

## **Alavi Bohras: An Introduction**

- **Origin**
- **How the Mission (*Da'wat*) works**
- **Missionaries (*Du'aat*)**
- **Present Missionary (*Da'i-e-Mutlaq*)**
- **Isma'ili-Taiyebi Faith**
- **The Unfortunate Event in the History of Alavi Bohras: The Demolition of the Holy Graves**
- **Customs and Traditions**
- **Language and Calendar**
- **Dress code and Food**
- **Profession and Education**
- **Vadodara City: A Centre of *Da'wat***
- **Love for India and their Relationship with Other Communities**
- **An Ideal Healthy Life of an Alavi Bohra: He and His Environment**
- **Source Material from the Manuscripts**
- **Abbreviations and Some important Links**
- **Other Related Articles**



*Bismillaah ir-Rahmaan ir-Raheem: ( I begin) with the Name of Allaah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful*

### Origin:

Alavi Bohras are the **Muslim-Shi'a-Isma'ili-Musta'alavi-Taiyebi** community whose origin and spiritual ancestry is established and associated to the Five Spiritual Masters of Purity (*Khamsat ul-Athaar* or *Panjatan Paak*) which includes the **Prophet Mohammad Rasoolullaah (saws)** – the Master of the Prophets (*Saiyed ul-Ambiyaa*); **Ali ul-Murtazaa (as)** – the Master of Vicegerents (*Saiyed ul-Waseeyin*), the vicegerent, cousin and son-in-law of Rasoolullaah (saws); **Faatemat uz-Zahraa (as)** – the Master of the Women of all times (*Saiyadah Nisaa il-Aalameen*) and the daughter of Rasoolullaah (saws); **Imaam Hasan (as)** and **Imaam Husain (as)** – the Truthful Imaams (*Imaama Haqqin*) and the grandson of Rasoolullaah (saws) and the sons of Ali and Faatemah. After the vicegerency of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as), Imaam Hasan became the first imaam followed by his brother Imaam Husain who came second and then the succession took place in the descendants (*aal*) of Imaam Husain from father to son called **Infallible Imaams** (*A'immah ul-Maa'sumeen*) whose succession will continue till The Last Day (*qayaamat*).

Alavi Bohras are **Isma'ilis** because of the fact that they adhered to the spiritual succession (*Imaamat*) of the 6th Faatemi **Imaam Isma'il**, the son of the 5<sup>th</sup> Imaam Ja'far us-Saadiq (as) when the split occurred in the mainstream Shi'a resulting in Isma'ilis and Isnaa-Asharis. Alavi Bohras are **Musta'alavis** because during the reign of the 18<sup>th</sup> Faatemi imaam, **Mustansir billah** (as) (427-487 AH/1036-1094 AD), schism occurred in the mainstream Isma'ilis in Egypt, those who believed in the spiritual succession of 19<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam Musta'ali, the son of Mustansir billah (as) came to be known as Musta'alavis. Their 21<sup>st</sup> Faatemi **Imaam Taiyeb** (as), the son of 20<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam Aamir (as), went into seclusion (*satr*) from Egypt after 526 AH/1132 AD owing to growing fear from the enemies. They believe that the succession of *Taiyebi Imaams* (as), though in seclusion, will always continue in the progeny of Imaam Taiyeb (as) till the Day of Judgement, thus Alavi Bohras are called **Taiyebis**. The sole spiritual, religious and temporal authority after the seclusion of *Imaam* (as) got transformed in Yaman in 532 AH/1138 AD in the form of a missionary (*da'i*) who owed the allegiance of the believers to the noble progeny of Imaam Taiyeb (as). They continued their mission in Yaman in the name of Imaam of their time (*imaam uz-zamaan*). The succession of these missionaries is called as **Du'aat-e-Mutlaqeen** (Pl. of *Da'i-e-Mutlaq*).

In India, during the time of 18<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam Mustansir billah (as) around 486 AH/1093 AD, the designated learned people (*wulaat*) who were sent from **Yaman** by the celebrated missionaries (*du'aat ul-balaagh*) under the guidance of the manifest *Imaam* (as opposed to the imaam of the time of seclusion) established the

foundation of Isma'ili-Taiyebi Da'wat in the region of **Gujarat** (Cambay or Khambhat). It was the result of their perseverance and efforts that people started believing and accepting the Isma'ili-Taiyebi principles and gradually the mission of Yaman gave birth to a new community in India – **The Bohras**. The succession of those designated learned people who worked as deputies of the missionaries of Yaman came to be known as **Wulaat ul-Hind** in India. They were all in close contact with the spiritual authority of Yaman i.e. the *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* after the seclusion of the Imaam Taiyeb (as).

Subsequently, split occurred at various instances in the mainstream Bohra community regarding the spiritual appointment (*Nass*) in the succession of **Da'i-e-Mutlaq** in Gujarat (Ahmedabad) between 825-1050 AH/1422-1640 AD. Two major splits during this period resulted in the formation of three major groups of Bohra community – **Alavis, Dawoodis and Sulaymaanis**. The tradition (*sunnat*) of the manifestation and the appointment of a *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* known as the Propagation of "**Nass**" is solely carried out by a former *Da'i* himself. Among Bohras, Alavis are the smallest minority who has independently survived all the vicissitudes of time. They believe in the Qur'anic Verse that, "**On the path of truth, minority always win.**"

Alavi Bohras, who are mainly traders, are peace-loving and harmonious people. The word 'bohra or vohra or Vohorwu or Vyavahar' itself indicates maintaining relations and is derived from the Gujarati word 'vohorvu' or 'vyavahar', which means "**to trade**". Secondly its name reflects the characteristic of "*al-Jamaa'at ul-Baaherah*" meaning the extraordinary brilliant community with full of life and love. Their cultural and social upbringing is such that the values of peace and prosperity are in their blood and they do not believe in **social discord or religious conflicts**. Some of the groups or clans of Sunnis in Gujarat who also are traders and do not belong to the mainstream Bohras have adopted the name of Vohra or Vora, owing to the fame and respect of the name. But they never followed the basic doctrines and customs of the **Isma'ili-Taiyebi Bohras**. The early Indian converts of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD during the reign of 18<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam Mustansir (as) comprised a single group of Isma'ili Bohras owing allegiance to the missionaries (*du'aat ul-balaagh*) who conveyed spiritual orders of manifest *Imaam* (*imaam-e-zaahir*) to common believers in Yaman.





*al-Hayao Sho'batun minal Imaan: The Shame is the part of the Faith*

### How the Mission (Da'wat) works

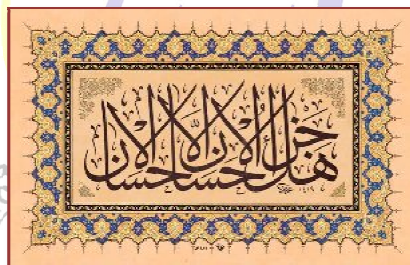
The religious hierarchy as well as social-cultural setup of the Alavi Bohras is essentially and traditionally Faatimid and the whole community is headed and governed by the chief authority of **Da'i-e-Mutlaq** who is appointed by his predecessor in office. The **Da'i** appoints two others to the subsidiary ranks of **Ma'zoon** (licentiate) and **Mukaasir** (executor). **Ma'zoon** (licentiate) means the person on the status of 'izn', one who takes oath and calls his subjects into the folds of Isma'ili faith. **Mukaasir** (executor) means the person on the status of 'kasr', one who is well versed with the false faiths of other sects and he removes doubts of his subjects by furnishing appropriate proofs of the truth. These positions are followed by the rank of Ra's ul-Hudood, Hadd-saheb, Miya-saheb, Shaikh-saheb and Mulla-saheb, **who are appointed by Da'i-e-Mutlaq to perform varied Da'wat duties as per his learning, capability, efficiency and merits.** Apart from all lower positions of different ranks (*sahebs*), the post of Ra's ul-Hudood is occupied by a highly educated and influential person who implements strict discipline in his subordinates and takes accounts of the execution of responsibilities from his lower ranks and reports the same to his upper ones.

The residence of the **Da'i-e-Mutlaq** is named as '**Devdi Mubaarak**' or '**Markaz-e-Da'wat**' i.e. the centre of the mission. All the **spiritual activities** (*ruhaani umoor*) of the followers right from his birth till his death is executed from this centre like the ceremony of giving names to a new-born, taking oath of allegiance from an adolescent boy/girl after giving him required preliminary religious knowledge, taking lectures on theology and spirituality among selected followers, conducting Nikaah, carrying out Talaq proceedings, settling internal and family disputes, arranging for burial rites, seeing the bad-good omen (*fa'l*) through Qur'an, fixing of engagement (*nisbat*) between prospective boys and girls etc. Near the centre, there is the **Main Mosque** (*al-Masjid ul-Jaame'*) where **Da'i** or **Ma'zoon** leads the daily prayers (*namaaz*), Friday prayer, prayer of the first night of every Islaamic month, prayer of the midnight (*nisf ul-layl*) in Ramazaan, prayer of important days-nights, prayer of Eid, prayer of the deceased (*janaazah*) etc. Today, the centre of Alavi Bohras is **Vadodara** where **Da'i** resides and apart from the Main Mosque there are other mosques and community halls which are looked after by **Da'i** himself. By the order of **Da'i**, persons (*aamil*) from the ranks of **Da'wat** are fixed to lead the prayers, meet the people for their personal assistance, handle different committees and help in exercising the Isma'ili faith properly.



