finally, gnanic verses are often used by preachers as proof texts in their sermons. Ginans also permeate the daily lives of individuals. They are quoted as proverbs and sung while performing domestic tasks in the style of the Dakhni songs translated in Chapter 4. Occasionally, they are recited in informal musical gatherings, called

*ginan mehfil*s or *ginan mushairas*. In recent decades, recordings of ginans by various artists have been widely circulated by means of cassettes, CDs, and even over the Internet.

Key Themes in the Ginans

The ginans translated below exemplify two key themes. First, the role of the imams and pirs as guides to the spiritual or the esoteric (*batin*). Satpanth, in common with most traditions of Islamic mysticism, seeks to foster the spiritual development of a disciple (*murid*) through control over the *nafs*, or ego self, a task best accomplished under the guidance and supervision of a spiritual preceptor (pir, *murshid*). The goal is to realize the ultimate experience for Muslim mystics—the “face to face meeting with God” or *didar*, “seeing the Divine.” Many ginans emphasize a form of inward spirituality by employing vocabulary from contemporaneous Indian religious movements, particularly that of the Sants, a group of lower caste “poet-saints” who represented a powerful anti-ritual and anti-caste movement that swept across medieval India. Challenging the efficacy of ritualism and rote learning as paths to salvation, these ginans urge the faithful to adopt a righteous lifestyle and recognize the transitory nature of the world (*maya*) in which the soul is entrapped in endless cycles of rebirth. Mindless performance of religious rituals is of no use in liberating the soul. The only means of breaking these cycles is through regular repetition/remembrance (*sumiran*) of the Divine Name (*nam/shabd*), which is given to those who follow the True Path by the *Satguru*, the “True Guide,” ambiguously identified in most ginans as either the pir or the imam. The ultimate goal of this inward meditation is enlightenment (*darshan*) in which one “sees,” spiritually, the light (*nur*) of the imam who is frequently referred to as Ali, the historic person and a symbol of all the imams.

A second theme is the relationship between disciples and the imam, who is a repository of knowledge and the inheritor of a pre-eternal and cosmic light. These ginans draw on love symbolism from the Bhakti tradition, the movement of devotionism that swept across North India at approximately the same time as the Sant movement. In particular, they utilize the central symbol used to express love and devotion in Bhakti poetry—the *virahini*, the woman longing for her beloved, best exemplified by Radha and the *gopis* (cowmaids) in their yearning for Krishna. In the ginans, the *virahini* becomes symbolic of the human soul who is experiencing *viraha* (painful longing) for the Beloved, almost always identified as the imam. As a result, ginans often portray the believer as a *virahini* employing the feminine voice, although their authors are predominantly male. Some ginans mention a promise (*kol*) of love between the female bride-soul and the imam, represented as the promise of marriage and marital bliss (*suhag*). This may, in fact, be an allusion to the primordial covenant of love between creation and God that is so central to Sufi love mysticism. Notwithstanding the highly evocative language of unfulfilled love and waiting, the ginans emphasize that the True Beloved can only be found after searching within the depths of one’s own soul.

SELECTIONS FROM SALOKO NANO

FROM THE SECTIONS ON LOVE, FAITH, THE BELIEVER, AND WORSHIP, ATTRIBUTED TO PIR SADR AD-DIN (LATE FOURTEENTH–EARLY FIFTEENTH C.); IN HINDI/GUJARATI

The True Guide proclaims:
 When true faith is manifest in a heart, all negligence is dispelled;
 What room is there for the darkness [of ignorance] where the light of
 the True Master radiates?

The True Guide proclaims:
 Construct a boat from the name of Ali and fill it with Truth.
 When the winds of Love blow, the True Master will surely guide it to
 the shore of salvation.

The True Guide proclaims:
 Color yourself with the pigment of Truth; just like *patola* silk,
 Which may fall to tatters, yet its color remains steadfast.

The True Guide proclaims:
 Place your hope in the Truth; adorn yourself with the Truth;
 Apply the collyrium (*kajal*) of Love to your eyes, let the Beloved be the
 garland around your neck.

The True Guide proclaims:
 The entire world appears to be poor, no one seems wealthy;
 Wealthy, indeed, is one who is in love with the Beloved.

The True Guide proclaims:
 Distance yourself from the seemingly enchanting world, keeping your
 soul away from its delusion and allure;
 If you surrender your life to Love; you will find the Beloved.

