



Ijtema Memories

Compiled by Fazal Ahmad and Tariq Chowdhry

The Ijtema of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya is a special occasion each year where our youth get a chance to meet each other and to compete in healthy pursuits. The first Ijtema was held in Qadian (India) in 1938. The first Ijtemas were held alongside the Jalsa in Qadian starting in December 1938, but soon the event demanded more time and energy, and so it became a separate event. Since those days over 60 years ago, the youth organisation has spread to all parts of the world and Ijtemas are held annually at various levels throughout the globe.

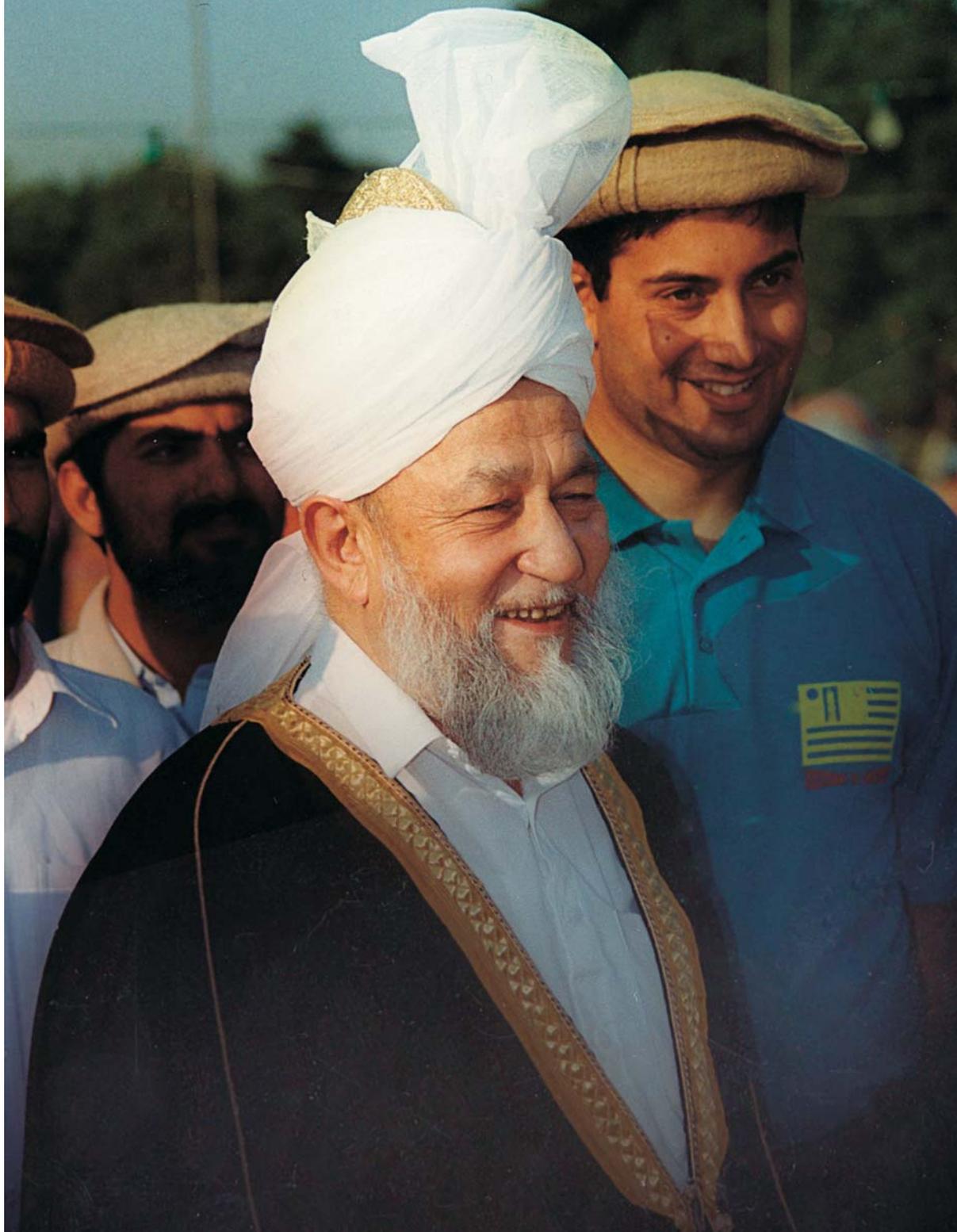
History of the UK Ijtema

The UK held its first Ijtema in 1965 at a time when there were a modest number of Khuddam, largely in the Greater London area. This was a modest affair but in 1972, the Gillingham Khuddam organised the first one day indoor ijtema that caught the imagination of the Khuddam at that time, leading to a flurry of such events taking place all over the UK over the next few years. However the London area remained the primary focus with the Ijtema taking place in and around the Fazal Mosque complex.



Above: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at the Pakistan National Ijtema in 1967 when he was Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya.

Right: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Ijtema in 1995



To address the needs of the increasing number of Khuddam around the country, the National Qiadat was established. The needs of the Ijtema also grew and Heathlands School, Hounslow became the venue for the National Ijtema with a focus on a comprehensive programme of academic and sporting activities.

However the major change occurred once the UK Jama'at acquired the land at Islamabad in mid 1985. That suddenly provided the freedom and space to hold events that included sports, barbeques and a much more varied programme of activities.. The first barbeque was held in Islamabad in the mid-80's in what had been the stables of the old Sheephatch Farm. This proved to be so successful that it has now become a fixture of the National Ijtema. A major part of the charm of the barbeques was the fact that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى enjoyed the function and met many of the Ijtema participants in a very

relaxed environment. Ameer Jama'at UK, Rafiq Ahmad Hayat Sahib recalls Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى enthusiasm for the tents and barbeques:

"At the Khuddam Ijtemas Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would come on Friday night and he would get his security staff to erect a tent for him there also. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would also look at all the tents and check on the barbeques. I think this was a form of tarbiyyat taking place."

He also encouraged a competitive spirit amongst the regions which extended not just to the barbeques, but also the tents and displays.. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would personally go and visit each regional area, inspect the tents and taste the barbeques. These are memories that no Khadim will ever forget, as our previous Sadr Ibrahim Noonan recounts:

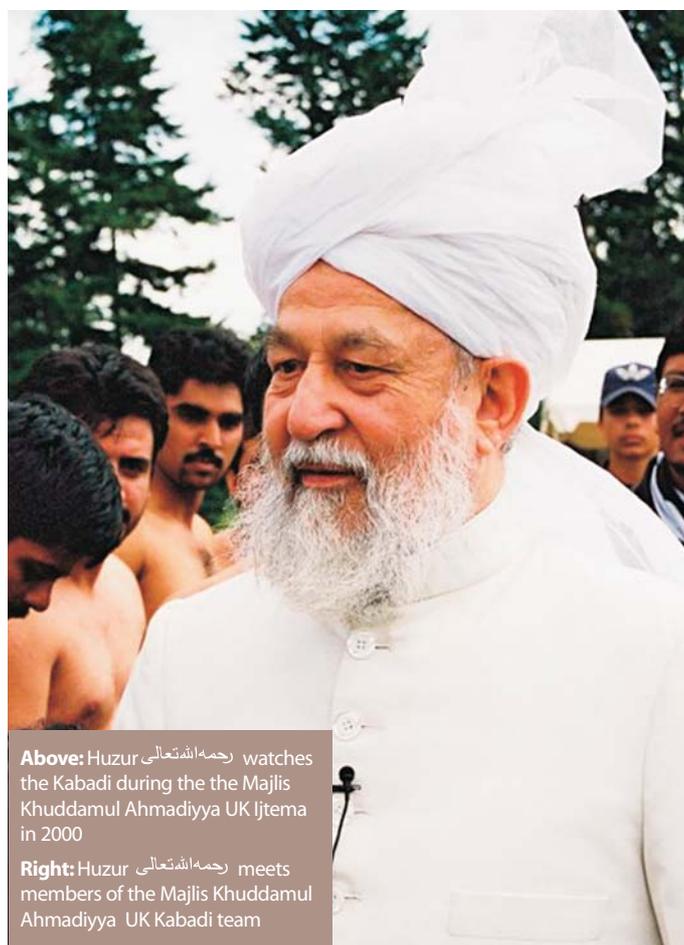


“Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى last Ijtema was in 2000. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى left the barbeque, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى turned to me with a loving smile and he raised his hand, put his index finger and his thumb together and said ‘excellent, excellent barbeque’. He said it in such a manner that really filled my heart with happiness and joy.”

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also laid great stress on the real purpose of Ijtema; spiritual advancement. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى always enjoyed the barbeque and sports functions, but he laid the greatest emphasis upon seeing large numbers of Khuddam attending each of the congregational prayers on time and behaving appropriately. He was keen to gauge progress year on year in the knowledge of the Qur’an, Sala’at, Surah Fatihah and the Philosophy of Islam, for if we didn’t show progress in these fields, what was the purpose of being great at Volleyball or cooking kebabs.

Ahmad Yahya was the Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK from 1992-1998. Attendances were rising and the quality was improving, but this was not always the case as Ahmad Sahib recalls:

“In the history of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, there has never been a second ijtema in the same year. However, I remember in 1995, when I read my report at the last session, I mentioned the attendance. After I sat down Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asked me the total tajneed of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya. I told him and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى immediately worked out the number of Khuddam that were absent. Then Huzur رحمه الله تعالى gave us a difficult challenge to try and bring those Khuddam that didn’t come. He told us to organise an Ijtema for those



Above: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watches the Kabadi during the the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Ijtema in 2000

