Excerpts: Their Highnesses the Aga Khans III and IV on false speculations they desire(d) an Ismaili state

**Imran Aslam:** You've always made this point that it takes time, it takes a lot of will, determination, courage, and we look at some of the projects like you have initiated in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. There are some concerns, which I think we needed to address here, certain perceptions that are needed to be cleared. When we talk about the Northern Areas, these are geopolitically strategic areas, sensitive areas. And there have been concerns as to whether the choice of those particular areas with the uplift programs, the Rural Support Program have some sort of a hidden agenda, etc. These are the conspiracy theories that do make the rounds. I thought this would be a good opportunity to talk about them. Talk about the other communities that have benefited as well.

**Aga Khan:** Well. Let me start at the beginning. My first visit to the Northern Areas was in the late 50s. And it was a dramatically isolated, poor area.

**Imran Aslam:** Did you go by horseback?

**Aga Khan:** Very nearly. And no seeing and feeling person could have ignored the awfulness of life up in that area. And it was all communities. It was an area of Pakistan that was isolated. All communities up there. What I started was a programme, which had never been tested before in the mountain valleys. Which was to see whether we could develop a programme where communities would develop and take their own destiny in their own hands -- and I still deal with a number of test cases. And I started in Rural Support
only. Then from Rural Support we moved into healthcare, education, cultural activities, etc. And, at the present time the programme is very, very large. It applies to all communities who want the programme to work in their areas. The constraints are human resources. The demands in the area are enormous. The financial constraints are less great.

But I must tell you very frankly that there is absolutely no hidden agenda other than answering a critical national situation. I would say that this was not specific to Pakistan. Eastern Tajikistan, i.e. the mountain communities in the Pairs have lived the same difficulty. It’s admittedly in a different context because it was the context of the Soviet Union, but the reality is that mountain communities generally are poor, often invisible and isolated. So that’s the background and there is absolutely no hidden agenda. Sometimes I’ve been told that I’m being put forward as a person who wants a State or this sort of thing. I can tell you that idea has never crossed my mind. More than that it is an idea that if were put on the table would last in my view one millionth of a second -- not more.

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2000 Imran Aslam Interview (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5829/

"Some busybodies have ferreted out the fact that in the 1930’s I approached the Government of India and suggested that I might be given a territorial state and join the company of Ruling Princes. From the refusal of this request they have drawn the quite erroneous and absurd conclusion that I was offended, and that in resentment I abandoned all the principles and ideals which I had cherished throughout my life. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"This is what really happened: it had long been felt among the Ismaili community that it would be desirable to possess a national home -- not a big, powerful state, but something on the lines of Tangier or the Vatican -- a scrap of earth of their own which all Ismailis, all over the world, could call theirs in perpetuity where they
could practise all their customs, establish their own laws, and (on the material side) build up their own financial centre, with its own banks, investment trusts, insurance schemes and welfare and provident arrangements.

"The idea of a territorial state made no particular appeal to me, but in view of the strength of Ismaili sentiment on the matter I made my approach to the Government of India. For reasons which I am sure were perfectly just and fair, the Government of India could not see their way to granting our request. The idea that they disapproved of me for having made it, or that I was hurt and disappointed by their refusal, is fantastic."

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9933/