

ALI S. ASANI

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2008 – Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, Committee on the Study of Religion and Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Sanskrit and Indian Studies and African and African-American Studies, Harvard University
1992-2008 Professor of the Practice of the Indo-Muslim Languages and Cultures,
1989-1992 Associate Professor of Indo-Muslim Culture, Harvard University
1984-1989 Assistant Professor of Indo-Muslim Culture, Harvard University
1983-1984 Instructor in Indo-Muslim Culture, Harvard University

EDUCATION

Ph.D., 1984 Harvard University; Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (with high distinction; subject: Indo-Muslim Culture)
A.M., 1981 Harvard University; Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
A.B., 1977 *summa cum laude*, Harvard University (major: The Comparative Study of Religion)

LANGUAGES

Urdu/Hindi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kacchi, Swahili
Reading knowledge: classical Arabic, Persian, French and German

HONORS, AWARDS AND GRANTS

2010 Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard
2008 Inaugural Virani lectures in Islamic Studies, University of British Columbia
2007 Research Grant Carnegie Corporation for creating an online resource mapping change and diversity in contemporary Islamic thought
2006 Grant from Aga Khan Development Network for researching a new book on understanding Islam and Muslim societies through a cultural studies approach
2005 Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard
2004 Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard University
2003 William Price Lecture, Trinity Church, Boston
2002 Harvard Foundation Faculty Medal for fostering intercultural and race relations through a better understanding of Islam
Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard University
2002 Helen Boyle Abrahamic Initiative Lecture, Chautauqua Institution
2000 Meyerson Lecture, Center for Asian Studies, University of Texas, Austin
2000 Dean's Innovation Fund, Harvard College, grant to develop multi-media website for courses on Islam

- 1999 Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching grant for Urdu textbook
Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard University
- 1998 Dean's Innovation Fund, Harvard College to develop new interdisciplinary course on teaching Islam through literature and the arts
Dean's Commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education, Harvard University
- 1996 Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching grant for incorporating popular songs into the teaching of Hindi/Urdu
Dean's commendation for distinguished teaching, Division of Continuing Education
- 1995 Research Grant, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London
- 1993 Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching grant for incorporating popular songs into the teaching of Swahili
Stanley Roth Sr. Foundation research support grant
- 1989 Distinguished Speaker, Forum Club of Houston
- 1986 National Endowment for the Humanities research grant
- 1976 Elected to Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society
- 1975 Detur Book Prize, Harvard University for "outstanding academic achievement"
- 1973 Edward Whitaker Scholarship, Harvard College for "exceptional performance in the freshman year"

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

Let's Study Urdu: An Introductory Course (Yale University Press, 2007)

Let's Study Urdu: An Introduction to the Script (Yale University Press, 2007)

Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia (I.B. Tauris, 2002)

Al-Ummah: A Handbook for an Identity Development Program for Immigrant Muslim Youth in North America (co-author) (1996)

Celebrating Muhammad: Images of the Prophet in Popular Muslim Poetry (co-author)
(University of South Carolina Press, 1995)

The Harvard Collection of Ismaili Literature in Indic Languages: A Descriptive Catalog and Finding Aid (Boston: G.K. Hall/Simon and Schuster, 1992)

The Bujh Niranjana: An Ismaili Mystical Poem (Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1991)

Books in progress:

"An Infidel of Love": Exploring Muslim understandings of Islam (Harvard University Press, forthcoming)

Selected Articles/Chapters in books

"Images of South Asian Sufism" *Sacred Spaces: A Journey with the Sufis of the Indus*, Samina Quraeshi (Peabody Museum Press, 2009)

