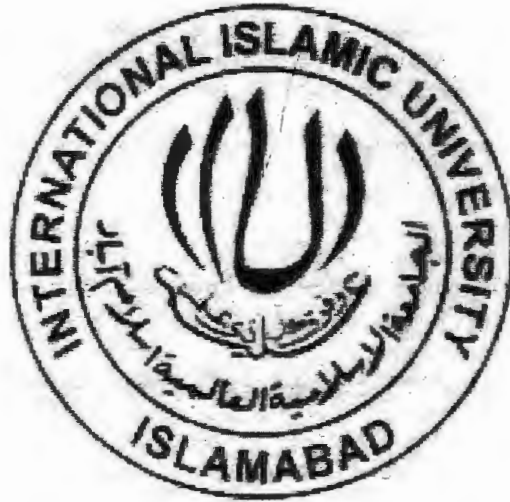


# Bohra Community of Pakistan: A Historical Study



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2016



Accession No. 1417180

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# Bohra Community of Pakistan: A Historical Study

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين

My Parents as I owe my existence to them

# Bohra Community of Pakistan: A Historical Study

**MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH**

Reg. No. 45-FSS/MSHIS/F13

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

Degree of Master Studies in the discipline of History

at the Faculty of Social Sciences,

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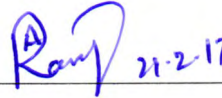


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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation endeavors to explore about the Bohra Community of Pakistan. The exploration of Bohra Community is in terms of its formation, organization, heritage and practices. Aiming the significant aspects of religion, history and culture. The inquisitiveness of knowing about a faction of the society such as Bohra Community, which is a secretive and closed community in its nature, has pushed me ahead to research on it.

This research enables one to comprehend Bohra community of Pakistan, its roots, heritage, culture, mundane life and culture. This study efforts to bridge the intellectual gap that is left unattended since decades. It also encompasses their socio-political life and their secrets of prosperity as a community.

This study covers the entire history of *Ismailism*, the difference of beliefs amongst *Ismailis*, *Khojas*, *Agha Khanis* and twelver *Shi'a*. It also discusses the bone of contention between the *imams*. An attempt has been made to explore, elaborate and put forward the Bohras' origin, their *imams*, *Da'is*. *Da'wat* structure and hierarchy, Socio-religious practices, education, their daily lives, ceremonies, customs, rituals and the community bond they share. This study also talks about their philanthropy and the trusts, organizations and institutions administered by them. An effort has been made to explore the Sunni *ulema* of Pakistan's view regarding Bohras but ironically, despite in constant pursuit to acquire their view, couldn't find much of it except a booklet and a pamphlet.

The resource material is based upon primary and secondary sources, primary sources being the community's indigenous publications and secondary sources include the books on Bohras, Fatimid and *Ismaili* history and articles from multiple journals.

## **Acknowledgements**

In the name of Allah, the beneficent the merciful. First and foremost, I am grateful to my mentor and supervisor, Dr Mujeeb Ahmad who has always sided by me throughout all thick and thins and has directed me. I feel myself lucky to have a guide as him, who is matchless in the scholarship and practice.

I am also thankful to all my teachers at the Department of History and Pakistan studies. Beginning with Dr Akhtar Husain, who has always motivated me to be focused and produce a well orated document. Dr Abdul Zahoor Khan for all the administrative support. Dr Safiullah for his invaluable input on the work and Dr Akmal Hussain Shah to keep asking about the status of the research work.

I am grateful to Shakeel Ahmad, who was ready to help out anytime I asked for.

I am gratified to my brother Muhammad Umar, who has been a great support and help in completion of this work. A big Thank You goes to my family for their unconditional support. I am also obliged to all the family friends who have been a support throughout the course of this research work. Without the encouragement of these it wouldn't have been possible.

**Muhammad Abdullah**

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## Glossary

<i>Agha Khan</i>	The leader of <i>Nizari Ismai'lis</i> . The Khojas believe that the Agha Khan is the <i>hazir</i> (present) <i>Imam</i> .
<i>Ahl-i-bayt</i>	People of the household. Refers to the family of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) especially his descendents through his daughter Hadrat Fatima and son-in-law Hadrat Ali.
<i>Aisahebah</i>	Title given to the wife of <i>Da 'i-i-mutlaq</i> .
<i>Ajlaf/Ashraf</i>	Two broad categories of Indian Muslims. <i>Ajlaf</i> communities (the overwhelming majority, a group that includes the Bohras) are descendents of indigenous converts. Whereas <i>Ashraf</i> communities are descendents of Afghans, Persians, Arabs, or other Muslim ruling elites from outside the Indian Subcontinent.
<i>Amilsaheb</i>	Assistant cleric in the Bohra hierarchy who serves as the <i>Da 'i</i> 's personal representative in a given locality. The title is often translated as priest, a term that would be out of place in almost any Islamic context other than an <i>Isma'ili</i> one.
<i>'Ashurah</i>	The tenth day of the Islamic month of <i>Muharram</i> , which commemorates the martyrdom of the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), Imām Husain and his 72 faithful followers in Karbala in 680.
<i>Auliya'</i>	-Arabic word for friends. Plural of <i>wali</i> . In Islamic terms, the people who are pious and friends of Allah.
<i>Ayatollah</i>	The highest rank of <i>Ithna'-Ashari</i> clerics. Meaning sign of Allah.
<i>Badri Mahal</i>	Located in downtown Mumbai, is the office from where matters of the Bohra <i>Da 'wat</i> are administered.
<i>Bania</i>	Member of a Gujarati mercantile caste or community. Bania communities include Bohra, <i>Khojah</i> , Memon, Parsi and various subgroups of Jains and Hindus.
<i>Barat</i>	Wedding procession. Social ostracism imposed by the Bohra <i>Da 'wat</i> . Since outright excommunication is legally precarious in India since the Prevention of Excommunication Act was introduced in 1949, the <i>Da 'wat</i> has relied on <i>baraat</i> to achieve somewhat similar purposes.
<i>Batin</i>	Secret theological doctrines and esoteric meanings of Islamic orthodoxy.

<i>Bhaisaheb</i>	<i>Bhai</i> referring to 'brother', the appellation given to every Bohra man. <i>Bhaisaheb</i> is the title reserved for men of the <i>Qasr-i- 'Aali</i> .
<i>Brahman</i>	The highest of four <i>varnas</i> (classes) in the Hindu caste system. Several Bohra families claim descent from priestly Brahmins rather than mercantile <i>Vaishyas</i> .
<i>Burq'ah</i>	Modest dress worn by traditional Muslim woman. For Bohras, the wearing of a <i>burq'ah</i> is a central part of the post-1980s Islamization program.
<i>Khalifah</i>	Successor, <i>i.e.</i> , successor to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). The eleventh through the twentieth <i>Ismai'li Imam</i> (as reckoned by the Bohras) ruled the Fatimid Empire with the title of <i>Khalifah</i> .
<i>Crore</i>	A South Asian word for mathematical unit equalling 10 million.
<i>Dafan</i>	Burial of a corpse.
<i>Da'i</i>	Missionary. In Fatimid usage, a cleric involved in propagation of the faith. In contemporary Bohra usage, short hand for the <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> .
<i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i>	The apex cleric of the Bohra community. The <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> is believed to be in contact with hidden <i>Imam</i> . This title was of only intermediate rank in the Fatimid hierarchy. All orthodox Bohras pledge to obey the dictates of the <i>Dai-i-mutlaq</i> in both spiritual and temporal matters.
<i>Da'wat</i>	The Rightly Guiding Mission in Bohra terms.
<i>Dawr-al-satr</i>	Period of concealment, during which the <i>Imam</i> lives in the world but is hidden away even from his own followers. <i>Ismai'lis</i> of both the <i>Nizari</i> and <i>Musta'li</i> branches believe a <i>Dawr-al-satr</i> encompassed the reigns of the seventh to the tenth <i>Imams</i> (765-881). Bohras believe a second <i>Dawr-al-satr</i> began when the twenty-first <i>Imam</i> entered concealment in 1132.
<i>Din</i>	A complete code of life that encompasses everything of a human life affairs. Islam is said to be a <i>Din</i> .
<i>Du'a</i>	Prayer, blessings.
<i>Dunya</i>	The world, worldly matters.
<i>Durgah</i>	Mausoleum. In Bohra terms, typically the Mausoleum of a <i>Da'i</i> or <i>Sayedi</i> .
<i>'Ehdul ehsan</i>	Recitation of <i>Qur'anic</i> verses by priest when a Bohra nears death.
<i>Farman</i>	Royal directive. For Bohras, a directive from the <i>Da'i</i> .
<i>Fatimi</i>	Fatimid, Spiritual descendent of Fatimah, the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)'s daughter. An <i>Ismai'li</i> State, that spanned from 909-1171 in Cairo, Egypt.
<i>Feta</i>	A pre-wound turban of gold silk worn by Bohra men instead of a <i>topi</i> on special occasions.
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence, the science of Islamic law.
<i>Fitrah</i>	Islamic Charity in <i>Ramadan</i> . In Bohras, paid together with <i>Sila</i> during Ramadan.

<i>Hadith</i>	Literally means news. In Islamic terminology it is referred to the collection of sayings, acts or deeds attributed to the Prophet Muhammad <i>Sallallahu 'Aliyhi Wasallam</i> .
<i>Hafiz</i>	One who has memorized the <i>Qur'an</i> by heart.
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage to Makkah undertaken by Muslims during the month of <i>Zil-hajj</i> .
<i>Haqiqat/Haqiqah</i>	Truth, the reality. The higher reaches of <i>Ismai'li</i> Gnostic learning.
<i>Hukm</i>	Command. In Bohra jargon, an official directive from the <i>Da'i</i> .
<i>Iddah</i>	A mourning period of 4 months and 10 days to be observed by a woman after divorce or death of her husband.
<i>Imam</i>	Spiritual leader. In Sunni terms, it is generally applied to the prayer leader at the local mosque. In <i>Shi'a</i> term it can also have this meaning, but is more significantly functional for one of the infallible intermediaries between God and man. <i>Ithna' Ashari</i> recognize twelve imams before the period of occultation, while Bohras recognize twenty-one before <i>satr</i> .
<i>Iman</i>	Faith.
<i>Isma'ili</i>	One of the two major surviving branches of <i>Shi'a</i> Islam. Bohras, like other <i>Isma'ilis</i> , get their name from their acceptance of <i>Imam</i> Isma'il ibn Jafar as the appointed spiritual successor to <i>Imam</i> Jafar as-Sadiq, wherein they differ from the <i>Twelvers</i> , who accept <i>Imam</i> Musa al-Kazim, the younger brother of Isma'il, as true <i>Imam</i> .
<i>Ism-i-azam</i>	The most effective name of Allah, chanting which can do wonders and make miracles happen.
<i>Ithna' Ashari</i>	The predominant <i>Shi'a</i> denomination. Also known as <i>Twelvers</i> .
<i>Jama'at</i>	Assembly to offer a prayer. A group, in Bohra term, a local Bohra community.
<i>Jama'at khanah</i>	The building that serves as the social and cultural and religious center for a local <i>Isma'ili</i> Agha Khani or Bohra Community.
<i>Kafan</i>	White cloth used to wrap up Muslim corpse before burial.
<i>Kal masum</i>	The religious status of the Bohra <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> . The difference between <i>kal masum</i> and <i>masum</i> is slight, but important. Perfect and reliable. the spiritual status of an <i>Imam</i> .
<i>Khaak-i-shifa</i>	Soil from Karbala, Iraq.
<i>Khidmat</i>	Service. For Bohras, helping as part of the clerical hierarchy, or volunteering at community events and occasions. <i>Khidmat</i> can also mean financial service in the form of charitable contributions to the <i>Da'wat</i> .
<i>Khojah</i>	Indian <i>Nazari Isma'ili</i> who recognize the Agha Khan as the living <i>Imam</i> . The Khojahs, like the Bohras, are a community of Gujarati <i>baniyas</i> concentrated in Karachi, Mumabai and other metropolitan centers around the world.
<i>Kurta</i>	A white cotton shirt, reaching down to the knees. For Bohras, an essential part of the male <i>Qaumi libas</i> i.e; community dress. Instituted by 52 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> Muhammad Burhanuddin, in early 1980s.

<i>Lakh</i>	A South Asian word for mathematical unit equalling one hundred thousands.
<i>Madrasah</i>	Islamic school providing religious education. The transnational Bohra network of Burhani <i>Madaris</i> combines Islamic and Western subjects in the same curriculum.
<i>Majlis</i>	Council. In Bohra term, a religious gathering that is less formal than a <i>wa'z</i> .
<i>Maktab</i>	An elementary Islamic school.
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Ma'sum</i>	Infallible and flawless. In Bohra doctrine the <i>Imam</i> is <i>ma'sum</i> , while the <i>Da'i</i> is <i>kal masum</i> meaning like <i>masum</i> .
<i>Mawlana/Mowla</i>	An honourable title used for Muslim clerics. In the Bohra community, this title is reserved for the <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> .
<i>Mazun</i>	The second highest <i>Shaikh</i> in the Bohra <i>Da'wat</i> hierarchy.
<i>Milad</i>	Birth, for Bohras the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), <i>Imam</i> or a <i>Da'i</i> .
<i>Misri</i>	A traditional Indian sweet.
<i>Mithaq</i>	An Oath of allegiance to God and the <i>Da'i-e-mutlaq</i> . All observant Bohras undertake it upon reaching puberty as a prime custom. The oath is repeated annually during the month of <i>Zil-hajj</i> .
<i>Miyasaheb</i>	Honor given to a Bohra member of the clergy who has earned his title through devotion, rather than financial contributions.
<i>Mohallah</i>	A neighborhood. In Bohra term an administrative unit for <i>Da'wat</i> organization.
<i>Muharram</i>	The first month of the Islamic year.
<i>Mukasir</i>	The third-ranking member of the clergy in the Bohra <i>Da'wat</i> .
<i>Mullah</i>	Islamic religious Scholar. In Bohra term, the title is given to the man authorized to lead prayers. The title of <i>Mullah</i> is lower than that of <i>Shaikh</i> or <i>'Amil</i> , and is awarded to graduates of the <i>Al-Jame'a-tus-Saifiyah</i> .
<i>Mumin/Muminin</i>	Plural of <i>mumin</i> means faithful. In general a practicing Muslim. In Bohra terminology it is reserved for members of the Bohra community.
<i>Munajaat</i>	Communication with or requesting Allah.
<i>Musafir Khanah</i>	An inn, For Bohras the pilgrims lodge maintained near a Bohra shrine.
<i>Musta'li</i>	One of the two surviving branches of the <i>Isma'ilis</i> . Bohras represent the only significant group of <i>Musta'li Isma'ilis</i> in the Modern World.
<i>Nass</i>	Assigning of Traditions. For Bohras, the designation of a <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> by his forerunner.