The **Aamil** or *Saheb-e-Razaa*, who is appointed by the *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* in a place where a sizable population of Bohras exist, is granted the permission to perform the **religious ceremonies** of the believers. He also leads the local congregation in religious, social and community affairs and has the responsibility to impart religious knowledge and train the people as per community traditions. Mainly in the month of Moharram or Ramazaan or when the need arises, the authoritative person be it a *Da'i*, *Ma'zoon*, *Mukaasir* or *Ra's ul-Hudood* visit those places controlled by *Aamil* and administer the community affairs, settle the internal conflicts and give important guidelines for welfare and education. Such towns normally have a mosque and an adjoining assembly hall (*jamaa'at-khaana*) where **socio-religious functions** are held. The local committees manage these properties and oversee the social and religious activities of the local Bohras which they directly report to the central administration of the *Da'i* through the local *Aamil*.

Unfortunately, Alavi Bohras are misquoted as Aliyya Bohras in historical and cultural accounts, especially by the people who were hostile and hateful to them to be called by the name derived from Ali. Hence it was their deliberate attempt to call the Alavi Bohras by **misnaming or mispronouncing** the name Alavi. But now through the website the World knows them by **Alavi Bohras** – as a distinct community centered in Vadodara. They have their unique religious, social, cultural, financial, educational setup and have well-knitted administration independent of any sectarian influence.



*Haal Jazaa ul-Ihsaan? - Is the Recompensation of Goodness anything but Goodness?*

#### **Missionaries (Du'aat):**

Starting from the period of seclusion (*daur us-satr*) of the Faatemi Taiyebi Imaams starting from 21st Imaam Taiyeb (as) in 12th century AD till now, the chief missionary - *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* operates as **the sole representative of the Imaam (as) in the seclusion**. He has a great command and influence on the belief and practices of the Taiyebi Bohras. The first missionary (*Da'i-e-Mutlaq*) Saiyedna Zueb, the son of Moosaa (d. 546 AH/1151 AD), carried on the mission from 532 AH/1138 AD in Yaman after the seclusion of the *Imaam*. Total 24 missionaries (*Du'aat-e-Mutlaqeen* pl. of *Da'i-e-Mutlaq*) served the mission in Yaman till 974 AH/1567 AD. Then the centre of the mission (*markaz-e-Da'wat*) got transferred to Ahmedabad (Gujarat). Bohras remained as **a united single community** till the 26<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Dawoodji Burhaanuddin, the son of Ajabshah (d. 999 AH/1591

AD) in Ahmedabad. A major split occurred after this which resulted in the formation of **two groups** – Dawoodis, who believed in the appointment of 27<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Dawoodji Burhaanuddin, the son of Qutubshah (d. 1021 AH/1612 AD) and Sulaymaan.

After the death of 28<sup>th</sup> Dawoodi *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin (d. 1030 AH/1621 AD) in Ahmedabad, a major split occurred in mainstream Dawoodi Bohras and those who adhered to the rightful authority (*da'iship*) of the 29<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq*, the grandson of 28<sup>th</sup> Da'i, **Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin, the son of S. Ibraheem** (d. 1046 AH/1637 AD), the Martyr (*shaheed*) came to be known as **Alavi Bohras**. This schism divided the mainstream Dawoodi Bohras into two different communities viz. Alavi Bohras and Dawoodi Bohras (who stuck to the mainstream name that was before the split).

The 32<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Jivabhai Ziyauddin (d. 1130 AH/1718 AD) on the instructions of 31<sup>st</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Hasan Badruddin (d. 1090 AH/1679 AD) shifted the **seat of Da'wat** from Ahmedabad to Vadodara (*Badri Mohalla*) in 1110 AH/ 1699 AD. Total 7 missionaries (Du'aat-e-Mutlaqeen pl. of Da'i-e-Mutlaq) served the mission in Ahmedabad from 974 AH/1567 AD till 1090 AH/1679 AD. Since then the community has its centre in Vadodara and it became **the cradle of the mission**. During the period of 35<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Noorbhai Nooruddin (d. 1178 AH/1764 AD), Surat city became the seat of Da'wat for a short span of 20 years. It is the endeavors and efforts in the various fields by their missionaries (*du'aat*) that has led to the present **progress and prosperity** of Alavi Bohras. It is the result of their unending efforts that the community is now in the lap of a modern age with the realization of the wholesome commitment of a true faithful Bohra towards personal-social relations and it has achieved excellence in the field of **education and business**.

The illustrious and learned 41<sup>st</sup> *Da'i*, **Saiyedna Jivabhai Fakhruddin** (1347 AH/1929 AD), was an accomplished scholar, a prolific writer and poet, a capable organizer and a man of vision. He made the handwritten copies of numerous **old manuscripts** to make it accessible to the pupils for higher studies. He composed different genre of poetry in Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Lisan ud-Da'wat on varied topics such as merits of Ahl ul-Bayt (as) - the household of Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws), the pillars of Islaam and Imaan, morals, merits of Moharram ul-Haraam and Ramazaan ul-Mo'azzam, truly guided mission (*da'wat ul-haqq*), Imaam and Da'i, martyrs of Karbala and Imaam Husain (as), the city of Vadodara, merits of faithful believers and who serves the Da'wat selflessly, Qur'an-e-kareem etc. He named his composition as **"Diwaan-e-Haseen"**. It is a practice to recite the selected compositions or verses (*abyaat*) in the assembly (*majlis*) of Da'wat. Some of his compositions have become so famous that have got memorized by the majority of the people. During the period of fifty years of his mission, he re-vitalized the community, fostered strong faith, organized the mission's objectives with broad-mindedness and far-sightedness, promoted welfare and education, guided the community to shun the irreligious customs, practices and social vices, and emancipated the community from the clutches of ignorance.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i*, **Saiyedna Fidaali Badruddin** (1377 AH/1958 AD) was a strong man of principles and discipline. During his time a number of community buildings were constructed for the welfare of the people. He always took the path of truth and justice and stayed in Mumbai for 9 months in 1366 AH/1947 AD to safeguard the community from the evil eyes of the hypocrites. The 43<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i*, **Saiyedna Yusuf Nooruddin** (d. 1394 AH/1974 AD), has the distinction of constructing the most splendid and beautiful mosque **"al-Masjid un-Nooraani ul-Alavi"** at Vadodara in 1393 AH adorned by the delicate calligraphy and dressed in the white marble. The huge task of building this mosque continued for 6 yrs and it was the most sought after destination for sight-seers in

Vadodara. All these missionaries (*du'aat*) led the Faatimid mission to the same cause and shaped the life of the believers and their deeds (*a'amaal*) in accordance with the teachings of Qur'an-e-Kareem and Isma'ili Jurisprudence (*fiqh*).



*al-Hilmo Saiyed ul-Akhlaaq: The Wisdom is the Master of the Morals*

#### **Present Missionary (Da'i-e-Mutlaq):**

The present 44<sup>th</sup> **Da'i-e-Mutlaq** or *Da'i uz-Zamaan* (the da'i of the present time) i.e. the representative (*naa'ib*) of *Imaam uz-Zamaan* (the imaam in the progeny of Imaam Taiyeb), **Saiyedna Abu Haatim Taiyeb Ziyauddin Saheb (tus)** has continued his predecessor's endeavors with particular emphasis on strengthening the community's Islaamic practices by promoting and spreading awareness about the Faatimid identity and Isma'ili legacy. His birthplace is Badri Mohalla, Vadodara and coincidentally his birth date falls on 4<sup>th</sup> **Rabi' ul-Aakhar 1351 AH/6<sup>th</sup> August 1932 AD**, when 21<sup>st</sup> Faatemi Imaam Taiyeb was born in Egypt on the same date in 524 AH/22 February 1130 AD. Under the graceful hands of his grandfather, the 42<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i*, Saiyedna Fidaali Badruddin, he completed his education and during the *Da'iship* of his beloved father, the 43<sup>rd</sup> *Da'i*, Saiyedna Yusuf Nooruddin, he being *Ma'zoon* (a spiritual status after *da'i*) at that time shouldered the responsibility of educating people for the betterment of the community. Now that he is on a status of *Da'i-e-Mutlaq*, on 4<sup>th</sup> **Rabi' ul-Aakhar 1404 AH/7<sup>th</sup> January 1984 AD**, he appointed his eldest son Haatim Zakiyuddin as his successor and elevated him on the status of **Ma'zoon-e-Mutlaq**. He appointed his son Mohammad Nooruddin on the status of **Mukaasir-e-Mutlaq** on 7<sup>th</sup> **Rajab 1430 AH/29<sup>th</sup> June 2009 AD** after the demise of his son *Mukaasir-e-Mutlaq* Dr. Husain Mo'eenuddin on 13<sup>th</sup> **Shawwaal 1429 AH/12<sup>th</sup> October 2008 AD**. The status of **Ra's ul-Hudood** is headed by his youngest son Dr. Zulqarnain Hakeemuddin.

