

Aga Khan IV: Legacy of a Visionary Leader and Philanthropist

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What's in Today's article?

- Aga Khan IV Latest News
- Shia-Sunni Split and Shia Denominations
- Nizari Ismailis and the Aga Khan
- Imam of the Atomic Age: Aga Khan IV
- Aga Khan IV: A Leader in Times of Crisis
- Aga Khan's Philanthropic Work
- Aga Khan's Philanthropic Work
- Aga Khan IV FAQs

Aga Khan IV Latest News

- Prince Karim al-Husseini, Aga Khan IV, passed away in Lisbon at the age of 88.

- A direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad through Fatima and Ali, he was the Imam of the **Nizari Ismaili Shias** and held near-divine status within the community.

Shia-Sunni Split and Shia Denominations

- Following Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 CE, Islam split over succession.
- One group, later called Sunnis, believed leadership should go to qualified individuals, while another, the Shias, insisted it should remain within Muhammad's bloodline.
- This led to lasting differences in doctrine, law, and religious practices.

Major Shia Denominations

- Shia Islam is not monolithic and has three main branches:
 - **Twelver Shias (Ithna Ashariyah)** – The largest Shia sect, making up 90% of Shias, follows a line of 12 Imams. The 12th Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, is believed to be in occultation.
 - **Ismaili Shias (Sevener Shias)** – They follow the same lineage as Twelvers until the sixth Imam, after which they diverge.
 - **Zaydi Shias (Fiver Shias)** – They separate after the fourth Imam and have their distinct beliefs

Nizari Ismailis and the Aga Khan

- The Ismaili branch of Shia Islam has two major subsects:
 - **Nizari Ismailis** – Trace their lineage directly to the Aga Khans.
 - **Dawoodi Bohras** – Recognize descent only up to the 18th Imam and follow a line of Dais, who are representatives of the hidden Imam.

Origins of the Aga Khan Title

- The title of Aga Khan was granted to Hasan Ali Shah, the 46th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, by Fath-Ali Shah Qajar, the king of Iran, in the 19th century.

Global Presence and Leadership

- Nizari Ismailis are spread across 30+ countries, primarily tracing their roots to Persia and the Indian subcontinent.
- They are not a majority community anywhere.

Lisbon as the Nizari Imamate's Seat

- In 2015, after an agreement with the Portuguese government, Aga Khan IV declared Lisbon as the global headquarters of the Nizari Imamate.

Imam of the Atomic Age: Aga Khan IV

- Born in 1936 in Geneva, Prince Karim was the eldest son of Prince Aly Khan and grandson of Aga Khan III.

- Raised in Nairobi and Switzerland, he later pursued Islamic history at Harvard.

Succession to the Imamate

- In **1957**, after the death of Aga Khan III, **Prince Karim was named his successor**, bypassing his father and uncle.
- Aga Khan III justified this choice, stating that modern times required a young leader familiar with the new atomic age.

A Modern and Global Figure

- Nicknamed the **“Imam of the Atomic Age”**, he symbolized progress and adaptability.
- **Bridged multiple divides** – spiritual and material, East and West, Muslim and Christian.

Aga Khan IV: A Leader in Times of Crisis

- Despite his lavish lifestyle, he remained a guiding force for Nizari Ismailis.
- Helped his community navigate major global shifts, including:
 - The end of the Cold War
 - Decolonization in Africa
 - The fall of communism in Central Asia
 - Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East
- He believed an imam should engage with everyday life, not withdraw from it.
- As he told Vanity Fair: “An imam is expected to protect his community and contribute to their quality of life.”

Aga Khan’s Philanthropic Work

- **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**
 - Focus areas: **Healthcare, housing, education, and rural economic development.**
 - Operates in **30 countries** with an annual budget of **over \$1 billion.**
 - Guided by **Islamic ethics**, aiming to **improve the quality of life** in Asia and Africa.
- **Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)**
 - Works to **preserve and promote the cultural heritage** of the Muslim world.
 - Supports **artists, musicians, and traditional art forms.**
 - Engaged in **renovating and refurbishing historic monuments.**
- **Key Restoration Projects in India**
 - **Humayun’s Tomb Complex & Nizamuddin area, Delhi** – Major restoration and revitalization project.
 - **Sunder Nursery, Delhi** – Transformed into a cultural and ecological park.
 - **Quli Qutb Shahi Tombs, Hyderabad** – Being restored into a heritage park.

Aga Khan IV FAQs

Q1. Who is Aga Khan in Indian history?

Ans. Aga Khan played a key role in education, philanthropy, and cultural restoration in India, notably through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

Q2. What is Aga Khan known for?

Ans. Aga Khan IV is known for leading the Nizari Ismailis and founding the Aga Khan Development Network for global humanitarian efforts.

Q3. Who is Aga Khan leader of?

Ans. Aga Khan IV was the Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Shias, a subsect of Shia Islam with followers in over 30 countries.

Q4. Are Ismailis Muslims?

Ans. Yes, Ismailis are a branch of Shia Islam, tracing their religious lineage through a line of Imams, including the Aga Khans.

Q5. Where is Aga Khan IV from?

Ans. Aga Khan IV was born in **Geneva, Switzerland**, and later declared **Lisbon, Portugal**, as the seat of the Nizari Imamate.

Source: **IE** | **TNA**

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