<i>Nida</i>	A call before prayer. Also said as <i>takbir</i> .
<i>Nizari</i>	One of the two major branches of <i>Isma'ilis</i> . The <i>Nizaris</i> are today represented by <i>Khojahs</i> and Agha Khanis.
<i>Pagri</i>	Turban.
<i>Pardah</i>	Seclusion. For Bohra women, <i>pardah</i> is considerably less restrictive. It primarily consists of avoiding physical contact with or revealing hair or body contours to men other than one's husband and blood relatives.
<i>Qarzan Hasanah</i>	Islamic finance system of interest free loan. In Bohras an amount one spends in the cause of Allah to help someone or a trust seeking no benefit for this act of charity.
<i>Qasr-i- 'Aali</i>	The Royal Family of the Bohra Community.
<i>Qatgul Sarah</i>	A Bohra term for private secretary of deputy minister.
<i>Qaum</i>	Community, nation.
<i>Qiblah</i>	The direction of Muslims' prayer.
<i>Qur'an</i>	The revealed book of Islam.
<i>Radd</i>	Refutation, counter narrative.
<i>Ramadan</i>	The ninth month in of Islamic year. Muslims fast during this month.
<i>Raza</i>	Permission. In the Bohra term, <i>muminin</i> often ask the <i>raza</i> of the <i>Da'i</i> for any major decisions or actions.
<i>Rida</i>	Veil. A piece of cloth Bohra women wear that covers their upper part of the body except face.
<i>Rupee</i>	Unit of currency in most of the South Asian countries.
<i>Salat</i>	Arabic word for prayer, offered five times a day.
<i>Shadi</i>	For Hindus marriage, while for Bohras the social aspect of a wedding celebration.
<i>Shahzadah/Shahzedi</i>	Prince/Princess. In Bohras a title given to the sons and daughters of a Bohra <i>Da'i</i> .
<i>Shaikh</i>	Elder. A title given by the <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i> to individuals who have been loyal in <i>Khidmat</i> .
<i>Sufi</i>	The mystical strain of Islam. A Sufi master is known as a <i>Shaikh</i> in Arabic or <i>pir</i> in Persian, and leads an established order <i>tariqah</i> .
<i>Surti</i>	Resident of city of Surat in Indian State of Gujarat, or descendent of a Surat native. Among the Bohras, a <i>de facto</i> aristocratic class.
<i>Syedna</i>	Honorific title of Bohra <i>Da'i-i-mutlaq</i>

<i>Takbir</i>	An act in <i>salat</i> in which the hands are held in line with the ears for a moment on the call of <i>Allah o akbar</i> by <i>imam</i> .
<i>Taharah</i>	Cleanliness, purity. For <i>Isma'ilis</i> , one of the seven pillars of the faith. It can be understood in <i>zahir</i> apparent or in <i>batin</i> esoteric terms.
<i>Taqiyah</i>	Dissimulation. An obligation for <i>Shi'a</i> when faced with religious subjugation. Practiced by the Bohras throughout much of their history.
<i>Tayyibi</i>	The only surviving school of <i>Musta'li Isma'ilis</i> . Named on the 21 <sup>st</sup> <i>Imam</i> <i>Tayyib</i> . In theological terms, Bohras are <i>Tayyibi Musta'li Isma'ili Shi'a</i> Muslims.
<i>Ulema</i>	Religious scholars, learned men in <i>ilm</i> Islamic knowledge
<i>Ummah</i>	Muslim Community in the world, In Bohra terms the community of <i>muminin</i> .
<i>'Urs</i>	Death anniversary. For Bohras the death anniversary of a <i>Da'i</i> .
<i>W'az</i>	Formal gathering in which the <i>Da'i</i> delivers a sermon from a ceremonial throne.
<i>Wallayah</i>	Devotion. One of the seven pillars of <i>Shi'a</i> Islam.
<i>Wali</i>	Friend, in Bohra terms Legatee
<i>Zahir</i>	Exoteric aspects of faith, as laid in the apparent meaning of the <i>Qur'an</i> and <i>Sharia'h</i> .

## Introduction

The Bohra community traces its spiritual heritage from the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and *Hadrat 'Ali* (601-61), son-in-law of the Prophet and continuing through his successor, the *imams*, who, functioning first from Medina, spread over to North Africa and Egypt in the succeeding centuries.

*Imam al-Mahdi Billah* (873-934) set out for North Africa and established his religious kingdom in Tunisia and the adjacent territories. Three *imams* succeeded him and the fourth, *imam al-Moiz-li-dinillah* (932-975), established his seat of authority in Egypt. The Fatimid *imams*, reigning in Egypt, founded the City of Cairo and started the renowned centre of learning, al-Azhar University in 970. From Egypt, the centre of Fatimid authority and activity was shifted to Yemen. When the 20<sup>th</sup> *imam* decided that the time had again come to keep away from the public eye, he made elaborate preparations for enabling his successor to go into seclusion at the appropriate moment and also for the preservation and continuation of the Fatimid tradition, from a congenial new centre in neighboring Yemen, and on a new basis. For this purpose, he directed his grand emissary in Yemen, to establish the institution of the vicegerent of the *imam* which dignitary was to function as the sole deputy of the *imams* in seclusion, exercising all their powers to the fullest extent.<sup>1</sup> The vicegerent came to be known as *Da'i-i-mutlaq* and his office necessitates the unfailing discharge of two obligations, viz., that the *Da'i-i-mutlaq* would take care to appoint a successor in time and that he would always carry on his mission in the name of the *imams* with all the authority and power inherent in that high office.<sup>2</sup> When the 21<sup>st</sup> *imam* went into seclusion in 1132, on the authority of the *imam*, the institution of *Da'i-i-mutlaq* was established, which continues vigorously without interruption to this day. The

<sup>1</sup> Satish C. Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963) p.7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

first to enter upon the august office in Yemen was Syedna Zoeb (d.1151). From Yemen, after a preparatory period lasting well nigh two centuries, the seat of the *Da'wat* was transferred to India. Already ties of friendly intercourse, exchange of thought and culture and trade had existed for long between India and Yemen. The followers of the *Da'i* in Yemen had settled down in India, and the more eminent amongst them used to visit Yemen, would stay with the *Da'is* for long periods, acquire first-hand knowledge of the traditions of the faith and also observe how the *Da'is* managing the affairs of the community. The *Dai's* also had representatives in India to attend to the needs of their followers. The *Dai's* chose India for the transfer of the *Da'wat* in the knowledge and belief that this country was receptive and tolerant towards varying faiths and creeds. The first *Da'i* to hold office in India in 1539 was Yusuf Najmuddin (d.1567). He commenced his mission in Gujarat and gradually his followers spread to other parts of India.<sup>3</sup>

The Bohras converted from Hinduism and the conversion took place mainly in the twelfth century in Indian Gujarat. They were mainly from the Hindu middle and upper castes and mainly from the castes engaged in trade and commerce. The conversion was mainly due to some Arab missionaries came from Egypt and Yemen. Later, the indigenous converts undertook the missionary activities in other contiguous regions like the areas that today constitute Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Sindh and Maharashtra. Thus, today the Bohras in India mainly live in these areas and number around 0.8 million. They are mainly engaged in small trade though now a newly educated professional class is also coming into existence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, p.9

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

# Chapter 1

## Origin of the Bohra Community

## 1.1 Legacy of the Bohra Community

Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu 'Aliye hi Wasallam* laid the foundations of Islam. Islam is not only considered to be a seal of the great revealed religions but also a complete and superseding one, which superseded Judaism and Christianity. Its adherents are called Muslims and they are accorded with a special status of *Ahl-i-kitab*. Islam was unified until the time of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. Soon after the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, there emerged divisions in Muslims. These divisions pushed apart Muslims on many fundamental issues, like, *Qur'an* and its standard text and other principal sources like *Shari'ah* that is a divine guidance and a sacred law of Islam.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Muslims were split into communities and sects and sub-sects over the time.<sup>6</sup>

The *Bohra* is a Muslim community in Western India mainly of Hindu descent with some mixture of Arab Yemenite blood, for most part *Shi'a* of *Isma'ili* sect belonging to that sect of *Isma'ilis* which upholds the claim of *al-Musta'li* (1094-1101) to succeed his father *al-Mustansir* (1029-94) in the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt.<sup>7</sup> The *Bohras* believe that Prophet chose his son-in-law Ali ibn Talib as his successor and an *Imam* appointed by both *i.e.* Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his daughter Fatima will always be on earth as a sole interpreter of Islam.<sup>8</sup>

The *Bohra* Community of Pakistan traces its ancestry to the ninth century, when they converted from Hinduism to Islam in the Indian State of Gujarat.<sup>9</sup> The term *Bohra* generally refers to the traders and businessmen, while specifically it designates the followers of *Isma'li*

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<sup>5</sup> Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p.21

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopedia of Islam, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. 1960, Leiden: The Netherlands p. 1254.

<sup>8</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, *Aab-i-Kauthar*, (Lahore: Naqush Press, 2006), p.353.

Thus, in other words the *Isma'ilis* are in agreement with the Twelvers about the initial *Imams*, the descendants of Muhammad (S.A.W) on his daughter- Fatima Zahra's side. As a result, the initial history of both branches is the same. Their dispute is in the matter of the succession after *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*, the sixth *Imam*. This dispute persist up to the recent times, and on the basis of such disputes *Isma'ilism* is further split into two sects, *Nizaris* and *Musta'lians*.<sup>15</sup> The unified *Isma'ili da'wat* was split into two branches upon the death of al-Mustansir<sup>16</sup> in 1094. As per the *Shi'a* rule of the *nass*, al-Mustansir earlier designated his elder son Abu Mansur Nizar (955-96) as his successor, however Abu'l Qasim shahanshah (1066-1121), known as *al-Afdal* who succeeded his father Badar al-Jamali (1015-94) as the powerful Fatimid vizier and "commander of the armies" was in pursuit to strengthen his authoritarian rule. For the purpose, he favored the candidacy of Nizar's younger brother Abu'l Qasim Ahmad (1074-1101).<sup>17</sup> Ahmad was married to *al-Afdal's* sister and was fully dependent on him. On the day after death of al-Mustansir, *al-Afdal* placed Ahmad on the Fatimid throne with the title of *al-Musta'li bi'llah*. This was supported by Fatimid army and an allegiance was obtained by the notables of Fatimid court and *Da'wat* leaders.

## 1.2. *Isma'ili Bohra Doctrine*

The life of *Imam Isma'il* is shrouded with ambiguity. His exact date of birth is unknown yet approximated between 719 and 722. His mother was apparently *Fatimah al-Hassan* descendant of *Imam Hassan bin Ali*, the first wife of *Imam Sadiq*. *Imam Isma'il* was the second son and

<sup>15</sup> Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis their history and doctrines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> *Abu Tamim Madd al-Mustansir bi'llah*, (1029- 1094) was the eighth caliph of the Fatimid Caliphate from 1036 until 94.

<sup>17</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 106.

twenty-five years senior to *Imam* Musa Kazim who was the son of a different wife of *Imam Sadiq*. The *Ithna' Ashari Shi'a* sources are critical regarding the character of *Imam Isma'il*. However, not surprisingly, the *Isma'ili* sources exalt and praise *Imam Isma'il*. Yet, the *Isma'ili* sources have very little historical information about *Isma'il*. Daftary comments, he is highly revered by them, but unfortunately, *Isma'ili* sources such as the *Uyun al-Akhbar* contain little historical information of any value concerning him. On the other hand, the Twelver sources, which are better and well-versed than the Sunni sources regarding the *Shi'a* sub-sects, are mostly hostile towards *Isma'il* and the claims raised on his behalf.<sup>18</sup> The *Isma'ilis* quote that *Imam Sadiq* said, he is the *Imam* after me, and what you learn from him is just the same as if you have learnt it from myself.<sup>19</sup> Once when *Imam Sadiq* was ill, he apparently called his trustworthy followers, members of his family, and handed the authority to *Isma'il*. Evidently *Imam Sadiq* guarded and educated *Isma'il*. *Isma'ilis* claim that a few events were especially indicative that *Isma'il* was the true successor of *Imam Sadiq*. For example, they narrate an instance when *Imam Sadiq* was absent and *Isma'il* acted on behalf of his father as the head of the family.<sup>20</sup> *Isma'ilis* often praised in *Isma'ili* texts and his status as the successor of *Imam Sadiq* is often implied. However, the *Ithna' Ashari* have a completely different view of *Isma'il*. They consider him to be a degenerate who disobeyed his father. The Sunni and Twelver sources regard *Isma'il* as a reprobate, and an unworthy son of his father. The latter in particular seem to adopt an attitude of the less said the better.<sup>21</sup> Also, many historians claim that *Isma'il* drank alcohol. The general statement is that *Isma'il* was deposed by *Ja'far* because of his excessive inclination to drink.<sup>22</sup> Allegedly, *Isma'il*

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<sup>18</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Origins of Isma'ilism: A Study of the Historical Background of the Fatimid Caliphate*, (New York: AMS Press, 1975) p.38.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.



also participated in certain radical, rebellious *Shi'a* circles. Evidently, *Isma'il* was not satisfied with *Imam Sadiq's* quiescent attitude. There are some references in *Ithna' Ashari* sources that report *Isma'il's* close association with *al-Mufaddal bin Uman al-Jufi* who was a money lender. Apparently, *Imam Sadiq* disapproved of the radical *Shi'as* who were influencing his son. *Al-Mufaddil* initially was a supporter of *Abul-Khattab*. Later he became a follower of *Imam Musa Kazim*.<sup>23</sup>

Another narrative as per the accounts is that *Isma'il* was in a militant anti-Abbasid plot that almost cost his life during the year 755. He was in partnership with *Bassam bin Abdullah al-Sayrafi* who was another radical *Shi'a* involved in money lending. Subsequently, caliph al-Mansur summoned *Imam Sadiq*, *Isma'il*, and *Bassam* to his court to interrogate them. *Bassam* was actually executed while *Isma'il's* life was spared.<sup>24</sup>

According to the *Ithna' Ashari* sources, *Imam Sadiq* indicated his deep displeasure of these activities of *Isma'il*. Daftary marks it as, all this evidence confirms the existence of close relations between *Isma'il* and the radical circles in *Imam Sadiq's* following; and it definitely places the young *Ismai'l* amongst those *Shi'as* who were not satisfied with their *Imam's* conservatism and submissiveness. *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* could not approve of such activities which were at variance with his efforts to consolidate *Shi'ism* on a quiescent basis.<sup>25</sup> It appears that, *Isma'il* also had links with other extremist *Shi'as* of his time, especially *Abul-Khattab*.

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<sup>23</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>25</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 99.