He paved the way to conduct mass marriages with minimal expenses, revamped the syllabus of *Madrasah Taiyebiyah* by making the learning of **Lisaan ud-da'wat** compulsory for all pupils, guided to publish a number of books highlighting Alavi faith and practices, conceptualized community website and monthly newsletter, eased the matrimonial complications by making *Devdi Mubaarak* (the office of *ad-Da'wat ul-Haadiyah*) the centre of all these activities, promoted youth activities, women welfare, medical centers and camps, educational skills for teachers, higher education, literacy, trade and business etc. He has fixed the **mehr of Rs. 1000/-** (which was



previously Rs. 200/-) for the marriage proposal given to the bride and it is on a discretionary power of an individual to give or not to give anything apart from *mehr*. There is no concept of dowry and one is free to arrange anything for the marriage of her daughter as per his financial condition, but under the pre-defined religious laws. His tenure of *Da'iship* is marked by the constructions of new mosques, guest houses (*musaafir-khaanas*), mausoleums and community halls.

Publications meant for religious knowledge and awareness (*deeni ma'lumaat*) proved prime objective of his *Da'iship*. Knowing that the books are the mother of discipline, he always emphasized in reading good things for fruitful results. Several books highlighting **Isma'ili-Taiyebi faith and facts** were published to make his followers conscious of their religious and social duties. Books such as *Kitaab ul-Walaayah* - how sincerity is incumbent on a follower for his imaam, *Makhzan ul-Masaa'il* - Q&A relating to wide range of topics strengthening the knowledge of a beginner, *Lisaan ud-Da'wat* – 3 books for learning the language of Da'wat in detail, *Mansak* – 2 books guiding a pilgrim for Hajj and 'Umrah, *Nisf ul-Layl* – different prayers with translation, *Anwaar ul-Qur'an* – different chapters of Qur'an with translation, *Shahrullaah Saheefah* – containing detailed account of Ramazaan, *Misbaah* – consisting of all the supplications (*du'as*) with translation which an Alavi Bohra recites from dawn to dusk, *Saheefah Taiyebiyah* – comprehensive account of each and every aspect of religious obligations of an Alavi, *Ad'eeyat us-Salaat* – meant for the students of Madrasah Taiyebiyah etc.



Wal 'Ilmo 'indallaah: The Knowledge is only with Allaah

### **Isma'ili-Taiyebi Faith:**

Alavis strongly believes in the **Tawheed** (Oneness) of Allaah which, according to them, is not only limited to Allaah but also applies to His representative as well i.e. A person of highest religious status (*Saheb-e-Maqaam* or *Hujjat*) who in the religious hierarchy is the topmost **spiritual authority** in his time, may be the Prophet or the spiritual master (*imaam*) of his progeny or his missionary (*da'i*) in their respective times. They believe in the **Tajreed** of Allaah which implies that the Creator (Allaah, *khaaliq*) is entirely different from the Creation (*makhlooq*). **Creator is always complete and His Creation is always incomplete.** Religion of Allaah (*shari'at*) is a

path that is taken by the Creation to transform itself from incompleteness to the completion under the guidance of the Prophets of Allaah. Creation is totally dependent on its Creator. They believe in the **Tanzeeh** of Allaah which means that the Names of Allaah (*al-Asmaa ul-Husnaa*) does not at all apply to Allaah The Almighty but to His first creation 'First Intellect' (*aql-e-awwal*) who accepted the **Call (da'wat) of Allaah** on its own.

The core of the Isma'ili-Taiyebi faith is to believe in the **unseen things (ghayb)** and in the succession of those spiritual authorities who had remained guardian of the Mission of Allaah, right from the first Prophet Aadam till the present day. The utterance of this faith is recited in each and every prayer. This belief states that, Heaven (*Jannat*) is true, Hell (*jahannum*) is true, Resurrection (*ba'ath*) is true, Balance of deeds (*mizaan*) is true, Way for Salvation (*siraat*) is true, Accounts of actions in the Grave (*hisaab*) is true, Angels (*malaa'ikah*) are true, Jinn are true, Reward for right-doers (*thawaab*) is true, Retribution for wrong-doers (*'azaab*) is true, Day of Resurrection (*qayamat*) is true, for Forgiveness of a believer the Intercession of his Imaam (*shafaa'at*) is true, this Material World (*duniyaa*) will get destroyed (*faani*) is true and the Hereafter (*aakhirat*) will always remain (*baaqa*) is true.

Alavis believe in **Prophet-hood** of the divine Prophets and the divine books and messages revealed upon them i.e. *nubuvat-risaalat* of *Ambiyaa-Mursaleen*, **Vicerency** of the People of Prophet (*ahl ul-bayt*) i.e. *wasayat* of *Awsiyaa*, the institution of supreme spiritual and temporal leadership from the progeny of the Vicegerent of the Prophet i.e. the *imaamat* of *A'immat* (pl. of *imaam*) and the call or mission (*da'wat*) of the missionaries (*du'aat*) of the Imaam. The Isma'ili faith, unlike mainstream Islaam, is based on the tradition of hierarchical appointment. In the case of an *Imaam*, the predecessor Imaam appoints his successor only from his sons and this goes on from father to son in the progeny of Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws). In the case of a *Da'i*, the predecessor *Da'i* can appoint his successor not only from his sons but also from the people of *Da'wat* ranks who deserves the post having the highest state of knowledge, wisdom and governance. Each authority at the lower rank has to work with total devotion and submission to the one at the higher rank. There cannot be any compromise or self-captivation in it. The religious authorities who work with *Ma'zoon* and *Mukaasir* are known as *Hudood* in the Isma'ili terminology. The *hadd* (a person of a rank with special duty - pl. *hudood*) at the upper rank demands total obedience from the *hadd* at lower rank. Thus, **the Isma'ili faith is a religion of subservience (*tabaa'at*) and obedience (*itaa'at*) to the Spiritual authorities (*darajaat-e-ruhaaniyah*)**. No dissent in any form is ever permitted.

A beginner or an outsider is not at all allowed to discuss about the religious intricacies unless he knows the basics of Isma'ili-Taiyebi faith. If he has some query then he can ask and consult the religious authority, but only after the acquisition of a necessary primary knowledge of Islaamic faith (*shari'at*). Reason behind this is because of the fact that it is not based on the sole literary meaning or grammatical interpretation or translation of the Qur'an with the disposition of the lawful deeds but its very essence is obtained only by knowing its hidden implications (*baatin*) and esoteric meaning (*ta'weel*). Isma'ilism in general and Taiyebism in particular, deals with the **allegorical interpretation of the pillars of Islaam**, a peculiar Isma'ili philosophy on unity (*wahdaaniyat*), creation (*takhleeq*), cosmology (*aflaak*), eschatology (*mabda'-ma'aad*), institution of Prophet-hood and *Imaamat*. Therefore, an Isma'ili-Taiyebi believer should submit himself to the **authority of the Imaam** or his deputy *Da'i* unquestionably on the powers and orders regarding religion, family and society with the strict observance of customary obedience to the higher rank of the religious hierarchy. Only those at the advance stage of learning could aspire to know the hidden meaning of Islaamic thoughts and tenets. Due to this reason the *Da'i* take **strict oath of allegiance (*bay'at-mithaaq*)** from his follower in the name of the *Imaam* of present

time (*imaam uz-zamaan*) so as to pledge his absolute loyalty to the *Imaam* or the *Da'i* and his sincerity to follow Isma'ili faith in each and every aspect of his life.

Thus, at the age of puberty every Bohra believer (*mu'min*) pronounces the traditional and compulsory oath of allegiance in front of his *Da'i* which requires the initiatee to adhere to the Islaamic law (*shari'at*) and accept the religious leadership of the *Da'i* of his time (*da'i uz-zamaan*). This oath is renewed each year on **18<sup>th</sup> Zul Hijjah**, the auspicious day when Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws) appointed his son-in-law and cousin Ali ul-Murtazaa, the son of Abu Taalib, as his vicegerent during the farewell pilgrimage (*hijjat ul-wadaa'*) at the place known as "**Ghadeer-e-Khumm**", when the Prophet was returning from Makkah to Madinah in 10 AH/15th March 632 AD. Apart from *Eid ul-Fitr* and *Eid ul-Azhaa*, Alavi Bohras consider this as a day of the completion of Islaam and celebrate it as *Eid-e-Ghadeer-e-Khumm*. The Alavi Bohras follow Faatimid School of thought and jurisprudence which recognizes **seven pillars of Islaam**. Among all the pillars, **devotion and submission** (*walaayat*) to the religious authority (*da'i*) is the supreme and most important pillar without which all the remaining six pillars are meaningless. Each pillar has seven obligations (*faraa'iz* pl. of *farz*) and twelve traditions (*sunan* pl. of *sunnat*). These pillars are as follows:

