Ginan (Hymn): Hearing and Reciting within the Indo-Muslim Cultural Context

by Karim Gillani

"*There is no flute, yet there is melody. There is no sound, yet there is music*".[1]

Throughout the Muslim world sound and sonic expressions play a vital role. From spoken words to recitation of the Quran, from devotional songs to melodic chants, from *adhan* (call to prayer) to vernacular local expressions, one can easily witness the profound spirituality through sounds. In many cases, melodic shape may differ due to various reasons, however, in most cases the integrity of the words remains. "Human diversity in language and culture has for centuries found expression in sonic form, articulating faith and piety in relation to a plurality of local, historical, and social identities".[2] Most of these expressions of a particular community or group are deeply grounded in practices that have deep spiritual roots, aesthetic effects, and a powerful impact on faith.[3]

Ginan is one of the vital performance traditions of an oral literature that stem from the practice of Islam in South Asia. It plays a significant role in maintaining collective and culture memory of Sathpanth Ismailis wherever they may live.[4] Khoja Ismailis in general give great emphasis on participatory and presentational performances,[5] which include both reciting and singing ginan inside the jamatkhana as a formal presentation as well as an embodiment of hearing, and listening along with the performance as an active participant. I suggest that the *ginān*s are the form of *Sama* and prayer that also represent a "collective memory" of Khoja Ismailis. Using Maurice Halbwachs theory of "Collective Memory" which means that Sathpanth Ismailis, under the guidance of their *pīrs*, Imāms and later *Sayyids* had a particular understanding of their history which they have perhaps

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[1] Pir Shams Sabzwari 13th CE, *Brahm Prakash*, (Divine Light) verse number: 71, Cited from Virani, N. Shafique, "Symphony of Gnosis: A Self-Definition of the Ismaili Ginan Tradition", *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought,* Essays in Honor of Hermann Landolt, Edited by Todd Lawson, p. 516.

[2] Qureshi, Regula, B, "Sounds and Spaces of Muslim Piety: Tradition and Transformation" conference introduction, University of Alberta taken from April 29th to Sunday May 1st, 2011.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* ed. & trans. Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

[5] For more information see Turino, Thomas, "Participatory and Presentational Performance" *Music as a Social Life*, pp 23-65, 1992.

drew upon both the rich Islamic Sufi and Indic culture of Northern India. In many ways the performance of ginan differs from other Sufi devotional performances including qawwali where trained musicians perform and the rest participate in the process of hearing *sama*. Among Ismailis, the difference between trained and non-trained musicians does not exist; hence the importance is given to the poetical messages of *Pirs* and *Sayyeds,* which they share through performance. Whatever terms one can use such as music, recitation, reading and performance the most important element is the message, which lies inside the text. Perhaps, the only way it will be transmitted is through listening and performing that needs to be communicated. As a result, the reciter leads the ginan and everyone in the congregation sings along in chorus of voices in unison. As a result, both performance and participation become one.

In this paper, I will situate ginan within the larger framework of Muslim piety in general and explore the significance of hearing, reciting and performance practices within the Indo-Muslim context in particular. I will also shed light on how and why the Khoja Ismaili communities have kept ginan as a source of living performance tradition throughout many centuries. What role does performance play in the identity of the Khoja Ismaili community? Bauman notes in his commentary especially for scholars like linguistic anthropologists who mainly focus on how communities are communicatively constituted "the performance forms of a community tend to be among the most memorable, repeatable, reflexively accessible forms of discourses in its communicative repertoire".[6] In other words, the communities are mostly connected through some form of interaction, dialogue and performances in a designated space. Therefore, in this chapter, I will explore how for centuries ginan has evolved a significant form of living performance tradition that has allowed the community to collectively interact with each other through songs as part of their daily religious practice.

[6] Bauman, R, "Commentary:indirect indexicality, identity, performance", *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1): pp 145-150, 2005, p 149.

Defining Ginan:

Among a large number of scholars, the term '*ginan'* or its variants *gyan* or *gnan* epistemologically derived from a Sanskrit word *jñana*[7]*,* which means 'knowledge' referring to the poetry; it may also be understood as 'hymn', which is frequently used in the basic sense of higher knowledge.[8] The term '*ginan'* itself has a double significance: on the one hand, it means religious knowledge or wisdom, on the other hand it means '*ghina'* in Arabic or '*gana'* in Urdu means singing or chanting.[9] One of the pioneers of the modern Ismaili studies Wladimir Ivanow defines the term 'ginan' as "it is used in the sense of the knowledge, i.e. the real and true, as the Arabic Ismaili term *haqaiq'*[10] and Seyyed Hossein Nasr defines it as 'supreme knowledge'.[11] There are innumerable examples in the ginanic literature explaining the meaning of ginan such as Pir Sadardin says in his ginan "*Ginan bolo re nit noray bharia*" "Always recite ginan which is full of light (divine knowledge)".[12]

Professor Muhram Khan disagrees with the term 'ginan' as having Sanskrit root, and defines the term 'ginan' as derived from the Arabic term '*ghina*' meaning chanting and reciting, as he believes that this word was commonly used in the lower Indus valley of Sind during the time of Ismaili *dawa* and Ismailis *Pirs* have used this local vernacular term and composed ginans.[13] To further support this argument, Dr. G. A. Allana, a linguist from Sind argues that phonetically also, it is not possible for the people of Sind,

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[7] Virani, Shafique N. "A Self-Definition of the Ismaili Ginan Tradition" *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought,* Edited by Todd Lawson, Published by I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK, 2005, p. 504.

[8] Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir. Ismaili *Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, p. 17.

[9] Khakee, Gulshan, *The Dasa Avatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis and Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan*, Harvard: PhD dissertation, 1972, p 3. Also see Gillani, Karim, MA thesis entitled *Ginan a musical heritage of Ismaili Muslim from India and Pakistan*, University of Alberta, 2005, p 1,

[10] Wladmir Ivanow, 'Satpanth' in Collectanea, Leiden, 1948, vol. 1, p 2.

[11] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, Edinburgh, 1981, pp 7, 50.

