

Aqnazar Alavatov  
Badakhshan, Tajikistan - Central Asia  
Singing poetry of Jalâl ud-Dîn Rûmî

Located in the heart of Tajikistan, Badakhshan is an autonomous region located in the western part of Pamir, adjoining Afghanistan and China. In this region where the mountainous peaks have little to envy in their Himalayan neighbours, the local traditions of devotional music, of mystic singing and dances have long flourished amongst the mountain peoples of Pamir, of which many are connected to the Ismaili branch of Islam.

The Ismailis, of which the spiritual leader, or Imam, is His Highness the Aga Khan, have cultivated distinct religious and cultural practices, which, strengthened by the difficult geographic configuration of Badakhshan have greatly contributed to the preservation of the many of the aspects of local traditions.

Aqnazar lives in Khorog, the regional capital and the largest city in Badakhshan, populated with 40,000 inhabitants. His repertoire comprises the Maddah – prayer singing, bringers of Baraka, divine protection, songs of lamentation with specific instrumental accompaniments, known as falak and traditional popular singing – the khalqi.

Aqnazar is primarily known for singing the poems of Jalâl ud-Dîn Rûmî, the great Sufi mystic and writer of the XIII<sup>th</sup> century, author of the Mesnevi and inspirer of the brotherhood of Whirling Dervishes of Konya.