- *Walaayat* - Love and devotion for Allaah, His Prophets, Imaam and his representatives (*du'aat* pl. of *da'i*).
- *Tahaarat* - Ritual purity & cleanliness
- *Salaat* - Five daily prayers
- *Zakaat* - Purification through paying of religious dues to a *Da'i* in the month of Ramazaan
- *Sawm* - Fasting for 30 days of the month of Ramazaan
- *Hajj* - Pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah in the last month of Zul Hijjah
- *Jihaad* - Holy war against the infidels (*kaafireen*) and hypocrites (*munaafiqeen*)



*Innallaaha la Yohibbo man kaana Mukhtaalan Fakhoora: Indeed Allaah does not like any arrogant braggart (who talks immodestly or with excessive pride about himself)*



## **The Unfortunate Event in the History of Alavi Bohras: The Demolition of the Holy Graves**

Every history is marked with good and bad memories. One such pathetic and unfortunate event that occurred in the history of Alavi Bohras, which has left deep scars in the hearts of mumineen, was the one which took place on the ill-fated day 10-11-1416 AH/29-3-1996 AD in Saraspur Qabrastan, Ahmedabad. The cemetery manager ordered **the demolition of the *qabr-e-mubaarak* (holy grave) of 30<sup>th</sup> Alavi *Da'i* Saiyedna Abd ut-Taiyeb Zakiyuddin** (d. 1047 AH/1638 AD), the son of 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin (aq) in the pretext of constructing the new mausoleum. Several rounds of talks with the cemetery authorities and their higher-ups resulted in giving guarantee of constructing the grave afresh on the same place. **These talks were full of deceit and shrewdness.** Once again on 7-4-1417 AH/21-8-1996 AD they exhibited their unending cruelty and hatred by demolishing the grave of 29<sup>th</sup> Alavi *Da'i* Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin Shaheed (aq), the son of S. Ibraheem and the grandson of Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin Saheb (aq) – the 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq*. Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin Shaheed (aq) is the most eminent and distinguished *Da'i* (missionary) because Alavi Bohras derive their name from him.

The succession of *Du'aat* of Alavi Bohras is established on the truthfulness, loyalty and bravery of Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin Shaheed (aq) who sacrificed his life in the way of Allaah. He guarded *ad-Da'wat ul-Haadiyah* (rightly guided mission) and showed **the path of Paradise** to the believers. Atrociousness and inhumanity of the cemetery management did not stop at this event. To extinguish the fire of protest and dissent which rose after these cruel episodes, the higher authorities of Dawoodi community gave assurance to consider the matter and resolve it as soon as possible by reconstructing the graves of Alavi *Da'is*. **But that was all patch-up work done by them and nothing concrete has been done until now.** Alavi authorities never lose an opportunity to remind their Dawoodi counterparts about this pending demand to restructure and restore the graves. Rampant corruption and partiality has eclipsed the process of getting justice from the local reinforcement agencies and the court of law.

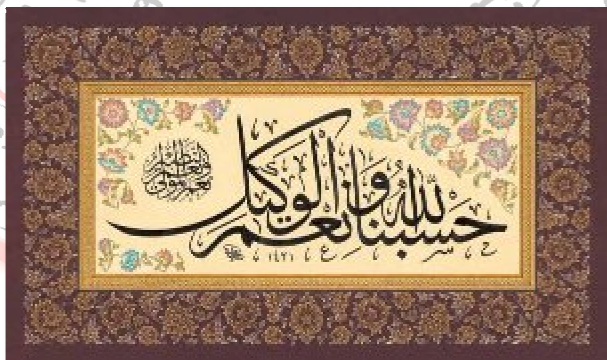
Prophet Mohammad Rasoolullaah (saws) has said that **'Place between my grave and my pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise (Jannat).'** The grave of Rasoolullaah (saws), here, means the time after his death and the pulpit means the time of the Day of Judgement (*Qayamat*) when Imaam Qaa'im (as), the last imaam from the progeny of Rasoolullaah (saws) will reveal himself (do the *Zuhoor*). The place between the grave and the pulpit means the Prophet's vicegerent (*wasi*), vicegerent's progeny (*imaam*) and the progeny's representative (*da'i*), who by the divine appointment (*nass*) guards and promulgates the Deen of Allaah in truthful and legible way. Hence the *Da'i* for the mumineen is the door to Paradise and the grave of the *Da'i* is the mortal remains where the believers come for **spiritual shelter and salvation** i.e. to take *Barakaat* of *Ziyaarat*.

One cannot imagine what fate Allaah Ta'aala will bring to the people who demolished the graves of Alavi *Du'aat* with whom thousands of faithful's hearts and their sentiments are attached? Hence, Alavis feel that by demolishing the grave of their *da'i*, some mischievous elements have unsuccessfully targeted their very foundation. **Alavis still visit (do the *ziyaarat*) the same place in the mausoleum where the demolished graves of *Da'is* once stood.** If at all the culprits think that Alavis will forget graves of their *Du'aat* then it is a serious mistake on their part because removing the graves will not remove the remembrance and sacrifice of the People

of Allaah (*da'is*) from the memory and hearts and this will remain perpetual as the reality has been noted down in the religious treatises (*deeni Saheefah*) that has been taught right from the beginning in religious school (*deeni madrasah*) to the children.

The main purpose of demolition of the graves was to remove the signs of spiritual attachment of Alavis from the Bohra cemetery. This mean task was carried out on the behest of some **envious anti-Alavi elements** in the Da'wat hierarchy of Dawoodis. The fact behind the hatred and jealousy exhibited by Dawoodis is that both the Alavi *da'is*, 29<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Ali, the grandson of 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* and 30<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Zakiyuddin saheb, the son of 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* have been buried there since 4 centuries besides the grave of 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin and **all the graves of three Alavi Da'is are in a single mausoleum (mazaar)**. This is the most concrete and existential proof and a factual account that favors the truthful appointment of Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin Shaheed (aq) as the 29<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* by his grandfather 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin Saheb (aq) – who is a common *Da'i* of Alavi and Dawoodis.

Interestingly, before demolition, when any Dawoodi Bohra visitor used to come (do *ziyaarat*) to the mausoleum of Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin Saheb (aq), unknowingly, **they also did the *ziyaarat* of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Alavi Da'is**. Hence it was very difficult for the Dawoodi authorities to explain their people the cause of the presence of graves of two Alavi *Da'is* besides the 28<sup>th</sup> *Da'i* in the same mausoleum, as they don't believe in the succession of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Alavi *da'is*. Since the mausoleum of Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin Saheb (as) is the place of visit of three *Da'is* (28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>) of Alavis, they deserve the possession of the place more than anyone else. **To uproot the foundation of this confusion a well planned conspiracy was hatched to demolish the two graves of Alavi Da'is in the mausoleum.** Some years back, Sulaymaanis won the case of acquiring the land of the same graveyard where their *Da'i* is buried in a separate mausoleum. The Saraspur Qabristan (graveyard) is the only place in India where all three Bohra communities (Alavi, Dawoodi and Sulaymaani) visit and pay respect to their respective *da'is* who were buried between the period of 975-1050 AH/1567-1640 AD.



*Hasbonallaaho wa Ne'mal Wakeel: Allaah is sufficient for us, He is an Excellent Trustee*

## **Customs and Traditions:**

Every New Year, the first ten days (*asharah mubaarakah*) of Muharram is marked by the historic event of the martyrdom of Imaam Husain (as), the son of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as) and the grandson of Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws), which is commemorated by setting up water stalls (*sabeel*) and doing mourning assemblies (*majaalis-e-'azadari*). In these ten days special morning discourses are held in the Main Mosque in the presence of *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* where **Isma'ili-Taiyebi ideology and ethos** is taught and **a message of sacrifice and safeguarding** ones belief is given taking into account the martyrdom of the people of Karbalaa. In honour of the truth on which the whole event of Karbalaa stood and remembering the hardships, thirst and hunger of the martyrs of Karbalaa, the tradition of setting up of the **water outlet (*sabeel*) made of pure Silver** is still alive in the community. The huge silver *sabeel* is built every year in Badri Mohalla, Vadodara, in a space between the Main Mosque and the residence of the *Da'i*. It was first built in Mumbai on Mohammadali Road sixty years ago, during the time of 42nd *Da'i*, Saiyedna Fidaali Badruddin (d. 1377 AH/1958 AD). Every year, while going into the mosque, *Da'i* sits near this *sabeel* and drinks a sip of water offered by the care-taker and then proceeds for the discourse.