Abul-Khattab was a *mawla* or client and one of the close companions of *Imam* Muhammad Baqir and *Imam Sadiq*. However, later, *Imam Sadiq* disassociated and disapproved of Abul-Khattab's actions. One of the early *Ithna' Ashari* scholars Nawbakhti describes Abul-Khattab as being a close companion of the *Imams* who was actually appointed as a representative of the *Imams* in Kufa until he claimed that he was a prophet and heir to *Imam Sadiq*.<sup>26</sup> *Imam Sadiq* denied that Abul-Khattab had any form of oteric knowledge. When the *Imam Sadiq* was asked why Abul-Khattab had been a close associate and then rejected, he replied, "There are some whom God has created for prophecy and they cannot be anything but prophets. There are some created for belief, and they cannot be anything but believers. Some God has entrusted with belief. If He wishes He may perfect and He wishes He may withdraw it. Abul-Khattab was one of those to whom God lent belief and when he falsified my father's words God withdrew it".<sup>27</sup> Abul-Khattab apparently gathered a following for himself. According to Daftary, Abul-Khattab's followers rallied to the side of *Imam Isma'il*. Hence, it's apt to say that early *Isma'ilis* were composed of many of the followers of Abul-Khattab. Some *Isma'ili* scholars such as Sadiq Ali claim that Abul-Khattab did know the unseen and the *ism-i-azam*. Sadiq Ali also says that *Imam Sadiq* was practicing *taqiyyah* when he was issuing statements against Abul-Khattab. Other *Isma'ili* scholars delink the *Isma'ilism* from Abul-Khattab and call him as a heretic. Daftary refers to this relationship in the following manner: *Al-Qummi* identifies al-*Isma'iliyya al-khalisa* with the, *Khatabiyya*; and Nawbakhti has a similar statement too. Furthermore, both the authors aim on showing the influence of the *Khatabis* on the nascent. *Isma'iliyya*, report that a group of Abul-Khattab's followers after his death joined the supporters of, *Muhammad bin Isma'il*, claiming that the spirit of the *Imam Sadiq* had passed into, Abul-Khattab and from him

<sup>26</sup> Bernard, *Origins of Isma'ilism*, p.34.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

to *Muhammad bin Isma'il*. Many later sources also speak of close associations between the early *Ismai'lis* and the *Khattabis*.<sup>28</sup>

On the contrary, some *Isma'ilis* believe that *Isma'il* in order to protect his life, used the name of Abul-Khattab, or otherwise known as *taqiyyah*. Sadiq Ali alleges that *Isma'il* adopted the name Abul-Khattab and the latter adopted the name of *Isma'il*. Another interesting link between Abul-Khattab and *Isma'ilis* found in *Umm-al-Kitab*, the most primitive *Isma'ili* source that was a secret holy book unearthed from Central Asia.<sup>29</sup> It describes Abul-Khattab being a central figure and founder of the religion. Apparently, the *Khatabiyyahs* and the *Isma'ilis* seem to be linked intimately and perhaps were overlapping groups. Evidently, *Isma'il* had contacts with Mubarak who was another extremist, militant *Shi'a*.<sup>30</sup> Once more, little is known about Mubarak. However, he was a *mawla* or servant of *Muhammad bin Isma'il*. Some sources account that Mubarak plotted with *Abdullah bin Mamun al-Qaddah* and found the sect of *Mubarakdiyyah*. They supported *Isma'il* as the new *Imam* during the lifetime of his father and accepted that *Isma'il* predeceased his father. After *Imam Sadiq's* death they considered *Muhammad bin Isma'il* as their next *Imam*. Daftary accounts that It seems likely then that the *Mubarakdiyyah* were at first the upholders of *Isma'il's* Imamate, and it was only after *Imam Sadiq's* death that the bulk of *Isma'il's* supporters rallied to the side of *Muhammad bin Isma'il* and recognized him as their new *Imam*. At the same time, *Isma'il* had to be elevated retrospectively to the Imamate. In other words, it was maintained that while *Imam Sadiq* was still alive, the Imamate had passed from him to *Isma'il*.<sup>31</sup> But, there are also other sources that seem to contradict this view. Some *Isma'ilis* and Orient lists believe that Mubarak was another name used by *Imam Isma'il*. It

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<sup>28</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

seems that, *Isma'il* was practicing *taqiyyah* while adopting the name Mubarak. As Daftary writes that it has now become evident that the name Mubarak was the epithet of *Isma'il* himself and it was applied as such to him by his followers.<sup>32</sup> There are also sufficient evidences that *Isma'il* had contacts with Abul-Khattab and Mubarak and perhaps he has had even used their identities as a cover in order to protect his life. So, it is apparent that early *Isma'ilism* was influenced by Abul- Khattab and Mubarak.<sup>33</sup>

The *Isma'ilis* also believe that time is divided into seven cyclical eras. Each era began with a speaker or *natiq* who brings divine revelation. The first six eras had Prophet Adam, Prophet Noah, Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, Prophet Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as speakers. The *natiq* is succeeded by the *samit* or silent one who describes the inner or esoteric meanings of the divine revelations. These six eras had Seth, Sham, Ishmael, Aaron, Simon Peter, and Ali as *samit* or silent ones. The seventh *Imam* is the *natiq* of the next era who will abrogate the *Shari'ah* and replace it with a new one. In the sixth era, according to the early *Isma'ilis*, the seventh *samit* was *Muhammad bin Isma'il* and they were waiting for the final *natiq* to come.<sup>34</sup> They also believed that God assumes the form of a man. The author Abu Ishaq Quhistani comments, "It was the wish of God that He should be recognized and worshipped. He chose man for this, from all creation, and favored him with His own form and attributes this man's form is His personal form".<sup>35</sup> Also, they believe that Prophet Adam was made in the form of God and quote Prophet Jesus in the Gospels describing that man is in the form of God.<sup>36</sup>

These are some of the beliefs of early *Isma'ilis*.

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<sup>32</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100

<sup>34</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Abu Ishaq Quhistani, *Haft Bab*, (Bombay: The Ismai'li Society, 1959), p.37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

The *Isma'ilism* arose through great tumult and remained secretive throughout the centuries in order to avoid harassment. The majority of the early *Isma'ilis'* central argument in claiming the legitimacy of their sect is that *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* designated *Imam Isma'il* as his successor, *Isma'il* did not pass away before the death of his father, and a change of *nass* did not occur. However, these claims are questionable and other qualms remain in the *Isma'ili* argument. One of the remaining doubts is that through the historical accounts of both the *Isma'ilis* and the non-*Isma'ilis*, it is evident that *Isma'il* had connections with extremist *Shi'a*, whom his father did not approve. This disapproval of *Isma'il's* activities by *Imam Sadiq* raises doubts about the legitimacy of *Isma'il's* imamate.

*Isma'il* had become involved with the extremist group, and had intrigued against his father. Lewis analysis of this charge does indicate that *Isma'il* was in close association with Abul-Khattab and others who would be classed with the *ghulat*. Abul-Khattab had been active in the *Shi'ite* group with *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*, but the latter had to repudiate him openly. He also states that *Imam Ja'far* had to forbid *Isma'il* on going to school with Abul-Khattab had been conducting.<sup>37</sup>

In *Isma'ili* doctrine, every *Imam* has mentioned about his successor. Just as *Imam Ali* appointed *Imam Hassan* (624-70) as his successor, *Imam Hassan* appointed *Imam Husain* (626-80), *Imam Husain* appointed *Imam Zainul Abedin* (658-713), *Imam Zainul Abedin* appointed *Imam Muhammad Baqir* (677-743), *Imam Muhammad Baqir* appointed *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* (702-65); *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* appointed *Imam Musa Kazim* (745-99). *Imam Musa Kazim* was appointed as *imam* during the lifetime of his father as there are testimonial proofs to give

<sup>37</sup> John Norman Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, (London: Luzac & Company Ltd, 1953) p.93

evidence to it.<sup>38</sup>

*Yazid bin Salit* mentions that he went along with some others to *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* to pay their respects. After greeting *imam*, he asked the *imam* you are our purified *Imam* and no one who is born is immune from death, and we have come here to ask you about your successor. The *Imam* pointed towards his sons, and then he pointed towards his son *Musa* and said that he will be the leader of them all. In him is tact, science, charity and love for the Creator, and whatever difficulties that people come across in their religion, he has all the answers to them and will guide them to the straight path. He has the best possible way of treating people and a wonderful delicacy of talking to them, and he is one of the doors leading to God.<sup>39</sup> In another narration, *Dawood bin Kasir* asked *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* whom they should follow after him as *imam*, in answer to which the *imam* replied that it would be his son *Musa*.<sup>40</sup>

Once, *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* publically announced at a function that his son *Musa* would be the lawful *Imam* and rightful successor after him. At this function his sons *Ali* and *Ishaq* were also present and these two were termed as witnesses, and they were considered as learned divines. There were also companions of *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*, and such other learned men whose knowledge of Islam was of a very high caliber and those were: *Mufaddal bin Umar*, *M'az bin Kasir*, *Abdul-rehman bin Hajjaj*, *Faiz bin Mukhtar*, *Yakoob bin Saraj*, *Imran bin Aayon*, *Abu Basir*, *Dawood-i-Rikkee*, *Yunus bin Zibyaan*, *Yazid bin Salit*, *Suleman bin Khaled* and *Safwanay Jamal*. All of them were made to bear witnesses to the statement of *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*, regarding the Imamate of *Imam Musa Kazim*.<sup>41</sup>

*Ebrahim-i-Karkhi* has also mentioned an occasion that one day when he went to *Imam*

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<sup>38</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.93

<sup>39</sup> Bernard, *Origins of Isma'ilism*, p.37.

<sup>40</sup> Asghar Ali, *The Bohras*, p.63.

<sup>41</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 57.

*Ja'far Sadiq*. Whilst he and *Imam* were talking, *imam's* child Musa came before them. *Imam* kissed the child and told *Ebrahim* that after me, my son Musa will be your *Imam*. People will become his enemies and trouble him. But his enemies will suffer and may the wrath of Allah be on those murderers, and God will increase their punishment. Then the *Imam* also told me that after *Imam* Musa Kazim, his son *Imam* Ali Reza would be the next *Imam*.<sup>42</sup>

Another such succession story prevails that Walid bin Sabin narrates that he heard from Abdul Jaleel that *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* had made *Isma'il* his Successor. To confirm this, Sabin approached the *Imam* for clarification whether he actually had proclaimed *Isma'il* as his successor? Then *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* at once replied on oath, that he had never said it and he further cleared that he named *Imam* Musa Kazim as his successor.<sup>43</sup>

Muhammad bin Yaqoob Kilyani in *Furo-i-Kafi* mentions: *Isma'il* had some Dirhams in his possession and decided to invest this amount with a businessman going on to Yemen for a share in a trade venture. *Isma'il* mentioned this to his father and the *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* told him that, since that businessman is drunkard, so, it would be wrong to give him money or to carry out any business deals with him. In spite of this advice, *Isma'il* entrusted the amount to this stranger, who swindled him, and the money was lost.<sup>44</sup>

*Isma'il* was the eldest son of *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*, and when he was 28 years old, his brother Musa Kazim was born. In these twenty eight years, seeing their *imam's* love towards his elder on *Isma'il* people began to feel that *Isma'il* would be the successor. This spread far and wide, and it

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<sup>42</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad b. Yaqoob kilyani, *Furo-i-kaafi*, (Beirut: Manthu'raat al Fajr ,n.d) Vol.111



was now in command of *Ja'far Sadiq* to make it known to the world who would be his successor

Both Sunni and *Shi'a* authorities are unanimous in their verdict that *Isma'il* died during the lifetime of his father, *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*. Saddrudin Hanafi-i-Kadri in his book *Kitab Rawa-i-Hool Mustafa* states that *Isma'il* died during the lifetime of his father *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* in Urez, and his body was taken to Medina for burial.<sup>45</sup>

Yazid bin Salit confirmed that *Isma'il* was dead and all the rest were told to be witnesses. Then *Imam Ja'far Sadiq* prayed, O Allah, you bear witness to this. The *Imam* removed his *Aba* as a sign of sorrow and grief. At various places the cortege halted and the face of *Isma'il* was shown to the people as a proof of his death. This was especially carried out to make it known to everyone that *Isma'il* was truly dead, and that he died during the life-time of his father *Imam Ja'far Sadiq*. In spite of all these precautions, some people in distant lands could not reconcile themselves to the thought of *Isma'il's* death.<sup>46</sup>

The issue of whether or not *Isma'il* had passed away during the lifetime of his father is central to the debate behind the succession to *Imam Sadiq*. Another central question to the debate regarding the succession to *Imam Sadiq* is whether or not a change of *nass* occurred. *Ithna' Asharis* claim that there was a change of *nass* decreed by Allah. Initially, *Imam Sadiq* had designated that *Isma'il* would be his successor. However, supposedly, Allah revealed to *Imam Sadiq* that Musa Kazim should replace *Isma'il* as the successor of *Imam Sadiq*. The *Isma'ilis* argue that the *hadith* about the change of *nass* is fabricated. Also, the *Isma'ilis* believe

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<sup>45</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> Bernard, *Origins of Isma'ilism*, p.59.

that Allah would not change a decree on the designation of Imamate. They quote the following *hadith*: "Verily, God makes changes in everything except in the matter of *Imam*".<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, some *Isma'ilis* claim that the *Imams* know the unseen and the future. Since they have the knowledge of the unseen, the declaration of the change of *nass* would imply that the *Imam* is deficient in his capabilities. Abdul Aziz Sachedina states in his book *Islamic Messianism*, it implied God's change of mind (*bada*) because of a new consideration, caused by the death of *Isma'il*. However, such connotations in the doctrine of *bada* raised serious questions about the nature of God's knowledge, and indirectly, about the ability of the *Imam*'s prophecy to future occurrences.<sup>48</sup> The *Ithna' Asharis* maintain that the *Imams* have knowledge of some aspects of the unseen; but, certain abrogation can be made in injunctions which are a reflection of the Divine Will. The issue of the change of *nass* is vital to the discussion about the succession to *Imam Sadiq*.

In order to maintain their legitimacy and to face the criticism by the *Ithna' Asharis*, the *Isma'ilis* also have various refutations of the *Ithna' Ashari* doctrines. The *Isma'ilis* ridicule the *Ithna' Asharis* view on *Imam Mahdi*. The *Ithna' Asharis* believe that their twelfth *Imam*, *Mahdi*, did not pass away and remains in occultation till the present day and will return to the Earth's physical plane before the Day of Judgment. In *Haft Bab*, an early *Isma'ili* text that was written more than five hundred years ago, the author contends that no human being can have such a large lifespan. He also states that every intelligent man knows that no human being can live for five hundred years, and cannot therefore remain all that time hidden in a cave.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>47</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Bohras*, p.57.

<sup>48</sup> Abdulaziz AbdulHussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1952) p.39.

<sup>49</sup> Abu Ishaq Quhistani, *Haft Bab*, p.15.

*Ithna' Asharis* might argue that Prophet Nuh also lived for one thousand years, that Prophet *Khidr's* lifetime also spanned a great deal of time, and the Sleepers of the Cave also lived beyond their average lifespan. To this argument the author of *Haft Bab* replies, "We would say to this that all such stories require *taawil* (esoteric interpretation), and they must be used in their implied sense."<sup>50</sup>

The *Isma'ilis* claim that the general public would remain bereft of knowledge under an *Imam* with whom they are unable to contact. The *Ithna' Asharis* might reply to this argument is with the quotation of a *hadith* by *Imam Sadiq* that equates the awaited *Imam Mahdi* to the sun behind the clouds which constantly confers light to the people. Since, the *Isma'ilis* do not accept the concept of the *Imam Mahdi*, they consider the line of *Ithna' Ashari Imams* to have been ended at *Imam Hasan al-Askari* (846-74), the father of *Imam Mahdi*. Daftary quotes Ivanow<sup>51</sup> as saying, "If an *Imam* dies without leaving a son as his successor, it can only mean that not only he personally, but the whole line of his ancestors were not the true *Imams*. Thus the discontinuation of the line of the Twelvers proved that at least the last several of them were not genuine".<sup>52</sup>

These are some of the arguments between the *Ithna' Asharis* and the *Isma'ilis*. The early *Isma'ilis* shared some similar doctrines. They believed that *Qur'an* and *Shari'ah* have a *zahir* or exoteric and *batin* or esoteric dimension. The rules within the *Shari'ah* are the exoteric aspect and are followed by only the common people. However, the *khawass* or elite follow the esoteric aspect of the *Shari'ah* which is extracted from the *taawil* or esoteric aspects of the *Qur'an*. There are some *Isma'ilis* today, the Nizaris, who do not follow the *Shari'ah* in minute detail.