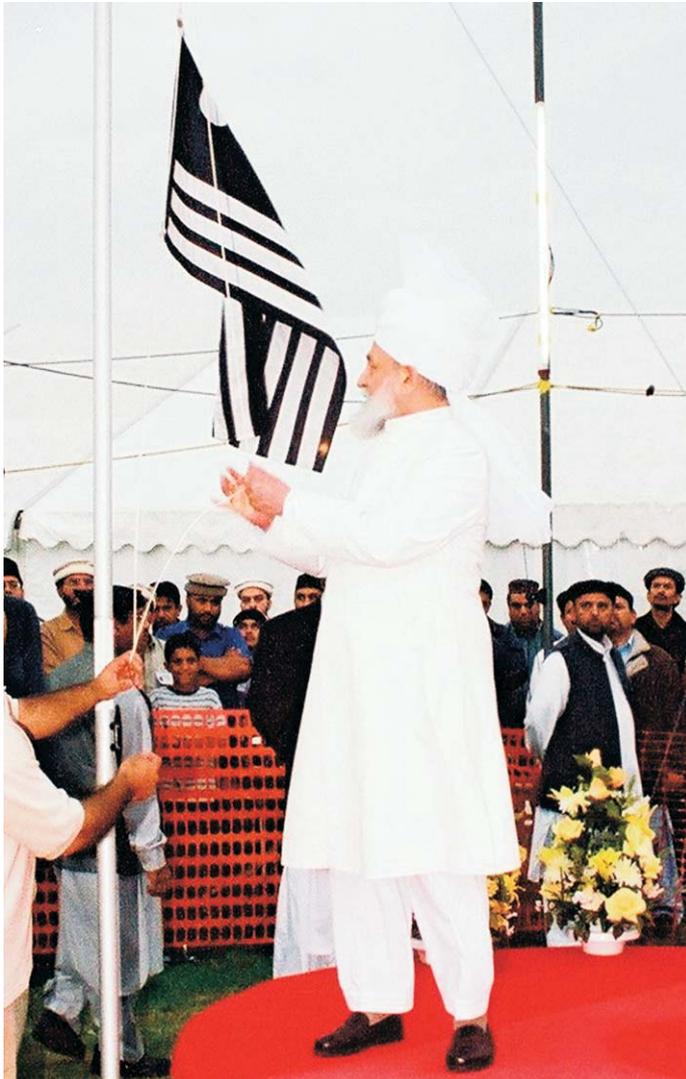
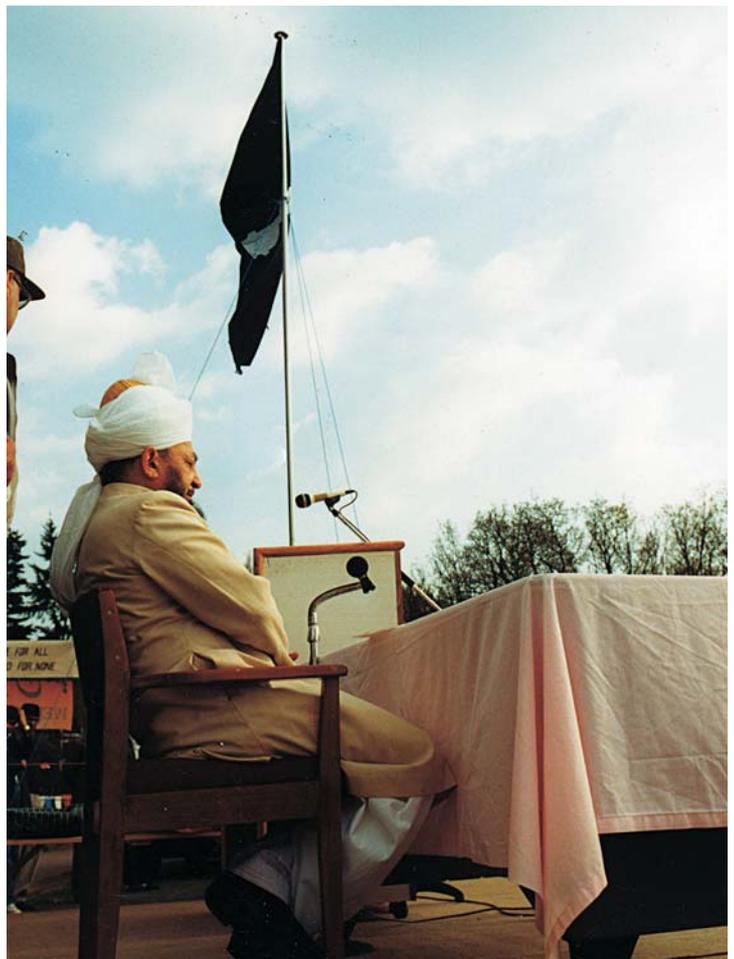
Right: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى meets members of the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Kabadi team

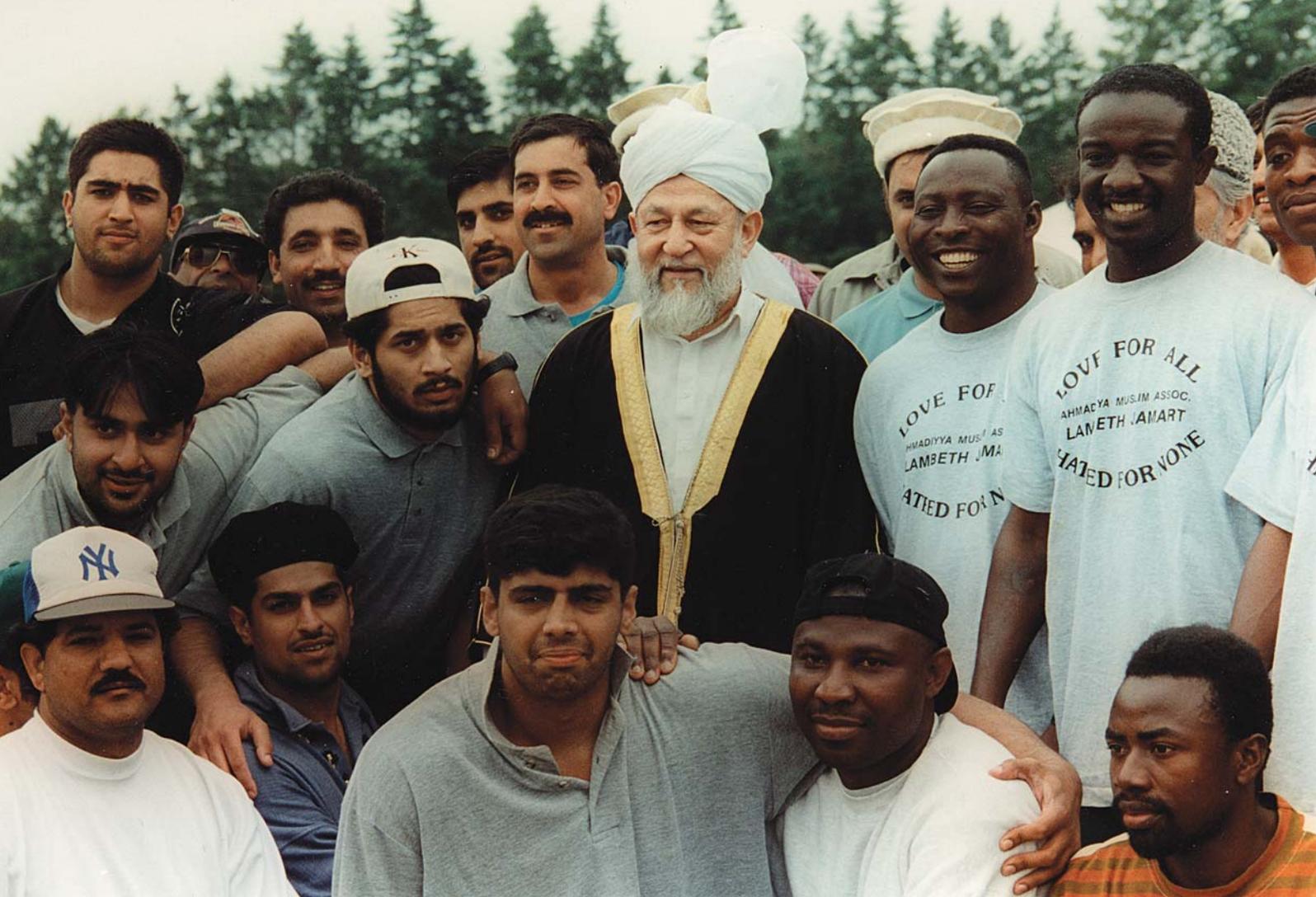
Khuddam who had not attended the Ijtema for the last three consecutive years. He wanted us to organise this before our next Ijtema and he also wanted the management committee to be consisting of those Khuddam that seldom come. When we heard this we were absolutely dumbfounded as to how we were going to do this. I then went to see Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asking for guidance on how we can get those Khuddam that never come to organise an event as big as this. However, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى simply said, we must try. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى never used to give up hope on someone that had very little attachment with the Jama'at. He always saw the best in everyone. By the grace of Allah we managed to organise this Ijtema and it was a success. As far as I can remember, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى spent most of his day at the Ijtema on Saturday and Sunday. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was so pleased that we obeyed his instructions and said that what he was most pleased about was the fact that he had set a difficult task but because you have obeyed the Khalifa of the time, Allah has given His blessing."

European Ijtema

In 1982 Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى arrived on his first visit to the continent after becoming Khalifa. He instructed Khuddam to start holding Ijtemas on a European scale, now that

Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at the European Ijtema 1985
Below: Scenes from the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Ijtema 2000 at Islamabad





Above: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى with the Tug of War teams of East London and Lambeth at the Ijtema of 1985

Left: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى addresses the Khuddam at the European Ijtema 1985 in Islamabad

travelling had become so much easier across Europe, and there was a sense of competition amongst the neighbouring Jama'ats. Although the larger Jama'ats such as the UK and Germany were well established, there was a need to bring the smaller Jama'ats to the same level, and to create a catalyst for joint activity across the Continent.

These instructions were duly implemented on the 27th, 28th and 29th July 1984 and the UK was given the honour of hosting the very first European Ijtema at the Heathlands School in Hounslow. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى attended the Ijtema and was pleased with the arrangements. The Ijtema took Khuddamul Ahmadiyya to the next stage as it allowed Khuddam from various parts of the Continent to meet and share experiences, and particularly enabled those from countries with a small tajneed (number of Khuddam) to participate in such a major event. Other European Ijtemas followed and were organised in the following venues:





Above: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watches the the weight lifting competition during the Ijtema of 1988

Right: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى meets the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK football referees during Ijtema 2000

- 1984 Hounslow, UK;**
- 1985 Islamabad, UK;**
- 1986 Nasir Bagh, West Germany;**
- 1987 Nunspeet, Holland;**
- 1988 Islamabad, UK;**
- 1989 Nasir Bagh, West Germany;**
- 1990 Islamabad, UK.**

All European Ijtemas enjoyed the special distinction of being graced with the august presence of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى . Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also used these occasions to enjoy sports challenges such as Kabbadi which was one of his favourites. On one occasion, he even laid down a challenge from the UK as former Sehat e Jismani Secretary fro Mhalis Khuddamul Ahamdiyya UK Arshad Ahmedi relates:

“In 1987 ... I received a message from Huzur رحمه الله تعالى that he, on behalf of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK, had made a cricket match challenge to a team formed of the various Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya in Europe. I quickly formed a team and we then travelled to the 4th European Ijtema in Nunspeet, Holland. The match took



place and we thrashed them! I remember at some stage of the closing session of the Ijtema, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى explained that he had made the challenge on the UK's behalf and was glad to see that the UK team had won, as he was confident that they would."

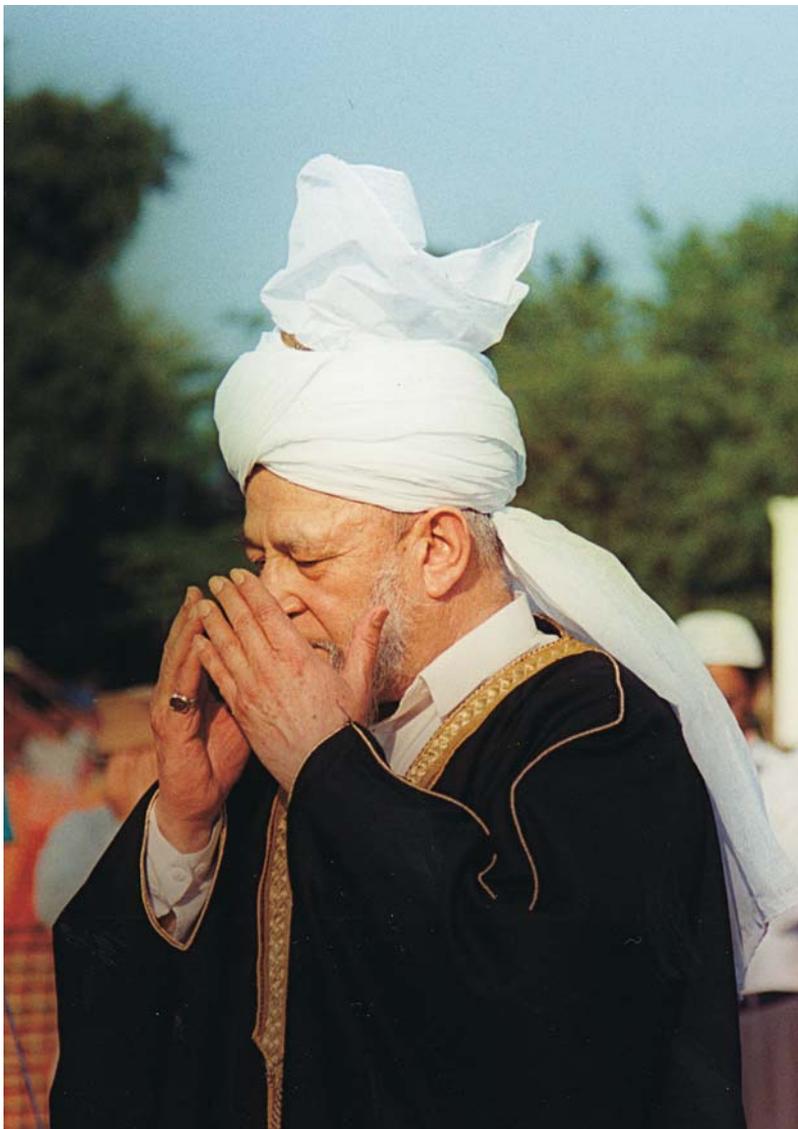
Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was always keen to establish and maintain records and for demonstrable improvements in the achievements of Khuddam. He had asked for performances to be compared to international standards, sometimes with unforeseen consequences as Arshad goes on to explain:

"In one Ijtema when announcing the results of the Shot-Putt, we announced the distance thrown by the winning Khadim, and then the World record, British record and also the Women's record. The Women's record was much further than what the Khadim had thrown! This made Huzur رحمه الله تعالى laugh."