Congregational **prayers and assemblies** are held chiefly on every Friday, first night of every Hijri month, first ten days of Moharram – commemoration of the martyrdom of Imaam Husain in Karbalaa, 20<sup>th</sup> Safar – *Chehlum* (40<sup>th</sup> day after the martyrdom of Imaam Husain), 2<sup>nd</sup> Rabi' ul-Awwal – Birthday and demise of the Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws), 4<sup>th</sup> Rabi' ul-Aakhar – Birthday of *Imaam uz-Zamaan* and *Da'i uz-Zamaan*, 15<sup>th</sup> Rajab – Birth of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as) in Ka'bah, night of 27<sup>th</sup> Rajab – Ascension to Heavens of the Prophet Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws) i.e. *Me'raaj*, night of 15<sup>th</sup> Sha'baan – Change of Qiblah and the night of forgiveness, 30 nights of Ramazaan – Midnight (*nisf ul-layl*) prayer recited with rhythmic verses (*munaajaat*), night of 17<sup>th</sup> Ramazaan – Remembrance of the Merits of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as), night of 19<sup>th</sup> Ramazaan – night of affliction (*zarbat*) on Ali ul-Murtazaa (as), night of 21<sup>st</sup> Ramazaan - Martyrdom of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as), night of 23<sup>rd</sup> Ramazaan – the celebrated night of salvation, night of 30<sup>th</sup> Ramazaan – night of Eid ul-Fitr, 9<sup>th</sup> Zul Hijjah – day of Hajj Pilgrimage i.e. *arafah*, night of 10<sup>th</sup> Zulhijjah – night of Eid ul-Azhaa (ritual sacrifice – *zabeehat*), 18<sup>th</sup> Zul Hijjah – day of ascension of Ali ul-Murtazaa (as) at the status of *wasi* i.e. became vicegerent of Mohammad ul-Mustafaa (saws) at *Ghadeer-e-khumm*.

Social gatherings take place mainly on the occasions of naming of the new born child and circumcision (*aqeeqah* and *khatnah*), birthdays (*milaad*), religious oath (*mithaaq*), marriage (*waleemah*), inauguration or opening ceremony of a new house or business (*iftitaah*), commemoration of the late *Da'i* (*urs*), ritual food for a deceased person after 3 days, 40 days, 4 month 10 days and after a year (*ziyaarat*, *chaalimu*, *cha-maasi*, *warsi*), ritual food after the pilgrimage (*wakeerah*), engagement ceremony, joint ritual food in the month of Moharram and Ramazaan (*niyaaz* and *iftaari*). A ceremony of fixing the date for marriage is a special occasion for both the bride and bridegroom. *Saiyedna* call them along with their respective parents to perform this ceremony in **which guidance is given to them to respect the needs of each other and share the responsibilities to form a peaceful home by acting as a sincere and loyal Alavi Bohra**. A wedding card is first offered to *Saiyedna* and then only it is distributed among relatives and friends.

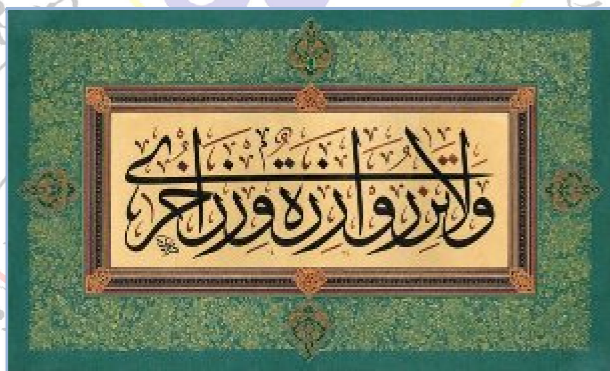
There are 12 most prime **Prophetic Traditions** (*sunnat*) which every Alavi Bohra has to follow and conform to them in his life. In it there are **6 types of relations** with whom he has to build close, warm and amiable



relationship. They are 1) Parents, 2) Wife and Children, 3) Neighbor, 4) Close relatives, 5) Servants and 6) Community members. Other 6 are based on social harmony and good character, they are 1) Always do good deeds, 2) Shun bad things, 3) Salute (say *salaam*) and be friendly to others, 4) Invite people and prepare food for them, 5) Visit a sick person and 6) Always speak truth and be honest.

Discipline is supreme in every walk of a believer's life. **Etiquettes and well-defined rules** (*aadaab*) govern in meeting *Saiyedna*, visiting graves, taking meals, sitting in an assembly (*majlis*), sleeping, travelling, maintaining sexual relationship, acquiring lawful knowledge, answering nature's call (*bayt ul-khalaa*, toilet), mosque, walking with parents, visiting a sick person, preparation of Friday prayers, observing fast, reciting Qur'an, talking with elders, constructing a house, behaving with a guest etc.

Offering pilgrimages to the holy shrines of the Prophets, **Faatemi Imaam (A'immah-e-Faatimiyyeen)**, celebrated missionaries (*du'aat-e-amjadeen*) and devout saints (*Mawaali-e-Tahereen*) who acted and proved to be a role model by sacrificing their life and wealth in guarding the Da'wat and Isma'ili Taiyebi faith, plays an important role in the devotional life of Alavi Bohras. The places of pilgrimage abroad include Syria, Jordan, Karbalaa, Najaf, Bayt ul-Muqaddas, Misr and Yaman; while in India it includes Ahmedabad, Khambhat, Patan, Denmaal, Dongaam, Galiyakot, Kapadwanj, Umreth, Mai saheb etc. There are rest houses or sanatoria (*musaafir-khaanas*) for the *Zaa'ereen* (visitors who come to the holy tomb for blessings-*barakaat* and supplications-*du'a*) providing them with lodging and boarding facilities in several cities run by charitable organizations.



*Wa laa tazero Waazeratun Wizra Ukhraa: And no Bearer shall bear another's Burden*

#### **Language and Calendar:**

Alavi Bohras read, write and speak an Arabicized form (blended with Arabic vocabulary) of Gujarati language, called **Lisaan ud-Da'wat** i.e. the language of the mission, which is an amalgamation of Arabic, Urdu and Persian words and written in Arabic script. All the *Da'wat* correspondence, orders and documentary affairs are

exclusively carried out in *Lisaan ud-Da'wat* and the sectarian education system is completely based on it. **Religious discourses and congregational lectures** during the prayers are held in it. The language of Allaah, His angels, His Prophets and His book is Arabic, so is the language of *Da'wat*. The missionaries who came to India (Gujarat) from Egypt and Yemen to promulgate and preach Isma'ili faith, mainly during the reign of the 18th Faatemi imaam, Mustansir billah (as) (427-487 AH/1036-1094 AD), spoke Arabic language as it was their mother tongue.

The first rank of preachers (*wulaat*) in India were Ahmad, Abdullaah and Nooruddin who learnt local language (*Sanskrit*) and blended it with Arabic to make people understand their message and mission. Hence Sanskrit was blended with Arabic. This language then remained unchanged until the beginning of Muslim rule in India, when it got influenced with Persian and Urdu. Gradually the Arabic-Sanskrit language underwent drastic transformation with the addition of Persian and Urdu terms and it resulted in the birth of a new language exclusively spoken by the Bohras – the *Lisaan ud-Da'wat*. **This language got changed into Gujarati syntax but retaining majority of Arabic terminology along with the writing pattern.** Thus like Arabic, *Lisaan ud-Da'wat* is written from right to left and it is the sum-up of variety of idioms-phrases and multiple dialects which makes it distinctive and comprehensive. Alavi Bohras residing globally speak this only language and its birth place which is now the centre of *Da'wat*; Vadodara places a pivotal role to make everyone adhere to their roots i.e. their mother tongue. Every Alavi has to come to Vadodara to fulfill his religious as well as social obligations by keeping *Lisaan ud-Da'wat* alive in his heart and tongue.

Being *Faatimi*, Alavi Bohras use *Hijri* Lunar calendar which was established and published during the Faatimid rule in Egypt in the second half of 4<sup>th</sup> century AH/10<sup>th</sup> century AD. Before that the *Imaam* used to announce months and festivals verbally among his followers. The system of calculating months and days began right from the first prophet of Islaam, *Aadam* (as) and that knowledge continued from one prophet to another till the last prophet of Islaam, *Mohammad ul-Mustafaa* (saws) who came with the final message which also included how to calculate months and days. This thing got transferred from tongue to chest into the holy *Faatimi Imaams*. ***Imaam* is like a moon, so seeing the glowing (*nooraani*) face of *Imaam* and obeying his order for the commencement of a new month is like moon-sighting.** The Alavi calendar has fixed number of days of each month based on the Lunar leap year (*kabeesah*) formula. An Alavi year has 355 days and in every 30 years 11 extra days are added i.e. in the span of 30 years; an extra day is added 11 times in different years in the last month of Zul Hijjah making it 30 days, which has usually 29 days. **All odd months have 30 days and all even months have 29 days.** Therefore accordingly, the month of Ramazaan being an odd month always consists of 30 days. *Da'i* has strict control on printing of this calendar as the details of all important dates are noted in it with the timings of daily prayers. A single type of calendar is printed and is distributed in the whole community.