The True Guide proclaims:
 When love rises on the horizon, one feels its wounds;
 When the sickness of love takes hold, no sleep comes to the eyes.

The True Guide proclaims:
 Love does not grow in a garden nor is it sold in a store;
 Love grows in the heart; a heart consumed by intense yearning [for the
 Beloved].

The True Guide proclaims:
 Whosoever has tasted the nectar of Ali, will never turn away from it;
 Whosoever dies a death of Love drinks the nectar of Love.

The True Guide proclaims:
 “Beloved! Beloved!” all cry out, but none finds the Beloved.

If the Beloved were to be found simply by uttering His name, what need would there be to sacrifice one's self [*literally*, what need would there be for bargaining with heads?].

The True Guide proclaims:

If you want to sacrifice your self (ego), then stay awake (in meditation) at night;

If you dedicate your life to remembrance [of Him], then the true Creator will be with you.

The True Guide proclaims:

“Beloved! Beloved!” all creatures cry out, but none finds the Beloved.

If the Beloved were to be found by simply repeating His name with the tongue, then the heron would become a swan.

The True Guide proclaims:

The heron and the swan are clearly different although they may seem alike;

But the heron eats whatever it fancies, while the swan feeds on pearls.

The True Guide proclaims:

Glass and gems are clearly different; only testing reveals their true value.

Dealing in glass accumulates only poison; through gems comes enlightenment.

The True Guide proclaims:

Those without and with a guide are clearly different; although outwardly they may appear to be alike;

Those without a Guide lust for wealth; those with a Guide desire only His name.

“FROM HIS LIGHT HE CREATED THE EARTH”

ATTRIBUTED TO PIR HASSAN SHAH (D. 1470); IN GUJARATI

From His Light He created the earth and the heavens, suspended without any support.

He revealed His power, manifest in the imam (leader) of the faith.

Follow the path of the Five Holy Persons [Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Husayn] and have faith in the True Path (Satpanth).

Believers, abide by the Truth and follow the Truth; keep your attention firmly on the True Path (Satpanth).

O careless one! Beware of the material world; you will not be misled if
you follow the straight Path.

Countless foolish and helpless souls have blindly wasted their lives.

Pir Hasan Shah has recited this hymn of wisdom (ginan).
Friends! Whoever seeks the Lord, finds Him.

“YOU COME FROM AN EXALTED PLACE”

ATTRIBUTED TO PIR SHAMS (LATE THIRTEENTH–EARLY FOURTEENTH C.);
IN HINDI-GUJARATI

You come from a highly exalted place; why then do you pay attention
to the low?
Your stay in the world is as short as four days, why then do you accrue
falsehood?
What do you gain from sin?

Refrain:

Do not be misled by the illusionary world;
Walk the path of humility for, in the end, you have to die.
Seek the intercession of the Messenger, the intercession of the
Prophet.
Fear evil, fear falsehood.
Do not be misled by the illusionary world.
Walk the path of humility, for in the end, you have to die.

Born naked into the world, you will be covered with cloth [when
you die].
What you earn in one moment, why do you squander in the next?
Why do you sin and abandon the true faith?

Do not be misled by the illusionary world . . .

Those who abandon the true faith are ensnared by deceit;
They stray from the true path and stand with sinners.
Following their egotistical desires, they cast their lives into hell.

Do not be misled by the illusionary world . . .

Only the few who are brave and courageous follow this path
That Prophet Muhammad has shown;
Pir Shams teaches true knowledge.

Do not be misled by the illusionary world . . .

“KNOW YOUR [TRUE] SELVES”

ATTRIBUTED TO PIR IMAM AD-DIN (D. 1531); IN HINDI/GUJARATI. THE TITLE IS AN ALLUSION TO THE SAYING OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD: “HE WHO KNOWS HIMSELF, KNOWS HIS LORD.”

Know your [true] selves, O believers, by meditating on the name
(*naam*) of the Lord.

Keep away from the five vices [lust, anger, greed, temptation, and pride]
by forsaking the ego; focus your heart only on “except God” [a phrase
from the *shahadah*].

The believers who have found the [path of] Truth and righteousness,
they have earned the reward of their virtuous acts.

The believers who have dissolved themselves in righteousness, they
have merged within the Light as light.

Those who are so united have become eternal; they have found within
themselves the splendor of the Lord.