1990, was the last European Ijtema, after this, the Ijtema's reverted back to National events as by now, each of the Nations had more firmly established Ijtema in their own countries and used the European Ijtema as a yardstick in order to improve their own structure and organisation. One of the legacies of the European Ijtemas was the relationships established between countries. These blossomed in the last few years through the aid convoys and other joint charity work coordinated through Humanity First with teams of Khuddam from various countries working together.

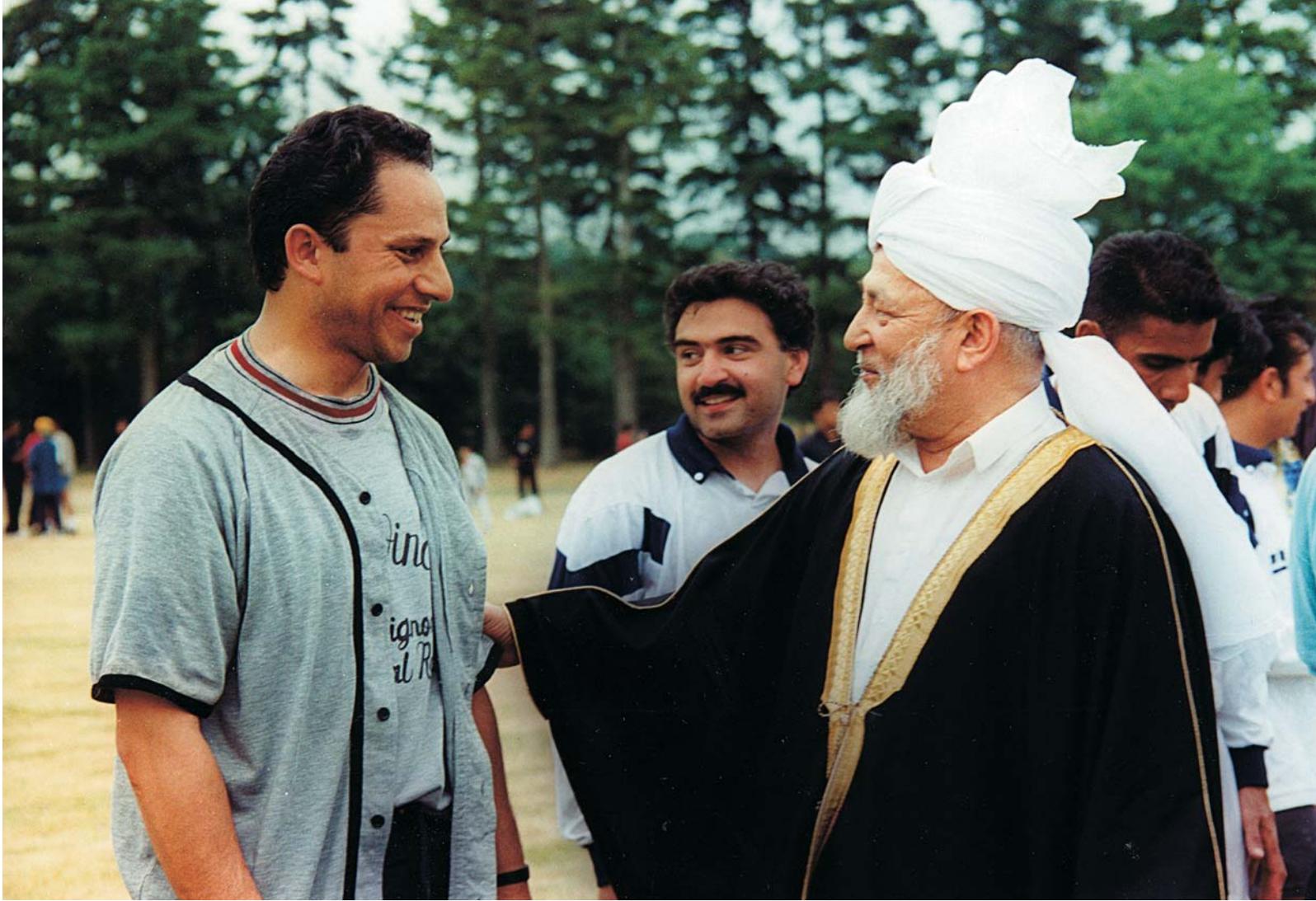
So in the UK, we have been very fortunate to have had our Hazur رضي الله عنه with us almost every year in our Ijtema, and to get so much personal attention and guidance to not just improve the event, but to use the event to improve ourselves. Huzur رضي الله عنه loved to meet the youth and the children and became fully immersed in the event. During the Ijtema Huzur رضي الله عنه provided invaluable guidance and advice in all spheres, from the issues of Tarbiyyat to food preparation and sports. There were occasions where Huzur رضي الله عنه expressed pleasure and at other times concern and indeed at times he would rebuke us. But this was his desire, like a father to a child, for the UK Khuddam to excel in every field.

In Huzur رضي الله عنه passing we lost a personage that nurtured the UK Jama'at and for Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya this was particularly significant.



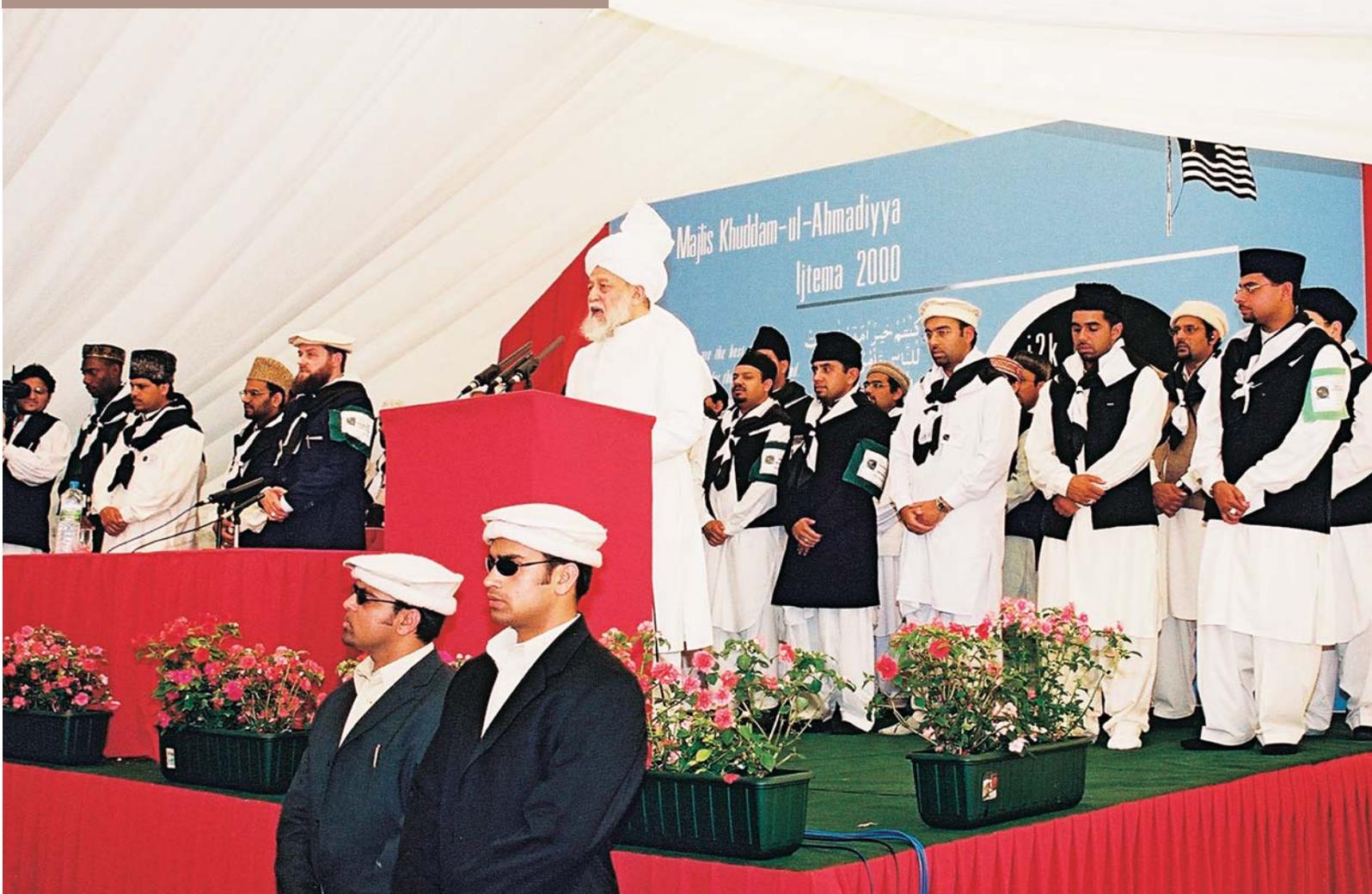
Top : Huzur رحمه الله تعالى addresses the Khuddam at the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Ijtema 2000 in Islamabad. This was a historic concluding address and was his last address to Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK, though Question and answers did take place at later Ijtema's.