<sup>50</sup> Abu Ishaq Quhistani, *Haft Bab*, p.16.

<sup>51</sup> Ivanow translated the primary *Isma'ili* book in Persian *Fro-i-kafi* into English.

<sup>52</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 59.

Abu Ishaq Quhistani, the author of *Haft Bab* explains, "Those persons who have stuck in the world of *Shari'ah* and have not reached the *haqiqah*<sup>53</sup> are described in the *Qur'an* as dead, not living. The people who follow *Shari'ah* only are dead because they are not under the orders of the bearer of the truth of the time".<sup>54</sup>

### 1.3 The Bohras in India

The *Ismaili* movement, right from the inception was a mission which sent its missionaries all over the world in different countries like Africa, Persia, Yemen, Central Asia and India. During the al-Mustansir's reign (1035-95) two eminent *da'is* Ahmad and Abdullah were sent from Egypt to India via Yemen, who landed on the port of Cambay. These *da'is* were sent by al-mustansir mainly to safeguard Muslims of India as at the time the ruler of Pattan, Siddharaja JayaSingha was killing Muslims.<sup>55</sup> These *da'is* paved the foundation of *Ismaili* community in India in a peaceful manner with an outlook of business. According to the author of *Mausam-i-Bahar*,<sup>56</sup> after landing on the port Cambay, the *da'i* Abdullah, while on the land route felt intensely thirsty and went to a nearby garden in search of water. The gardener and his wife namely Kaka Akela and Kaki Akeli told him that due to drought the well was dry. Abdullah went near the well and threw a spear in it and there gushed out a stream of sweet and cold water. Seeing this miracle both the husband and wife embraced Islam. Later, Abdullah learnt the local languages and befriended with temple priest and defeated him in religious proclaims, thus, converted him to the Islamic faith. Through this priest he also converted the

<sup>53</sup> Fact of the matter, truth.

<sup>54</sup> Abu Ishaq Quhistani, *Haft Bab*, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, p.15.

<sup>56</sup> Bohras consider this book as an authentic history while, it is, in fact, a legendary account based more on religious devotion and imagination than facts.

minister Bharmal to Islamic faith. However, all of them kept this conversion to new faith a secret to avoid any punishment by the king of Pattan, Siddharaja JayaSingha. The *Da'i* Abdullah was now intended to convert the king and for the purpose, he showed many miracles. On being shown more miracles by missionary the king embraced the new faith.<sup>57</sup> According to Satish Misra<sup>58</sup> the King of Pattan Siddharaja JayaSingha (1094-1143) was very tolerant towards other faiths but himself never converted to any other religion. The JayaSingha who began his rule in 1094 seems to have been a very popular ruler who was tolerant towards other faiths. The *da'is* tried to convert both i.e. the rulers and ruled but they attained success in converting ruled by performing them miracles and giving them a spiritual solace. The ruled class might also converted in resistance to the social stigma of class hierarchy. As in Islam there is greater emphasis on equality and any such class hierarchy is missing. The middle classes like traders and lower like untouchables who had differences with feudal nobility, social class oppression systems and hierarchical notions were more inclined to adapt a practically hierarchical faith like *Isma'ilism*.<sup>59</sup> It was probably the reason that these *Arab* missionaries found most of the converts from the trading classes.

The word Bohra as stated by most of the writers on this subject is derived from a Gujarati language word *Vohrwu* or *Vyahwar* meaning to transact or to trade. Thus, the Bohras were Hindu traders from big or small urban areas before their conversion to *Isma'ili* faith. In the absence of the authentic records it is very difficult to establish how many local people from the Gujarat converted by *da'i* Abdullah and *da'i* Ahmad. However, the new converts continued increasing considerably for two and a half centuries, i.e. 1130-1380. This was the time when the

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<sup>57</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Bohras*, p.102.

<sup>58</sup> Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, p.8-9.

<sup>59</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Bohras*, p.105.

*Mastur* (hidden) *Imams* in Yemen sent their deputies to the towns and tracts of India where *Isma'ilis* were living, to collect *Zakat* and send it to the *Da'i* in Yemen. These deputies had also the freedom to preach *Isma'ili* faith more freely than their co-religionists in Persia, Syria and Yemen.<sup>60</sup>

Things began to change for Bohras in Gujarat with the invasion of Muzaffar Shah (1390-1413). With the advent of Muslim power in Gujarat, the sectarian differences were assumed importance as the Muzaffar Shah noticed the spread of *Isma'ilism* in Gujarat with great jealousy and envy. He, being a new Rajput Sunni convert, vigorously encouraged and imposed the Sunni doctrine and suppressed, persecuted and forcibly converted Bohras to Sunnis.

#### 1.4 Religious Beliefs and Practices

In Bohra religion, the *imam* who still lives concealed, through his descendants continues to be the most important figure. In fact, his place is taken by the *da'i-i-mutlaq* who is his representative. Succession of the *da'i* is dependent upon the *nass* that he receives as a revelation by the *Imam*.

The majority of Muslims in the world are Sunnis and Bohra faith has a lot of similarities in belief and practice with Sunnis. Bohras name the *Qur'an* as the first and most authentic and respected book. It is taught in schools and religious institutions. It is also recited in addresses and congregations. The only difference to Sunni belief in *Qur'an* is that Bohras believe the actual esoteric meanings of *Qur'an* are known to the *da'i* only. Secondly, *Sunnah* that is considered as a pathway to Sunnis is not considered by Bohras. Bohras follow the Fatimid pattern on it that

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<sup>60</sup> Mian Bhai Mullah Abdul Husain, *A short Note of Daudi Bohras*, (Surat: Progressive Publications, 1920), p.20.

somehow states it that it is not needed.<sup>61</sup> On the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) Bohras recognize him as the Head of all prophets. Nevertheless, the *da'i* claims that he has not the rank of Prophet but has the powers of the prophet. There is also a tradition that Allah is said to be connected with the *da'i* on the earth by a rope and all believers must through the help of the *da'i* cling the rope to gain salvation.<sup>62</sup>

*Isma'ili* Bohras also have more pillars of Islam than those of Sunnis. *Shahadah* is considered a foundation base, upon which the pillars are built. Those Pillars are

1. *Walaya*
2. *Taharah*
3. *Salat*
4. *Zakat*
5. *Sawm*
6. *Hajj*
7. *Jihad*

*Walaya* is affection for the Prophet's relations. It is the first pillar that is actually based upon the *kalmia*.<sup>63</sup> The *kalima* is "La'ilaha illa Allah Muhammad-ur-Rasul-ullah 'Ali'un Wali'ullah Wa'wasi-ur-Rassul-ullah".<sup>64</sup> Second is *Taharah*. Unlike Sunnis the Bohras believe that the *da'i-i-mutlaq* has the power to designate the style and form of prayer or ablution but Bohra ablution is same like Sunnis.<sup>65</sup> The third pillar is the *salat*, meaning prayer. The call to prayer used by the Bohras follows the *Shi'ite* pattern. Bohras have their own mosques for prayers. Their mosques

<sup>61</sup> John Norman Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.284.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.285.

<sup>63</sup> A declaration or a profession of faith.

<sup>64</sup> There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet 'Ali is friend of Allah and the *wasi* of the prophet.

<sup>65</sup> John Norman Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.286.

have no *minbar*, the *mullah* uses a platform on wheels on the occasions when needed. Unlike Sunnis' prayers, that is offered five times a day, Bohras pray three times a day: in the morning *fajr*, in afternoon they combine two prayers, *zuhr* and '*asr*. After *zuhr* prayer they stop for a while, walk around and then offer '*asr* prayer. In the same way they combine the *maghrib* and the *ishaa* prayers. After prayers they repeat the names of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), 'Ali and Fatima, and twenty one *Imams*, asking each to assist and bless them. They offer the prayers with their hands at their sides like *Shi'as* do. They also wear particular garments for prayer called *Nimazi libas*. Bohras do not have any special prayer on Fridays, neither do they have any *khutbah* or address except on some specific occasions. They have a prayer book in Gujarati vocabulary with Arabic script namely, *Shifat al salat*.<sup>66</sup>

The next pillar is the *zakat*. *Zakat* is a fixed charity amount on those Muslims who possess the *nisab* for it. In Bohras none of the community member is permitted to forget it. A Bohra follower on the time of *mithaq* subscribes by saying *Na'am*<sup>67</sup> to the following:

All the properties moveable and immoveable, wealth, capital, jewels, cattle, goods or whatever he has earned from this world are all alms for the poor Muslims, which can be regained by any contrivance. Whatever he will earn in rest of his life is forbidden to him but by the fulfillment of the covenant which has been taken by him. He again says *Na'am*.<sup>68</sup> Bohras have seven types of *zakat* on them; *zakat al salat*, *zakat al fitr*, *Haqq al nafs*, *Nikah dues*, *salami sayyidena*, *zakat al da'wat* and *Nazarah Muqam*. *Zakat al salat* and *zakat ul fitr* are annual taxes on every member. Every man, woman, child and even embryos in the womb are counted for this purpose. These two taxes are collected through *amilsaheb* during the month of *Ramadan*. *Haqq al nafs* is a tax

<sup>66</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.286.

<sup>67</sup> Arabic word for admitting something or saying yes.

<sup>68</sup> Abdulaziz AbdulHussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p.92.



on the evolution of the soul of the deceased. It is Rs.119 or multiples of this amounts collected from the relatives of the deceased. The poor members of the community pay nothing while the wealthy pay heavily.

*Nikah* dues are a marriage fee of Rs.11. But the rich pay more. For second and third wives the fee is much larger. *Salami Sayyidena* is cash offering to the *da'i-i-mutlaq*. These offerings are usually on very large scales and are sent through *amilsahebs* when *da'i-i-mutlaq* is on tour. On the ceremonial occasions like his birthday these offerings are presented in person.<sup>69</sup>

*Zakat al da'wat* is the the offerings of the community members for the smooth running and maintaining the *da'wat*. It has three forms. First is an income tax, which falls on the merchants only and is not collected by the employees of the government or private servants. It represents 2.5 percent of annual income. The trusted assistants of *da'i-i-mutlaq* who often are relatives called *sahib al da'wat* collect this and enter the facts into their register. Only the most dogmatic religionists show their correct income. Bohras not liable to this assessment may make an offering under the *salami sayyidena* to these collectors. Second is *Khumus*. Among Bohras, this is the one fifth of the expected income. It also implies on inherited property, so much so that if a Bohra has five sons, he gives one to the *da'i* for training, or redeem him. Third is *kafarat*. These are the cash payments in lieu of the fasts or prayers by the person who either missed them or cannot take out time for them. The *kafarat* are intended for distribution to the poor. *Nazarah Muqam* is an offering given in fulfillment of vows to the hidden *Imam*. These offerings are also sent to *da'i* through *amilsaheb*.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Abdulaziz AbdulHussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p.95.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96

In Bohras, other than *Zakat*, there are also other special demands for donations for the erection of institutions, costs of communal litigation and for the support of *mullas* and *mashaikh*. The *da'i* also receives a considerable amount through the fines imposed on the community members on the offences like non attendance at daily prayers and others.<sup>71</sup>

The fifth pillar of Bohra faith is *sawm*. *Sawm* or fasting is observed all the thirty days of the month of Ramadan. The seventeenth, nineteenth and twenty first nights are especially considered sacred and are observed carefully. The twenty seventh night of Ramadan is associated with daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) Fatima and Bohras stay awake all night. The first and last Thursdays and middle Wednesday of every month are also days of fasting. 32<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Qutb ud din (1646-48) followed lunar year there as +354 days, where, the odd numbered months have 30 days and the even numbered months have 29 days, except in a leap year when the 12<sup>th</sup> and final month has 30 days. Bohras follow the same astronomical calendar that is why they commence their fast a day or two before than Sunnis and so is the *Eid ul fitr* and *Eid ul Adha*. Bohras have always a 30 days month of Ramadan.<sup>72</sup>

The sixth pillar is *Hajj* meaning a pilgrimage to Mecca. It is an obligation on Bohras to accept the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, Bohras arrive at Mecca a day or two before than other pilgrims following their calendar and largely perform their rituals apart. Other than Mecca, Bohras also make a pilgrimage to Karbala. A smaller number amongst them also make a pilgrimage to Najaf, Cairo and Jerusalem. Unlike Fatimids, Bohras have developed a custom of visiting shrines. The shrines and graves of *da'is* and other saints in India are visited commonly. The most visited tombs by Bohra community members are in Ahmedabad, Surat, Jamnagar,

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>72</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.289.

Ujjan and Burhanpur. At all these places free accommodation is provided to Bohras for as long as they want to stay there. The Bohra community considers vows to *T'azias* and *Tabuts* at Muharram as idolatrous like they do have faith in vows made at the graves of saints.

The seventh pillar *Jihad* requires Bohras to fight with all their wealth and bodies and lives, whenever the *Imam* or *da'i-i-mutlaq* may require it.<sup>73</sup>

### 1.5 Bohra Institutions

The Bohras have a strong tradition of religious learning facilitated by various institutional, communal, and individual structures, with roots in an earlier semi formal academy in Yemen, and further back, in the Fatimid teaching assemblies. Bohras from Yemen and India would travel to the *da'i* in Yemen, and stay with him for extended periods of time, studying with intellectuals who lived with him, and also learning with the *da'i* personally. Bohras' major contemporary institution of religious education is the religious seminary located in Surat, with branches in Karachi and Nairobi. Founded in the seventeenth century in Jamnagar by *Sayyidna Isma'il Badr al-din* (1657-74), and consolidated in the early nineteenth century in Surat by *Sayyidna Abd-i-Alī Saif-ud-din*, it was expanded and systematized in the twentieth century by Tahir Saifuddin (1915-65).

Additionally, children are taught in increasingly standardized after-school classes called *madaris* and in classes within their regular school curriculum for those who attend one of the many Bohra secular schools. Religious learning is disseminated to the full community adults and children through regular classes called *sabaq* and periodic lectures.<sup>74</sup>

A century after its initial institutionalization, *i.e.* 20<sup>th</sup> century the legacy and task of

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.290.

<sup>74</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1984) p.27.

imparting knowledge and preparing the community was entrusted to the 51<sup>st</sup> *da'i* Taher Saifuddin. His era was that of World Wars, colonial independence, movements of freedom and pan-Islamic caliphates and unheard of scientific discovery. Recognizing the nature and magnitude of social change in his time he adjusted *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah's* teaching system in order to produce graduates that could thrive in the complex and changing world that now surrounded them.

In 1961, the 51<sup>st</sup> *Da'-i-mullaq* Taher Saifuddin constructed a new campus of *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* in Surat. The educational re-orientation and new campus heralded a fresh chapter in the history of the academy.

Reflecting current realities, beneficial educational practices and subjects were welcomed through the inclusion of courses in English, sciences and humanities. Preserving the old and enduring whilst incorporating the new and beneficial subjects brought immediate and long term results, as *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* mutually imparted spiritual and temporal education.<sup>75</sup>

It was appropriate that this transformation of *Dars-i-saify* be commemorated with a modification to its name, *Jami'ah*, the Arabic word for university, reflects the university level education brought to the institution and *Saifiyah* pays tribute to the efforts of both the *Da'is*, the inventive founder Abdeali Saifuddin and Taher Saifuddin. What was previously *Dars-i-saify* now became *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah*.