[12] Ginan by Pir Sadardin, first verse is taken from the book entitled *Jawahir-e-Ginan*, published by the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board of Pakistan, 2002, p 4.

[13] Khan, Muhram, "Qadeem Sindhi Shairi and Shaira", an article included in *Kinjhar*, *Research Journal of the Department of Sindh*, University of Sindh, 2002, p 58 and 86.

Punjab, Kutch and Gujarat, etc. "to pronounce the initial cluster of sounds such as [jn] of the word 'jnan'. Similarly the clusters of sounds such as [gn, jn, gy, py, ky, ks' and kr] etc. are not possible, and all the clusters as such are separated by the speakers of these regions by inserting short vowel [i] in between the two components of [g] and [n] or [j] and [n] etc.[14] The terms for devotional hymns in Sindhi language has been used as '*Sureela geeta'* (tuneful songs) or '*Veragi Kalam'* that means (chanting hymns).[15] The above explanation of ginan also supports the idea of related local devotional musical genres and their meanings such as the 'qawwali" (Arabic '*qawl*' means utterance and sayings), 'kafi' (Arabic, means rhymes), *Shabd* (Sacred words), *Kirtan* (to praise) and *bhajan* (to serve, adore).[16] Whatever, the term 'ginan' means, it is an undeniable fact among all the scholars that the ginans are divinely inspired hymns, *waridat*, 'things that come from the divine'. Another Quranic term which is often used to describe the mystical works, mentioned in Sura al-Kahf verse 65 is '*ilm laduni'*, when asked to Dogush in Turkey regarding his poems, he replied: "These are things that are given to us from the '*ilm laduni'*; it is a higher inspiration to which we are only the vessels'.[17] Similarly one of the greatest Urdu poet Ghalib (1797-1869) says in his poetry:

Aate hain ghaib se ye mazamin khayal mein
Ghalib sareer-i-khama navaye sarosh hain

These themes come to mind from the world unseen
Ghalib, the scratching of the pen is the voice of the heavenly angel.[18]

Traditionally, Pir Satgur Nur (11th-12th CE) has been recognized as the first author and composer of ginan in Indian Subcontinent, followed by series of *Pirs*, *Sayyeds* and *Dais*, who continued their Ismaili religious mission under the guidance of Nizari Ismaili Imams

[14] Allana, G. A, *Ismaili Movement in Sindh, Multan and Gujrat*, p. 297.
[15] Khan, Muhram, p. 297.
[16] Gillani, Karim, *Ginan: A musical heritage of Ismaili Muslim from India and Pakistan*, MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2005, p 52.
[17] Cited from Annemarie Schimmel article "Reason and Mystical Experience in Sufism", *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, edited by Farhad Daftary, I. B. Tauris, London, New York, and in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK, 2000, p 138.
[18] K.C. Kanda (compiled and edited by), *Master Couplets of Urdu Poetry*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, p 281, for more information also see the same page with another verse translation "Heaven inspired, Ghalib, are my poetic thoughts, The racing of my pen is the very voice of gods."

(Ismaili spiritual leader). Among them Pir Shams ($12^{th}/13^{th}$ CE), Pir Sadardin ($13^{th}/14^{th}$ CE), Pir Hasan Kabiruddin ($14^{th}/15^{th}$ CE), Sayyed Imamshah ($15^{th}/16^{th}$), Sayyed Mohammad Shah ($16^{th}/17^{th}$ CE) and Sayyeda Imam Begum ($19^{th}/20^{th}$) are prominent.[19] The history of the corpus of *ginan* hymns is as old as the Ismaili *dawa* (religious mission) in the Indian subcontinent. G*inan* is a genre of devotional poetry rooted in the musical and poetic matrix of Indian culture. G*inans* are traditionally recited during daily ritual prayers in Ismaili congregation halls (*jamatkhanas*). G*inans* have been revered for generations among the Ismailis as sacred compositions (*śhāstras*).[20] Various *pīrs* and *dais* (missionaries) composed *ginan* hymns in several Indian languages, among which Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Sirāiki and Sindhi are prominent. The ginans are powerful in imagery and symbolism drawn from the spiritual and cultural milieu of the Indian subcontinent. The entire *ginān* corpus consists of about one thousand poems whose lengths vary from five to five hundred verses.[21] The historical roots of the *ginān* hymns are close to South Asian Sufi, *bhākti* and *sānt* devotional poems.[22] Available historical information and manuscripts suggest that these *gināns* were composed by a series of preacher-saints or *Pīrs, Seyyeds* under the guidance of an Imām.

Significance of Hearing and Reciting within Muslim Context:

Often the term 'music' in the context of Islam is often seen debatable and it is generally assumed illicit (*haram*). Many arguments and debates have been raised for the support and rejection for the practice of music since the beginning of Islam. Hence, throughout the Muslim world devotional expressions and sonic sounds play a pivotal role both in its fundamental practice of Quranic chanting and in the form of various vernacular local traditions. The common elements among the Muslim *adhan* (call to prayer), the Sufi *qawwali* and the Ismaili *ginan* are that they all share musical sounds in order to give sonic form to the religious and textual messages of Islam. Especially among the mystics, musical sounds occupy an important place in their daily rituals. For them, music is the

[19] Nanji, Azim, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, 1978, p. 39.

[20] Kassam, Tazim R, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*, p. 1

[21] Three decades ago, based on a list compiled by Alibhai Nanji of Hyderabad, Azim Nanji in his book entitled 'The Nizārī Ismāilī traditions' estimated the total number of Ginans to be about 800. See Nanji, Azim. *The* Nizārī *Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent,* p. 10.