Pay heed: [For the sake of] love of the world, why do you devote your
life to such [lowly] purposes?

Those who are attached to greed, desire, and temptation; they have gone
astray from the path of faith.

Believers! Those who are ensnared in obeying their egos, they will be
burnt between the armies of temptation.

O believer in the Five Persons [Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan,
Husayn]! One who does not share his wealth, he has wasted his life
in a false business.

Know that [giving] one-fortieth [of income to the pir] is an obligation;
escape from the trap of the world.

O believers! If you do not recognize the Perfect Guide, you will wander
blindly in the world.

When you recognize Him within your inner self, your heart will shine
as pure as the moon.

Obey the Guide with an attentive mind, [then you will realize that] the
Lord is ever-present in your heart.

Pir Imam ad-din says: “O righteous ones listen to these words; the Light
is to be found in the interior cavity behind the eyebrows” [a yogic site
of energy; a focus for Satpanthi meditation leading to vision of the
light of the imam].

“O FRIEND, THE SAVIOR OF MY SOUL”

ATTRIBUTED TO PIR SADR AL-DIN (LATE FOURTEENTH–EARLY FIFTEENTH C.);
IN GUJARATI

O friend, the savior of my soul,
Do not abandon me and stay apart from me.
I have built such a beautifully decorated house for you,
Come and reside in it.

O friend, I have prepared for you a bed of incomparable beauty;
Return (to rest) on this bed.
(Lying) next to the Beloved, overwhelmed by love,
I forget all of my sorrows.

O friend, the bed-swing sways back and forth,
With [the rhythm of] my every breath.
What ecstasy is aroused in the body,
When I am with the Beloved.

O friend, to whom can I describe
The pangs of separation (*viraha*) from the Beloved?
[Perhaps if] I were to meet a wise sage
He would understand.

O friend, the Creator of the creation
Is the One who has saved me.
Pir Sadr ad-Din, grasping me by the hand,
Takes me across the ocean (to salvation).

“HOW TIRED ARE MY EYES FROM WAITING EXPECTANTLY”

ATTRIBUTED TO PIR FAZAL SHAH (D. 1659); IN GUJARATI

How tired are my eyes from waiting expectantly:
When will my Lord come?
So that knowing Him to be present before me, I may touch his feet.
Beloved, bowing humbly, I will greet you.

Sweet Lord, I remember your name,
O Lord, I remember your name,
O Master, I remember your name.

My Master, I have been in love with you since childhood;
I am in love with the Lord of the Light.
How can the ignorant possibly understand this?

Sweet Lord, I remember your name,
 O Lord, I remember your name,
 O Master, I remember your name.

Pir Fazal Shah humbly pleads:
 O Merciful One, have mercy on me!
 Only your mercy will redeem my honor!
 I, your slave, am sinful; You are the Savior.

Sweet Lord, I remember your name,
 O Lord, I remember your name,
 O Master, I remember your name

Gits: Songs of Praise

Gits represent a vibrant tradition of literature among Nizari Ismaili communities of South Asian origin. They are the principal literary form through which the individual believer can express religious devotion in a personal voice. At the same time, they permit those who listen to them to participate in this devotion. The historical origins of gits are obscure, but it would be reasonable to assume that this important tradition dates back several centuries. Today, cassettes and CDs of gits are common and seem to be particularly appealing to the younger generation, as their lilting lyrics, rhythmic melodies, and musical instrumentation reflect contemporary cultures and tastes. More importantly, since most gits are written in modern vernaculars, their lyrics are more comprehensible to contemporary audiences than those of the *ginans*, which often employ grammatical forms and vocabulary from various medieval dialects.

Both men and women have been actively engaged in composing and singing gits. The majority of them are neither professional musicians nor songwriters, although in several cases involvement with the git tradition is a family affair. Alongside individual composers, various community institutions have been active in promoting the git tradition by sponsoring performances and recordings both of talented “star” singers and of community-based groups.

Traditionally, gits commemorate festive events such as Imam Day (the anniversary of the imam’s accession) or the birthday of the imam, or they may celebrate the imam’s official visits to followers in particular countries. In 1982/3 dozens of gits were composed during the Silver Jubilee of Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV’s reign as imam. Gits have also been recited on general Muslim festivals such as the two Muslim *‘ids*. In addition to such celebrations, gits are also sung in special musical concerts, called *git mehfil*s or *mushairas*. Frequently, gits are composed to accompany the performance of dances popular in the community, such as the traditional Gujarati *dandiya* (stick dance), *raas*, and *garba*. More recent innovations include gits with a fast-paced tempo for use during “disco” *dandiyas*.