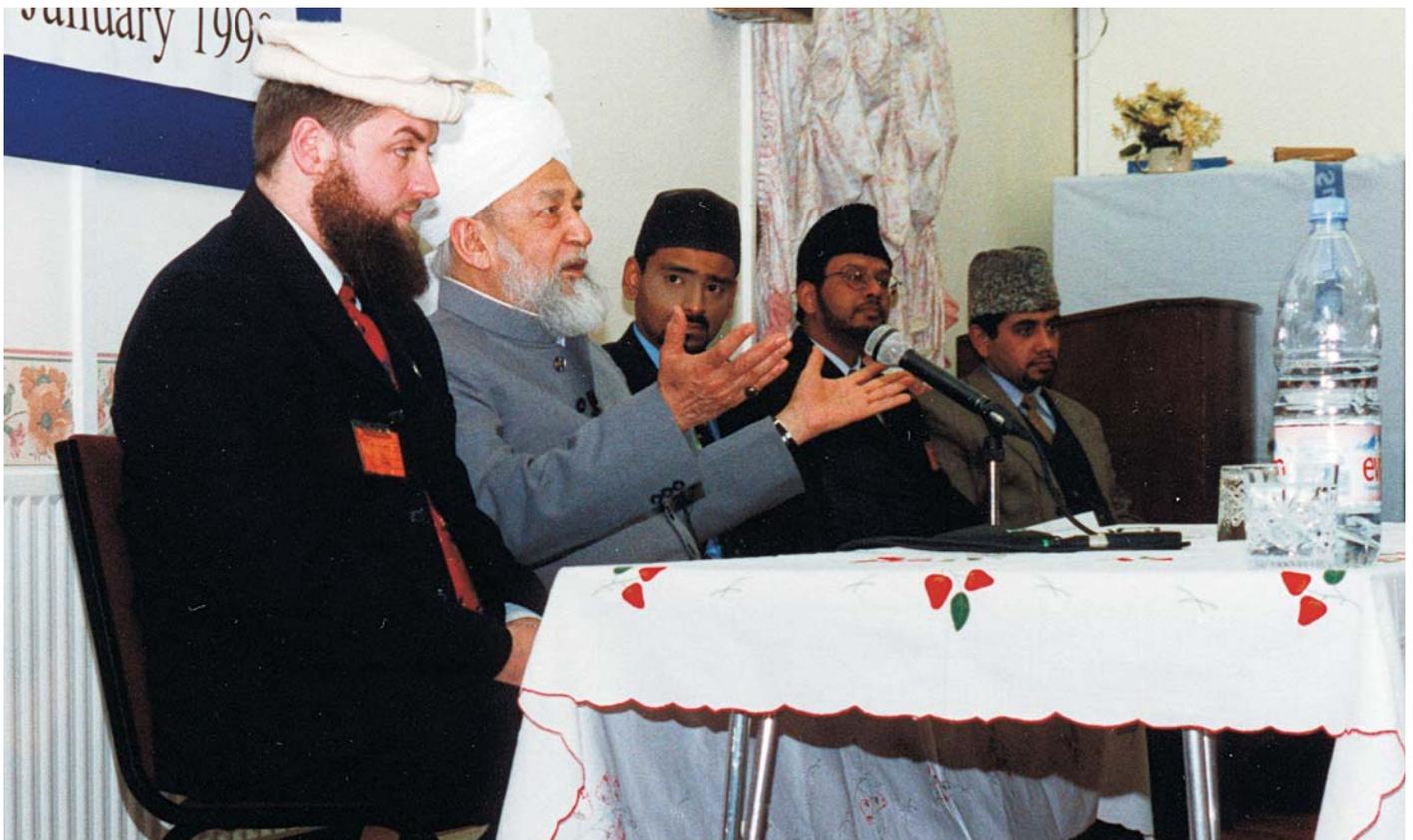
Left: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at leads silent prayer after the flag hoisting session of the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK 1995 Ijtema in Islamabad.



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at the Ijtema 1995.

Bottom: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at the Ijtema 2000.





Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى guidance for students

by Dr Hammad Khan

Dynamism and boundless energy were the overwhelming first impressions that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى emanated. He was a polymath, a true renaissance man. Interested in everything and everyone with a desire to instil that interest in all around him. He was a man of science, a poet and sportsman; anyone who knew him could not help but be inspired.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى had an extraordinary interest in the welfare of students. Along with this he had a strong desire that students should not waste their time at university or college. He reiterated over and over that he felt that the opportunities for a young man moving away from home to university or college were huge.

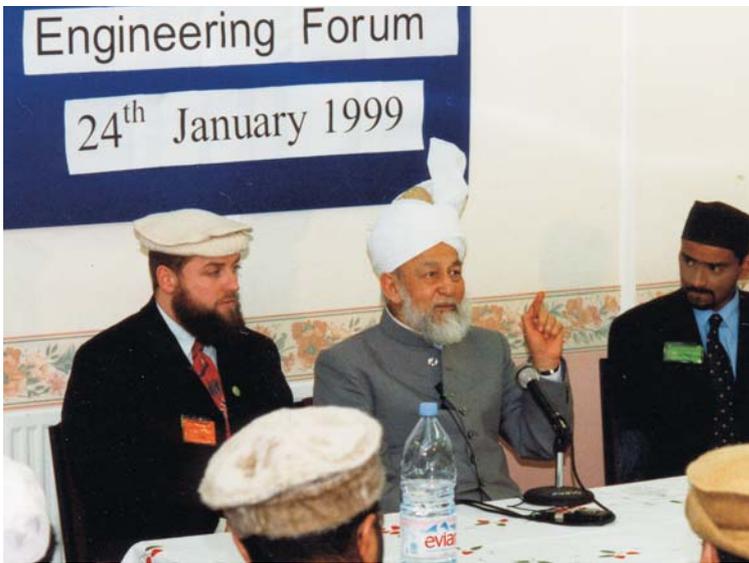
To the delight of many a young khadim he would often recount stories of his own education in London, during the fifties, when he enrolled at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He described himself as "a not so good student" and other than in one class (Phonetics) made no great efforts. However, he did not feel that his time in London was wasted; he valued the opportunities he had to meet people from diverse backgrounds appreciating a host of viewpoints; he made friendships that were to last his lifetime and the impression he gave wherever he went was of a friendly and kind human being.

He travelled an extraordinary amount, primarily in his small second hand Morris. He drove and hitchhiked around most of England and Europe and regarded these experiences as his real education.

His flair for absorbing and understanding hundreds of different subjects and disciplines came through especially when Huzur رحمه الله تعالى spent time with students. There was no sphere of knowledge which Huzur رحمه الله تعالى did not feel wholly comfortable discussing. He amazed many with his familiarity with every subject; ranging from politics and law to the minutiae of science. His face would often light up as a young student asked him another challenging question.

The extraordinary breadth and depth in his knowledge probably came most to light on the publication of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى book, "Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth" in which Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had gathered together a lifetime's worth of observations and thoughts on a variety of subjects in natural history, physics and human behaviour and interpreted them in the light of Islamic teaching and Quranic law.

The Umoor-e-Tuluba Department of Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadyya UK organised many seminars which Huzur رحمه الله تعالى did us the honour of attending. One particular Majlis Irfan with Huzur



Top left & Right & Bottom Left: Huzur visits careers seminar held by Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya - Umoore Tulaba.
Bottom Left: In 1989 various forums were arranged where by students were able to meet Huzur and ask questions.

رحمه الله تعالى stands out; at a Student Affairs Seminar held at the London Mosque in 1999. The Question and Answer Session was held in the Nusrat Hall, a small area conducive to a relaxed atmosphere. Immediately he expressed his delight at the number of people who had attended the seminar. And as the questions came he seemed more and more relaxed, pleased with the breadth and depth of questions. First came questions on quantum physics then law and politics, medicine, biology. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى did not stall or skip a step, as was his style, he would merely pause for a few moments to gather his thoughts and then launch into a subject with vigour whilst revealing a unique and unrivalled depth of knowledge. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was always aware of the latest theories and controversies in whatever subject he was speaking on and would seem to add a new dimension of interpretation based on his vast religious and secular knowledge. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى desired very much that young Ahmadis should go into further education, and always did his utmost to encourage this. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was an extraordinary judge of character, and would immediately be able to sum up a person when they asked for careers advice and he would invariably advise someone according to their personal abilities and interests.

On one occasion Huzur رحمه الله تعالى expressed his desire that more young Ahmadi students should go into Law. He said that he felt that the Jamaat needed more lawyers in every specialisation and that the Jamaat needed representation on the world stage. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was always mindful of the needs of the Jamaat when he gave careers advice and he had previously encouraged young students to take up medicine (especially Surgery) and physics. It is a testament to the affection and regard the students of the UK had for Huzur رحمه الله تعالى that we now by the grace of God are seeing a clutch of young doctors and lawyers coming to the fore in the Jamaat.

His knowledge and his ability to make a complicated subject clear, inspired many young Khuddam and is one of his most lasting legacies. May Allah bless his soul and may we live up to the aspirations that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had for us. Ameen.



Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى love for Squash

by Shazil Lone

Our beloved Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى enjoyed a keen interest in many forms of physical exercise, but there was one sport in which he took a particular interest - squash.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى started the game from the basics of holding a racquet. In fact, the outstanding proponent of the game, Hashim Khan, was his original mentor and coach. Hashim was the seven-time British Open Champion and patriarch of the Khan squash dynasty, which was later to include Jahangeer Khan.

Hashim himself was from a poor background, and a member of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى family had helped to arrange for Hashim to travel to England for the prestigious British Open Championship - regarded as the Wimbledon of squash - in the early 1950s. This is how Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, who was attending the London School of Oriental and African Studies at the time, came in contact with him. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was able to see many of his matches including the British Open finals, in which Hashim was victorious. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى availed the rare opportunity of being coached by one of the truly all-time greats of the game and never forgot what

he learnt. Even while playing after a break of almost 30 years, or while watching matches, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to recall three key points of the game, which he learnt from Hashim Khan:

1. Holding the racquet with a tight grip and not letting the wrist drop;
2. Serving with a high lob into the corner of the backcourt making it as difficult as possible for your opponent;
3. Taking control of the 'T' in the middle of the court during rallies.

In 1996 Huzur رحمه الله تعالى mentioned to the then Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Sports Secretary (Mohtamim Sehat-e-Jismani), Mohamed Arshad Ahmedi Sahib, that he had already instructed the Majlis to introduce the game of squash to Khuddam and Atfal. At that stage he had advised Khuddam that they should use the facilities of King George's Squash Club on Kimber Road, very near to the Fazl Mosque. Four squash courts had been booked for two hours every Sunday morning on a regular basis and the attendance swelled with every session. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asked Arshad Sahib to join the club and to inform him when it would be appropriate for them to play a game.



Top: A photograph of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى with the competitors and organisers of the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Squash tournament. (1995)

Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى first game of squash was played after a gap of almost 30 years behind closed doors. After a short while, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى began to rediscover his 'court sense', started to hit the ball cleanly and, more importantly, regained his squash fitness. It was not long before people were allowed in the viewing gallery to watch him play and viewers were extremely impressed by the high quality of his game.

A regular squash court booking in clubs is 45 minutes, but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى became so keen and enjoyed playing so much that he increased the booking to two sessions. Arshad Sahib recalls: "Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى fitness was amazing. I am 51 today and am nowhere near as fit as he was back then. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to make a special tea with coffee and honey mixture for me, but he never used to have any himself. He just wanted to continue playing. It was a very special time for me. It was as if I had the Khalifa to myself for a couple of hours. I would come to his office and we would go together in his car to the squash club. I will cherish those memories forever."

As Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى enjoyment of the game increased, so did the number of sessions, from once weekly to up to three times a week

(other commitments allowing). A number of people enjoyed playing with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى including Major Mahmood Sahib, Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى Head of Security.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى often recalled his playing days during his student life and mentioned that it was quite normal for him to play for a couple of hours without a break. Even during the months of Ramadhan, which fell in the summer of the 1950s, he would play some of his university friends for several hours right up to the time of Iftar.

Sadly, it was during the month of Ramadhan in the summer of 1986, that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى sustained an injury during one session that almost proved to be his last appearance on a squash court. While attempting to retrieve a ball from the back of the court, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى accidentally tripped and fell head first on to the back wall. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى instinctively turned his head just in time to avoid a full-face impact against the wall and instead fell with his face facing slightly to the right, with the result that his left eyebrow split open.

