

The Importance of and the Esoteric Meanings of Jamat Khana

The Ka'bah is located in Makkah and is a central Muslim institution. Since the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.s.), a local House of God in every Muslim village has been built because it is not possible for all the Muslims of far-flung countries to reach the ka'bah for daily worship. Thus, the Holy Prophet started to build a local House of God called a Masjid in places such as Medina. The tradition of building local Houses of God exists in all Muslim communities. The Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims have and are building Jamat Khanas in the Western world since the migration of Ismailis from different parts of Africa and Asia and at present, there are high profile Jamat Khanas in London, England; Burnaby, Canada; and Lisbon, Portugal. Other centers are in the planning or construction stages around the world. At the same time, there are local Jamat Khanas in almost every Ismaili Muslim community.

The aim of this posting series is to understanding the deeper and esoteric meaning of Jamat Khana and its link to the Light of the present and living Imam of the time, Noor Mowlana Hazir Imam.

Posting No. 1. Jamat Khana is a House of Reward and Peace

God says: "And when We made the House a place of reward and peace for mankind (saying): Take as the place of prayer where Ibrahim stood." (2:125). The taw'il is that, just as the Ka'bah is the central House of God, similarly, Jama'at-khanah is the local House of God. Or in other words, just as the Ka'bah is the House of God at the level of shariat, the Jama'at-khanah is the House of God at the level of haqiqat. Therefore, the virtues which are mentioned in the Qur'anic verse about the Ka'bah, the central House of God, are also true about this local house of God, which is called Jama'at-khanah. Thus according to the Qur'anic wisdom and Ismaili faith, Jama'at-khanah is the place of reward and peace.

This means that the entire reward of all religious commands and prohibitions is centered on Jama'at-khanah and this is true for spiritual peace and satisfaction. Because this religious house of the Jamaat has double virtues. On the one hand, it is the representative of the Ka'bah and on the other hand, it is the symbol of the true (holy) Imam, because the (holy) Imam, in accordance to the Divine Will, has given the Jama'at-khanah to his followers to represent his own personality and physical and spiritual closeness. Thus at the first stage, this is the station or place of (Hazrat) Ibrahim (a.s.) for the Jamaat." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 119-120)

Posting No. 2. The Holy Imam of the Time is the Living House of God

God says: "And when We made the House a place of reward and peace for mankind (saying): Take as the place of prayer where Ibrahim stood." (2:125). Another taw'il of this verse is that just as, by His command the Ka'bah, the House of God, is a place of reward and peace externally, so internally the Imam of the time as the House of God, is the means of every kind of reward and peace. This means that the (holy) Imam is the spiritual Qiblah, towards whom the attention of the heart is necessary in every good deed and that is the way of attaining reward.

You can see that the reward is mentioned first and then comes peace. The wisdom in this is that, the mu'mins cross the stages of reward and good first, by obeying the Holy Imam and then, as a result, they enter into the light of his spirituality. And it is he who is God's inner House in which there is only peace and no fear or danger of any kind. Just as in the external world, the station of Ibrahim is in a place where there is a stone, similarly in the internal world, in the luminosity of the Manifest Imam, there is a Pearl of Intellect, which we have

been commanded to reach to attain the wisdoms of salat or namaz." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 119-120)

Posting No. 3. The Holy Imam and Jamat Khana are Spiritual and Luminous Houses

In the verse (3:96), God says: "Verily, the first house set up for mankind is at Bakkah (Makkah), blessed and a guidance for the entire people of the world." In this blessed verse, there are many wisdom-filled allusions. One of them is that 'first' is the foundation of ordinals (numbers) and it necessitates that it be followed by the second, third, fourth, fifth, etc. This implies that although the first and the central religious house is in Makkah, there will be many secondary and local religious houses (Jama'at-khanahs) in the time of Prophethood and the cycle of Imamah.

