



## UNITED KINGDOM VISIT

# INTER-FAITH MEETING

## Learning more about the Shi'a Ismaili Muslim community

We have compiled some references and resources to help you learn more about the Shi'a Ismaili Muslim community as we prepare for Mawlana Hazar Imam's visit to the United Kingdom as well as the Inter-Faith Meeting. You can use these resources to find out more about the community, and to prepare for the visit. For specific information on the visit, please refer to the [Inter-Faith Meeting information page](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

We have added links to relevant web resources and information.

## Key definitions

### General terms

What is said?	What does it mean?	When is it used?
<b>Ya Ali Madad</b> Common Reply: <b>Mawla Ali Madad</b>	"May Ali Help you"	Used by Shi'a Muslims, particularly Ismailis alongside or in place of Muslim greetings like "Assalamu Alaykum".
<b>Jamat</b>	Congregation, community	When referring to the Shi'a Ismaili Muslim community.
<b>Jamatkhana (Khane or JK)</b>	House of the community	When referring to the designated space for congregational prayer as well as social and communal activities.



		<p><i>Further information:</i></p> <p><a href="https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-are-jamatkhanas">https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-are-jamatkhanas</a></p>
<b>Mawlana Hazar Imam</b>	Our Present Living Guide	An Arabic term used as a title for the Imam of the Time. Used to refer to him among Ismailis. Sometimes abbreviated to “Hazar Imam”.
<b>Murshid or Pir</b>	Spiritual Guide, Teacher or Master	An Arabic term used in mystical Sufi Muslim traditions; we use it for the Imam-of-the-Time.
<b>Murid</b>	One who seeks, follower or disciple	An Arabic term used for individuals who have pledged <i>bay’ah</i> to the Imam-of-the-Time and agree to follow his guidance.
<b>Tariqah</b>	Spiritual Path or Way to the Divine	An Arabic term referring to the path or way shown by the Murshid. The Shi’a Ismaili Tariqah is guided by the Imam-of-the-Time.
<b>Bay’ah</b>	Pledge of allegiance	<p>An Arabic term used to pledge allegiance. In Shi’a Ismaili belief, <i>bay’ah</i> affirms the permanent spiritual bond between the Imam and his <i>murids</i>.</p> <p><i>Further information:</i></p> <p><a href="https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/video-ilm-nass-and-bayah">https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/video-ilm-nass-and-bayah</a></p>
<b>Salawat</b>	Invocation of blessings	A special prayer of blessings on Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) and his family.
<b>Farman</b>	Spiritual Guidance or Command	A Persian word literally meaning “command” or “authority”, which refers to the Guidance of the Imam.
<b>Talika</b>	Letter	A formal letter sent by the Imam to convey guidance and blessings to the Jamat. It is usually read out loud in Jamatkhana.
<b>Hidaya / Hidayat</b>	Guidance	Private or informal guidance given by the Imam to individuals or to Jamati leaders. This often informs institutional work or programmes.
<b>Allah</b>	God	The Arabic word meaning God, used by both Muslims and Arabic-speaking Christians



<b>Tawhid</b>	Oneness	The Arabic word used to refer to the core Muslim belief in the Oneness of Allah.
<b>Nabuwwah</b>	Prophethood	The Arabic word used to refer to Allah's revelations to the Prophets and specifically to the Prophethood of Muhammad, believed by Muslims to be the last Prophet.
<b>Imamat</b>	The role of the Imam (literally 'guidance')	The Arabic term used to refer to the Shi'a belief that Divine Guidance continues through the Imams from the Prophet's family.
<b>Tasbih</b>	To glorify or praise	An Arabic term used in several ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To describe prayers in which we ask Allah for strength of faith, unity, love and other similar supplications</li> <li>• To describe prayers in which we repeat the Divine Attributes of Allah or short supplications (also known as dhikr)</li> <li>• To describe the beads that some people use to count repeated prayers</li> </ul>
<b>Dhikr</b> (sometimes pronounced zikr)	Remembrance	Practices of remembering or repeating the names of Allah, the Prophets or the Imams
<b>Ab-e-Shifa</b>	Literally 'water of healing'	Persian word referring to water that has been blessed by the Imam, which is then shared with the Jamat.

### Terms that you might hear relating to the Imam's visit

What is said?	What does it mean?	When is it used?
<b>Didar</b>	Seeing and being seen	A Persian term used to describe a meeting with the Imam in a spiritual context. More info: <a href="https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-is-didar">https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-is-didar</a>
<b>Mulaqat</b>	Meeting	An Arabic term used to describe a meeting with the Imam.
<b>Intezar</b>	Anticipated Arrival (literally 'waiting')	An Arabic/Persian word to describe the anticipation of the arrival of the Imam.
<b>Huzur</b>	Presence	An Arabic term to describe being in the presence of the Imam.