Dr Zaffar Dar, one of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى doctors, was summoned immediately and the eyebrow was stitched in the back of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى car with a white plaster covering the cut. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was to deliver his weekend Darsul Qur'an that evening prior to Iftar, which used to be filmed and sent to different parts of the world (this being before MTA broadcasts had begun). Huzur رحمه الله تعالى remarked that there were people who were already against the idea of him playing squash at his age (57 at the time), and that this accident would just convince them even more for Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to give it up.

Although his squash playing days ended, his love for the sport and his support of the Khuddam tournament never diminished. Squash was introduced as a national sporting event in Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK in 1987 and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى always graced the event with his presence at the final. During one of the finals, between Arshad Sahib and Naseer Hayat, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى arrived midway and surprised everyone by taking off his turban and picking a racquet. He asked Naseer Sahib to leave the court for a while so that he could play some rallies with Arshad Sahib. Such was his love for the game.

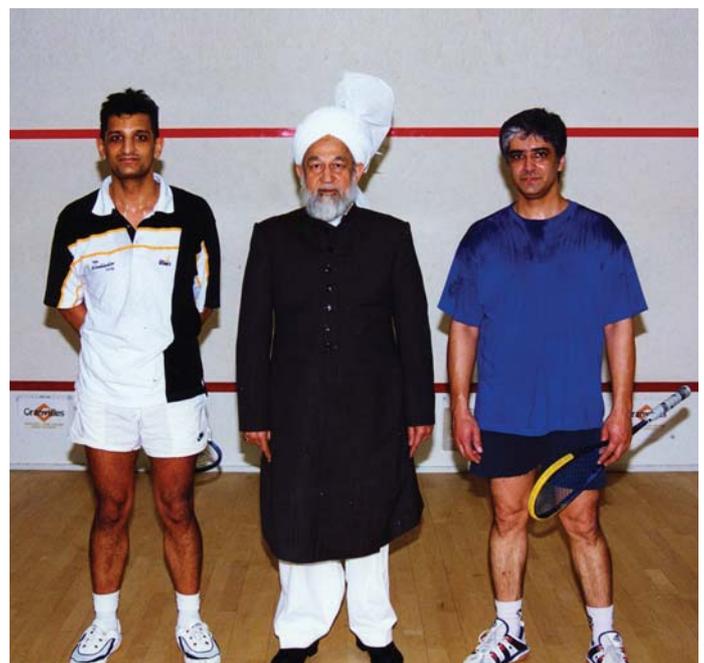
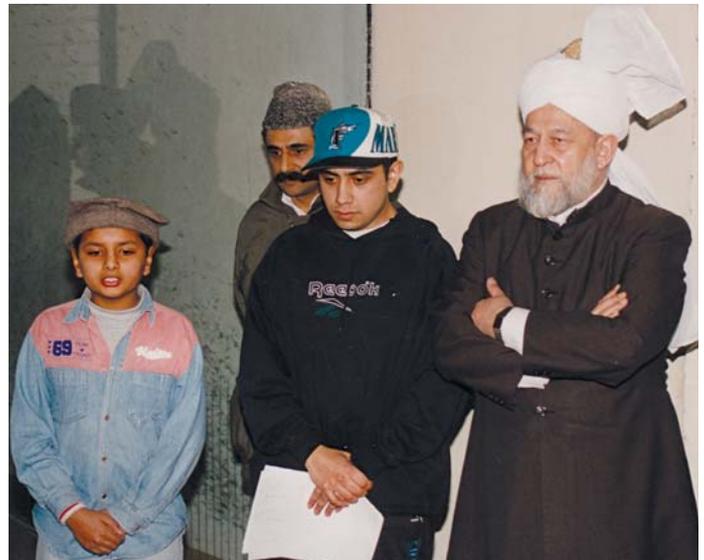
My very first event as Mohtamim Sehat-e-Jismani in 1999 turned out to be the last squash tournament Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was able to attend. It was held at the King's Club in Wimbledon. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى arrived he took a courtside seat behind the glass wall. Arrangements were made for a senior commentator to keep Huzur رحمه الله تعالى up to speed with the game, its score and general commentary of the play. But I saw very quickly that aside from the introduction of the players, the commentator's role was redundant as Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى personal grasp of proceedings was more than enough. It was clear to see Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى appreciation and

understanding of the game, as he often sat in silence during the play, watching each subsequent manoeuvre and making any comments during the breaks in play.

It was indeed a rare and precious sight to see a man held in such high esteem by millions of people around the world, whose time was so in demand, relax and be entertained by a sport that he loved so much. It is also a testament to his simplicity as a man that he could so easily relate to the game of squash and its players, be they young or old.

May Allah bless his soul and may He permit us to fulfil the aspirations Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had for us in every sphere of life, Ameen.

Below: A photograph of Huzur at the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Squash tournament.
Bottom Right: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى plays squash with Arshad Ahmadi
Bottom Left: Huzur with finalist of the Squash Tournament

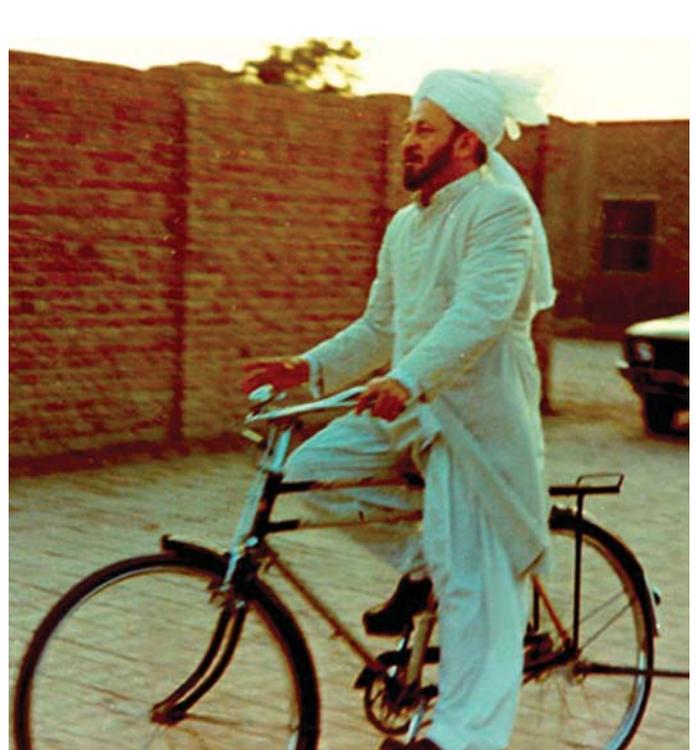
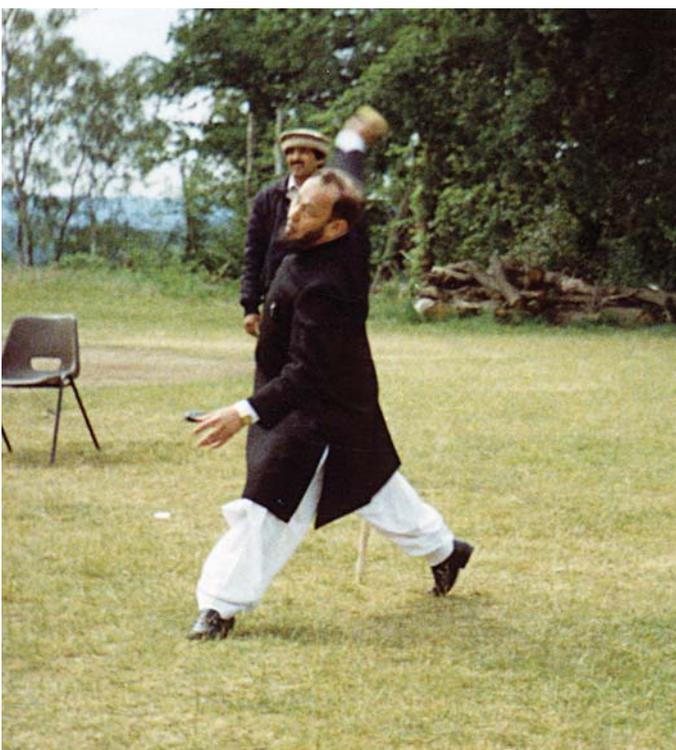
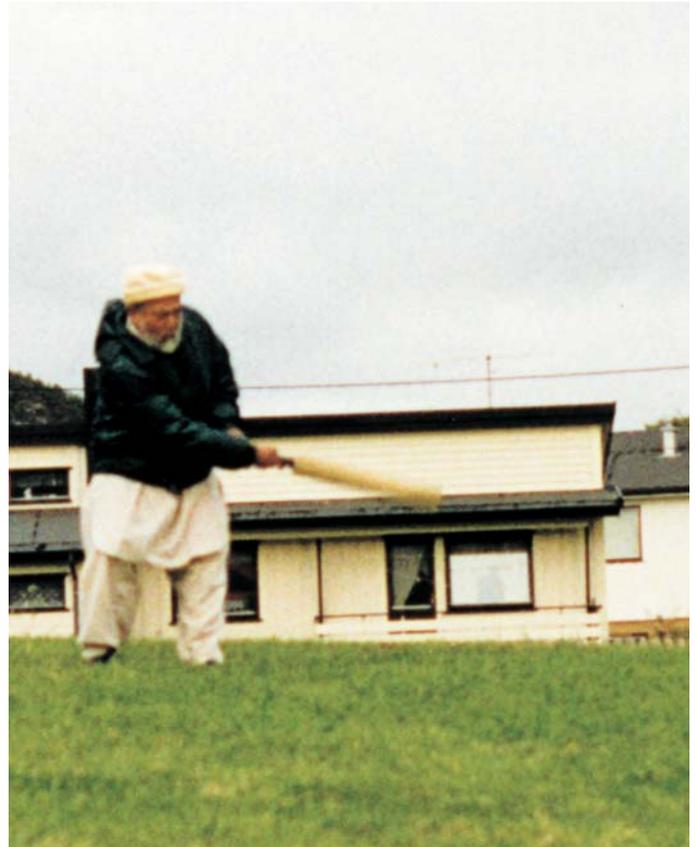


Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى love of sports

Our beloved Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى enjoyed a keen interest in many forms of sport and physical exercise including walking, badminton, cricket, football and shooting. Below are a selection of photographs.

Top Left: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى enjoying the sport of clay pigeon shooting. **Top Right:** Huzur رحمه الله تعالى playing cricket.

Bottom Left: Cricket in islamabad. **Bottom Left:** Cycling in Pakistan.





Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى and the Foundations of Humanity First

By Kalim Bhatti

**“My mercy encompasses all”
(Al-Qur’an 7:156)**

There is a Sufi saying that the friend of Allah is he whose generosity is like that of the river, benevolence like that of the sun, and hospitality like that of the earth (1). By any measure, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى exuded these universal qualities of the love of humanity with the utmost sincerity, as the Promised Messiah عليه السلام said of the Holy Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم, “his soul melted out of sympathy for mankind”(2). Charitable giving is emphasised in the teachings of all religions, but especially Islam, and particularly in the Ahmadiyya Movement; as exemplified by the Promised Messiah’s عليه السلام teaching that the “pure essentials” of being human are “love and sympathy for mankind”, which he called “earthly perfection”(3), and the work of the Jama’at, namely institutions such as the “langar khana” and the Nusrat Jehan Schemes (the building of schools and hospitals) in Africa.