The 52<sup>nd</sup> *da'i-i-mullaq* Muhammed Burhanuddin continued the development initiated by his predecessor. He widened the dimensions of teaching and learning and provided the campus with the latest technology to facilitate it.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.57.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58

In 1976 *Muhammad* Burhanuddin established an institute for the study of *Qur'anic* arts and sciences known as *Mahad al-zahra*. He then endowed *Mahad al-zahra* with a state of the art language laboratory that was used for language improvement as well as for enhancing the quality of *Qur'anic* recitation and *Qur'anic* education.

In 1983, a new campus of *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* was established in Karachi by the then *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin which mirrored the academic and structural components of its sister academy in Surat. During this period, a complete renovation and refurbishment process was also undertaken for *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* at Surat.

In 2012, on the occasion of his 100th birthday celebration of *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin established a third campus of this historic institute in Nairobi, Kenya. The educational movement that traced its heritage to the Fatimid *Imams* of North Africa and Egypt returned to the continent from whence it came.

With the passing of almost one thousand years since the seclusion of the *Imam Ja'far sadiq* and *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin reaching of one hundred years, thousands and hundreds had united indicating the exponential blessings that in his tenure as *Da'i-i-mutlaq* the community had seen.<sup>77</sup>

Further indicative of his bountiful era, at the onset of his Golden Jubilee year, *Muhammad* Burhanuddin's successor, 53<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Mufaddal Saifuddin announced on his behalf during the discourse he delivered on the occasion of Syedna Taher Saifuddin's death anniversary that yet another campus of *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* would be constructed in the suburbs of the Mumbai, India.<sup>78</sup>

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, the 53<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* is the benefactor of *Aljamea-tus-*

<sup>77</sup> Shaikh Mustafa Abdulhussein, *Al-Dai al-Fatimi, Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin: A Biographical Sketch in Pictures*. (London: Al-Jamiya-tus-Safiya Press, 2000) p.22.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

*saifiyah* today. As, his father *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Saifuddin consistently emphasized the importance of character and moral development alongside education and learning. He emphasized that the study of Fatimid texts and secular subjects in *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* should result in a student that is modest and humble yet confident in assisting the continuation of Fatimid thought and culture in today's world.<sup>79</sup> He or she should be able to embrace traditional education and contextualize it with modernity rather than sacrificing its principles and ideals at the altar of notions of progress. *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Saifuddin repeatedly mentioned the students of *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* in his discourses and sermons indicating his deep affection for the academy and its children.

Though the Fatimid educational movement, which has come to be embodied in *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* spans over a thousand years, it is still vibrant today due to the vitality of its philosophy and its assimilation of past wisdom along with contemporary knowledge.

Locations have varied and circumstances continuously change, but the firm resolve to disseminate knowledge and enlighten the intellect in Bohra Community has remained and continues to remain unshaken. Currently, under the guidance of 53<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i* Mufaddal Saifuddin, it is with this resolve that *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* positively looks towards the future.

*Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* is the principal educational institute of the Bohra community. Its sole benefactor, the 53<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Mufaddal Saifuddin, oversees and guides it in all its endeavors. The academy has been functioning from its present campus in Surat, India for over two centuries, with a sister campus inaugurated at Karachi, Pakistan in 1983, a third campus was established in Nairobi in 2011. The purpose is to provide young Bohra men and women with an education based on the principles of Fatimid philosophy. This philosophy encompasses tenets that have proven themselves over the centuries and also utilizes and incorporates

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

advances in and understanding of contemporary modern education. The eleven year educational program covers higher secondary, undergraduate, graduate and post graduate education. Although, students specialize in select disciplines, however, philosophy mandates that they acquire and appreciate a holistic view of different branches of knowledge. In this respect, students are exposed to a range of subjects within the empirical sciences, social sciences and the humanities, as well as select modern languages.

For Bohra community, education is more than academics per se. It is a quest for excellence in all aspects of personality, imbibing morality as well as intellectualism. Furthermore, the execution of the academy's undertaking involves constant application of what is learnt, thereby bridging theory and practice.

Due to this philosophy, the Bohra academic institution *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* is at once, ancient yet modern, focused yet holistic in its outlook. It is this applied Fatimid educational philosophy that gives it a distinction.

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# Chapter II

## Organizational Structure of the Bohra Community



## 2.1 Composition Structure of Bohra Community

The success of any community mainly depends entirely on the guidance the members receive from the head of that community. Secondly, the organizational structural of the community holds a key to keep that success. The first head of Bohra community in India was appointed by the *Imam* at Yemen to carry out the *da'wat*. Later, when the Bohra community flourished in India the seat of *Isma'is* was shifted to India and *da'i* acquired the significant status, which regulated the entire community. The Bohra community looked upon the *da'i* as their mentor, guide and spiritual head who would uplift them.<sup>80</sup> The *da'i* or the spiritual head is merely not to guide them for religious activities and take the oath of allegiance from followers but he also has to possess a lot of diplomacy and common sense to keep the ruling powers appeased and protect his followers. In this regard, he inculcates and maintains a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment amongst the community members. In this way the Bohra community members don't have to look out of their society for spiritual, material or economic happiness. This is the major reason of the Bohra community's strength and prosperity.

The major secret of prosperity and persistence of the Bohra community in Pakistan has been their able leadership, which had provided its followers a smooth life amidst the troubled situation of Pakistan's socio-economic and political history. Surprisingly, very little or no change has really taken place in the structural aspect of *da'wat* or Bohra leadership, which remains as follows from the day of its inception in India.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.16.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

## 2.2 Bohra *Da'wat* Hierarchy

### *Da'i-i-mutlaq*

*Da'i-i-mutlaq* is the head and chief of the spiritual and temporal world of Bohras. He is also the sole owner of community property.

*Mansus/ Wali 'Ahad* is the crown prince of the *da'i*.

*Mazun* is the Prime Minister of the community. In absence of the *da'i* he becomes the acting head.

*Makasar* is the chief of army or minister of war. In recent times, since the 52<sup>nd</sup> *da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin emphasized on the economical and educational fortification of the community and there's no wartime, thus, there is no *Makasar*.

*Rasul Hadut* is the grand mufti or an Islamic lawyer who is the legal authority to give a decision or decree (*fatwa*) in answer to an enquiry.

*Mafsub* is the chief *mulla* who besides leading the religious ceremonies is responsible for maintaining peace and justice and collection of fees and donations.

*Shaikh saheb* or *miasaheb* is responsible for religious education and leads the prayers.

*Mulla saheb* is a degree holder of religious knowledge and is allowed to lead the prayers or assist *sheikh saheb* and is given a monthly honorarium from the *da'wat* fund.<sup>82</sup>

*Seth Saheb* is the title bestowed by the *da'i-i-mutlaq* to those who are rich and distinguished. With this title these are allowed to occupy the left hand side seat beside the *da'i-i-mutlaq*. *Bhaisaheb* is the title for men folk of the *da'i* family while womenfolk are called *Aisahiba*.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.207.

<sup>83</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.21.

### ***Da'wati Fund***

In order to support all above mentioned positions, for the management and smooth functioning of the *da'wat* and to lead the community in an effective manner, an organizational hierarchical structure is framed. That is as follows

*Da'i-i-mutlaq*

*Wazir*

*Naib wazir*

*Qatgul Sarah*

*Wazir-i-talim*

*Wazir-i-siyasat*

*Naazrul Amal*

*Naib Nāazrūl Amāl*

*Wali/Saheb-i-'ilaqa*

*Naib 'ilaqa-i-dar*

*Diwan-i-Amil*

*Naib Amil*

*Naqib-i-darbar*

The fund is collected through different sources like *zakat*, fines, *Salami* and personal offerings to *da'i* and *bhaisaheb*.<sup>84</sup> This fund is then dispersed through the above-mentioned hierarchy to finance the *da'wat* and keep the community together. This fund also finances the primary schools, scholarships for poor Bohras and feasts on the occasions of '*urs*'.

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<sup>84</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.20.

### 2.3 Language, Literature and learning

The language used by the *da'wat* administration and spoken by the *da'i* and the majority of the Bohras worldwide is called *lisan-i-da'wat* or *da'wat ni zaban* meaning the language of the *da'wat*. Mainly based on Indian Gujarati language, a Neo-Indo-Aryan language, it incorporates a large number of Persian words and a hefty and progressively increasing Arabic lexicon. The Bohra dialect of Gujarati is written both in the *Devanagari* script, and often in the Arabic *naskh* script. The earliest Bohras were Indian, and they spoke Gujarati language. Over a period of time, with the continuous effort of the leadership to promote *Qur'anic* and Islamic learning within the community, the language of these texts has been percolated with Arabic words replacing part of the Gujarati lexicon.<sup>85</sup>

As per the Fatimid Philosophy of education, Allah is the source of all knowledge and this knowledge is bestowed upon humankind through the auspices of divine revelation in conjunction with His prophets. In light of this fundamental Islamic belief, the Fatimid philosophy of education endorses and promotes any knowledge that enhances one's understanding of the Allah, His revelation, creation and enables His servitude. Such knowledge is inherently Fatimid in its nature, irrespective of whichever field of study it may be classified in today. This philosophy is also crystallized in *Imam Ahmed al Taqi's* following enjoinder;

"It befits our brethren, may Allah Ta'ala give them strength, to not hate a single field of knowledge among all knowledge, shun a particular book among books, or bear prejudice towards a certain faith from among the faiths of the world. Indeed, our philosophy and our faith engulf all faiths and encompass all knowledge."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.300.

<sup>86</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 117.

As early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Fatimid *Da'i*, Ahmed Hamiduddin al-Kirmani stated that understanding the Physical and Natural World constituted an essential aspect of worship. Thus, in essence, there is no incompatibility between the principles of Fatimid education and most modern disciplines of knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

Fatimid philosophy necessitates an integration of the temporal and spiritual aspects of human life. An education guided by this philosophy is not only temporally relevant and beneficial but also spiritually fulfilling and socially responsible. Any education devoid of spirituality and bereft of moral teachings is inherently lacking. For this reason, education founded upon Fatimid philosophy comprises of the endeavour for academic excellence, meaningful practice and refinement of character and development of moral virtue. The attainment of these values results in *Takaamul Shaksi i.e. A Well-rounded Personality*.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.4 Bohra Customs and Rituals

### Laws and Customs

The principal and primary source to the laws and customs of *Isma'ili Musta'li* Bohra faith is Qadi Numan's book namely *Da'aim al islam*. This is applicable to all the Bohras as a basic *fiqh*. This *da'aim* was first presented to Indian readers in an abridged form in both Urdu and Arabic under the title *Sharh al masa'il* by 46<sup>th</sup> *da'i* of the *sulaimanis*, Haji Ghulam Husain. Bohras law agrees with the Sunni law in rejecting *mut'a* marriage as invalid. While in Twelvers, it is permissible.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard, *Origins of Isma'ilism*, p.39.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

## Birth and Infancy

Bohra Community has its specific rituals regarding birth of a child. Beginning it with the selection of the name, it is the responsibility of the sister in law to find a suitable name. In many cases the child's name is not selected by relatives, but by the *da'i-i-mutlaq*. The very first words that a new born at Bohra family hears are those of the *adhan* chanted into his or her ears. In all the matters, relating to the health of mother and newborn, Bohras avail every modern medical tool, drug, and practice. The newborn is also fed with a tiny pinch of *Khak-i-shifa* for five days. On the sixth day, the *chatti*<sup>89</sup> ceremony is held at home, for close relatives. This is the time when sister in law announces the name she has asked from *da'i-i-mutlaq* or *amilsaheb*.<sup>90</sup>

After the naming ceremony, next major ceremony of childhood is '*aqiqah*. It can be held on the seventh, fourteenth, or twenty first day after birth. It usually is a large public gathering. All of the baby's hair is shaved off, weighed, and buried in the ground. Later, the family will give away an amount equivalent to the hair weight's silver to a poor person or family. Most of the Bohra families try to assure that the first word spoken out of their child's mouth should be Allah. The first *salam-i-sayyidena* by the baby in person is given an importance and is considered a good omen.<sup>91</sup>

Bohras also celebrate birthdays. The parents or elders of the family celebrate it with circling their heads with a *Thaal*<sup>92</sup> containing sweets, coconuts and gifts. This is a custom taken from the Hindu ancestors. The sweets represent the hope of sweetness in life, while the coconuts are a symbolic demonstration of fertility, and prosperity.

<sup>89</sup> The naming ceremony of a new born on the sixth day. Originally from the Gujarati culture but now its observed by Bohras as a ritual all over the world.

<sup>90</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.63.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>92</sup> A big size plate

*Mithaq*<sup>93</sup>

The central and most important ritual for Bohras is *Mithaq*. The *Mithaq* ceremony is held on attaining the age of puberty. In this ceremony, a Bohra owes to Allah, takes an oath of allegiance to *da'i-i-mutlaq* and promises to accept his spiritual guidance without any reservation and wholeheartedly. After *Mithaq*, a Bohra is considered an adult with all the rights and responsibilities equal to any other mature member of the community. Every year, on the eighteenth day of the month of *Zil Hajj*, every Bohra congregation renews its *Mithaq* by vowing it together.<sup>94</sup>

### **Bohra Marriage**

According to *da'wat*, it is obligatory for a Bohra to lead a happy and comfortable life within the limits of *iman*. His acts and deeds should comply with the commands of *iman* and Islam. As a reference to it, the translation of a *Qur'anic* verse is quoted by Bohra community that states, 'Allah has created your wives from amongst your kinds, so that you can derive satisfaction and He has generated love and affection between the two of you'.<sup>95</sup> Without marriage one will not be able to attain refined feelings and derive satisfaction of life. In Bohra theology the marriage enables one to attain piety, protection and sustenance. The *Shari'ah* contains certain commands regarding marriage like, no *nikah* is justified without *wali* and at least two witnesses. Therefore, in a rightful *nikah* a *wali* and two unprejudiced witnesses are needed. There are also other certain conditions, without which *nikah* cannot be solemnized. That includes the willingness of the bridegroom and bride, *khutbah* i.e. sermon of *Nikah* to be pronounced by the *Raza Saheb*, two persons as witnesses for the person duly authorized by the bride for her

<sup>93</sup> *Mithaq* is an obligation on every Bohra upon reaching the age of puberty.

<sup>94</sup> Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis*, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> (30:21)

representation as *wali*, and the designation of *meher* to the bride is obligatory to be executed. The *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Taher Saifuddin<sup>96</sup> established *Rasm-i-Saify*<sup>97</sup> and *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin<sup>98</sup> continued the same, according to which if a *mumin* enters into *nikah*, his existence is blessed with peace and prosperity. A *mumin* must ensure that he does not indulge in extravagance and overspending. He has to spend according to his means of income. It is desirable to invite people for *walimah* and demonstrate his jubilation. This was one of the reasons to initiate *Rasm-i-Saify* and this multiplied the happiness and joy.<sup>99</sup>

### Marriage Proposal

Every *da'i-i-mutlaq* has always directed his followers, that it is appropriate for a *mumin* to marry off his daughter, as soon as she attains apt age for it. One must not delay and his craving should not be for a groom having a car or a bungalow, but he should look for the essence of *iman* in him. As per Bohra traditions, if a proposal is received one asks for the *Reza* of *bhaiSaheb* about the intended proposal and accepts it. However, following are the guidelines to be followed while sending a proposal.<sup>100</sup>

- A group of about seven persons should visit the girl's place of residence.
- If the proposal evokes 'yes' as a formal answer, sweets should be served to all along with a small gift.
- If possible the engagement may be formalized on the *mubarak* hands of *da'i-i-mutlaq*.