[22] Asani, Ali, Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia, 2002, p 4-5,

tool to get closer to God, polishing their hearts, and purify their souls. Among Sufis in South Asia, "music is the feast for the soul" because music serves to lift devotees into states of the mystical ecstasy and self-realization.[23]

Early Islamic sources reveal that the concepts of hearing and recitation played a key role from the very first revelation of Prophet Muhammad. In fact the Quran was reveled to Prophet Mohammed through Jibrail (Gabriel) in (610 CE), not in a text form but Prophet Mohammed heard the voice of Jibrail as a command "*Iqra*" "Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth".[24] God's revelation was a fundamentally "aural," an auditive, phenomenon, even when it was sometimes accompanied by visions. The Quran was heard, recited, remembered and orally transmitted before it was written down, and the term itself comes from the root QR', which signifies "recitation of a text".[25] The message from God was accessible to human perception not through vision, perception or cognition, but through sound in the spoken word in Muhammad's language, Arabic. "It should not be forgotten that the Quran denotes the event of recitation. Only subsequently did it become, in physical terms, a book. The recitation was felt and received as inspired, and inspiration suggest openness".[26]

The Prophet Mohammed received words of Quran in a considerable portion of time; He kept them in His memory and transmitted them to His followers through oral recitation. As a result many companions have memorized the Quran before the time of His demise. Prophet Mohammed died in (632 CE); it was not until the reign of the Caliph Uthman (644 CE), third of the four companions of the Prophet that the present text of the Quran was committed to writing. However, the written words of the Quran remain inseparably connected to their utterance in recitation. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, He had spread the message of Quran by sending out reciters, not texts, and Caliph Uthman sent

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[23] Qureshi, Regula, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan, Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali,* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1995.

[24] Al-Quran, Sura 96, ayat 1, translation by M. Pickthall.

[25] During, Jean, "Hearing and Understanding in the Islamic Gnosis", *The World of Music*, 39 (2)- 1997, p. 128.

[26] Esmail, Aziz, *The Poetics of Religious Experience: The Islamic Context*, I. B. Tauris Publishers London, New York, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK, 1998, p 6.

the standard Quranic text along with one reciter, who could transmit its message through recitation.[27] Even today it is a common practice to recite the Quran aloud as compared to reading the Quran silently so the reciter could hear and witness the divine messages through his own ears. When a Muslim baby is born, among one of the first practices is to *tilwa* (recite*)* in baby's ear so he/she can hear and experience the words of God, the Quran, through sound or recitation. In the Muslim world learning how to read the Quran means learning the sounds as well as the meaning of the words, so they can be recited, remembered and performed. Among Muslims, one of the major achievements of any child is to earn the title of *Hafiz al-Quran,* meaning to learn by heart the entire message with the aid of its sounded forms and proper delivery.[28]

If we examine the text of the Quran carefully, it is not difficult to find rhymes, rhythmic patterns, assonance and recurring phrases, all of that enhances the understanding and meaning of the structure of the Quranic text as well as provides deeper sonic impact. Therefore, one can easily observe that the way the text is structured in the Quran is highly suitable for recitation. Various references related to recitation can be found in the Quran itself, stating that the Quran was transmitted to Prophet Mohammed in the mode of recitation (*tartilan*) (25/31) and that the Prophet was directed to recite it in a similar manner (*wa rattilol-quran tartilan,* 74/4)[29] as meaning "recite the Quran according to the rules of *tajwid*."[30]According to Mohammed Arkoun, "in the early Quranic stage, the relationship between men who hear the call and God is expressed in the context of an oral culture, outside the intervention of clerics who exercise a power of interpretation in favor of, or in opposition to, the state."[31]

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[27] Nelson, Kristina, *The Art of Reciting the Quran*, Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 1987, p 3.
[28] Qureshi, Regula, "Islam and Music" *Sacred Music: Experiencing Music in World Religions,* Edited by Guy L. Beck, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Canada, 2006, p 90.
[29] Ibid, p 91.
[30] 'Tajwid' is the system of rules regulating the correct oral rendering of the Quran, use in almost all over the Musim world. For more information see "Tajwid"Nelson, Kristina, *The Art of Reciting the Quran*, pp. 14-31.
[31] Arkoun, Mohammed, "Islam between its Tradition and Globalization" *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, edited by Farhad Daftary, I. B. Tauris, London, New York, in association of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK, 2000, p. 201.

The Prophet Mohammed and the Imams of His *Ahl al Bayt* (People of the House' or family) have given special emphasis on reciting Quran beautifully and understand the beauty of sounds within the sacred text. The Prophet Mohammad said that among the creation's greatest beauties are 'the fine intonation of a beautiful voice (*nagh-mata'l-sawt al-hasan*)'.[32] On another occasion He said: "Everything possesses its own adornment (*hilya*); and the adornment of the Quran is a beautiful voice".[33] It has been mentioned that Imam Zayn al-Abidin (Ali b. Husayn) was very famous with His beautiful Quranic recitation, those who witnessed His voice would 'swoon away due to the beauty of His voice *(saiq min husni sawithi).*[34] Reza Shah-Kazemi explains the whole process as "the whole being of one who is attuned to the divine 'music' of the Quran is opened up to the spiritual power of the Revelation –the theurgic power unleashed by an inimitable symbiosis of sensible sound and intelligible light: sonoral presence of the sacred and enlightening exposition of the truth".[35] As Seyyed Hossein Nasr sums up that "For Muslims, everything about the Quran is sacred—its sound, the very words of the Arabic language chosen by God to express His message, the letters in which it is written, and even the paper that constitutes the physical aspect of the sacred text".[36] Hence, one has to be careful not to believe that it is only the aesthetic effect of the beautiful recitation that so deeply struck those who listened to them; however it is the combination of enchanting musicality, profound meaning, and above all, theurgic power, that perhaps overwhelmed and possibly intoxicated them by the divine Word.[37]

Early Islamic Myths on Hearing:

In the Muslim context, there are two very well known myths regarding the significance of hearing. As we know, hearing is the highest experience because it is the first experience with which an individual is awakened. In the first myth, Adam's soul refused to enter the body of clay molded by the God. Hence, God command the angels to make *sama'* and, in

[32] Muhammad Yaqub al-Kulayni, *al-Usul min al-kafi*, Tehran, 1376 Sh./ vol. 2, 1997, p. 608, no. 3518.
[33] Ibid, vol 2, p. 608, no 3519.
[34] Ibid, vol 2, p. 607, no. 3514.
[35] Kazemi, Reza Shah, *Spiritual Quest: Reflections on Quranic Prayer According to the Teachings of Imam Ali*, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Occasional Paper 3, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, New York, 2011, p.7.
[36] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Islam', *Our Religion*, Arvind Sharma, ed., s, San Francisco, 1993, p. 448.
[37] Frithjof Schuon, Understanding Islam, Bloomington, 1994, p. 46.