<b>Nazrana</b>	Offering or Gift	A Persian word used to describe the voluntary gift offered to the Imam. More info: <a href="https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-is-nazrana">https://the.ismaili/gb/en/news/what-is-nazrana</a>
<b>Shukrana</b>	Gratitude or Thankfulness	An Arabic word used to convey gratitude for, and to, the Imam-of-the-Time. It is one of the UK visit themes.
<b>Adab</b>	Manners, etiquette, behaviour	An Arabic term used to convey the appropriate manners and decorum in the presence of the Imam.

You can find more definitions on page 28 of the secondary “Light My Way” booklet, available from [United Kingdom Visit - Secondary Learning Resources | The Ismaili](#).

## Core Shi’a Ismaili beliefs

Shi’a Imami Ismaili Muslims share common human values with many communities around the globe. Kindness, care for others and for the earth, generosity, honesty and integrity are among these values.

In common with the Abrahamic faith traditions of Judaism and Christianity, all Muslims, including the Shi’a Ismailis, believe in One God. In Arabic, this is known as *tawhid* - the oneness of Allah (the Arabic term for God). Like all Muslims, Shia Ismaili Muslims believe that Allah revealed the message of Islam to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him and his progeny). This belief in Prophethood, and specifically that Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet, is known in Arabic as *nabuwwah*.

The Shi’a interpretation of Islam holds that during his lifetime, upon divine command, the Prophet designated Ali ibn Abi Talib as the leader of the Muslim community. According to Shia Muslims, the office of religious leadership, or *Imamat*, continues in perpetuity. For Shia Ismaili Muslims, His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan is the 50<sup>th</sup> hereditary Imam in direct lineal descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The Imam’s role is to guide his followers in both spiritual and worldly matters. For more information, please see the section on [the Ismaili Imamat on the Ismaili website](#).

You can find out more about what Ismailis believe through this series of short videos called [‘What Ismailis Believe’](#).



## Want to find out more?

There are several sources that can help you to understand more about the history and practices of the Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims both in the United Kingdom and across the world. Here is a selection of books and video resources that you might find interesting.

### Ismaili practices

#### Books

- The Institute of Ismaili Studies' Secondary Curriculum for Ismaili young people includes two modules on *Faith and Practice In Islamic Traditions*. These are available from Jamatkhana at your local Kitab desk or online via Canvas if you have an IIUK account. Click [this link](#) to find out more about the curriculum: [Secondary Curriculum | The Institute of Ismaili Studies](#)
- *Shimmering Light*, an anthology of Ismaili Poetry, contains qasidas or devotional poems from the Arabic and Persian traditions. See [Shimmering Light | The Institute of Ismaili Studies](#). Physical copies can be purchased from your local Jamatkhana Kitab desk.
- *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismaili Religious Lyrics*, is a collection of translations of *ginans* by Aziz Esmail, with an excellent (but dense) introduction situating the *ginans* in the context of Shi'a Ismaili belief and Indian traditions of religious devotion. See [A Scent of Sandalwood | The Institute of Ismaili Studies](#). This can be purchased from your local Jamatkhana Kitab desk.
- Accessible publications are available as eBooks from the Institute of Ismaili Studies including:
  - [Experiences of the Jamatkhana by Aliaa Remtilla](#)
  - [Ismaili Festivals by Shiraz Kabani](#)

#### Videos

- There is a wealth of video material available on the Ismaili TV. These are primarily aimed at Ismailis and offer interesting insights on how Shi'a Ismaili Muslims express their faith.
  - [Facets of Faith: Nurturing the Imam-Murid Relationship](#)
  - [A Guiding Light: The Imamate of the Shi'a Ismaili Muslims](#)
  - [Ismaili Festivals: stories of celebration](#)
  - [Ifar Dinner held in 2025](#)



## Music and arts

- There are frequent exhibitions at the Aga Khan Centre which can be visited for free. For example, [Canticle of the Birds - Aga Khan Centre](#)
- The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto has online exhibitions and recordings of musical performances. See also: [Aga Khan Museum - Explore At Home](#)
- The Ismaili Sounds playlists showcase music from the wide range of cultural traditions to which Ismailis belong. Here's the [2024 playlist](#) – there's plenty more to explore on YouTube as well.

## Ismaili history

- The Institute of Ismaili Studies offers a Secondary Curriculum designed for young Ismaili youth. This curriculum features several history modules including Muslim Societies and Civilisations and Encounters in Muslim History.
- There are multiple YouTube series dedicated to Ismaili history. Examples include:
  - [Muslim footprints podcast](#)
  - [Stories of the Ismaili Imams](#)

## The Imams and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)

- Transcripts of speeches made by Mawlana Shah Karim al-Hussaini, our 49th Imam, and by Mawlana Hazar Imam, are available on the Aga Khan Development Network website: [See all Speeches - AKDN](#). Videos of some speeches are also available on the [Aga Khan Development Network YouTube channel](#).
- There is an enormous amount of material on the AKDN website: [Improving the quality of life - AKDN](#) and [YouTube channel](#).
- The [AKDN's Ethical Framework](#) sets out the core values by which the AKDN operates and which also govern how the Shi'a Ismaili Muslim community seeks to live.