In the very first year of his Khilafat, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى identified “three creative principles” of the Holy Qur’an relevant to the development of Humanity First’s ethical background: Absolute Justice, Kindness and Kinship:

“Indeed Allah requires you to abide by justice, to treat with

grace and to give
like the giving of kin to kin” (Al Qur’an 16:91)

Huzur’s رحمه الله تعالى view on charitable giving was deeply rooted in the Islamic teaching, asserting in a lecture in 1990 at the University of Seville (4) that although Islam instigated an “institutionalised” mode of spending on the poor, it lays an emphasis on the non-institutionalised methods, or Sadaqa. It is this voluntary giving out of benevolence (Ihsan), or the art of returning more than others’ dues that would lead to the highest stage in human relationships, that of “Ita’i Dhill-Qurba”, which Hadhrat Sahib described as “a spontaneous expression of love and care, as experienced by a mother for her child” (5). Indeed, the mother’s unconditional love became a signature metaphor for the exemplary qualities of the servitude and sympathy he wished members of the Movement to try to attain throughout the Sermons of his tenure. The spirit of charitable giving should be to give “without any trace of affectation” (6)

Delivering a lecture in 1990 at the Queen Elizabeth II (7) Conference Centre in London, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى pinpointed many of the characteristics of capitalism that have created an imbalanced and unjust society, suggesting the necessity for charity based on Islamic guidelines of absolute justice. It was really part of Hadhrat Sahib’s insight into the application of the finer points of all areas of Islamic



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى meets with a Humanity First team about to leave for a trip abroad to deliver aid to the needy.

philosophy that he was able to interpret so skilfully in the context of today's society

Then, in 1992 in his Friday Sermon of 28th August during the height of the hunger crisis in Somalia, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى discussed how simply the thought of the torment and starvation the people were suffering there caused severe restlessness of the heart. In fact, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى iterated that the heart is obliged to be affected by the sorrows of its fellow man, indicating the humanity of an individual. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also mentioned here that the Jama'at was already trying to help the people of Somalia, but problems had arisen in coordinating with the relief organisations established there, largely controlled by western nations, and in utter frustration of wanting to help all we could in some way, our aid was handed over to these organisations

But it was in 1993 that Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى perceived that the need, time and opportunity had arisen for Jama'at Ahmadiyya to set up an international organisation to serve humankind throughout the world, without distinction of colour, race or creed. Under direct instructions of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK undertook a programme of humanitarian aid relief convoys to assist the victims of the tragic war in the former Yugoslavia. Once the

convoys, which went directly into the heart of Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia, were established, Hadhrat Sahib approved the name of the proposed international charity as 'Humanity First'. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى advised that this organisation should not limit itself with involving Ahmadi's, but other "noble souls" also. Huzur's vision was to establish a charity that would promote the highest ethical action, safeguard the preservation of human life and dignity above all other considerations, and through it, symbolise the unity and brotherhood of humankind. Finally it should be a non-political, non-sectarian agency.

Throughout his Khilafat, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى emphasised in his sermons that we must inculcate the attitude of universality not only among all Ahmadi's, but that there should be a feeling of "oneness", of belonging to humanity, and that no geographical or racial barriers should be permitted (8).

In fact, without the personal support of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى, Humanity First could not even have grown out of its conceptual vision. If we analyse simply how Humanity First is funded,



the main source is through direct appeals to the public, and the source of the inspiration to give within the Jama'at has been Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, from its beginnings, right up until the final "Iraq Appeal" just weeks before his sad demise. There have been countless occasions where our fundraisers have stood open handed before a Friday Sermon, or Eid Sermon, and with the blessing of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى thousands have been collected in one day. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى stood as the figurehead, the symbol of what Humanity First attempts to achieve: compassion for our fellow man, unity and love.

Throughout the world we have put his message into practice, even before the inauguration of Humanity First, the emphasis on charitable schemes was abundant, for example the Jama'at's work in West African hospitals, the worldwide enrolment of thousands of blood and kidney donors, cycle runs and marathon walks to name but a few altruistic outlets that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى encouraged during his tenure. In fact it was on our beloved Imam's arrival and encouragement that raising funds for charities such as Save the Children Fund and Great Ormond Street were instigated by Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK.

Although Humanity First is a "non-religious" charity, its entire basis is ground in the universal Islamic values of justice and fairness to friends and foes alike in every sphere of human interest, and the demolishing of discriminations within man, again, advocating the spirit of Ita'i Dhill-Qurba.

Part of his humanistic approach in all matters can be found in Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى propagation of homeopathy, a economically viable, and often free alternative that the Ahmadiyya Jama'at provide for those in need who could never afford expensive pharmaceuticals. Yet the true beauty of his nature was found in the personal attention Hadhrat

Sahib would give to hundreds of thousand of members of the Movement who would write to him regularly regarding treatment with homoeopathy. This personal involvement was also to be found during Humanity First's convoys to the former Yugoslavia, where he constantly corresponded to many individual victims, thus giving such comfort that we who are fortunate in our lives of abundance could never realise.

He also advised and showed by example, in the light of the Holy Qur'an, not just what to give, but how to give. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى repeatedly emphasised that giving something that one would be ashamed of receiving from anyone else could not be defined as alms:

"Do not select out of it for charity that which is worthless"
(Al-Qur'an 2:268)

Humanity First's motto, "serving mankind," was also inspired by Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى incisive understanding of the Islamic concept of service affirming that:

"You will remain the best as long as you are you are service minded"(9)

It must be kept in mind that Humanity First is not merely a reactive disaster relief organisation, Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى continuously discussed the concept of giving from ones "self" not only from wealth, which is why the "Learn a Skill," "Education Sponsorships" and now Orphanages have been instigated in West Africa and South America. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى has explained that the basis of giving from what one possesses is taught in the Holy Qur'an:

"And the true believers spend in Our cause whatsoever We Ourselves have bestowed upon them." (Al-Qur'an 2:4)



Top: A truck loaded with Humanitarian Aid.

Left: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى meets with Humanity First members

And that this goes beyond simply our possessions, but also our faculties, human relationships, honour, peace and comfort. It is difficult to conceive the depth with which Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى has elucidated the concept of giving. Notably, there is the recurring encouragement that all sections of society should participate in God's cause:

"All that is required is that you should spend something of which God has given you. The scope of something is so variable that that even ordinary, weak people who do not have the strength to make substantial sacrifices can at least participate to whatever degree they can afford" **(10)**

Yet again, this advice has proved invaluable to Humanity First, in that it has been the sacrifices of the Ahmadiyya Community both in

monetary terms but as much in the voluntary time that members have given whenever the need has arisen, from its inception throughout the Bosnian War, through to the Sierra Leone and Kosovo Crises, up until the India and Turkey Earthquakes, the Water for Life, Feed a Family and I.T. Projects, all the aid workers and the management of Humanity First have been, and are unpaid volunteers. For every appeal, for every scheme Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى always led by personal example, by donating not only his time, but substantial funds from his personal reserves, into every cause.

In the last nine years, Humanity First has been able to extend its operations in fifteen countries and, thanks to the commitment of its members and the prayers and advice of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى its work is growing daily. By the grace of Allah, the organisation has been distinguished by the most unique of patrons imaginable in Huzur, one whose vision of uniting humanity through the continuous practical devotion to a noble cause will be sorely missed. It is said that that there is no path shorter to Allah than that of bringing solace to hearts, and this bringing comfort to the hearts of the needy and destitute will remain the abiding legacy of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى. May Allah bless his soul for his dedication, compassion and love for humanity. Ameen.

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Huzur رحمه الله تعالى with Majlis-e-Amila. A journey through the years



Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad رحمه الله تعالى, Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Markazia
with Majlis Amila Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Lahore (1968 -1969)



Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رحمه الله تعالى, with the Majlis Amila Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK (1988 - 1989)
This photo was taken under the Sadarat of Rafiq Ahmad Hayat Sahib, the 1st Sadr of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK



Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى , with the Majlis Amila Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK (1994 - 1995)
This photo was taken under the Sadarat of Sayed Ahmad Yahya Sahib, the 2nd Sadr of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK



Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى , with the Majlis Amila Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK (1999 - 2000)
This photo was taken under the Sadarat of Maulana Ibrahim Ahmad Noonan Sahib, the 3rd Sadr of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK and is the last photo of the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Amila with Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV رَحْمَةُ اللهِ تَعَالَى



An interview with

RAFIQ AHMED HAYAT SAHIB

First Sadr
of 1988 - 1992
Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK

Rafiq Ahmed Hayat has enjoyed a distinguished Jama'at career, starting in the 1960s when he became the first Secretary Atfal in the UK. In October 1988 he was appointed National Qaid of Majlis Khudamul Ahmadiyya UK and was the first Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK. Later he served as Sadr Majlis Ansarullah UK, Chairman of MTA International and as Editor of The Review of Religions. Currently he is serving as Amir Jama'at UK.

First Recollection

In 1981, during my visit to Pakistan, Hadhrat Chaudhry Muhammad Zafrulla Khan Sahib requested me to hand certain members of the family of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad عليه السلام, signed copies of his translation of the Holy Qur'an, which had just been published. One of the houses I had to visit was that of Sahibzada Mirza Tahir Ahmad Sahib رحمه الله تعالى. Unfortunately he was attending a press conference that day and therefore I did not get the opportunity to meet him. Later, whilst still in Pakistan, I met my brother-in-law who told me to listen to a tape of the same Conference. The way that Mian Tahir رحمه الله تعالى had tackled the major points of contention regarding the Jama'at within such a short period of time was truly amazing, so much so that I decided to bring the tape back to the UK and played it at a Jama'at study circle in London. That was my very first introduction to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. The following year, of course, Sahibzada Mirza Tahir Ahmad Sahib رحمه الله تعالى was elected Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV.

On 30th April 1984, I remember getting a call early in the morning to come

immediately to The Fazl Mosque. There were lots of people present. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى arrived there was a lot of commotion. Despite his long and difficult journey, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى wasted no time and initialised daily Majlis-e-Irfan sessions. The day after his arrival I was on duty at the second gate of the Mosque. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was walking down with Mubarak Saqi Sahib. As Huzur رحمه الله تعالى passed he waved his hand in our direction and then said something to Saqi Sahib. It was only afterwards that Saqi Sahib came to me and said Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had been enquiring about you. This was Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى first introduction to me. I was amazed that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had picked me out of such a large crowd.

Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى Association with Khuddamul Ahmadiyya

The moment Huzur رحمه الله تعالى arrived he took a lot of interest in the Khuddam. I think he realised there was a lot of room for Tarbiyyat. If you grow up in Rabwah, these things came naturally. The way Huzur رحمه الله تعالى decided he would conduct our Tarbiyyat was by creating a strong bond with the youth. He realised a lot of work had



Top: The Centenary cycle marathon arrives at the Fazl Mosque. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى is seen smiling as the late Aftab Ahmad Khan, Amir Jama'at UK guides the cyclist in. Rafiq Hayat Sahib, Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya is wearing the centenary sweatshirt.

to be done in that area, and maybe he also knew that we were going to be his helpers for the future.

Firstly he taught us the very basics, about service to humanity and so on. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also promoted the idea of involving Khuddam in programmes such as the Marathon Walks. For the first Walk we had to organise four different routes into Islamabad. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى graciously came along all four routes with us, spoke with us and took photographs with us. That was part of the bonding process.

Training

In October 1988, the then Amir, Aftab Khan Sahib, called me and said Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had instructed that I should take over responsibility for Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK. The European Ijtema took place in Islamabad only three after my appointment and proved to be a great learning experience for me personally. One thing I noticed was that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى

was physically very fit and it was a real effort to keep up with him. During the Ijtema, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى conducted a Majlis-e-Irfan Session. As soon as the Session was over he immediately got up and left. Everything happened so fast, that I didn't even have a chance to put on my shoes. So I quickly ran after him in my socks right into the mud! There was a car waiting outside with its lights on and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى enquired about its occupants. I replied that I didn't know, but I think Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was trying to teach us to be aware and have a total sense of everything around you. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى then asked me about certain Khuddam who were on duty and I didn't know their names. Again this was training in the sense that one should know his people, not simply by name but also their background.