the ecstasy of this music, Adam's soul entered in the prison of his body. In another myth, one day after hearing the sweet voice of the divine Adam's wake up, the voice said, "Am I not your Master? (*alastu bi rabbikum*).[38] Then Adam replied in ecstasy with these words "Yes, I attest to it," confirming the eternal Covenant (*mithaq*) which binds the entire humanity to their creator.[39] Parallel ideas are also associated in the oral tradition of India, as famous Indian mystic Hazrat Nizamuddin Aoulia once said "On the day of convenant of souls with God, I heard God's call to the souls "Am I not your God?" in Purbi raga".[40]

A similar idea was supported by the thoughts of Ahmad Tusi, N. Purjavdi regarding the experience of Adam and divine hearing:

"In fact, the first thing that God created for the descendants of Adam on the day of the Convenant was comprehension, then the auditive and enunciatory faculties (after Adam responded). Then, before the descendants of Adam were asked, the Creator presented them with these three faculties or abilities; and upon the answer "yes," all three were set into action. Although language is posterior to understanding and hearing, it is the irradiation of the verb (*alast*), which unifies understanding and hearing. If the call from the side of the Creator had not come, then neither the ear would have heard anything nor the understanding understood anything".[41]

The relation between music, the Word, which creates, and (*wajd*) ecstasy that helps accompany the sensations of existing is explained in another myth by Sharh-e-ta'arrof of Bokhari (d. 1042), at the time when perhaps the *sama* practice had already expanded from Bagdad and Persia to throughout the Muslim world.

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[38] Quran: Al Aaraf, chapter 7.
[39] Jean, During, p 129.
[40] Saleem, Agha, *Melody of Clouds*: *Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*, p. 8.
[41] Purjavadi, N, *Soltan-e-tariqat. Savaneh-ye-Zendegi o shahr-e-asar-e-Ahmad-e Ghazzali,* Teheran, 1979, p 242,

"Some say that the principle of *sama* is that of the rapture produced by the sound of the creative Decree; the word consists of what He had said to the world: "Be"! (Kun), and it was so. The first joy that things can attain is the joy of this world. Now that beings can be listened to, the *sama* is a form of nourishment through the memory and the perfume of this first *sama*.

The myth of *kun* Creator (fiat! Or esto!) and Convenant support each other in a mutual manner and also support the practice of Sufi *sama* in the sense of a reaffirmation of the Promise or Pact. Music is the mirror of universal harmony: "Where this melody (the resonance of the Creator's Word) does not exist, there the soul can understand nothing. The universe is this melody itself, so as the eternal Master played it".[42]

Concepts of *Sama* and *Dhikr:*

"*The True Guide says: I will come and be seated in (the heart of) such a person and there will be a lot of sounds (of celebration) in the palace. The night of this person is spent in an awakened state and that time he/she partakes in ginan (divine knowledge)".*[43]

The practice of *sama* (listening) and *dhikr* (remembrance) contribute immensely in Muslim piety and devotion. *Sama* has been sometimes seen as a controversial practice theologically in the Islamic tradition even though it is mentioned (*sura*s 33:40 and 13: 28) in the Quran. Islamic mainstream opinion has conceived some ritual practices of *sama* as dangerous and unlawful, but there is no direct prohibition of music in the Quran, and several recognitions are given to chanting, cultivation and cantillation of music in other religious texts as well.[44]

Often these two profound Quranic concepts '*sama'* and '*dhikr'* are limited to only Sufism. As in most Sufi assemblies *sama* and *dhikr* are the primary form of ritual practices, however, they are not bound to only Sufis or esoteric practices of Islam. In fact,

[42] Ibid.: 250

[43] Pir Shams Sabzwari, Saloko Moto, verse number, I have done the translation for this verse, 105.

[44] Qureshi, Regula, Sufi music of India and Pakistan. p. 82.

Quran speaks in volumes for these practices again and again and reminds followers to polish their heart through remembrance. "He is successful who groweth, and remembers the name of his Lord, so prayeth."[45] Moreover, remembering thy lord also provides peace in the heart as Quran says: "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah; for without doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!"[46] In fact, according to the Quran, remembrance of Allah is the most significant practice in the eyes of the Lord, "recite that which hath been inspired in thee of the Scripture, and establish worship. Lo! Worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity, but verily remembrance of Allah is more important. And Allah knoweth what ye do".[47] The concepts of *sama* and *dhikr* signify the importance of utmost devotion and love to thy Lord. Allah says "so remember the name of thy Lord and devote thyself with a complete devotion".[48]

How do sounds affect the heart and soul of its listeners? Sound deeply affect heart and soul, as described by Ibn Sina's disciple Ibn Zaylah (d. 440/1048) "Sound produces an influence on the soul in two directions. One is on account of its special composition (i.e., its physical content); the other on account of its being similar to the soul (i.e., its spiritual content)".[49]

Does it depend on the listener's ability to experience the divine through sounds? Or does it depend on the performer on how to reach the listener's heart through the performance? Dhu'l-Nun the Egyptian Sufi (d. 246/861) said, "Listening (*al-sama*) is a divine influence which stirs the heart to see Allah; those who listen to it spiritually attain to Allah, and those who listen to it sensually fall into heresy".[50] Listening is the door through which one can stir the heart and experience the divine. In the first treatise of Sufism, *Kash al-Mahjub* (The Unveiling of the veil) Abu Hassan Ali bin usman al-Julabi Hujwiri, also

[45] Sura 87, ayats 14-15, Translation from M. Pickthall
[46] Ibid: *Sura* 13: ayat 28.
[47] Ibid: *Sura* 29: ayat 45
[48] Ibid: Sura 73: ayat 8
[49] Cited by G. H. Farmer, "The Religious Music of Islam," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1952, pp 60-65.
[50] Cited by *H. G. Farmer, A History of Arabian Music*, London: Luzac, 1929; repr. 1973, p 36.