The second allusion is that just as the first religious house was set up in Makkah, the first (holy) Imam (Mawla Ali (a.s.) was also appointed in Makkah. He is the spiritual and luminous house for people and in which, there are blessings and guidance for those who (actually) become personal worlds (i.e., become spiritually advanced and knowledgeable souls)." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 121-122)

Posting No. 4. The House of God is Full of Blessings and Guidance

In the verse (3:96), God says: "Verily, the first house set up for mankind is at Bakkah (Makkah), blessed and a guidance for the entire people of the world." In this blessed verse, there are many wisdom-filled allusions.

The third allusion is that one of the meanings of the suggestive recitation of "Bakkah" is giryah-u zari, weeping and shedding tears. So its ta'willic implication is that the first house of spirituality is built for people from the shining tears of love of Mawla, which for the lovers of Mawla, is full of blessings and guidance.

The fourth allusion is that the Ka'bah, the Imam and the Jama'at-khanah are the House of God on one hand, and on the other hand, they are also the religious houses of the people, because blessings and guidance which are in these houses are for the sake of people, and their attribution to God is due to their being His special possessions." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, page 122)

Posting No. 5. The Holy Imams and Jama'at-khanahs are Lit by the Lamp of the Divine Light

It is said in verse (24:36): "(That light is lit) in houses which God has permitted to be exalted, and His name to be remembered therein. He is hallowed therein in the morning and in the evening." By these houses are meant the Holy Imams and also the Jama'at-khanahs, in which is lit the lamp of Divine light, whose observation and recognition is certain." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, page 122)

"... The jama'at-khanah is the place where the magnificent soul (i.e., light) of the Imam of the time works, to which the souls of all things come, for in the Imam-i mubin (manifest and speaking Imam) all the things of the universe are encompassed (36:12). These bright proofs about the eminence and blessings of Jama'at-khanah are enough for true mu'mins." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 124-125)

Posting No. 6. Piety (Taqwa) for the Holy Imam, the Speaking Qur'an and Jamat Khana is Necessary

"You should be aware of the fact that in Islam taqwa (piety, God-fearing) is extremely important, because it is the spirit of all worship ('ibadat). In order to attain taqwa, one has to struggle a lot. But note the compassionate nature of the Signs of God (Sha'a'ri'llah) and that by respecting and revering them, one attains the piety of the heart (22:32). The pure personality of the Imam of the time, who is the speaking Qu'ran and Jama'at-khanah, are among the Signs of God, and therefore, reverence for them results in the piety of heart and is also itself piety. For one of them is the hidden or spiritual House of God and the other is His apparent or physical House." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 126-127)

Posting No. 7. Mu'mins will enter the Luminous House of God

"The Divine law is that the spiritual Masjid and luminous Jama'at-khanah has continued to be forever in the pure personality of the Prophet and the Imam. Hazrat Nuh has called this luminous house "my house (bayti)" (71:28) and the mu'mins who entered it were called "the people of the house (ahl-i bayt)", for as the Qur'an says: "O my Lord, forgive me, my parents, and those who enter my (spiritual) house as (perfect) believers, and the believing men and believing women" (71:28). In this wisdom-filled prayer of Hazrat Nuh, the mu'mins are in two categories: those who had entered his luminous house (i.e. the House of God) due to their perfect faith and those who have still not been able to enter it." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 127-128)

Posting No. 8. The Holy Imam is the Intellectual and Spiritual Jamat Khana

"In his time the Holy Prophet was God's living House (22:26) and the luminous and miraculous Jama'at-khanah, for as it is said in verse (33:33): "Verily, God intends but to keep away from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O you people of the (luminous) house, and to purify you in every respect (externally and internally)." This holy house was the light of Prophethood and Imamah and the people of the house were the Holy Five Persons: namely Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.s.), Hazrat 'Ali-i Murtaza (a.s.), Hazrat Fatimah-i Zahra (a.s.), Hazrat Hasan-i Mujtaba (a.s.) and Hazrat Husayn-i Sayyid-i shuhada (a.s.). This luminous house is the speaking House of God and the intellectual and spiritual Jama'at-khanah, and it is the house of wisdom about which the Holy Prophet has said: "I am the house of wisdom and 'Ali is its door." It is also the same blessed and holy house in which, according to verse (24:36), the lamp of the Divine light is lit." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 128-129)

Posting No. 9. To whom does the Straight Path belong?