- “Enhancing religious literacy in a liberal arts education through the study of Islam and Muslim societies” *Harvard Samplers*, ed. Stephen Kosslyn, Evelyne Hammonds (Harvard University Press) (forthcoming)
- “Ismaili Muslim Americans,” *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History*, ed. E. Curtis (forthcoming)
- “Transforming and Transmitting Traditions: Salman Ahmad and Sufi Rock in Pakistan” *Contemporary Expressions of Muslim Devotion in South Asia* ed. S. Shaikh (I.B. Tauris and Institute of Ismaili Studies) (forthcoming)
- “The Ismaili Pir Sadr ad-Din” *Tales of God's Friends: Islamic Hagiography in Translation* ed. J. Renard (University of California Press) 261-268
- “Satpanth Ismaili Songs to Hazrat Ali and the Imams,” *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (Princeton University Press) 48-62
- “From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim: The Articulation of Khojah Identity in Pre-colonial, Colonial And Post-colonial South Asia and its impact on Ismaili Khojah Devotional Life and Literatures.” *A Modern History of the Ismailis*, ed. F. Daftary (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming)
- “Improving the Status of Women Through Reforms in Marriage Contract Law: The Experience of the Nizari Ismaili Community,” *The Islamic Marriage Contract: Case Studies in Islamic Family Law*, ed. F. Vogel and A. Qureshi (Harvard University Press, 2008) 285-295.
- “On Muslims Knowing the Muslim Other” *Muslims in the United States: Identity, Influence and Innovation* ed. Phillipa Strum et al (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005) , 181-190.
- “Movements with an Islamic origin: The Bahai and the Ahmadiyya,” *Global Religions: A Handbook*, ed. M. Juergensmeyer (Oxford, 2006)
- “Folk legends from the Indus and Traditions of Spirituality,” *Legends of the Indus* (Asia Ink, 2004)
- “South Asian Literatures and the Qur’an” *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, ed. J. Macauliffe et al.
- “Islam in South Asia” and “Islamic Poetry” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition
- “Ismailism in *Ginan* Literature,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, vol. XIV, fasc 2.
- “The dargah of Muin ad-Din Chishti in Ajmer,” *Dargahs: Abodes of Saints*, ed. M. Currim and G. Mitchell (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2004)
- “ A brief note on the Bujh Niranjani” *Ginans : Texts and Contexts: Essays on Ismaili Hymns from South Asia in Honour of Zawahir Moir* ed. F. Mallison and T. Kassam
- “‘Oh that I could be a bird and fly, I would rush to the Beloved:’ Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry,” *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*, ed. Kimberley Patton and Paul Waldau (Columbia University Press, 2006) 170-175.
- “At the Crossroads of Indic and Iranian Civilizations: Sindhi Literary Culture,” *Literary Cultures in History. Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. S. Pollock (U. of California, 2003), 612-646; reprinted (excerpts) in *Cultural Diversity, Linguistic Plurality and Literary Traditions in India*, ed. S.Kumar et al. (Department of English, Delhi University: MacMillan India, 2005)