know as Data Ganj Baksh (990 CE-1077 CE) said: "listening to sweet sounds produces an effervescence of the substance molded in man; true, if the substance be true, false, if the substance be false".[51]

The *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa* (Brethren of Purity), whose vast encyclopedia of philosophy, science, and art, was compiled in the fourth/tenth century, contains a precious epistle on music.[52] Many contemporary Muslim historians including Heinz Halm, W. Ivanow, Farhad Daftary, Paul Casanova and Abbas Hamdani, believe that *Rasail* was written and compiled by the Ismailis to spread the quest for an intellectual mission based on the Shia's theology and philosophy during the medieval period.[53] *Rasial* contains 52 epistles on various field of knowledge include music, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, logic, physical sciences, natural sciences, spirituality and more. *Rasail* concludes their epistle with the validation of the most delighted and most perfect music, which are the sounds of the sacred text and His name:

" Tradition teaches that the sweetest melody which the inhabitants of paradise have at their disposal and the most beautiful song they hear is the discourse of God—great be His praise. It is thus that the Word of God Most High states, the greeting which [will welcome them] there will be peace! (Quran, 10-11). And the end of their invocation will be peace!" (Quran X, 10-11). And the end of their invocation will be: "Praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds." It is said that Moses-peace be upon him—upon hearing the words of his Lord, was overcome with joy, with happiness and with rapture to the point of being unable to contain himself. He was overwhelmed by emotion, transported while listening to this serene melody and from that point on regarded all rhythms, all melodies, and all songs as insignificant".[54]

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[51] This work dates to the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, according to R.A. Nicholson, who provided an English translation of it in the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, vol. 17, London: Luzac, 1911; repr. 1959.

[52] Complete work includes fifty two epistle, among them the one on music is the fifth. For more informaiton see "Lepitre sur la musique des Ikhwan al-safa', translation and annotation by A;Shiloah, Revue des etudes islamiques 1964, p. 31,

[53] Hamdani, Abbas, "A critique of Paul Casanova's dating of the Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa", Daftary (ed.), *Mideaeval Ismaili History and Thought*, 1996, p. 145.

[54] Cited by Shiloah, Revue des etudes islamiques 33, 1966, 192-93.

Ibn' Arabi, once emphasizes the significance of sound with a similar argument:

God says "[God is] Listening, Knowing" (Koran 9:98), and He says, "[God is] Listening, Seeing" (22:61). Hence He places listening before knowledge and sight. The first thing we knew from God and which became connected to us from Him was His speech (*qawl*) and our listening (*sama*')...The cosmos can have no existence without Speech on God's part and listening on the part of the cosmos".[55]

Renowned Muslim theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) writes in the beginning of the long chapter of his famous book *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (The Revival of the Sciences of Religion), in which he provides in detail the laws and principles of spiritual *sama:*

"Hearts and inmost thoughts, song and ecstasy, are treasuries of secrets and mines of jewels. Infolded in them are their jewels like as fire is infolded in iron and stone, and concealed like as water is concealed under dust and loam. There is no way to the extracting of their hidden things save by the flint and steel of listening to music and singing, and there is no entrance to the heart save by the antechamber of the ears. So musical tones, measured and pleasing bring forth what is in it and make evident its beauties and defects. For when the heart is moved there is made evident that only which it contains like as a vessel drips only what is in it. And listening to music and singing is for the heart a true touchstone and a speaking standard; whenever the soul of the music and singing reaches the heart, then there stirs in the heart that which in it preponderates".[56]

Sama and _Dhikr_ within the South Asian Cultural Context:

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[55] Cited from Chittick, William C, *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p 213.

[56] It is the eight book of the "quarter" of the Ihya' dealing with the "social customs" (adat). It has been translated into English by E. B. Macdonald, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 195-252, 705-46; (1902) 1-28, the quote cited above appears on p.199.

Throughout the fourteen hundred years of Muslim history, the teaching of Islam spread in various parts of the world, from Arabic speaking countries to Central Asia, South Asia, Africa, Indonesia, etc., and encountered various languages, cultures and religions. Muslim missionaries have taken the essence of the teaching of Quran and spread the teaching in various languages and cultures so Islam does not look foreign to indigenous beliefs and practices. Similarly the concepts of *sama* and *dhikr* spread with the teaching of Islam to various parts of the world, however, the core remains the same, but in practice, it adopted and evolved according to various cultural contexts. It is a historical fact that more than conquests, Sufis and mystical practices of Islam have played a significant role in the spread of Islam in South Asia. Among Chishti Sufis, the musical style of qawwali plays a vital role during the ceremony of *sama*, and among Sindhis, followers of Shah Latif, *wai* and *kafi* are the vital form of remembrance. Similarly among Khoja Ismailis, ginan is one of the most significant forms of *dhikr* and *sama*, which were composed by the Pirs and Seyyed to share the essence and the teaching of Shia Islam in Indian-Subcontinent. Among many Sindhis, the respect for *Shah jo Risalo* is equal to the Quran (not in its literal meaning but through the teaching of *Risalo*, Sindhis understand the teaching of Islam in its own vernacular language Sindhi). As Shah Abdul Latif himself said in his *risalo* "*Baita na banyo manhua, hi ayatun ahin*" meaning " O listeners! Do not consider my verses as merely *'baits'* (devotional rhymes), they are actually the verses of the Quran-e- Sharif".[57] Another famous Sufi master Baba Bulleh Shah goes further and even prefer the musical instrument for *dhikr,* saying:

"We sold Quran and purchased Tanboor (long neck lute, musical instrument),
The Tanboor revealed Divine mystery unto us".[58]

Similarly, for many Central Asians, the Rumi's Mathnawi is the Persian Quran. Seyyed Hossain Nasr citing one of the authorities on Rumi Hadi Hairi's unpublished work in which he has shown some 6000 verses of *diwan* and Mathnawi are practically direct

[57] Allana, G. A, *Ismaili Movement in Sindh, Multan and Gujrat*, p. 298.
[58] Saleem, Agha, *Melody of Clouds*: *Shah Abdul Lateef Bhittai*, p. 8

translations of Quranic verses into Persian Poetry.[59] Rumi himself called the Masnavi "the roots of the roots of the roots of the (Islamic) Religion... and the explainer of the Qur'an".[60] It does not mean in its limited sense, it means that various underlines messages within the Mathnawi are regarded as a vast esoteric commentary on the Quran, many of its verses being interpreted as translations of Quranic verses into Persian.