*Wa Libaas ut-Taqwaa zaaleka Khayrun: And the Garment of Piety, that is the Best*

#### **Dress code and Food:**

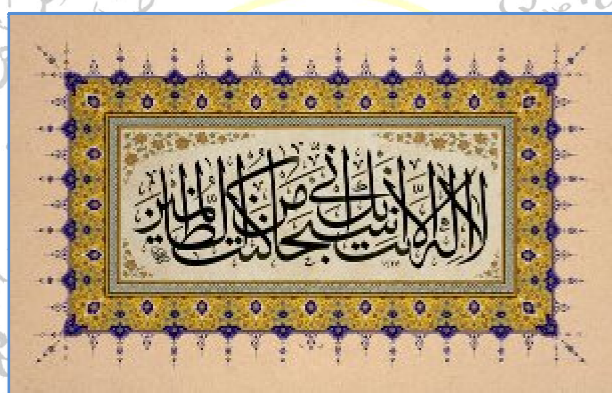
The members of the Royal family which includes *Da'i* and his close associates, assembly members and dignitaries with special permission wear a **white turban** (*paghdi*) made of cotton cloth on a thread *topi* carries a distinction, unique identity and a mark of respect. The turban of a *Da'i* and his deputy (*ma'zoon*) has a small piece of golden cloth which is evident on its front side and this distinguishes him from others. It is worn in prayers, functions, feast, funeral, assemblies etc. It is made only by the permission of *Da'i* and by the ladies (*mastooraat*) of Royal family at the *Da'i's* residence. **Nobody can wear this turban unless permitted by *Da'i*.**

Alavi Bohra's traditional dress for man is white kurta, pyjama and a special cap weaved from white-silver-golden thread called **topi**. He is supposed to wear this attire in religious rituals as well as social gatherings where there is a presence of *Da'i* or his representative, whether he be in mosque, mausoleum, graveyard or when he comes to meet someone at the *Da'i's* residence. He puts on a golden turban *pheto* instead of a traditional *topi* and an outer robe called '*abaa* or *sayaa* especially during the marriage ceremony. For woman, the dress code is a veil which covers her entire body from head to toe called as *rida*. There is no rule of its colour or pattern, but not a single body part of chastity and modesty should get revealed to a person with whom she can marry (*ghayr-mehram*). Traditional *rida* is made of two pieces; upper (*pardi*) and lower (*ghaghro*) stitched with beautiful laces and adorned with imitation materials. Like man, woman is dressed in *rida* on all religio-social occasions or when she goes out for some work. **This dress code has now become an integral part of her social life and is coined as a unique identity of a Bohri woman.** In Madrasah Taiyebiyah, the dress code for boys is white loose long shirt (*kurta*), loose trouser (*pyjama*) and *topi* and for girls is white loose long frock (*kurti*), loose trouser (*izaar*) and scarf.

Alavi Bohras eat collectively in a group of 7 persons at social functions or with family members at home in a traditional big round plate known as a **thaal** while sitting on the floor. Eating with spoon and fork is not permissible i.e. one has to eat with his right hand fingers and not by using left hand. Also one cannot sit and eat on table or chair with exception that one has any health problem. This is a tradition (*sunnat*) of the Prophet Mohammad (saws) who sat with his household i.e. Ali, Faatimah, Hasan and Husain (*panjatan paak*) in a big



round plate and used to eat the holy dishes of the Paradise send from the Heavens. **That heavenly plate came to be known as *maa'edah*.** Every year during the New Year's Eve, every Bohra's house witnesses a specially decorated *thaal* with a variety of dishes made from cereals (popularly called as *lachko*), vegetables, fish and meat. It is considered a good omen for a house to sit together in this *thaal* and begin the feast with the name of Allaah by taking salt, sugar, milk, honey etc. When *Da'i* presides on any social function, his permission is first sought and a *thaal* is presented before him, then only other *thaals* are distributed between guests. After he takes first morsel, others start eating after taking his permission. Manners and etiquettes are maintained strictly while eating and sharing the dishes. **Salt is tasted first by reciting *Bismillaah* after which the eldest member in the *thaal* eats the serving first.** The *thaal* must be clean and free from any remaining food after eating. Each member takes the amount of serving which is sufficient for him. Wastage and excess of food is not permitted. Every member again tastes the salt at the end. One has to sit with his legs folded backward and see that nothing falls down while taking morsels on the plastic sheet (*sifrah*) kept below the *thaal*.



*Laa ilaaha illa anta Subhaanaka inni kunto min az-Zaalemeen: There is no Lord but You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among Wrong-doers*

### **Profession and Education:**

Though Vadodara, being the hometown (*maadar-e-watan*) for majority of Alavi Bohras, they are scattered in different parts of India and abroad. **Mumbai is another city which has sizeable number of Alavis where they have their own mosque, graveyard, community hall and guest house.** In the last 15 years, some of the families have migrated to Vadodara for social benefit and better livelihood. They are also settled in the big cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Bangalore etc. Alavi Bohras of Nadiad town have a distinction of constructing a small beautiful mosque in spite of small number of families and they always gather in it for all big occasions and support each other in every possible way. Anand, Choota-Udaipur, Borsad, Ankleshwar, Bharuch, Navsari, Mevli, Halol, Kalol, Umalla, Godhra, Kosamba etc. also have some families doing ancestral business. Internationally, some of the young professionals and entrepreneurs are settled with their families in US, UK,

UAE, Saudi Arabia and Australia. **They all come to Vadodara along with their children and visit *Da'i* to get guidance and blessings.** They are well-connected and well-informed with their community through the community monthly newsletter "**Mishkaat ul-Haadi**" and the community website [www.alavibohra.org](http://www.alavibohra.org).

Being Bohras, main occupation is manufacturing business and trading especially production and retailing of optical frames, tin containers, tin cupboards and furniture, hardware, printing, dress material, catering, industrial plant ducting, computer hardware and software etc. In fact, optical market is largely dominated by Alavi Bohras in Vadodara. Now the trend is fast changing towards professionalism, thus the number of teachers, accountants, engineers, doctors, CAs, MBAs, advocates, computer professionals, company managers etc. is rapidly increasing. Not following the foot-steps of their home-business, these **skillful enthusiastic youngsters** are opting for entirely different course of interest for fulfilling their aspirations which assures them with stable career, progress and financial strength.

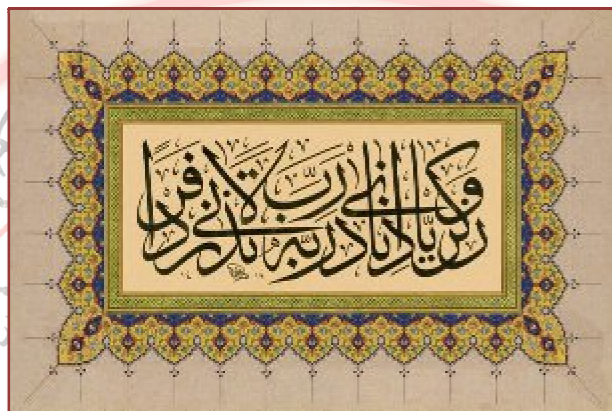
To aid people financially and to promote trade and commerce, Alavi Bohras have their own Co-operative bank situated in Vadodara which was established during the time of the 43rd *Da'i*, Saiyedna Yusuf Nooruddin. Today, this bank has progressed considerably and is helping needy people in carrying out their routine business smoothly. They have several charitable trusts and social workers who help the weaker section of the community by assisting them in healthcare, hospitalization, books and fees for higher education, school and tuition fees, food, giving loans without interest (*qarz-e-hasanah*), providing houses with low rates, arranging finance for marriages etc.

The total population of Alavi Bohras is around 8000 people. **The ratio of male-female is normally equal and there is no discrimination of education and upbringing between a boy or girl child.** Alavi parents are very keen and serious to educate their children and give them the best for their future in form of religious and professional education. There is a strong instinct of learning tradition amongst the Alavi Bohras, their *Da'is* usually being prolific writers, orators and promoters of education. Today all the young members of the Royal Family i.e. the household of *Da'i* which is the first family of the community are well-educated and well-aware of social traits and trends. **It was a wish of the present *Da'i* (Saiyedna) to see his community with the priceless wealth of higher education.**

And now this has become a reality, with the persistent and untiring efforts of spreading the awareness of acquiring knowledge His Holiness Abu Haatim Saiyedna Taiyeb Ziyauddin (TUS) has accomplished his mission and achieved the goal of attaining nearly 100% literacy rate in the community. Importance of imparting education to the children is always focused in the discourses and sermons by *Saiyedna*. **Not a single child in the community is deprived of basic education.** This awareness has transformed the way of living drastically. Apart from taking interest in the family business, the youngsters have started opting for higher studies in various disciplines to carve out their bright future.

*Saiyedna* ascended on the holy throne of *Da'wat* (*takht-e-taiyebi*) in 1394 AH/1974 AD, and since then he has led the tenure of his *Da'iship* by guiding and guarding believers on the right path (*siraat-e-mustaqeem*) and the way of salvation (*raah-e-najaat*). Knowing that treading on this path without education will not get the community its desired destination (*manzil-e-madqsood*), a preliminary school (*baalwadi*) which was founded during the time of the 43rd *Da'i*, Saiyedna Yusuf Nooruddin, in Badri Mohalla, was shifted to a new premises

now called as Zenith School. This educational institution has helped to a large extent in building the educational awareness and in promoting higher learning among Alavi youth.