Another important piece of advice Huzur رحمه الله تعالى gave was that whenever the Khalifa of the time is present, the organisers should use the best person for Tilawat and Nazm. This was the very basic training that

we needed in those early days.

Leadership

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was able to bring out the very best in each and every individual. We started to do things that we could never have imagined. After the first European Ijtema, things started to take shape. Another part of our training was that whenever I used to accompany Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to the prayers, I would walk behind the guards. However, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would beckon me to come forward and whilst walking to the Mosque he would grasp my hand with great affection and give his instructions and advice regarding Khuddam affairs. During the earlier days, due to less hectic activity schedule, we would often informally invite Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to our events and he would always respond affirmatively. In those days Huzur رحمه الله تعالى graciously attended almost every Khuddam function, including badminton, squash and other such tournaments.



1989 - Centenary Year

We held various events to commemorate the Centenary Year in 1989. One programme that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was particularly pleased with was the cycle marathon from Bradford to London. Throughout the organisation of that event he took great interest and always asked me about its progress. It was a great event in which all members of the Jama'at were in some way involved. We also enjoyed a lot of press coverage. I remember we presented Huzur رحمه الله تعالى with a bicycle as a gift to commemorate the event. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى immediately rode the bicycle and showed us his skills by jumping up some small steps!

Another major event was Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى historic lecture at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. Many intellectuals and academics were present for that address which was later published in the form of a book entitled Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues. It was a passionate speech that very much impressed the attendees. We also arranged a number of press conferences that led to national papers writing detailed articles on the Jama'at.

In the same year we had a memorable "Jama'at Day" at Islamabad where we organised merry-go-rounds and bouncy castles for the children. It was truly a proud moment in the Jama'at's history.

The Centenary Interview

We were very fortunate that during the centenary year, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى very kindly accepted our request for an interview regarding his earlier life and in particular his time with his father,

Top: 24th March 1989. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى is walking to the stage in the field from where Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watched the 'Atfal March past'.

Hadhrat Musleh Mau'ood رضي الله عنه. This interview was taken over two separate sessions and lasted approximately six hours, and was published in the Khuddam Centenary Souvenir. This was a very historic interview covering various aspects of his life, to include his student days in London, his relationship with various prominent persons such as Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Wali Khan and Mangle. He also related some very funny incidents of his personal experiences with some well known personalities within the Jama'at.

Mubahala

In 1988, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had issued a Mubahala challenge to Ziaul Haq, the then President of Pakistan who had been actively persecuting the Jama'at. Zia perished as a result of that challenge, dying in a plane crash. When news came about his death, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى immediately instructed us to purchase sweets and distribute it amongst Jama'at members. He also directed that different coloured lights be placed on the Fazl Mosque. He must have seen some hesitation in my eyes, and he then explained that we were not celebrating the death of a person, but rather the glorious fulfilment of Allah's decree.

Power of Prayers

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى always made a point of emphasising the power of prayers, and I would always request him for his special prayers



before important events. Such requests were often made as Huzur رحمه الله تعالى made his way from his flat to the Fazl Mosque at prayer times. He had a special way of showing his love and affection, and on many occasions he would hold my hand all the way to the Mosque whilst giving his instructions and advice.

I remember that during a particular Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtema, the whether on the first day was so bad that we feared the entire event would be ruined. On the opening session I requested those present to pray earnestly that God improve the whether. In spite of a bad forecast, the weather changed almost immediately and by the grace of Allah the ijtema was a great success. In fact reports were received that in the immediate vicinity of Islamabad the rainfall was extreme and unrelenting, but as soon as one arrived at Islamabad it stopped almost immediately. I later related this incident to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and during the closing session as I was reading my report, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى stopped me and asked me to relate this incident as it was confirmation of how Allah responds to prayer.

Atfal Rally

Once I mentioned to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى that I felt that the Atfal did not receive the attention they deserved during Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtema, and perhaps it was appropriate to organize a separate Ijtema for them altogether. So I sought his guidance on this issue and this is how the Atfal Rally was born.

There is an interesting story about the first rally. A couple of days before the event, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى beckoned me in the normal way after Maghrib Prayers at the Fazl Mosque to enquire about the Atfal

Rally. As was normally the practice in those days, I requested Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to grace us with his presence at the Rally. Unfortunately Huzur رحمه الله تعالى informed me that he had already made plans for a family trip to Devon and Cornwall that same weekend, and thus he would be unable to attend. As Huzur رحمه الله تعالى entered his office outside, I turned to Major Mahmood Sahib and said that perhaps Huzur رحمه الله تعالى will make it back on Sunday in time for the final session, to which Malik Ashfaq Sahib immediately responded that there was absolutely no chance. I responded by saying that at least we can pray.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى left for his trip as planned, and to my absolute surprise I received a message late Saturday night confirming that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and the Kaafila had arrived back in London! Huzur رحمه الله تعالى then related the following story at the final session of the first Atfal Rally. It transpired that when Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and his family had reached Devon and Cornwall, every hotel was fully booked - not a single room was to be found anywhere! Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said that he had been perturbed by this because it was very unusual. However, the unusual circumstances were explained to him the following morning by Major Sahib who said that a prayer duel had taken place between Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya and Ashfaq Sahib – and it appeared that Sadr Sahib had won! Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was able to attend the Rally after all and he always took great personal interest in the event.

Khuddam Ijtemas

Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى immense love for the Khuddam was evident by his active and keen participation in all our events. At the Khuddam Ijtemas at Islamabad, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would arrive on Friday



Top: The Jalsa Main Gate team in Islamabad prepared a barbecue for Huzur رحمه الله تعالى after his morning walk. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى affectionately referred to them as the “Dukes of Barbecue”

evening and stay the whole weekend. He took great interest in every aspect of the Ijtema, so much that he would bring his own private tent and would instruct the security staff to put it up so that it could be used by his grandchildren. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would also look at all the Khuddam tents and sample each region’s barbecue. He would great interest in innovative style and design of the tents.

In the final session at one Ijtema, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى directed everyone’s attention to the fact that they should know their Salat with translation and also be able to read the Holy Qur’an properly. This was the next level of Tarbiyyat and that was his style.

Love for Sport

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was an avid sports player. He would always attend the various tournaments organized by Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, and in particular he was a big fan of cricket, squash, hockey and badminton. In fact I remember that during the late 1980s we made arrangements for Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to play squash at the sports club on kimber road. He would play once or twice a week with various squash players, including Major Mahmood sahib, Arshad Ahmadi and Naseer Hayat.

Many people will remember his love for Kabaddi, a game that was clearly close to his heart since he had been an excellent player himself during his youth. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also enjoyed clay pigeon shooting, and some arrangements were made in Islamabad soon after his arrival in this country. Even during his illness, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى continued to play badminton with members of his security staff in the Mahmood Hall at the London Mosque.

Dedication

I remember when I first learned about Begum Sahiba’s ill-health. It was the weekend of the Marathon Walk and we had our traditional barbecue. I suggested to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى that he should not go out of his way to attend, but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said that he would first visit his wife at the hospital and then join us for the event. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى very graciously stayed with us for the whole evening. As he was leaving he conveyed his apologies for not being able to participate the following day as he wanted to be with Begum Sahiba. It was evident from his life that he always put the Jama’at before personal issues. Even during that difficult period, he was able to spend time with us.

Love and Respect for Neighbours

On occasions such as Christmas or Eid, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would instruct us to send gifts on his behalf to neighbours around the London Mosque, and during the mango season when mangoes from his farm in Pakistan would arrive, he would have us distribute some to the neighbours. He instructed me to organize individual dinners with each household in the vicinity of the Fazl Mosque. He would spend a great deal of time with the neighbours over such dinners to create a bonding, which in a number of cases remained till his demise. A number of them wrote some very heartfelt condolence letters in which they expressed their deep sense of loss at his demise.



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى walks to the Jalsa Gah the in Qadian.

He also used his Question & Answer sessions as a means of reaching out to people. He loved challenging questions, and had the ability to speak at great depth on such a wide variety of subjects, that he often left specialists on a particular subject astounded by his level of knowledge. On one occasions he asked my opinion regarding internet security. I replied that I was no expert in Information Technology, and he handed me a magazine about 'firewalls'. He told me to go away and read it, and come back to discuss it with him in greater depth later.

Barbecues

During Jalsa Salana, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to go for walks after Fajr. I would also accompany him and he would occasionally stop at the main gate and chat to the Khuddam. Often the Khuddam would have a barbecue waiting for him and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would sometimes take the skewer and eat the kebab as he was going back to his residence. That was a very special moment for the boys on the Gate.

Love for Food

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had a very distinct and highly developed taste for food. He was always trying out new recipes and encouraged us to use such recipes in our events. He was very fond of BBQs, and I remember that during the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtemas, he would visit all the regional and individual BBQs to taste the food and give his personal opinion. He was particularly fond of green chillis with his food, his water was always chilled, and he preferred Gharoori i.e. the crusty base of sweet rice. He also preferred his naan

to be slightly hardened and crusty.

In one of the last Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtemas attended by Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, I remember that he particularly enjoyed barbecued prawns.

Outstanding Memory

Another quality of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was his knowledge of so many family backgrounds. At one Ijtema we had a martial arts exhibition and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asked me to introduce the organiser, Khalid Jamal. When I finished introducing him, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى replied: "Is that all?!" Then Huzur رحمه الله تعالى went into detail about Khalid's grandfather and his history in Mauritius! Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى in-depth knowledge about the members of the Jama'at from all over the world was exceptional, and furthermore he was also able to trace their family trees which sometimes extended back many generations. Sometimes the information would be news to the individual themselves.

Research Teams

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would ask us to undertake in-depth research on various topics, and then we would meet him sometimes two or three times a week to discuss the information obtained. These sessions were often quite informal and as they would last two or three hours, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would entertain us with his good sense of humour and would often have interesting confectionary for us.

One day I received a phonecall from the Private Secretary to Huzur



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى delivers a Jalsa address in Qadian.

رحمه الله تعالى, instructing that we needed to have confirmation of the statement that 'the thread of a spider's web is stronger than steel,' and that he was going to use this reference in his dars that evening. I was concerned how I was going to find this information under such a small timescale, but Allah came to our rescue again. I phoned Naseer Dean Sahib and requested him to go to Waterstones and see if we could find something in Richard Attenborough's book. Naseer called me back excitedly within half an hour and said that he had randomly opened the book, and on that very page he had found the relevant information, yet another sign of Allah's blessings.

As a result of our in depth research, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى instructed me to start publishing our research in the Review of Religions, and indeed he instructed me to take responsibility for the magazine. A team was put together and under Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى guidance we were able to change the style of the magazine to make it more user friendly, whilst focussing more on contemporary issues in light of the religious edicts. Later I became involved in MTA International, again a very exciting and amazing period. This is of course a huge chapter in the history of the Jama'at in itself. It was the training that we had received from Huzur رحمه الله تعالى through Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya that allowed us to take on these bigger tasks. The process of training continued throughout Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى lifetime.

Advice

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى once told me that a person never gets sick from hard work, but rather illness arises due to worrying and stress. He said that one could work seven days a week and lead a perfectly healthy life, as long as stress levels were kept low. I have always

remembered this sound advice and tried to incorporate it into every aspect of my life.