Likewise, the teachings of ginans have esteem respect and status among the Khoja Ismailis, as they believe that through the teachings of ginan their ancestors found the true path (*sirat-ul-mustaqim)*. Therefore, it is not a mere coincidence that Khoja Ismailis give the deepest respect and sometimes-scriptural status to ginan. Confirming these teachings for the contemporary era, the 48th Ismaili Imam Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah Aga Khan (1877-1957), on July 5th, 1899, in Zanzibar made the following *firman* (guidance):

"Pir Sadardin has composed for you ginans by extracting the essence of the Qur'an and stating it in the language of Hindustan".[61]

The similarities of ginan and Quran can be seen in many ways. Chapter 3 or Surah Al-I Imran, verses 190-191 states "The men of intellect are those who remember Allah standing, sitting and reclining". Similar ideas can be found in ginanic literature. Pir Hasan Kabirdin in His ginan mentions:

Eji Khadiya padiya letiya bethiya mede bhaive,
Hardam sami rajo sambhariye
O my brother! Standing or lying down, reclining or sitting, remember Mowla all the time'.[62]

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[59] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," in Chelkowski (ed.), *The Scholar and the Saint*, p. 183.
[60] Ibrahim Gamard (edited), *Mathnavi*: *Rumi and Islam*, March 21, 2004, Skylight Illuminations, Woodstock, USA, p 6.
[61] H. H. Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah, Aga Khan III *Kalam-e- Imam e Mubin*, Part 1, Mumbai, 1950, p. 85.
[62] It is taken from Pir Hassan Kabirudin ginan.

Another ginan states, "*Eji sute bethe bahi rah chalanteji, nam sahebjiko lijiyeje*". (O brother! While reclining, sitting and while walking keep on taking the name of your Lord).[63] In the Quranic verse 73/8, Allah says "So remember the name of thy Lord and devote thyself with a complete devotion". Sayyed Imam Shah in His ginan says: "O brother! Keep thoughts concentrated so that an attachment of love will rise in your heart. Remember the Lord like this in every breath. O brother! Never forsake this remembrance". [64]

Among Ismailis ginan is one of the forms of *sama* and *dhikr* through which community practice their faith. The only conceptual difference is that ginans are the utmost source towards Imam, as all Shia believe that Imam is the direct descendent of Prophet Mohammad and rightly guided religious and spiritual authority, therefore most of the ginan themes are connected with the allegiance, love and devotion towards Imams.

Exploring Ginan within the South Asian Cultural Context:

Devotional music can be heard almost everywhere in South Asia. One of the reasons is that in South Asia music is never separated from the religion, culture and the society. Milton Singer, an anthropologist, who studied the Radha Krishna Bhajans of Madras City in 1960s mentions that music plays a fundamental role in the daily practice of Hindus, where myth, ritual and symbols are together with the one devotion; it is a way of life for them. As he noted that apart from bhajan singing Hindus also participate in the sacred scriptures of Hindus such as Mahabarat in which devotees act and dramatize the sacred myths into reality, where devotees, walk, move, talk, and sing everything in such a way that they are living and acting in reality like their God and Goddess.[65] This is another reality of ritual drama as described by Victor Turner, where people move from one stage of reality to another, or liminal phase, where they are neither here nor there, they are in

[63] Pir Hassan Kabir-u-din, ginan Eji Dur Desh thi aya, verse 2, cited from Ginans, with English Translation and Glossary, volume 2, compiled by Zarina Kamaluddin and Kamaluddin Ali Muhammad, Z.A Printer, Karachi, Pakistan, 2007, p.111.

[64] Ibid, Volume 2, ginan "Eji Piyu Piyu kijiye" p 124.

[65] See the work of Singer, Milton, "The Radha-Krishna Bhajanas of Madras City." in Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes, edited by Milton Singer, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 90-138.

between threshold.[66] A similar expression of devotion can also be seen in the Shia Ithna-Ashari devotional ritual where Imam Hussein and his martyrdom are depicted through *soz, nuha, marsia,* and *matam*. The social and psychological effect is so intense that some devotees go into trance and ritual drama moves them into another reality where meta-historically they re-visit the entire war of Imam Hussein and sacrifice their life in the service of their Imam.[67] All in all, devotional music plays a vital role in the daily life of South Asian religion.

All the above mentioned devotional genres, share much common grounds with each other, such as the geographic region of Northern India and the cultures in which these genres were written, composed and shared in vernacular languages including Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi etc. Because of the regional and cultural similarities, they share more or less similar musical styles, structure of poetry, symbols of normative expressions and above all the shared belief system among Sufis, Bhaktis and Ismailis of love and humanity. If we closely study the belief system of a spiritual guide among the Sufi *Shaikh silsila* (spiritual chain) with Sikh Gurus and Ismaili Pirs and Imam, we would find common theological grounds as a result many of these genres were also shared commonly.[68] A qawwali such as (*Kirpa Karo Maharaj*) (Lord have mercy be upon me) by the Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti from 13th century, is marked by a very Indic and Hindu expression, which is accepted by Hindu and Muslim alike. Similarly Sufi poetry of Pir Shams (Das Avatar, ten incarnation of Vishnu), Baba Bulleh Shah, Kabir share a wide- spread form of devotion among Sikh, Hindu and Muslim practices. The poetry and music of these poets are beyond the expression of one identity and ritual belief, which makes devotional music of Northern India very unique, rich and diverse in its nature and performances. A major Sufi contribution was to "turn to the pre-existing indigenous folk-poetic tradition, a tradition that was mainly oral, meant to be recited or sung in a musical mode. Although it was recorded in writing only rarely (and that only at a very later

[66] See the work of Turner, Victor, *The Anthropology of Performance,* PAJ Publications, 1986.
[67] Qureshi, B. Regula, "Islamic Music in an Indian Environment: The Shia Majlis", Ethnomusicology, Vol. 25, No. 1, Jan 1981, pp-41-71. And also see Schubel, Wayne, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shia Devotional Rituals in South Asia*, University of South Carolina Press, 1993.