In terms of their formal structures, gits draw on a variety of eclectic sources: the folk traditions of Gujarat and Sind, particularly the Gujarati *garbi* and *raas*; Bollywood songs from India's popular cinema industry; *bhajans*, or devotional songs attributed to poets associated with the Bhakti and Sant traditions; and genres of Urdu poetry, in particular the *ghazal*. Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and Sindhi predominate as major languages. Occasionally, entire Arabic phrases, usually from the Qur'an or having some theological import (such as the *salwat*, the formulaic blessing on the Prophet Muhammad and his family) are also incorporated to create bilingual gits. Among Nizari Ismaili communities in East Africa, gits have also been composed in Swahili.

The relationship between the imam and his followers forms a central theme within the gits. According to Ismaili teachings, an individual believer's progress on the path of spiritual development is possible only by means of the relationship that exists between the inner reality of the believer and the spiritual reality of the imam as the locus of divine light (*nur*). As keeper of the mysteries of the *batin* (the esoteric), the imam becomes not only the guide but also the object of the spiritual quest for the attainment of the spiritual vision (*didar*) and union for which the believer yearns. The gits depict this relationship in a variety of ways, depending on the temperament of the poet. One of the most interesting and intriguing portrayals of this relationship takes place within the complex of images associated with the *virahini*, a loving and yearning woman tormented by the absence of her beloved or her husband. As we have seen above, the *virahini*, who enjoys great popularity in a wide variety of South Asian religious traditions, is conspicuous in the ginans as well. That she should appear in gits devoted to the imam, the longed-for Beloved, hardly comes as a surprise, for such usage is entirely in keeping with Indic literary conventions according to which the human soul is always represented as feminine before the Divine.

The gits translated below contain a kaleidoscope of images associated with the typical *virahini*. To stress the humility of the disciple before the spiritual guide, the *virahini* is represented as a simple village woman who is afflicted by the fiery pangs of yearning for the beloved imam. She is convinced that out of love for her, the Beloved will overlook her inferior social status, as well as her numerous faults, and will visit her humble abode. To tempt him, she offers him the best hospitality that someone of her status can provide, proposing that she prepare for him freshly cooked bread and other delicacies. She thirsts and pines for even a single glance from her elusive Beloved, calling out to her girlfriends for help as she searches desperately for him. Highlighting her longing is the use of rain imagery, for in Indian literary traditions the season of rain is the season for lovers, always involving the theme of *viraha*, or love in separation, and the yearnings of the *virahini*. Her happiness in anticipating the coming of the imam is shared by creation: the birds, the flowers, and even the rivers rejoice. The heavens, too, join in celebrating this event as the moon smiles radiantly in the sky. Notwithstanding the imagery borrowed from the realm of yearning human love and nature, the poet is aware that the relationship with the imam is a spiritual one. Thus, the *virahini*, though searching

outwardly, realizes that the real search has to be an inner one, within the depths of her heart, which is where the Beloved truly resides.

The gits translated below were composed by the prominent git writer, Hassanali Rammal (d. 1990), under the pen name Suman. Born in Karachi in 1906, Suman composed over one hundred and thirty gits in Gujarati, Sindhi, and Urdu/Hindi, some of which were published in 1970 in a book titled *Suman Sangrah*. His compositions have been sung by prominent singers, including the famous Khursheed Noor Ali (Bhaloo), originally of Karachi but now living in Vancouver. Through a proliferation of recordings, the most famous being *Prem Sandesh* (A Message of Love), Suman's songs have become popular among Nizari Ismailis worldwide, particularly those living in the United Kingdom and North America. Suman was a versatile and talented writer, contributing articles and poems to a variety of periodicals and newspapers. In addition, he was a playwright for two drama clubs in the Ismaili community in Karachi. A member of the Theosophical Society in Karachi, he composed songs in praise of Krishna, the Buddha, Zoroaster, and the founder of the society, Madame Blavatsky, which were regularly sung at the society's meetings. Clearly a talented individual with a cosmopolitan outlook, he was particularly well versed in Bhakti and Sufi devotional poetry in various vernacular languages, a familiarity that is readily apparent in the pluralist ethos of his compositions.