*Wa Zakariyaa iz naadaa Rabbahu, Rabbe la tazarni Fardan: And Zakariyaa, when he cried out to his Lord, O my Lord! Do not leave me without an Heir*

#### **Vadodara City: A centre of Da'wat:**

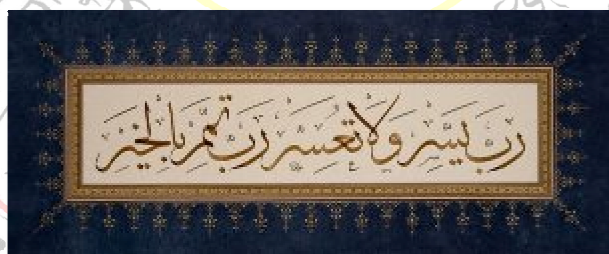
Since 1110 AH/ 1699 AD, three centuries has passed and 12 Alavi missionaries (*da'is*) have so far served the holy mission of Allaah with peace and prosperity. Vadodara is the place of moderate peace-loving people with moderate climatic conditions. **Its soil has the essence of producing the men of wisdom and intellectuality.** It is a distinction for Alavi Bohras that as many as 12 missionaries with a gap of 20 years when 35<sup>th</sup> *Da'i* carried on the mission in Surat (1158-1178 AH/1745-1764 AD), have served their spiritual responsibilities from a single city and in a single house for such a long period. This distinction reaches to a new level of supremacy from the fact that the foundation of the place which is now the residence of *Saiyedna* is more than **300 years** old where all 12 *da'is* stayed in their respective periods of Da'wat and now it is showered by the bliss of angelic presence of these *da'is*. **This holy residence (Devdi Mubaarak) houses in it, an unparallel and priceless treasures of Faatimi-Taiyebi literature.** It has the library of 450 Arabic and Persian manuscripts (MSS-makhtootah), some of them around 500 yrs old.

When their 32<sup>nd</sup> *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* Saiyedna Ziauddin Jivabhai migrated to Vadodara, he took all the valuable manuscripts with him which was there in the possession of Alavi *da'is* in Ahmedabad. In Vadodara, he first built a beautiful mosque with 7 pillars and 21 arches. He pioneered to build a separate street (*mohalla*) for Alavi Bohras. **He built a mosque at the entrance of mohalla and kept his residence in the middle of it.** He then meticulously preserved those manuscripts and maintained this legacy for posterity. There are also autograph copies chiefly transcribed by the Alavi missionaries (*da'is*) making it a unique treasure house and a rich traditional heritage. These manuscripts are mainly on Faatimi jurisprudence (*fiqh*), history (*akhbaar*), doctrines



(*aqaa'id*), facts and realities (*haqaa'iq*), lectures (*majaalis*), succession in Prophets and their progeny with propagation of *Nass*, refutation of false sects, religious sciences, poetry, biographies, admonitions and prayers and on comparative studies. **They all are painstakingly preserved, carefully maintained, and periodically copied by Ma'zoon-e-Mutlaq himself**, who is next to *Saiyedna* and by his selected pupils under strict permission and supervision. These manuscripts are not merely for the purpose of storage and preservation or to boast of this legacy, but it is regularly read, taught and literary works are carried out by translating different topics into *Lisaan ud-Da'wat*. This is done carefully so as to make its complexity easier for a common Alavi to comprehend.

In Vadodara, Alavi Bohras have 4 mosques, 4 community halls, 4 mausoleums in which there are tombs (*quboor*) of 11 Alavi *da'is*. They also have a sectarian religious school named as Madrasah Taiyebiyah. The need of a separate guest-house has not yet felt as every Alavi Bohras who stay in other cities or countries have their own house or they have their close relatives in Vadodara. If a problem of staying arises to anyone there is a facility in the community hall, but this seldom happens. Between the period of 1405-1420 AH/1985-2000 AD, the families who were staying in a single house in Badri Mohalla, planned to shift to a new place in a bungalow or flat as the families grew with new marriages. *Saiyedna* directed these families to build new houses in one locality and named it as "**Taiyebi Park**" to protect Alavi culture and social relations. During this period many families shifted to Ajwa Road and Fatehgunj in Vadodara to form new Alavi neighbourhood with mosque and madrasah. The place (*jamaa'at-khaana*) where the food for lunch or dinner is prepared has **a strong historical significance and spiritual attachment**. The food has a special taste and aroma which one cannot find anywhere. This place is near the Main Mosque and was frequented by all the late *Alavi da'is* who had a food there and blessed the followers with heartfelt supplications (*du'a*). Today *Saiyedna* and his assembly members sit on the same blessed place for meals of feast and funeral.



*Rabbe yassir wa laa to'assir Rabbe tammim bil Khayr: O my Lord! Ease my Work and don't make it difficult and complete it with your graceful Hands*

#### **Their love for India and their Relationship with Other Communities:**

After fulfilling the personal and religious commitments, the second priority of Alavi Bohras is to maintain social and national interests. They love their country, its people and culture; abide to its law and respect its rich heritage. It is the land of Hunaid, under whose guidance Adam, the first prophet became the guardian of the

mission of Allaah (*Da'wat ul-Haqq*), which was previously called as Hunaidistaan. **But as the time passed the name got transformed from Hunaidistaan to "Hindustaan"**. Three pieces of land are blessed by Allaah Ta'aala and His Da'wat will always remain in them – they are Hind, Sindh and Yaman. It is the land of truth and true mission. Till the Day of Judgement, this fruitful land of holy men will remain the centre of this mission. Alavi Bohras have maintained friendly relations with the people of their home-land India whether they are Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Sunnis, Isnaa-Asharis, Nizaris, Sulaymanis and Dawoodis. They participate in the social functions of all the above communities, invite them for their family occasions, do trade and commerce and **collectively participate to counter any anti-national or anti-social activities**. They celebrate the national festivals with their countrymen such as Republic day, Independence Day, Hindu New year, Uttarayan, Christmas etc.

It is the branches that differ; but the stem of the tree is the only source of nourishment for its branches. Thus, Alavis and all other Taiyebi Bohras who believe in the institution of *Da'i-e-Mutlaq* have the only one stem of *Faatemi Imaams* and *Du'aat* of Yaman **representing the holy tree (*shajarah*) of *Panjatan Paak* – The household of the Prophet Mohammad Rasoolullaah (saws)**. There is no difference in their literature, tenets and ethos, but it is the branches of the line of succession of *Da'is* due to which they got identified with various names. Alavi Bohras have nurtured cordial relationship with their counter parts i.e. Sulaymanis and Dawoodis. **People of both the Bohras communities are attached socially and with trade and business**. In special cases, both of them accept Alavi girls in marriage and likewise Alavis can marry their son with a girl of Sulaymani or Dawoodi origin. Once an Alavi boy or girl marries an outsider without the permission of *Da'i*, he/she ceases to be a member of Alavi Bohra community. If any outsider wants to become a member of Alavi Bohra community, he should first clean himself with ritual purity, then get preliminary religious knowledge required to be a Bohra and give an oath of allegiance to the *Da'i*.

The members of other communities are permitted to attend the ceremony of Nikaah and its proceeding as ladies are not present in this ceremony. A special place is allotted to these people with whom bridegroom or the guardian of a bride share cordial relationship and they request to see this ceremony closely. They are given white dress and traditional *topi* to participate in it and after the ceremony *Da'i* gift them with a special symbol of remembrance (*rumaal-itr*) as a blessing.



*Wa in Ta'uddu Ne'matallaah la Tohsuha, Innallaah la-Ghafoor ur-Raheem: If you enumerate Allaah's blessings, you will not be able to count them. Indeed Allaah is all-Forgiving, all-Merciful*

### **An Ideal Healthy Life of an Alavi Bohra: He and His Environment:**

Allaah Ta'aala says in the Qur'an, 'Then which of the Blessings (*ne'mat*) of your Lord will you deny?' Leading a healthy life is a Blessing of Allaah for all of us. Health is a broad term which encompasses variety of parameters. Health does not only mean physical health. It also includes mental, social and spiritual health or wellbeing – which is called as **"Health in Totality."**

*Saiyedna* (tus) envisages the life of Alavi mumineen and says that, "Allaah Ta'aala has done favour on us by bestowing us with life full of faith and fervor. **Health in Totality is the greatest Blessing and *ne'mat* of Allaah Ta'aala.** Life began from Spirituality which is the foremost dimension in our lives, which decides and governs our Physical life in this World. Everything in this Universe has been created with a purpose. It has to reach to the point of its Origin by going through the cycles of Life and Death. Life is priceless and one should recognize its worth. We all began from the Spiritual World in the form of *nafs* (spirit). It is the union of *nafs* and body through which we execute our deeds physically." Hence the surrounding physical factors are equally important to attain Health in Totality. Health starts from Spiritual plane to Mental; then to Physical and lastly to Social plane. **Healthy Mind and Body assures that our surroundings will automatically become clean and healthy.** We should live our life and let others live their own. Cleanliness and Purity (on all planes) are the prime factors which will lead us to success and solace."

Health does not merely mean being free from any disease. Health is a state of harmony where the functioning of all faculties leads to productivity and positivity. Health can be divided broadly into **Spiritual Health, Physical Health (which includes mental plane) and Environmental Health (which includes social plane).** A man is said to be healthy only if these three things are healthy. Hence complete health is better than thousand bounties.