<sup>96</sup> Was 51<sup>st</sup> *da'i-i-mutlaq* of Bohra community who held the term from 1915-1965.

<sup>97</sup> The ceremony initiated by Bohra *Da'i-i-mutlaq* to commence mass weddings.

<sup>98</sup> 52<sup>nd</sup> *da'i-i-mutlaq*

<sup>99</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.60.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61



- At the time of engagement, a ring, silver medallion, two handkerchiefs and *misri*, placed in a dish, should be presented to the proposed bride.<sup>101</sup>

### Custom of promoting the reciprocal visits

For the first time, when the proposed bride is called, she should be invited with her friends. The bride's mother accompanied by her few other female friends, should hold a celebration to the occasion as *vevan*. When the mother of the bride enters, she should be welcomed with *nisar*.<sup>102</sup> The mother in law should present groom with sweets and few other gifts as *Akhiana*<sup>103</sup> or salutation. The bride should be made to sit on a flower bejeweled pillow or small stage. The mother of the groom should present her counterpart with a small gift. A pair of apparels along with ornaments and other gifts should be given to the proposed bride. The groom should be invited along with friends. The groom's mother should take some sweets with her as *akhiana*. If possible they may be invited for *jaman*<sup>104</sup>. The son in law may be presented with sweets along with *kurta* buttons or *saya kurta* material or any other appropriate gifts by his mother in law.

### Festivals

On the New Year's eve i.e. first night of *Muharram al-Haram*, *Milad Mubarak* of *Da'i*, *Me'raj*, the 15<sup>th</sup> night of month of *Sha'ban*, *Eid-ul-Fitr*, *Eid-ul-Adha* and on the birthday of the groom, the bride's family should present sweets and other gifts to the groom. The bride should also do *salam* to her would be mother in law. The groom's family should send *iftar* in Ramadan, *mushif*, other *Du'a Kitaabs*, a pair of *namazi jodi*, *Tasbih*, *Khak-i-Shifa*, a photograph of *da'i-i-*

<sup>101</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.62.

<sup>102</sup> A present consists of a dish containing rose petals, dry fruits, chocolates and coins.

<sup>103</sup> A traditional gift to be presented to groom as a gesture of best wishes.

<sup>104</sup> A feast on the occasion of happiness with the sweets as a compulsory ingredient.

*mutlaq* and few other appropriate gifts arranged in a *thaal* to the bride's family. The bride's family may reciprocate in a similar manner. However, all this is subject to affordability of both the families.<sup>105</sup>

### **Solemnization of *Nikah***

It is very important for the relatives of the bride, that they have the knowledge and are well aware of the guardians of the bride, so that they may be availed of as and when required. The guardians for *nikah* should be from her paternal side or her father's offspring. Their line of order is as follows:

1. Paternal grandfather of the bride.
2. Father of the bride.
3. In case of second marriage Bride's son or *grandson* having attained *mithaq*.<sup>106</sup>
4. Bride's real brother.
5. Son of the Bride's real brother.
6. Step brother of the bride, born to bride's father's earlier marriage.
7. Step son of the brother of bride, born to bride's brother earlier marriage.
8. Bride's paternal uncle.
9. Son of paternal uncle *i.e.* cousin.
10. Paternal uncle of the bride from the bride's grandfather's earlier marriage.
11. Sons of paternal uncle born to bride's grandfather's earlier marriage.

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<sup>105</sup> Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*, p.63.

<sup>106</sup> In case of second marriage a word of agreement by the son or grandson of the bride, to be undertaken in front of *bhaisaheb*.

Four male members from the groom's family should proceed to invite the relatives of the bride who should present them *Itar* or any other gift.

The groom should wear a *pagri* or *feta* which is usually worn by Bohra men. It should be topped with a decorative feather stick called *Sar Pech*. The groom should wear a *Kurta* and *Saya*, and he should adorn himself with a *takhti* and pearl necklace or flower garland, a *Dushalah*<sup>107</sup> to cover his left hand. The right arm is to be tied with a *Bazo bandh*.<sup>108</sup> The bride may wear nice apparel, preferably of red colour, apply henna and embellish herself with gold ornaments. At the time of *nikah*, she should be offered *misri* and she should recite *Qur'an*, in particular, Surah al-Fateha. If she has constraints, she should recite *Du'a-i-Saify*, or do *Tasbih* of *Salawaat*. Preferably, she should be facing the *Qibla* while sitting at the time of *nikah*. After *nikah* the groom should be adorned with *Sehra*.

After *nikah*, the amount of *meher* should be given to the *wali* of the bride. Two persons should go with the *Toran*<sup>109</sup> to the place where the bride is sitting and present it to her, and the bride's family should reciprocate with gifts to these two persons. When the groom ritually offers *salam* to his mother-in-law, she should reciprocate it by offering him rich gifts. When the bride ceremonially performs *salam* to her mother-in-law, she should carry a red kerchief with its one corner wrapped and tied with a silver coin in it, one coconut and a certain amount of *salam*.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> An unstitched piece of cotton with embroidered *zari* cloth interwoven with velvet.

<sup>108</sup> A round strip of velvet cloth of maroon colour inscribed with names of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his daughter Fatima, Her husband Ali, and their sons Hassan and Hussain.

<sup>109</sup> The literally meaning of *Toran* is an embroidered door hanging cloth similar to a curtain or a cover. But In Bohra weddings it means the gift along with the dowry amount, *misri*, coconut, beetle leaves, seven full pieces of betel nut flower garland, rich garments and gold ornaments.

<sup>110</sup> Salam here means money presented as a goodwill gesture to the newly wed bride or groom.

After the *nikah* and all above-mentioned rituals are performed the groom's family arranges a *nikah* reception.<sup>111</sup>

After seeking *raza* of the auspicious time from *amilsaheb* or *rezasaheb*, the ceremony of *mandvo* is performed. Interestingly, *mandvo* is a pre-marriage ceremony that is performed by Hindus as well. This similarity shows that Bohra culture, over the time period, has taken in rituals and culture from other religions and geographical traditions of that vicinity.

### **Mandvo**

In the ceremony of *mandvo*, coconut, *Falul* should be placed in a red cloth, and the ends should be wrapped in a betel nut, and all the four corners should be tied with red and yellow strings by a girl who has not attained *Mithaq*.<sup>112</sup> The *mandva* should be lifted up and drawn and tied above the entrance of the house, and will stay there till the wedding is over.

Both parties to the *vevan*<sup>113</sup> should equally invite each other with respect and exchange appropriate gifts. The relatives should be given gifts or *misri* with the invitation.

### **Katha Ceremony**<sup>114</sup>

One should seek *raza* of *amilsaheb* or *razasaheb* for the auspicious time for bringing in *katha*, which has to be bought in red handkerchief, and it comprises of two coconuts, *katho*, betel nut, cardamom, turmeric, *kapoor kachli*<sup>115</sup>, *chital chini*, red and yellow strings and jasmine oil. The *katha* ceremony is to be performed separately for the bride and groom. Maternal and

<sup>111</sup> Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, p.78.

<sup>112</sup> *Falul* means chopped pieces of dry fruits.

<sup>113</sup> Marriage.

<sup>114</sup> *Katha* is extract of acacia trees. Used as food additives, widely known as *catchehu*.

<sup>115</sup> Spiked ginger lily.

paternal aunts should sit facing each other. The *katha* ingredients are divided into four equal parts and placed in the *Musli* and crushed. The four relatives should be given appropriate gifts. The *katha* should finally be disposed off in mud or water.

The maternal uncle accompanied preferably by a music band and merriment attends the venue, with apparels and jewelry. The uncle dresses the groom, and presents him with buttons and flower garland, and ties *safa* on groom's head, and helps him with the shoes, and leads him down the stage holding his hands. Likewise, the maternal aunt helps bride dressing up with *lengha* and *orhni*, and then her uncle or her brother, leads her down the stage. Then, four relatives, symbolically place *mehndi* sticks on the right palms of both groom and bride. Similarly, during the event of *Sehra* of small children in the family, the groom's uncle performs the *Mosalu* ceremony. The groom side invites guests for reception termed as *Dubala*. The bride's family presents the groom's family with a utensil containing milk and whole sugar in the morning.<sup>116</sup>

### Procession

One can organize a procession on the day of *walimah*. The groom wears a *sehra* and the relatives of the bride make a formal call on the groom. In the procession the groom is made to mount a horse, likewise, the children whose *Khatnah*<sup>117</sup> has been performed also wear a *sehra* and mount a horse. Young girls of the family travel in a *Buggy*, accompanied by a musical band, the procession pass through the area. To add luster, the leaders and men of importance in the community along with family elders also walk along in the procession. When the groom reaches his in laws' house, the father-in-law welcomes him with *pan* and *sherbet*. Finally, the father-in-

<sup>116</sup> This milk and sugar serving is called *Sherbat*.

<sup>117</sup> Circumcision

law offers his hand to help groom dismount the horse, leading him to the stage where the groom is seated and offered congratulations. The guests are served with pan and sherbet. The bride's family sends their daughter to her husband's home on the day of their wedding reception. The groom's family is invited as *vevan*<sup>118</sup> and is presented with gifts. In return the mother-in-law welcomes and offers the bride *pannu*.<sup>119</sup>

When the bride reaches at her husband's home, the mother-in-law makes the bride along with bride's elder sister or her father's sister to sit on a raised stool, covered with a red cloth along, facing the *Qiblah*. Sweets or chocolates are placed on all the four corners of this red cloth. From the basket, coconuts, garlands and garments are then taken and placed in the hands of the bride. The best maid accompanying bride is also given a coconut and a gift. The bride is made to wear the garland and necklace and her maid is also garlanded. The mother-in-law plucks some petals from the bride's garland, and shower over the bride three times as *nisar*.<sup>120</sup> Thereafter, the womenfolk of the bride and the groom's family repeat the same. The mother-in-law then performs the custom of taking *balaa*.<sup>121</sup> After that, the bride stands on the same stool with the help of her mother-in-law and gets dressed with a *rida* and takes three bites of sweets. The bride's maternal uncle or brother should help her to step down from the stool. The bride then offers a farewell *salam* to her parents and relatives and is escorted by her best maid to the bridal room along with those who may have been invited. At the time of first formal look of the bride's face, the groom presents her with a ring or any other gift.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, Bohra customs are up

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<sup>118</sup> Honoured guests.

<sup>119</sup> A decorative basket in which there are two coconuts, two flower garlands, a small quantity of rice as a good omen, betel nut, one set of rich clothing, a necklace, sweets and a gift for the bride's best maid.

<sup>120</sup> Anything that is given away for a person to respect or to show one's love and respect towards him or her.

<sup>121</sup> Hurdles, obstacles and sorrows.

<sup>122</sup> Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, p.80.

to such minute details and all the Bohra community members not only adhere to these rituals but practice them at every occasion and ceremony as well.

After the wedding, the bride's mother should send some rich silver gift to bride's parents. Before the bride goes to her mother's house, the mother-in-law should see her off, by presenting bride with a pair of garments, ornaments and sweets. If possible, the groom's family should invite guests for *walimah jaman* on this day if possible.

### **Commands for copulation**

The Bohras believe that *Shari'ah* has guided man in every aspect of life. In the same manner, they accept as true that the relationship between a man and woman must also be maintained within the boundaries of *Din*, so as to derive complete satisfaction and bliss in this life and the hereafter. There are specific guidelines for newly-wed Bohra men and women to follow in copulation, so that they could understand and follow the code of conduct devised by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to the very detail.

- At the time of ejaculation, one should say *Bismillahi-al-Rahman-al-Rahim*, so that to a mumin a *mumin* child is born.
- Mating facing the *Qiblah* is not preferable.
- One should not talk during copulation.
- The copulation should be in absolute privacy and they should never copulate, if they are being watched by anyone, to an extent, that even a child in cradle may likely be watching them.
- One should not eat or drink immediately after mating, but only after performing *ghusl*.

- The *ghusl-i-janabat* is compulsory for both the husband and wife.

#### **Copulation should be avoided during these times**

- From the wee hours of morning till sunrise *i.e. Fajr*.
- From sunset to the disappearance of twilight *i.e. Maghrib*.
- During the night of lunar and day of solar eclipse.
- During the night and day when earthquake has stricken.
- During the night and day when storm and cyclones strike.

On 1<sup>st</sup> night of the month of Rajab, 15<sup>th</sup> night of the month of *Sha 'ban*, night of *Eid-ul-fitr* and *Eid-ul-Adha* a *mumin* should engross himself in *namaz* and *zikr* of Allah.

#### **Customs to be avoided in a Marriage**

- *Pithi* *i.e.* turmeric liquid should not be applied on the body.
- The husband should not lift his bride and make her untie the *toran*.
- Respect and reverence should be shown to *Jaman* and *thaal*. Especially friends of both bride and groom should not indulge in things that are not appropriate and contrary to manners of *Din*, and by which sentiments and happiness are affected.
- As per Allah's command in *Qur'an*, the *Jaman* should be savoury and scrumptious, but extravagance and wastage should be avoided.<sup>123</sup>

These are the customs and traditions of a Bohra wedding that are thought to be auspicious and signs of good omen. The Bohra *Da'is* have adopted these customs and approved of them for the

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<sup>123</sup> (7:31)



reason that they do not contradict to the codes and laws of *Shari'ah* and fall within its boundaries. These customs and rituals multiply ones joy and happiness. As announcing a marriage was also preferred by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). However, 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin emphasized that no practice should be thought or considered as compulsory and must be followed according to the availability of resources and ones convenience. There are certain codes pertaining the *Shari'ah* that must be followed by any means to ensure a rightful matrimony, which is inevitable, such as the laws of *nikah*. Therefore, it is necessary to seek the *raza* and benevolence of *amilsaheb* and *rezasaheb* for every aspect and occasion of the wedding.<sup>124</sup>

#### **Bohra rituals on death**

The Bohra Community has differences with the general Islamic customs. Islam promotes the ideology that death is a departure from the life of this world, to the world of infinity, and every Muslim should pray for Allah's mercy to be with the departed, so that they may find peace and happiness in the life hereafter.

When a Bohra Muslim nears death, the practice of *e'hdul ehsan* is performed by a priest *i.e.* the recitation of verses from the *Qur'an*, so that they give him physical comfort, and encourage the dying one to recite words of remembrance and prayer. The dying one should also be encouraged to recite the names of *auliyah* and is given *khaak-i-shifa*.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 94.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Upon death, those with the deceased are encouraged to remain calm, pray for the departed, and begin preparations for burial. The deceased's body is placed in a way that if he's standing he faces the *qiblah*.

The eyes of the deceased should be closed, and the body is covered temporarily with a clean white sheet. It is forbidden for those in mourning to excessively wail or scream. As Bohras quote an incident when the Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) own son died, he said, the eyes shed tears and the heart is grieved, but we will not say anything except which pleases our Lord.<sup>126</sup>

The Bohras take it an obligation that the deceased should be buried as soon as possible, avoiding the need for embalming or otherwise disturbing the body of the deceased. If necessary, an autopsy may be performed, but should be done with the utmost respect for the dead.