[68] See Ali Asani'work on Bujh Niranjan.

stage), its simple rhyme forms made it easy to memorize".[69]

Although there are ample examples which suggest that ginan literature was a tool to spread the Satpanth Muslim *dawa* in the Indian subcontinent, however ginan has also taken many influences from indigenous cultures and religions which are sometimes being questioned by mainstream orthodox Muslim writers. For many of them the "Arab" centered approach towards practicing Islam is the only correct version that mostly discards cultures contribution to the propagation of faith. The idea of a culture-free Islam is an abstraction from historical reality. According to Esmail, "every religious tradition creates and recreates itself through an ever-shifting synthesis of inherited and contemporary ideas"[70]. In the Indian subcontinent, the result has been a distinctive blend of indigenous and foreign motifs, which, once they had come together, formed a seamless whole. It is ideological self-consciousness which shifts among the elements, distinguishing 'Hindu' from 'Muslim'. In this context, there is no need to define religious faith in hard and fast modern global categories. The need to define religious faith usually arises when there is a surrounding polemic in terms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. It is a common observation that people mostly think about religion in black and white form, right and wrong way, or maybe look at the religion from a completely strange point of view, or use modern scientific methods to explore the ancient medieval texts. Michael Foucault was one of the first theorists to argue the notion of historians and scientist who follow twentieth century theoretical models to know the past events of history. Using the example of the science of biology, Foucault argues

> Historians want to write histories of biology in the eighteenth century; but they do not realize that biology did not exist then, and that the pattern of knowledge that has been familiar to us for a hundred and fifty years is not valid for a previous period. And that, if biology was unknown, there was a very simple reason for it: that life itself did not

[69] *Asani, Ali, "Sufi Poetry and Folk Tradition" p. 184.*
[70] Esmail, Aziz. *A Scent of Sandalwood, Indo-Ismāilī Religious Lyrics*.p. 32

> exist. All that existed was living beings, which were viewed through a grid of knowledge constituted by natural history.[71]

In above statement Foucault describes a set of implicit rules for the formation of any discourse. He emphasizes that there must be some implicit set of rules that allow such objects to arise within discourse, that provides the linguistic and conceptual space within which they are intelligible.[72] As Esmail explains, the environment of the medieval Indian subcontinent "where such environmental pressures are absent, the conditions are more favorable to an organic vision, anchored in the mental and social realities of the people". The *ginans* are one such 'organic' tradition".[73]

Many historians of Islam in Indian Subcontinent have made statements regarding various vernacular indigenous ideas were incorporated by the poets in the mainstream popular culture. The important example for this case exists in the *Sunnis* of Bengal: the Prophet Muhammad was regarded as the 'incarnation of God himself'.[74] He was the *avatar* of the times, the wicked *kaliyuga* (the fourth and last age, according to the *Vedas*, in world-history). According to the Indian mytho-history, each of the *Vedas* corresponded to each of the four ages. And so popular Islam, retaining this scheme of the *yugas* and the *Vedas*, thought of the teachings of Islam as the last scripture, perfecting and superseding earlier wisdom (just as the Quran and had presented itself as a successor to the God-given scriptures of the other Semitic faiths).[75] Not only in Bengali *Sunni* Islam and *Ismaili Khoja* literature could we see mixed concepts of Hindu and Muslim religious ideas; there are ample examples available in Sufi literatures that represent the same elements, sometimes metaphorically and sometimes esoterically and symbolically. This is notable especially in the mix of the Sufi practices and the Hindu *Bhakti* traditions. The Chisthi of

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[71] Foucault, Michael, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, A. M. Sheridan Smith (trans). New York: Harper and Row; original French edition, 1966; reprint, 1970: pp- 127-128, London: Routledge, 1995.
[72] Willi Braun and Russel T.McCutcheon (edited) "*Guide to the study of Religion*" "Discourse" written by Tim Murphy, 2000, pp-396-408.
[73] Esmail, Aziz. *A Scent of Sandalwood, Indo-Ismāiīlī Religious Lyrics*.p. 28.
[74] Asim, Roy, Islam in South Asia (New Delhi, 1996), p. 104. The incarnations, in Vaisnavite mythology are: fish, tortoise, boar, man-lion, dwarf, axe-man, Rama, Krishna and Budha.
[75] Roy, *Islamic Syncretistic Tradition*, pp. 136-140.

Bijapur for instance, drew heavily from the *Bhakti* tradition.[76] In this way the result was the transposition of the all too familiar audacities of Sufism in the Arabo-Persian-Turkish contexts to the Sub-continental context. Asim Roy points out that the 'Bengali Muslims' adoration of the *Pir* was unqualified and Boundless', but this is hardly news to anyone with the remotest familiarity with Sufism.[77] The Punjabi Sufi poet, Sultan Bahu (1631-91) said that "true lovers of God are neither Hindus nor Muslims, nor do they prostrate in mosques. At every breath they see God.[78] *Pir* Shams, an Ismaili missionary from the twelfth-thirteen centuries conveys the same idea in His poetry:

Not Hindu, nor *Musalman* knows my Lord.
My Lord is seated pure, immaculate.
My mind is my prayer-mat.
Allah, my *qazi*, my body, a mosque.
Seated within, I say my *namaz* (prayer).
What can the fool know of my prayer?[79]

Wladimir Ivanow, a prominent scholar in Ismaili history, published a seminal monograph on *Satpanth* Ismailism. In that monograph, Ivanow investigated the reasons for the success of the Ismaili *da'wah* (religious mission) in the subcontinent, and surveyed the literature and religious practice of *Satpanth*. He attributed the success of the Ismaili preachers to the followings strategies:

> Either by intuition, or sound and clever reasoning, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī missionaries devised… methods depending on two principles. One was their bold tactics in separating the meaning and spirit of Islam from its hard Arabic shell. The other was their concentration of efforts on a few definite castes.[80]

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[76] Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval* India (Princeton, 1978), p. 151.
[77] Roy, *Islamic Syncretistic* Tradition, p. 159.
[78] Quoted in Lajwanti Rama Krishna, Panjabi Sufi Poets, A.D. 1460-1900, Calcutta-London, 1938, p. xviii and pp. 33-37.
[79] Ginan by Pir Shams, cited from Esmail, Aziz. *A Scent of Sandalwood, Indo-Ismāiīlī Religious Lyrics*, p. 53.
[80] Ivanow, W. *Satpanth,Indian Ismailism*. 1948.