**“WON'T YOU COME TO MY LITTLE VILLAGE JUST ONCE,
O OUR LORD!”**

IN GUJARATI

Won't you come to my little village just once, O our Lord!
Come, O beloved Karim Shah;
O star of our eyes, the *jamats* await expectantly for you to bestow *didar*
[the ultimate goal of Ismaili mysticism is enlightenment in which one
“sees” (*didar*) spiritually the light (*nur*)].
Come, O beloved Karim Shah.

Come, so that I can give you cupfuls of milk to drink,
And serve you warm delicious *rotla* [flat bread] with butter,
And dishes drippingly rich in *ghee* [clarified butter],
And sumptuous sweet juicy fruits.
We are simple and naive village folk;
But we will host you heart and soul.

Gathering extraordinarily fragrant jasmines and red roses,
I weave a garland for you;
With the deepest sentiments of devotion in my heart,
I place it around the neck of our beloved imam,

O Bestower of blessings,
The light of everyone's eyes.

My eyes gaze expectantly waiting for my Master,
And with the light of knowledge, I awaken my soul;
In my heart I spread a bed adorned with "Suman" [flowers]
And lay my beloved Karim lovingly to sleep.
Deflect all our sorrows,
O knower of the secrets of the heart!
Oh, where should I look for you, O beloved?

You are the Prophet's progeny and beloved of Ali;
Whenever I have asked a question, I have never returned
empty-handed.
Oh, where should I look for you, O beloved,
Karim Shah, my beloved?

Into which lane has beloved Karim Shah gone,
O girlfriend, won't you please tell me?
I have searched the heavens and under the earth.
Truly, he resides in the believer's heart.
Oh where . . .

To behold the day of the Silver Jubilee
My eyes are thirsting.
My heart pines, O beloved,
Won't you show me that sweet sight?
Oh where . . .

Your place is in these eyes,
Your name pulsates in my heartbeats.
"Suman" thirsts for a glimpse of your face,
So that the heart dances in rapture.
Oh where . . .

"GENTLY IT RAINS"

IN GUJARATI

O friend, here comes the colorful cloud of the rainy season; gently it rains. Yes, friend, thunder roars, lightning flashes, and gently it rains. O friend, listen to the gushing of rivers, gurgling of streams, and the chattering of countless birds. Friend, the lakes are overflowing; the earth is soaked; all creation is beautifully adorned.

- O friend, this is not an ordinary stream of rain, rather the gates of heavenly blessings have opened, and gently it rains.
- O friend, the Jubilee has come to our front yard with anklet bells jingling, our hearts are filled with boundless happiness.
- O friend, let's welcome beloved Karim Shah with a shower of flowers: he is our support.
- O friend, let's celebrate this occasion with heart's love, and gently it rains.
- O friend, everywhere there is lush greenery with an exuberance of nectar-laden flowers, "Suman" blossoming in the garden.
- O friend, with the colorful rainy season and the company of friends, spring enters my life.
- O friend, with delicious waves every part of my body sways, and gently it rains.

"IN THE TOWN SQUARE OF THE SKY, THE MOON IS SMILING"

IN GUJARATI

Spring has blossomed fragrant with the sweet scent of flowers;
 With eyes anxiously searching the path by which Shah Karim will arrive,
 The moon is smiling, O girlfriend, the moon is smiling.
 In the town square of the sky, the moon is smiling.

The Shah has arrived at our front yard.
 Let us lovingly welcome him with flowers on this occasion.
 I have strung flowers onto every thread of my heart.
 Oh, girlfriend, what a sweet and delightful fragrance comes forth!
 In the town square . . .

O king bird, do tell us the tale of the heavens:
 How is the celebration up there? Is it magnificent?
 Surely much more glorious than on the earth:
 Full of grandeur are the festivities in paradise.
 In the town square . . .

Bravo, bravo, O Ismaili! Bravo to your love.
 Magnificent is your heart; awe-inspiring are your sentiments.
 Due to your beloved, the sitar of love plays;
 And the entire universe is dazzled.

How delightful are these bonds of love.
 "Suman," the wasps are bowing before the nightingales.
 Wherever you step, I would spread my eyes for you to walk upon.
 The Shah's brilliance radiates from every step.

Sources

Ginans

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Gits

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Further Reading

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