In preparation for burial, the family or other members of the community will bathe and shroud the body. The deceased will be bathed thrice with respect, reciting verses of *du'a*. With clean and scented water, in a manner similar to how Muslims make ablutions for prayer. The body will then be wrapped in sheets of clean, white cloth called the *kafan*.<sup>127</sup>

### **Funeral Prayers (*salat-i-janazah*)**

The deceased is transported to the site of the funeral prayers. The community gathers, and the *imam* stands in front of the deceased, facing towards the *qiblah*. The funeral prayer formation is different from daily prayers and there is no bowing or prostration. First the *nida* is done and then the *imam* recites verses from the *Qur'an* prior to which the *shahdat* is recited. The funeral

<sup>126</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.257.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.258.

prayer is prayed with five *takbirs*, where in prayers are said for the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his progeny, the deceased & those who have gathered.<sup>128</sup>

## **Burial**

After the funeral prayer the dead body is taken to the graveyard for burial. While all friends, family and member of the community attend the funeral prayers, only few men of the community accompany the body to the gravesite. It is preferred for a Bohra to be buried where he or she dies, and not be transported to another location or country because that might cause delays or require embalming the body. In the cities where Bohra community members are less in numbers, they set aside a graveyard for Bohras. The deceased is then laid in the grave on his or her right side, facing *Qiblah*. At the gravesite, it is discouraged for people to erect tombstones, elaborate markers, or put flowers or other monuments. Rather, one should humbly remember Allah and His mercy, and pray for the deceased.

## **Mourning**

3 days mourning period is observed by the relatives and loved ones of the deceased. In Bohras, mourning is observed with increased devotion, receiving visitors and condolences, and avoiding decorative clothing and jewelry. Widows observe an extended mourning period known as *iddah*. It is four months and ten days long mourning. During this time, she is not allowed to remarry, move from her home, or wear decorative clothing or jewelry.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p.259.

<sup>129</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe: Islam and modernity among the Daudi Bohras*,(Chicago: university of Chicago Press,2001) p.42.

Bohras have a faith that when one dies, everything in this life is left behind, and there is no more opportunity for him or her to perform acts of righteousness. In reference to this, they quote a *hadith* that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) once said that there are three things, however, which may continue to benefit a person after death; charity given during life which continues to help others, knowledge from which people continue to benefit, and a righteous child who prays for him or her.<sup>130</sup> While many people of the Bohra community follow the above rituals, however, there are variations of these last rites depending on what the decedent's friends or family feel comfortable doing and appropriate for the person they are honoring.

## 2.4 Calendar and Holidays

The Bohras follow the *Musta'lian Isma'ili* calendar which is somewhat different from the common Islamic lunar calendar. It's not only based on the astronomical new moon but also arranges that the month of Ramadan always has thirty days. The custom of public feasts on special days has a strong hold on the Bohra community. These feasts are paid from the *Da'i's* funds. The biggest feasts are arranged on the first ten days of *Muharram*, on the third day of Ramadan and when there is a death or marriage in *da'i's* family. A new *da'i* after assuming authority feasts his people for three days and again on the tenth and fourteenth days and at the end of the year.<sup>131</sup> Rich and middle class families in Bohras have public dinners on other significant days in the family calendar like *aqiqah*, marriage or death. Following is the list of

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<sup>130</sup> *Sunan Nasa'i*, Vol 4, Book 30, Hadith 3681.

<sup>131</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.303.

special occasions for public feasts financed by community funds, together with the *Eid* festivals and observed as holidays by the community.<sup>132</sup>

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<i>Muharram</i> 1-10	In the memory of <i>Husain bin Ali</i>
<i>Muharram</i> 27	The anniversary of <i>Fakhr-al-din</i> .
<i>Safar</i> 10	<i>Chehlam</i> in memory of <i>Husain bin Ali</i>
<i>Jumad-al-sani</i> 27	Martyrdom of <i>da'i-i-mutlaq</i> Qutbuddin.
<i>Sha'ban</i> 14	<i>Shab-i-Barat</i>
<i>Ramadan</i> 17, 19 & 21	In the memory of <i>'Ali bin abi-talib</i>
<i>Ramadan</i> 27	<i>Lailat-ul-qadr</i> , Associated with <i>Fatima bint</i> Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)
<i>Zil Hajj</i> 18	<i>Eid-al-Ghadir</i> , day of taking the oath or <i>Mithaq</i>  Also the Birthday of the <i>Imam</i>

Each one of these days is said to have its own special dish as part of the feast that is held.

The *Muharram* however is observed very carefully by the Bohras. They not only conduct *majalis*

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<sup>132</sup> Abdul Husseïn Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, p.110.

but the basic faith and its tenets are also explained in this month. This month is also considered as a month of importance for community gatherings.<sup>133</sup>

## 2.5 Status of Women in Bohra Community

The Bohra community had a tradition of female genital mutilation known as FGM but with the passage of time its exercise has been minimized.

The status of women within the community has increased distinctly over the past half-century, a period related closely with the increased availability of modern education. An aspect of Western educational philosophy that the Bohras have particularly taken to heart is the importance of women education. While Bohra women are inclined to be homemakers, they are seldom disgraced for working outside the house. In the middle and the upper segments of Bohra community, professional careers for women are strongly encouraged.

Bohra women value independence, and the most important reason they indicate is in order to have an independent source of income to meet their own *pakit kharcho*.<sup>134</sup> They don't wish to be dependent for money, to spend on personal belongings. There are various other reasons for why women want to be self employed. Women can also work to supplement family income, as their husband's salary is not adequate to make both ends meet, or to improve their living standard.

All of the women keep and control their income and spend it as they see fit, with the exception of two women, one is who hands over her income to her husband and second is who shares it with her mother. A woman gives her earnings to her husband only if he needs it. There

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<sup>133</sup> Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p.304.

<sup>134</sup> Pocket Expenses

is an unspoken conformity that men in the family should not ask for women's earnings nor do they inquire how it is spent. The women give little thought to the freedom they have over their personal earnings and link it with the *Qur'an* that specifies that whoever earns has control over it.<sup>135</sup>

The 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhaddin has encouraged men to be self employed and to start their own business, regardless of how small, and this injunction spills over to women's aspirations about the work. Being self-employed also gives women a control and flexibility over the time and effort they wish to devote to their work. The family and domestic work remains a priority for the Bohra women, but they also need time for leisure, religious occasions and productive work. They don't want their lives to be career focused either, rather, they prefer a balanced life.<sup>136</sup>

The types of work considered culturally acceptable for Bohra women are either conventional skill like sewing, doing crochet and embroidery work, and teaching, etc. Now with changing time, higher education, computer operation, office work and white collar jobs are also emerging as acceptable cadre. Now days, Bohra women are working as professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers, and designers.

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<sup>135</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe*, p.37.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

# Chapter III

## Social Behavior and Practices



### 3.1 Bohra Meals

For Bohras food has an aura tinged with the religious sentiment, and it should not be consumed while reclining in a posture of disrespectful indolence. Bohra men and women alike are required to keep their heads covered while eating. Diners sit with legs tucked under their bodies, or at least with one leg bent and the other one pressed closely against the raised thigh, but never with legs crossed or stretched out. The prohibition partially stems from convenience of others but more from a sense of respect for food. Bohra meals are vital social bond rather than mere physical sustenance. Bohras take a pinch of salt before every meal.

Bohra cuisine is famous for its delicious and scrumptious dishes. The famous Bohra desserts are pineapple pudding, *khajur nu halwo*<sup>137</sup> and rice pudding. In main courses Bohra cuisine is enriched with *shami kebab*,<sup>138</sup> *tekha aalo*,<sup>139</sup> *gosh ni tarkari*,<sup>140</sup> *mutton korma*,<sup>141</sup> *lagan ya seekh*,<sup>142</sup> *Patwalya*,<sup>143</sup> *kefti daal*,<sup>144</sup> spicy fried fish, *dudhi ni tarkari*<sup>145</sup> and *baigan nu bharta*.<sup>146</sup>

### 3.2 Bohra Dress

Bohra community being a close community also stands out in its cultural dressing. A Bohra can be identified easily by the way he or she is dressed. Their dress carries a unique identity of them being a Bohra. Bohras believe in coexistence of *din* and *dunya*, so they accept

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<sup>137</sup> Dates pudding

<sup>138</sup> Meat patties with lentils and spices as ingredients.

<sup>139</sup> Spicy potatoes

<sup>140</sup> Mutton stew

<sup>141</sup> Mutton curry

<sup>142</sup> Minced meat layered with tomatoes and finished with eggs.

<sup>143</sup> Colocasia leaf rolls

<sup>144</sup> Mixed lentils' soup

<sup>145</sup> Bottle gourd soup

<sup>146</sup> Roasted eggplant

benefits from both the eastern and western societies without being incarcerated or confined by them.<sup>147</sup> In Cairo's *Jame'a tul anwar*, a Fatimid mosque, someone asked the 52nd *da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin about the diverse dresses of Bohra women when they came to the *masjid*.<sup>148</sup> He replied we should encourage our people to wear what the royal family wears and we want our people to look like us. The women of the *Qasar-i-'Aali*<sup>149</sup> used to wear the *hijab*, as decreed by the 49<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Taher Saifuddin (1915-65).<sup>150</sup>

Till the 1970s the Bohra men used to wear knee length *kurta* and trousers and a skull cap. After the eruption of reformist Bohra group amongst Bohras in 1973. It triggered reformist versus orthodox clashes. The reformist group negated all the commandments of *da'i* and began to follow *Shi'a* customs in daily life. To keep the orthodox Bohra steadfast and to carry a distinctive appearance than reformist the *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin issued quite a lot of guidelines regarding dressing in decade of 1970-80. According to these guidelines, the Bohra men are required to wear white pajama trousers with a white knee length *kurta* and a knee length overcoat that is fastened by tuxedo style four buttons in front. The men should wear white colour dresses as it is a symbol of purity and this colour was favored by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe* p.19

<sup>148</sup> The year, according to community member Mustafa Jackwala, was 1979 and the discussion took place during the first Muharram congregation.

<sup>149</sup> The residence of *Da'i-i-mutlaq*, known as royal family palace.

<sup>150</sup> Zahra Arif Lotia, *Rida's contribution to the textile cottage industry*, BTd Thesis, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, 2011 p.44.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

Likewise, women before 1970 were allowed to wear *saari* and *rida* wasn't an obligation for them.<sup>152</sup> They use to wear a *burqa 'h* on the clothes when going out of the house though. This women dress is called *Jori*. After the commandments by *Da 'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin *rida* was declared mandatory for all the Bohra women to mark a distinction than reformist group. This way the dress for Bohra women is *rida* on top of each and every dress. Due to this *rida* they stand out from other women and can be identified easily. *Rida* also has a *pardi*<sup>153</sup> to cover the face but most of the women don't put it before the face. The young girls who haven't attended *mithaq* have an exemption to wear *rida*, instead they wear a scarf, *topi* or *dupatta*. The young girls' dress is called *jabla izaar*, this dress has a pajama and a long knee length kurta. Women also wear *ghagrah*, a skirt that has an ankle length worn below the *rida* or the blouse. In case of young boys the dress code remains the same as of men.<sup>154</sup>

For men, to compliment their *kurta*, they wear a loose overcoat, which is called *saya*. For prayers, the Bohra men wear *perun*. It is a garment similar to a *kurta* but it doesn't have any slits on sides. It is worn over the *kurta* at the time of offering prayers. *Topi* refers to a cap. All the Bohra men wear a *topi* indoors and outdoors. Bohra *topi* is a colorful embroidered close fitting cap.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Saari* is an Indian dress for women

<sup>153</sup> A cloth flap to cover the face

<sup>154</sup> Zahra Lotia, *Rida's contribution*, p.44.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

### 3.3 Trusts and organizations

#### Burhani Guards Trust

Burhani Guards Trust is an international trust of Bohras that was founded under the directives of 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin. Burhani Guards Trust Pakistan was set off in 1974. At that time, it had strength of only 66 members and one division from *Adam Masjid* and registered in St. John Ambulance Brigade in 1976, later with Directorate of Social Welfare-Sindh, Pakistan in 1991. It is a distinctive platform for *khidmat guzars* amongst the Bohra community. On the other hand, youth also performs *khidmat* of *muminin* with discipline and gets uplifted according to their age and performances. At present, it consists of 16 Divisions and 3 Units with strength of 1214 members who are ready to perform their services anywhere and anytime. It was set off to be the best organization to serve *muminin* on every occasion, be it a community get-together, a religious ritual, a Bohra Mosque security or a congregation in the community. The security of *muminin* and *khidmat* with *nishat* and *jan nisari* is the prime motto of Burhani Guards.<sup>156</sup>

In order to run the Burhani Guards Trust and its affairs efficiently there's a strong organizational structure with duties and responsibilities devised and assigned to all the members. The Burhani Guards have a uniform similar to that of the forces or security personnel. The uniform also has ranks' badges and stripped collars. To govern it, there is a supervisory committee that has set certain rules and regulations. These rules cover all the aspects, from inducting the new members to the standard operating procedures.

<sup>156</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe*, p. 47.

As per the regulations of Burhani Guards, the member or *mohallah* unit who wishes to join Burhani Guards should take permission *raza* from their *'amilsaheb*. A member of the trust should have a beard and he has to wear the *topi* all the times.

The captain of the unit of Burhani Guards should wear the officers' belt with three stars. These uniforms have no resemblance to the uniform of the supervisory committee members. Officers in charge wears whistle rope that is of the same colour as of the dress. The member of any unit is registered after the verification by unit leader. All the members of trust wear specific approved badge on the left arm. This approval is given by the supervisory committee. Becoming a member and post registration, they are given identity cards. These cards have a validity of one year and can be renewed after paying annual membership or registration fee.

The captain looks after a unit of trust and reports to the officers of Burhani Guards International. In a way, it makes a hierarchical chain in the community to organize it globally with a regular exchange of information and happenings and to stay aware of the community members internationally. These rules also demand from a member of the trust to ensure that he will not use any *moharramat* i.e. Tobacco, cigarette, alcohol, not to be involved directly or indirectly in *riba* interest. If a member is found committing any of the above prohibited acts he is terminated immediately. It's not to avoid these only, but also to follow all the other rituals strictly like *namaz*, attending congregations and paying the due amount as per Bohra customs. The trust member guard is bound to attend weekly lectures called *asbaq*, so that he could learn the *khidmat* of *muminin* in a better and efficient manner. Listening to *wa'z* is also an obligation on all the members, be it takes place during their duty. Interestingly, if a member is found roaming during *wa'z* he faces strict action for it.

The major duties of Burhani Guards under the title of *khidmat* are to manage and maintain road security during '*Ashra-i-mubarak, majalis, zikr-i-mubarak* and other gatherings. The duties and responsibilities may change time to time as per the directives of supervisory committee of Burhani Guards International. Since, supervisory committee is the sole director of the trust, it has the rights to dismiss or suspend any member from organization as a disciplinary action with the permission of the president. However, a change in all the above-mentioned rules and regulations can take place with the approval of the president. Burhani Guards trust also runs a number of committees under it, these committees work in different aspects to help Bohra community.<sup>157</sup>

#### *Al Tamriz*

In 1994, with the permission of 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhuddin, a medical aid service by the name of *Al Tamriz* was started. This committee focuses on providing medical paraphernalia such as walker, wheelchair and walking stick to poor *muminin*. The committee organizes four to five free medical camps annually. These camps include eye camp, ENT camp, dental camp and medical checkup camp. In these camps medicines are also given along with free checkups.