As Ali Asani explained, *Pirs* (missionaries) presented Islam, in its Nizari Ismaili form, in languages, terms and concepts that were familiar to their Indic audience. For example, in an environment full of cults and sects, several *Pīrs* used an indigenous Sanskrit term *panth* (path, doctrine, and sect) to refer to the religion they were preaching. In fact, their preferred term for Ismāʿīlī Islam was *Satpanth*, the true or correct path, and a term that echoes the Quranic concept of *sirat al-mustaqum*, the right and straight path.[81] Satish Misra has insisted on a distinction between 'indigenisation' and 'Islamization' viewing them as proceeding in opposite directions.[82] Ahmad, seeking to modify this further, has proposed that everywhere there has been "an evolving and accumulating tradition wherein new elements have continually been absorbed and integrated from time to time". On one hand, beliefs and practices from Islamic religious thought and culture came to be assimilated. On the other hand, beliefs and customs drawn from local, indigenous culture are 'incorporated into orthodox Islam". It is thus, in Ahmad's view, 'a two-way process', in which what propagates "Islamization' has to do not with the source of ideas and customs, but with 'whether they were viewed as Islamic and therefore, as basic to the definition of a group or individual as Muslim".[83]

To better understand the various themes related to the ginan literature borrowed from vast Indic culture one has to also analyze historically that many times Ismailis were brutally persecuted due to various political reasons and therefore Ismailis have adopted *taqqiyya* (dissimulation, as a protective strategy used by Shias) to hide their own religious identities so an outsider cannot interfere with religious beliefs. Thus the motive behind the invention of the Khojki scripts by Pir Sadardin was to hide the religious text. In fact Pir Sadardin and others Pirs had various names such Sadardin, Savdev, etc and they were widely acceptable among Sufi Muslim, Bhakti, and Hindus alike. Ismailis, due to *taqiyya*, and the specific significance given to the concept of *batin* (esoteric) have shaped a community in such a way that they give vital importance to their personal search through devotional performance including ginan and qasidas. One can imagine the situation of Ismailis, where they had no choice but to hide their religious identity due to mass

[81] Ali S. Asani, *The Ismaili Ginans as devotional literature,* 1992.
[82] Ibid., p. 85
[83] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

persecution, and also to maintain their religious connection had perhaps change the community outlook.

Due to *taqiyya* many interesting developments took place in that while *taqiyya* provided a useful and pragmatic cloak in some instances, it also allowed a language and vehicle of expression for the community, for example, poetry to spread among other communities. In some instances, since so many generations had passed, the articulation of identity had been transformed to such an extent that Sufism or esoteric forms of Islam and Ismailism were so interlinked and intertwined[84], they became one and the same, such as in the case of Persia. In India and Pakistan, the matter is much more complex in that regional nuances and experiences such as in Punjab, Sindh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, socio-religious contexts have significantly affected modes of expression above and beyond religious affiliation. So, Sufi, Hindu, Sunni and Shi'a Muslim, Sikhism, Jainism and other groups all use similar modes of poetry and singing to express complex ideas and thoughts, and as some believe, also for purposes of conversion. In the case of the Subcontinent, I would argue it is part and parcel of a larger cultural idiom that allows these things to happen, especially in environments which we would today refer to as "identity" less rigid and more fluid. I think the earliest ginan manuscripts that we have attest to this, and the manuscript tradition of other communities would also demonstrate the same fluidity.

In conclusion, this chapter has identified relevant contexts for an understanding of ginan and its relevance with sonic practices of performance. Firstly, we have conceptualized the significance of hearing and recitation within the larger framework of Muslim Piety. Beginning from the recitation of Quran to the concepts of *sama* and *dhikr* and situating ginan within the Indo-Muslim cultural contexts. Secondly, we have identified that the medieval poets used the mode of music as a cultural idiom to express religious teaching in a vernacular forms. Thirdly, we have explored various themes and concepts, which were shared among Sufis, Ismailis and Bhaktis in a more pluralistic indigenous cultural environment rather than the very strict form of Arab Islam. And finally, we have explored

[84] Even at the shrines of Pir Shams, Pir Sadardin and Pir Hassan Kabirddin and their current shrine keepers and followers consider them as Sufi mystics, see Karim Gillani's work "Sufi music of Multan: A City of Saint".

the role of *taqqiyya* (dissimulation) in the practice of Ismaili teaching. History shows that Khoja Ismailis religious identities were challenged by orthodox Sunni practices and as a result, many times Ismailis were brutally massacred. Therefore, to secure the religious identity and practice of their faith regularly, the powerful oral tool such as mode of songs or hymns (ginan) played a momentous role both in terms of preserving the tradition in their memory for centuries and also to practice their faith through songs. Even today one can witness that many older community members try to remembers at least a large numbers of ginans by heart and use them in their daily life, and above all, it is because of its soulful tunes that they have memorized it and remember it for centuries. "I don't know how to read and write, even my old eyes are unable to see anymore, hence I am able to sing hundreds of ginans, if I am able to recall the right tunes, once I know the right tunes then I can sing for hours, ginan is a form of prayer to me".[85]

[85] Taken interview from an old Ismaili community member from Lahore, taken interview during my visit in 2007.

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