- “‘So that you may know one another,’: A Muslim American Reflects on Pluralism and Islam,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Special issue: Islam: Enduring Myths and Changing Realities) vol. 588 (2003), 40-51.
- “Pluralism, Intolerance, and the Qur’an,” *American Scholar*, vol. 71, no. 1 (2002), 52-60; reprinted in *Interreligious Insight*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2006) 26-36
- “Ali ibn Abi Talib,” and “The Family of the Prophet,” in *Encyclopedia of the Quran*, ed. J. Macauliffe et al
- “The Khojahs of South Asia: Defining a Space of their Own,” *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 13 no. 2 (2001), 155-168.
- “Muslims in South Asia: Defining Community and the ‘Other’” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), 103-113.
- “Qazi Qadan: A Pioneer Sindhi Poet,” *The Banyan Tree: Essays on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages*, ed. M. Offredi (Manohar, 2000), 3-13.
- “Through the Lens of Mirza of Delhi: The Debbas Album of early Twentieth Century Photographs of Pilgrimage Sites in Mecca and Medina,” *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, vol. 15 (1998), 178-199 (co-authored with C. Gavin)
- “Arabic Literature in India,” *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. J. Meisami (Routledge, 1998), 395-396.
- “Imam Hussain’s Conversation with God: An Elegy on the martyrdom at Karbala,” “Poems in praise of God’s Beloved, Muhammad, the Chosen, “The Petition of a Yearning Soul,” *Seven Doors to Islam*, ed. John Renard (U. of California, 1998)
- “The Ismaili ginans: Reflections on Authority and Authorship,” *Medieval Ismaili History and Thought*, ed. F. Daftary (Cambridge, 1996), 265-280.
- “Propagating the Message: Popular Sufi Songs and Spiritual Transformation in South Asia,” *Bulletin of The Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies*, vol. 15, nos.3-4 (1996), 5-15.
- “In Praise of Muhammad: Indigenizing the Arabic qasida in Urdu and Sindhi literatures,” *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. S. Sperl and C. Shackle (E.J. Brill, 1996), 351-361.
- “Muslim Literatures of South Asia,” *Muslim Almanac: A Reference Work on the History, Faith, Culture and Peoples of Islam*, ed. A. Nanji (Gale Research, 1995), 355-364
- “Urdu Literature,” *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. J. Esposito (Oxford, 1995)
- “In Praise of Muhammad: Sindhi and Urdu Poems,” *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. D. Lopez (Princeton, 1995), 159-186.
- “The Bridegroom Prophet in Medieval Sindhi Poetry,” *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers 1989-91*, ed. F. Mallison and A. Entwistle (Manohar, 1994) 213-225.
- “Bridal Symbolism in the Ismaili Ginan Literature,” *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, ed. R. Herrera (Peter Lang, 1993), 389-404
- “A Testimony of Love: The Git Tradition of the Nizari Ismailis,” *God is Beautiful and loves Beauty*, ed. A. Giese and C. Burgel (P. Lang, 1993), 21-33.

“Folk Romance in Sufi Poetry from Sind,” *Islam and the Indian Regions*, ed. A. Dallapiccola and S. Lallemand (Franz, Steiner Verlag, 1993), vol. 1, 229-237.

“The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan: Its Origins, Characteristics and Themes,” *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India*, ed. D. Eck and F. Mallison (Groningen, 1991), pp 1-18

“The Ismaili Ginans as Devotional Literature,” *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research, 1985-88* (Cambridge, 1991), 101-112.

“Sufi Poetry in the Folk Tradition of Indo-Pakistan,” *Religion and Literature*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1988),

“Amir Khusrau and poetry in Indic Languages,” *Islamic Culture*, vol LXII, nos. 2-3 (1988),

“The Khojki Script: A Legacy of Ismaili Islam in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 107 (1987), 439-449.

“Music and Dance in the work of Mawlana Jalal ad-Din Rumi,” *Islamic Culture*, vol. LX, no. 2 (1986), 41-55.

RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE/APPOINTMENTS

- Chair, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
- Associate Director, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program, Harvard University
- Academic Council, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University
- Member of the Religion in the Schools Task Force, American Academy of Religion
- Committee on General Education, Harvard University
- Director of Graduate Studies, Dept of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University
- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Dept of Sanskrit and Indian Studies
- Director of Urdu-Hindi Language Program, Harvard University
- Co-chair, Islam in the West interfaculty collaborative project, Harvard University
- Advisory Board, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University
- Board of Freshman Advisors, Harvard College
- University Committee on Religion
- Committee on Study out of Residence, Harvard College
- Committee on Ethnic Studies, Harvard
- Committee on African Studies, Harvard
- Committee on South Asian Studies, Harvard
- Committee on Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard
- Faculty Advisory Board, Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations
- Faculty Affiliate, Program in Religion and Secondary Education, Harvard Divinity School
- Board of Directors, American Muslim Congress
- Advisor, The Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence, Search Institute
- Academic Consultant, University of Texas and Aga Khan Development Network sponsored Islamic Cultural Studies Initiative (developing material for new frameworks on teaching about Islam and Muslim societies in the Texas school system and selected schools in Africa and Asia)
- Advisory Board, The Pluralism Project, Harvard University
- Director, College Program on Islam (Bridgewater Community College 2004; Oxford College, Emory 2005, 2010)
- Consultant to the Asia Society, Interfaith Center of New York, the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board
- Trustee and Executive Board member, American Institute for Indian Studies