*Al Tamriz* committee in collaboration with Burhani Diagnostic Centre has lately set up a clinic at *Adam Masjid*<sup>158</sup> by the name of Burhani Clinic for facilitating and providing medical assistance to *muminin*. It also organizes child vaccination facilities and health awareness workshops for *muminin* to stay away from *moharramat* as Tobacco, Cigarette, etc. blood

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<sup>157</sup> [www.burhaniguardstrust.com](http://www.burhaniguardstrust.com)

<sup>158</sup> Bohra mosque near city courts, Karachi, Pakistan.

donation camps are also arranged by Burhani clinic and the collected blood is given to *muminin* in their operations when blood is required.<sup>159</sup>

#### Burhani Diagnostic Centre

Burhani diagnostic centre is a laboratory which works as a mini hospital having an outdoor patient department, medical tests and diagnostic services on reasonable tariff for Bohra community.

This was envisioned by Ali Asghar *bhaisaheb* in 2004 to establish medical camps on permanent basis that lead it to become a diagnostic centre. Later, the permission to it was granted by the then *Da'i-i-mutlaq* on the occasion of his 93<sup>rd</sup> *milad* celebrations in 2005 at Burhani *mahal*, Civil Lines, Karachi and was named Burhani Diagnostic Centre.<sup>160</sup>

#### Qutbi Amanat Scheme

*Qutbi Amanat* Scheme is another initiative started in 1994 on the instructions of 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin. The *raison d'être* for it is elevating members and providing them *qarzan hasanah* and inspiring them to establish their own business. This scheme also facilitates Bohra community members to go for *khidmat* at international *Miqaats* as '*Ashara mubarakah* and *ziyarat-i-muqadassah*.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> [www.burhaniguardstrust.com](http://www.burhaniguardstrust.com)

<sup>160</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe*, p. 47.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

## Members Welfare Committee

After the initiative of *Qutbi Amanat* Scheme, the community members took *da'i's* instructions as a command of action and adhered to it. This adherence opened up a lot of new business ventures by the Bohras. To assist their career counseling and business counseling needs Members Welfare Committee came into existence in 2009 for a better future of members. The Committee comprises of a group of veteran businessmen and professionals, who perform their tasks for functioning of the Committee, which is providing members with apt advices and presenting them appropriate channel towards progressive professional practice and conduct. Another task of the committee is motivating and upliftment of the members who need a hand to raise themselves or their family to a standard lifestyle. The committee considers such members and efforts to uplift them.<sup>162</sup>

## Training and Activities Committee

Training and activities Committee is a subcommittee of the Burhani Guards Trust. It ensures the discipline and conducts first aid and fire fighting courses to enhance Trust members' capabilities and prepare them for facing different challenges in *khidmat*. It keeps a check on members about their uniforms, personal hygiene, beard and *topi* and use of *moharramat*. It also organizes inter divisions competition camps and adventure and training camps for members.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the mainframe*, p. 54.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.



## Public Relations and I.T. Committee

In present day the world has been globalized and is connected to cyber world. It has made communication, technology and public relations a vital element for an organization or a community. Bohra community has also paced with it. All the Bohra community members are in a way inter connected, digitized and registered on their central database through e-jamaat. E-jamaat is a computerized database for identity cards of Bohra community members carrying a specific unique identity number to each and every member of the community. Another such venture is *mahd-i-zahra*, an online *Qur'an* learning institute for *muminin*. All such tasks are managed and executed by public relations and I.T committee. The committee is equipped with latest wireless and computer systems, with workstations under the *Taheri Masjid* in Saddar, Karachi. This work station is known as control room and is run and administered by the members of Burhani Guards.

## Financial Matters of the Burhani Guards Trust Pakistan

The Trust's financial matters are managed by the supervisory committee of Burhani Guards International. The working year begins on 1<sup>st</sup> April and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March. The membership and other fee and collections to run the activities are decided by the supervisory committee. An annual internal audit is also conducted on the maintained records.

In order to work efficiently and in a professional manner, Burhani Guards have divided the Bohra living areas in Pakistan into divisions naming them *mohallas*. Since, Karachi has the

largest number of Bohra community members; it has been divided into sixteen divisions, while other cities of the Pakistan with little Bohra population are considered as one division.<sup>164</sup>

#### Burhani Hospital Karachi

In 1913, Karachi was facing flu and cold infection as an epidemic. It was the time, when Bohra community initially established a dispensary for the treatment of influenza in Karachi. Later, this dispensary upgraded as Marvi Maternity Home. In 1978, the then *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin transformed this into a general hospital and given it under the supervision of Burhani Medical Board for its management and declared it a not for profit hospital.<sup>165</sup> He guided to take care of all the *Ibadullah*<sup>166</sup> and cure all the patients in need, without any discrimination of caste and creed and regardless of the religion or religious affiliation of patients. The Burhani hospital charges a nominal payment from the needy patients. The Burhani Hospital, Karachi is currently serving around ten to twelve thousand patients an year.<sup>167</sup>

#### Burhani Leisure Park

On September 8, 2015 the incumbent 53<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Mufaddal Saifuddin inducted first ever family park for Bohra community in Karachi. This is a continuation of all the welfare and community support measures the Bohra community head undertakes time to time. The idea

<sup>164</sup> [www.burhaniguardstrust.com](http://www.burhaniguardstrust.com)

<sup>165</sup> Mustafa Abdulhussein, *Al-Dai al-Fatimi*, p.29

<sup>166</sup> Men of Allah

<sup>167</sup> [www.burhanihospital.org.pk](http://www.burhanihospital.org.pk)

of this park was first visualized in 2012, when former *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin visited Karachi and noticed unavailability of any leisure facilities for the community members.<sup>168</sup>

The park spans over ten acres of land, out of which almost seven acres of land has been developed. It has kid's playhouses and a water park with six slides for kids. Water park also has four slides of it reserved for adults. Park is equipped with a restaurant, a coffee house and museum, this museum have the mementoes of late 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin. There are also boat houses within the park named as *Safina*.<sup>169</sup>

#### *Faizul Mawa'id al Burhaniyah*<sup>170</sup>

The period of 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin has undoubtedly been a progressive period for the community. In 2012, The *Da'i* coined the idea to liberate Bohra women from the fireplace and kitchen. For the purpose, he initiated the *Faizul mawa'id al burhaniyah*. He encouraged women to allocate more time to their religious activities and children's education. He urged them to start a small business.<sup>171</sup> Since then, *Faizul mawa'id al burhaniyah* has been started in every Bohra *jama'at* center in the world. Regardless of any social or economical status, every Bohra house gets daily meal cooked by their local community kitchen. This community kitchen supplies meal all week days but Sundays. All the families are

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<sup>168</sup> Shaikh Mustafa, *Al-Dai al-Fatimi* (London: Al-Jamiya-tus-Safiya Press, 2000), p.27.

<sup>169</sup> An Arabic word for boat or ship.

<sup>170</sup> Community Kitchen, wherefrom meals are sent to every member of the community's house.

<sup>171</sup> *The Times of India* (2012, Feb. 15), Community kitchen gives Bohra women freedom.

encouraged to contribute as per their financial capability. Obviously, the well to do family is encouraged to contribute more and from poor families no contribution at all is expected.<sup>172</sup>

This community kitchen concept sounds novel, yet it has not only mitigated the food security but also removed the daily burden of cooking from women members of the community. Thus allowed them to chase and practice other interests.

### **3.4 Bohra Population**

In absence of any authentic census figures tracing the exact figure of Bohra population in Pakistan is a difficult question to answer. The government of Pakistan does not publish figures about the sects among Muslims. One of the possible sources is the central Bohra *Da'wat* register, that maintains the records of Bohra community members' taxes given to the *bahisahebs*.

The access to this central register is unbound for everyone except a few family members of the *Da'i-i-mutlaq*. According to an Indian newspaper *Tehelka*, the Bohra population is around one million in the world, amongst which around three hundred thousand live in Karachi, Pakistan.<sup>173</sup>

Mostly, Bohras live in the urban city centers of Pakistan such as Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Quetta.

### **3.5 Sunni Ulema on Bohras 'aqidah**

Sunni and Bohras are poles apart from each other in the religious beliefs and practices. Sunnis believe in the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), the pious caliphate of Abu-Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali, and consider companions of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) righteous. However, Sunnis also have the faith in Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as the last Prophet by Allah and there

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<sup>172</sup> Shaikh Mustafa, *Al-Dai al-Fatimi*, p.43.

<sup>173</sup> *Tehelka*, India (2011, Feb. 22), Reform movement gathers forces in the Bohra community.

would be no Prophet after him. According to Sunni belief only the Prophets of Allah are *masum* and there is none and no one can claim to be *masum* or *kal masum*. In opposition to Bohra *imams* and *Da'i* heredity Sunnis adhere to the the *Qur'anic* verse that states, Have faith in Allah. Offer your prayers and proceed to good deeds.<sup>174</sup>

Sunnis believe that the '*aqidah* of the Bohras is nowhere near the '*aqidah* of the mainstream Muslims. The Bohras are an off-shoot of the *Shi'a* sect, and their '*aqidah* and belief is very much in line with that of *Shi'a*. Sunnis are of the opinion that the Bohra beliefs are away from the truth and guidance of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

The Bohras believe in the imamate of the progeny of *Imam Ali-bin-Abi-Talib*, and believe all the the *imams* after him as *masums*. Then they have a system of *Da'is*, with a belief that the *Da'is* are not *masum* but are *kal masum*.

The *Da'i-i-mutlaq* is their premier spiritual leader and he is considered by them as their *imam*. The *Da'i* then appoints people, mostly from his family, in a system, whereby all of them hold very powerful positions in the community and are always considered prestigious and higher than any member of the community.

Sunnis on the other hand don't have any such condition to any adherent of their belief system. Although there is a further split amongst Sunnis on the different issues, however, the basic belief i.e. '*aqidah* is same amongst all. Andreas Rieck in his book quoted that Mawlana Zafar Ahmad Usmani (1893-1974) published a fatwa in the League daily *al-Manshur*<sup>175</sup> and justified the inclusion of *Shi'a* and Bohras in league.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> (22:77)

<sup>175</sup> *Al-Manshur*, Delhi.

<sup>176</sup> Andreas Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan: An assertive and Beleaguered minority* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), p.51.

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# Conclusion

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## Conclusion

The Bohras are a business community with its principal base in the Indian State of Gujarat. Bohras are a sect of the Fatimid *Shi'a* school of thought and about one million people claim to follow this sect of Islam all over the world.

Bohra is not a religion by itself. It is a Gujarati speaking trading class originating from the Surat and Gujarat in India, who are adherents of *Isma'ili Musta'li Shi'a* sub-sect of Islam. Most of the Bohras are converts from Hinduism, who were predominantly a business community, some of whom converted to Islam.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a crucial era of transition in Bohra Community. It was under the leadership of 52<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-i-mutlaq* Muhammad Burhanuddin, the community went about defining itself as intensely conventional and religious, yet modern and willing to embrace change. Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the Bohra Community of Pakistan being a business Community has rendered its expertise and capital for the country. In Pakistan, both the resident and migrants to Karachi Bohras have played an important role in setting up a national industrial and banking system of Pakistan.<sup>177</sup>

Bohra Community of Pakistan is undoubtedly a well organized traditional Muslim Community of Pakistan. The community is not only confined to Pakistan but is spread over in almost 34 countries of the world. The majority resides in India, Pakistan and Africa. Being a closed and secretive community, it is hard to find published or unpublished literature on them. Recently,

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<sup>177</sup> Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p.51.

Bohra University *Aljamea-tus-saifiyah* has started publishing some of its literature. This published literature will surely be a huge help for further studies on this community.



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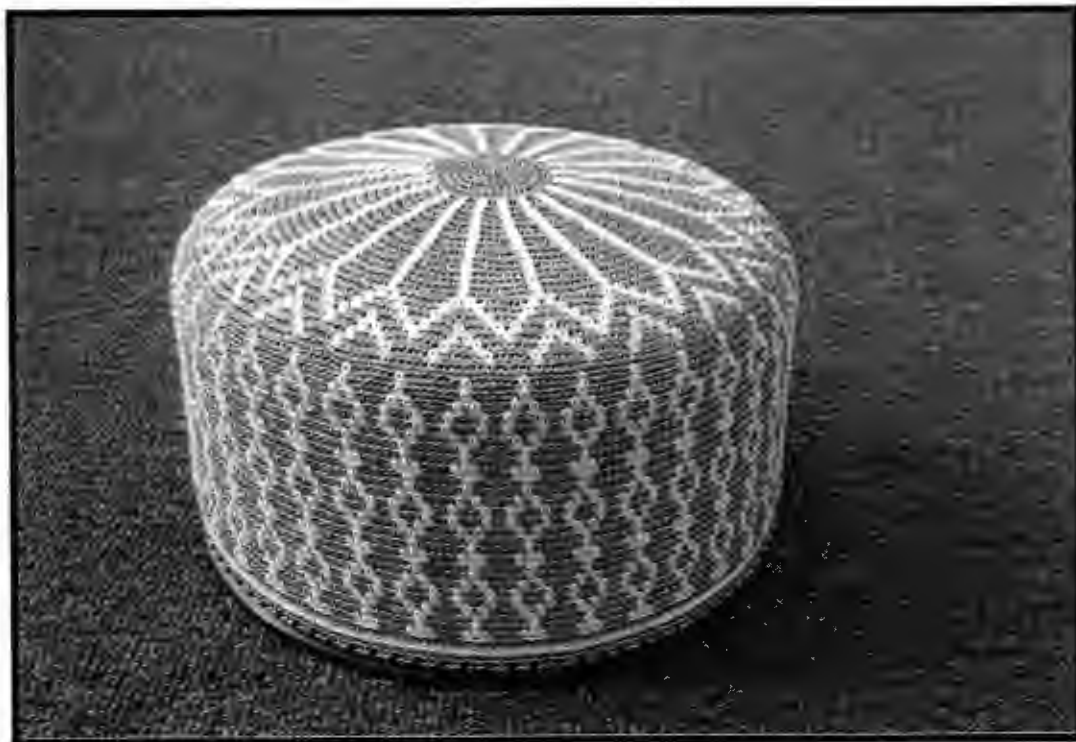
Appendix I

Bohras' AZAAN (Call for Prayer)

Recital	Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
4times	الله اكبر	<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	Allah is the Greatest
2 times	اشهد ان لا اله الا الله	<i>Ash hadu al laa ilaha illaha illa llāh</i>	I testify that there is no God but Allah
2 times	اشهد ان محمدا رسول الله	<i>Ash hadu anna Muhammadan rasulu llah</i>	I testify that Muhammad (S.a.w) is the messenger of God
2 times	اشهد ان مولانا عليا ولي الله	<i>Ash hadu anna 'Aliya wali ullah</i>	I testify that 'Ali is the vicegerent of God
2 times	حي على الصلاة	<i>Hayya 'alas salah</i>	Come towards the prayer
2 times	حي على الفلاح	<i>Hayya 'alal falah</i>	Come towards the victory
2 times	حي على خير العمل	<i>Hayya al Khair al 'amal</i>	come towards the greatest of all things
2 times	محمد و علي خير البشر و عطرة هما خير عطر	<i>Muhammadun va 'Aliun khayr ul basar va itrat o homa khayr ul itar</i>	Muhammad and Ali are the greatest of all men and their descendants are the greatest of all progenies
2 times	الله اكبر	<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	God is the greatest
2 times	لا اله الا الله	<i>La ilaha illallah</i>	There is no God except for Allah

Appendix II

Bohra Topi



Appendix III

Bohra Men Dress