"In order to present this reality in an understandable way, it is asked: To whom does the straight path belong? Does it belong to God or to the Prophets? Does it belong to the Holy Prophet or the Imam? Does it not belong to mu'mins? The answer is that, first of all, it belongs to God, for He is the goal of it. That is, all have to go to His luminous House (42:53; 2:156). It is also the path of all the Prophets, because they were the guides of the people on it (1:7; 4:68). It is the path of the Holy Prophet, the last Messenger, because he is the chief of all Prophets and Messengers (12:108); it is the path of the Imam because he is the true guide (13:7). And it is also true path is made for the guidance of the mu'mins (4:115). Thus the extremely pure and sacred House, which belongs to God, also belongs to all the above-mentioned ranks. Although God Himself is free from and above space and non-space, the recognition of His oneness is not possible outside His luminous House (24:35). This house, which is full of mercies and blessings and illuminated with the light of recognition, is the light of Prophets and Imams (24:36) and this same house also belongs to

mu'min men and mu'min women when they follow them completely (57:12; 66:8)."
(Source: Fruit of Paradise, page 129-130)

Posting No. 10. Three Kinds of Jamat Khanas

"Jama'at-khanahs are of three kinds: First is the universal Jama'at-khanah, which is the blessed personality of the Imam of the time, second is the local Jama'at-khanah, which is the Jama'at-khanah of the city, town, village or area, and the third is the personal Jama'at-khanah, which is the heart of every faithful servant. But their interrelated wisdom is in the local Jama'at-khanah. Because it is here that a mu'min gradually progresses, the door of the personal Jama'at-khanah or the Jama'at-khanah of the heart opens for him and he is illuminated with the light of faith (nur-i iman). And it is here that the holy didar or vision of the pure Imam takes place, which is the true Jama'at-khanah of luminosity." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, page 131)

Posting No. 11. Spiritual Progress of Personal Jamat Khanas

"In the verse (10:87), God says: "And We revealed to Musa and his brother: Provide houses for your people in Misr and make your houses places of worship, and establish prayer, and give glad tidings to the mu'mins." Misr is the name of every city which has a protective wall around it and by this is meant the city of spirituality, because not only does it have a protective wall around it, but also a door. Thus in this wisdom-filled verse the spiritual progress of the personal Jama'at-khanahs is mentioned. That is, God commanded the Prophet and Imam to make houses in the city of spirituality for the hudud-i din (religious hierarchy) of their community and to give the status of the House of God to these houses and do the work of true mission (da'wat-i haqq) and give mu'mins the practical glad tidings of such spiritual progress and ascension." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 131-132)

Posting No. 12. Jamat-khana of the Heart is the Holy Imam of the Time

"It is said: "The heart of the mu'min is the Throne of God." However, it is necessary to ask and know what the real meaning of this saying is. Because the word "mu'min" is applicable to many people, but the concept of the Divine Throne is very high. You should understand that the heart of the mu'min is the Imam of the time and it is this holy personality in which the Divine light shines, for as the Wise Qur'an says: "And know that Allah comes in between the man and his heart" (8:24). That is, in the light of true knowledge, you should know the law of trial: Why does God come between man and his heart (i.e., the Imam of the time)? Indeed the wisdom-filled allusion and the secret of success in this is that one should have recourse to God with his true heart. He should return to Him and further go where his heart is. This shows that in reality, Jama'at-khanah of the heart is also the Imam of the time." (Source: Fruit of Paradise, pages 133-134)

Peace, light, barakat, taid and a 'golden' didar,
Noorallah juma
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