#### **Spiritual Health:**

- He should obey his both parents: ***Ruhaani*** (spiritual parents-*Saiyedna*) and ***Jismaani*** (biological parents)
- He should acquire **righteous knowledge** and fulfill his religious obligations as well as social relations
- He should implement what he **learns** and what he **declares**
- He should choose for **others** what he chooses for **himself**
- He should be satisfied with what he has and keep himself away from all the **evil things** and wickedness
- He should seek **forgiveness** and pardon for his sins
- He should keep open his **mind** for better understanding, discussion and fruitful opinion
- He should be aware that what he does is **correct** for him and for others
- He should not forget his **origin**, ancestors, customs and traditions
- He should not lose **hope** if he fails, but continue his **efforts** to succeed
- He should spare **time** for others and help them by any means available.

#### **Physical Health:**



- He should have **control** on food, sleep, laughing, speaking and sex
- He should **walk** regularly
- He should bath daily and maintain proper **hygiene** by washing hands before and after taking meals, clipping nails on every Friday, brushing teeth regularly at the time of doing ablution (*wuzoo*).
- He should mostly sit or sleep on the **floor**
- He should not **consume** pork, alcoholic drinks, tobacco or any intoxicants
- He should take permitted (*halaal*) meat, green and leafy vegetables, fruits, egg, milk, honey etc. and make a habit to eat **homemade food**.
- He should drink plenty of **water** but not while taking meals
- He should go for **outing** whenever he finds an opportunity
- He should avoid **excessive use** of electronic home appliances and wireless gadgets
- He should spare time for **himself** and his family

#### Environmental Health:

- He should see that dirty utensils and clothes are **cleaned** as early as possible
- He should not pollute an **air** by unnecessary using petroleum products or with loud noises.
- He should protect and grow **trees**
- He should not defecate, spit or throw garbage in an **open space**
- He should avoid **using plastic** carry bags but instead use paper or cloth bags
- He should be **kind** to birds and domestic animals
- He should **conserve** water and shun its wastage
- He should be aware of the disadvantages of using **fire crackers**
- He should be decently **dressed** and behave properly in the **public places** such as road, campus, park, market etc.
- He should always strive to **safe-guard** the rights of others and maintain the **peaceful environment** by the best way possible
- He should exercise **friendliness** and responsibility in the society
- He should always think about the **progress and success** of his community and give a thought as to what he can do for his **community**

**TO BE BORN IN MIND:** *Deenullaah* (Religion of Allaah)-**Islaam** is the best code of conduct for a human when learnt from a divinely designated teacher. It encompasses all spheres of Health. **He who knows his Religion best is the most learned man in this World.** No school, college or university can teach the Human Values better than one's Religion. He has, indeed won the race in this World and the Hereafter, who has practiced his Religion in its **purity and truthfulness.**



*Wa Howa 'alaa kulle Shay'in Wakeel: Indeed He is a Trustee over all Things*

**Source Material from the Manuscripts:**

- ***Da'aaim ul-Islaam wa zikr ul-Halaal wal Haraam wal Qazaaya wal Ahkaam:*** Saiyedna Qazi No'maan during the time of 14<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam al-Mo'iz (d. 365 AH/976 AD)
- ***Ithbaat ul-Imamah:*** Saiyedna Ahmad bin Mohammad an-Nisaaburi during the time of 15<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam al-'Azeed (d. 386 AH/996 AD)
- ***Tanbeeh ul-Haadi wal Mustahdi:*** Saiyedna Ahmad Hameeduddin al-Kirmaani during the time of 16<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam al-Haakim (d. 411 AH/1021 AD)
- ***al-Majaalis ul-Mo'ayyadiyah:*** Saiyedna Hebatullaah Mo'ayyad ash-Shiraaazi during the time of 18<sup>th</sup> Faatemi Imaam al-Mustansir (d. 487 AH/1094 AD)
- ***Tohfah ul-Quloob wa Farjat ul-Makroob:*** 3<sup>rd</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Haatim Mohiyuddin (d. 596 AH/1199 AD)
- ***Taaaj ul-'Aqaa'id wa Ma'dan ul-Fawaa'id:*** 5<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Ali bin Mohammad al-Waleed (d. 612 AH/1215 AD)
- ***Risaalat ul-Mabda' wal Ma'aad:*** 8<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Husain bin Saiyedna Ali bin Mohammad al-Waleed (d. 667 AH/1269 AD)
- ***'Uyoon ul-Akhbaar wa Funoon ul-Aathaar:*** 19<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Idrees 'Imaaduddin (d. 872 AH/1468 AD)
- ***Risaalat ul-Ishaarah wal Bashaarah:*** 20<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Hasan Badruddin (d. 918 AH/1512 AD)
- ***al-Azhaar:*** Saiyedi Hasan bin Nuh al-Bharuchi during the time of 20<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Hasan Badruddin (d. 918 AH/1512 AD)
- ***Sittah Rasaa'il:*** Saiyedi Khawj bin Malak during the time of 27<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Dawoodji Burhaanuddin bin Qutubshah (d. 1021 AH/1612 AD)
- ***ar-Risaalat ul-Mozayyanah:*** Saiyedi Hasan Khan bin Ali Khan bin Taaaj during the time of 27<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Dawoodji Burhaanuddin bin Qutubshah (d. 1021 AH/1612 AD)
- ***ar-Risaalat ul-Mohbarat il-Munsh'ah:*** Saiyedi Hasan Khan bin Ali Khan bin Taaaj during the time of 27<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Dawoodji Burhaanuddin bin Qutubshah (d. 1021 AH/1612 AD)

- **ar-Risaalah fi Ahwaal-e-Ta'leem-e-Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin 'inda Saiyedna Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin:** Written by a pupil during the time of 28<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna S Aadam Safiyuddin (d. 1030 AH/1621 AD)
- **ar-Risaalat us-Sagheerat ul-Jadeedah fi Ithbaat in-Nass 'alaa Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin:** 29<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Ali Shamsuddin (d. 1046 AH/1637 AD) send to the people of Nadiad.
- **Diwaan-e-Hasan:** 31<sup>st</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Badruddin Hasan bin Wali, the last missionary (*da'i*) of Ahmedabad (d. 1090 AH/1679 AD)
- **Saheefah Nooraaniyah:** 35<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Nuruddin Noorbhai bin Shaikhali, the only missionary (*da'i*) of Surat (d. 1178 AH/1765 AD)
- **Diwaan-e-Shams:** 37<sup>th</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Shaikhali Shamsuddin bin Saiyedna Hameeduddin (d. 1248 AH/1833 AD)
- **Diwaan-e-Haseen:** 41<sup>st</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq Saiyedna Jivabhai Fakhruddin bin Saiyedna Ameenuddin (d. 1347 AH/1929 AD)
- **Qaraatees ud-Du'aat il-'Alaviyeen:** Historic and Doctrinal documents written by number of Alavi Du'aat since the seat of Da'wat was transferred to Vadodara
- **Diwaan-e-Nagoshiya:** Written by one of the *aalim* (learned man) of Nagoshiya sect which was wiped out during the 41<sup>st</sup> Da'i-e-Mutlaq
- **Risaalah Pali Meedu:** Written by one of the Dawoodi *aalim* Shaikh Aadam Safiyuddin (1170 AH/1757 AD)



*Innama yakhshallaaha min 'Ibaadeh il-'Ulamaao: Indeed only the Learned man will fear Allaah from His Servants*

#### **Abbreviations and Some important Links:**

##### **Abbreviations**

- (saws): *sallallaaho 'alayhe wa aalehi wa sallam* – Allaah bless him (Prophet Mohammad) and grant him protection
- (as): *'alayhis salaam* – Peace be upon him
- (tus): Allaah bless him with long life – Long Live *Saiyedna*



- (aq): *a'alallaaho qudsahu* – Allaah elevate his sanctity
- *abu*: father of
- *bin*: son of
- *d.*: *died on*
- AH: After *Hijrat* – Year after the migration of the Prophet *Mohammad* (saws) from Makkah to Madina
- AD: Year after the death of Prophet '*Isaa* (as) - Jesus Chirst

#### Links of this Website

- To know Isma'ili Taiyebi Terminology: [Glossary](#)
- List of Taiyebi Imaams and Missionaries (*du'aat*): [History](#)
- Different articles of 29<sup>th</sup> Alavi *Da'i* Saiyedna [Ali Shamsuddin](#) Shaheed (aq)
- Articles and Lectures consisting Alavi faith and doctrines: [Articles](#) & [Lectures](#)
- 100 Principles and tenets of Alavi Bohras: [Principles](#)
- Qur'an-e-Kareem: [Qur'an](#)
- Details of Moharram and Ramazaan: [Moharram ul-Haraam](#) & [Shahrullaah](#)
- Important Events of Community: [Akhbaar](#)
- Exclusive Alavi Calendar with related features: [Calendar](#)



*Wa Ayyoob, iz naadaa Rabbahu anni massaniyaz Zurro wa Anta Arham ur-Raahemeen: And Ayyoob, when he called out to his Lord, "Indeed distress has befallen me, and You are the most Merciful of the merciful."*

#### Other Related Articles:

- [Who are Alavi Bohras](#)
- [Our Identity : The Bohras](#)
- [A Window to the Futuristic Studies of Alavi Bohras : A Scholarly Note](#)



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