That Morning

The previous night we had sat in Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى company during the Majlis-e-Irfan session. He had been very joyous and answered questions in his normal loving way, and particularly enjoyed some personal incidents related by Chaudhry Rashid Sahib. The Majlis ended with hearty laughter. The following morning I received a call around 9.30am from Sahibzada Mirza Luqman Sahib who told me to come to the Fazl Mosque straight away. A lot of things went through my mind as I was making my way but never did I think it was that serious. When I reached the Fazl Mosque, there was no one in the compound except for the security guards. There was complete silence. I met Mian Luqman Sahib in the library. I remember the look on his face, he gave me the news and then took me to Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى room where Dr Noori Sahib was present. I touched Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى hand and it was still warm. I went completely numb, it was very painful, and I was not really accepting what I was seeing.

We contacted the then Nazir-e-Aala in Pakistan, Sahibzada Mirza Masroor Ahmad Sahib, who guided us and also instructed us not to disclose anything until he called us back. I stayed upstairs, whilst Dr Mujeedul Haq was called and asked to get the death certificate issued immediately. Dr Haq and Mian Luqman Sahib both went to Wandsworth Town Hall where Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى death was registered and the certificate obtained.



By this time people started arriving in the compound for the regular Saturday Children's Class. I sent a message that the class was cancelled without giving any reason. I also got in touch with Tony Coleman MP and asked him to come and see us. The rest is history and well documented.

I feel very blessed that I had the opportunity to work with the one of the greatest people that I will ever know. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had such a great personality, such great humour, such a lovely smile. Somehow he made you feel so good about yourself and made you feel very special. He taught me everything, he loved me, he trained me, he prayed for me, he looked after my family. We grew up under his guidance. He has left us with very fond memories.

Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watches sports events at the Khuddam Ijtema



An interview with

SAYED AHMAD YAHYA SAHIB

Second Sadr

of 1992-1998

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK

Sayed Ahmad Yahya was born in Lahore and raised in Rabwah where he studied at Taleemul Islam High School and College before completing his BSc in Maths & Physics. He is son of Sayed Abdul Hayee Sahib, who is Nazir Isha'at Tasneef in Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya Rabwah. In 1988 he migrated to the UK and four years later was appointed as Sadr of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV, a post he held for the maximum three terms. He is now serving the Jama'at as Naib Amir UK and Chairman of the charitable trust 'Humanity First'.

First Recollection

As a Khadim in Rabwah, I had helped in the department of translation within Sami' Basri during the Jalsa Salana. The department was headed by Muneer Farrukh Sahib, who was also responsible for relaying telecom facilities within Kasre Khilafat and the Private Secretary's offices. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was elected Khalifa the new Kasre Khilafat was not yet functional. I was introduced to Huzur رضي الله عنه through working in the Private Secretary offices, installing and testing the telephone system in the whole complex. I had a few opportunities to fix the internal telephone system in Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى office and that's how my personal relationship and bonding with him started.

Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK

In November 1992, at Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى suggestion, I moved from Southall to be closer to the Fazal Mosque, so it could be more convenient to serve the Jama'at. Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK was holding its annual Shura around this time. I had already scheduled to visit my parents in Pakistan and so could only attend the first day of the Shura, thus missing out on the election. I received a fax in Rabwah with the news that

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had appointed me Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK! I had no idea that I was going to be Sadr and I remember asking my father: "Are you sure this is correct?" That's how surprised I was. When I arrived back in the UK I met Huzur رحمه الله تعالى who said: "Come here, Sadr Sahib!" I became emotional that the Khalifa of the time had called me "Sadr Sahib". Huzur رحمه الله تعالى told me not to worry and assured me everything would be fine, insha'Allah. He instructed me to form my 'Aamla' before we discussed things further.

Tabligh

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asked us to organise Tabligh sittings in the form of Q&A sessions where guests would be invited to an audience with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. We were in competition with Majlis Ansarullah as to who could bring the most guests. This was Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى way of encouraging us to do better. Sometimes Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would set us a target for the number of guests we should bring and then he used to comment on the quality of questions. On many occasions the same question was asked but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would always answer in detail each time.



Jalsa Hospitality

One area where Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would not compromise was hospitality. He wanted us to give the best quality of service to the guests of the Promised Messiah عليه السلام. He did not want a single guest to return home unhappy and he would constantly remind the volunteers with quotations from the Promised Messiah عليه السلام. He would issue instructions and explain how to take care of every guest, from Kings, diplomats to the common man.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى himself taught us how to receive guests and what menus to prepare. He would also enquire about the sleeping arrangements for the guests from abroad, especially Pakistan, and even personally check to see if the beds prepared for them were comfortable enough.

On one occasion Huzur رحمه الله تعالى received a complaint that the private stalls were charging too much. Consequently, Huzur advised that the auxiliary organisations should also set up stalls selling items at affordable prices that would allow people from overseas to enjoy the Bazaar. He told Khuddam to provide quality service with low prices and the aim should be not to

Top: A photograph of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at a Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Question and Answer session in Islamabad during the Ijtema

make any profit.

Affection for Youth

We were immensely fortunate that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى regularly attended both the Khuddam Ijtema and Atfal Rally. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to be so happy when he was amongst children and the youth. During the Question and Answer sessions the Atfal would keep queuing yet Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would never get tired and answered all the questions. One child used to ask Huzur رحمه الله تعالى the same question every year but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى enjoyed such moments. On occasions Huzur would use humour and jokes and therefore create a very relaxed environment.

Traditionally, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to grace the Khuddam Ijtema with his presence on Saturday and Sunday of the event.. One year we decided to start the Ijtema on the Friday with a Question and Answer Session in the evening, giving us a record attendance for a Friday. This really delighted Huzur رحمه الله تعالى.

He particularly enjoyed watching the sports events – Tug of war & Kabaddi were his favourite. We never had the quality of players that they have in Germany, but we always used to make an effort. We would involve some of our African brothers and once even utilised Yahya McKenzie Sahib. He only had a couple of minutes training before running straight onto the field! I recall that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى really enjoyed that game. It also showed the spirit of our youth that even though they did not know the game, they were ever ready to put Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى enjoyment first. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would also watch the football final with enthusiasm, and used to compliment Amir Ahmedi on a particular goal which he had scored many years ago. He would also praise Ismail Addo Sahib's sons, Rehman and Rahim, for the way they supported their team.

Barbecues

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to love the barbecues. Every region organised a



barbecue and it became a tradition for Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to visit each and every stall. Each stall would insist that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى should try their particular recipe. Out of sheer kindness he obliged and would also give his comments. This used to be a very special night for the Khuddam, who used to see their Khalifa coming to them, eating, mingling and joking with them. It showed his deep affection and love for the Khuddam. I recall Huzur mentioning many times during the Ijtema 1998 that this was his most memorable BBQ event. Huzur enjoyed the different types of food and the atmosphere was highly charged with excitement.

It is interesting to note that it was from these nights that our African brothers started singing the "La ilaaha illallah" verses, which Huzur رحمه الله تعالى so greatly loved. Thereafter, of course, it has become a feature of our Jalsa Salana.

Attention to Detail

There was so much I had learnt from Huzur رحمه الله تعالى from my day to day dealings as Sadr Majlis. He always emphasised attention to detail. He would say: "Plan in detail, discuss properly and then implement". He was so particular in administrative matters. He would never approve our decisions or budgets unless they were presented to him in writing.

There were times when we did make mistakes and one of these was at an Ijtema. We had invited some guests from Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى Urdu Class but the food served to them was cold. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى learnt about this he became very upset, so much so that he rebuked us for failing to respect our guests.

Top: A photograph of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at an Atfal Rally Question and Answer session

The following year we made a greater effort and, Alhamdulillah, it was a most colourful night. The nazms recited together by the Urdu Class and the African brothers created a beautiful atmosphere. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى commented later that he had not enjoyed a barbecue so much as the one that night. There was another reason that made that night special. Thunderstorms had hit Tilford and the rain even reached the main field of Islamabad, but amazingly did not cross the tent and the barbecue area! I remember some Ansar, who had been invited to the event, telling me that they were driving to Islamabad and were halfway there, but then decided to turn back as they had assumed the barbecue had been cancelled!

Second Ijtema

In the history of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK, there has never been two Ijtemas in the same year. During the final session at one Ijtema in the mid-90s, after I had read my report and mentioned the attendance, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى asked me the total Tajneed of Khuddam in the UK. I told him the figure and he immediately worked out the number of Khuddam that were absent. Then Huzur رحمه الله تعالى told me to organise an Ijtema especially for those Khuddam who had not attended the Ijtema for the last three consecutive years. He also said that the management committee of that Ijtema should only consist of Khuddam that had been absent. I was the only one allowed from the Majlis-e-'Amila to be included in that committee!

It was a big challenge and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى kept encouraging me,



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى awards a prize to a Tifl during the Ijtema

he never gave up hope on those who had very little contact with the Jama'at. By the grace of Allah, the Ijtema was organised and proved a huge success with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى graciously attending both days. He was so pleased that we had obeyed his instruction and Allah had blessed the Ijtema with great success. The amazing thing was that after Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had finished his concluding speech, he gave everyone a chance to do Musafa (shake hands) with him. Huzur mentioned that this was the first time in the history of Khuddamul Ahmadiyya that such an ijtema was organised. Some individuals who attended this ijtema now have a strong link with the Jama'at. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى cared for everyone and did not want a single person of the Jama'at to be left out.

Service to Humanity

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى used to become very upset when he heard television reports about the situation in Bosnia. At one stage he even stopped watching the news as it distressed him so much.

The Jama'at in Hungary had sent a letter stating to Huzur that thousands of refugees were taking refuge in Hungary and asked if the Jama'at could do something. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى instructed us to help as much as possible. In the beginning it was a small effort, starting with one truck followed by a second truck, but within six months we sent a convoy with eight 7.5-ton trucks fully loaded with clothing, food and parcels. Three boys went in each truck. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى gave us so much encouragement and taught us one prayer in particular that we should recite throughout the journey:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مَدْخَلَ صِدْقِيْ وَ
اَخْرِجْنِيْ مَخْرَجِ صِدْقِيْ وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ
لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا ﴿٨١﴾

“O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and make me go forth a good going forth. And grant me from Thyself a helping power”
(Ch 17, v 81)

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى even related personal accounts of how this prayer used to help him. One incident he told us about was when his car had broken down during a family trip from Rabwah to Rawalpindi. His family was worried as it was getting late and they were on an open road, but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said that he had the confidence in this prayer. A driver of the Shahnawaz family was passing by and stopped. As far as I can remember, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said that the part which was faulty in his car was the part that the driver happened to be carrying as a spare in his boot!

When we reached Hungary, refugees gave us their accounts of war and how they have lost their loved ones in front of their eyes. This was a very difficult and emotional experience for everyone in the convoy because no one had ever heard such stories of horror in their lives.

MTA Link to Hungary

In those days MTA had just started. Fortunately we had a mobile phone with us in Hungary and we received a call from the MTA coordinator who said they wanted to have a live link with our convoy. As it would be difficult on a mobile they wanted us to find a telephone link. I told him there was only one payphone in the camp which normally had a long queue. Alhamdulillah, we managed to



call at the stated time with people waiting behind us to use the phone! When I started talking I discovered that I was speaking to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى ! I briefed Huzur رحمه الله تعالى about the conditions in which the people were living and about arrangements generally. I also informed Huzur رحمه الله تعالى that some children can recite the Holy Qur'an beautifully and he asked me if there was any child who can recite. A little girl was around who recited a portion of Holy Qur'an on the phone so that her voice could go live to the whole world! Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was very pleased with this little girl and complemented a lot. He also expressed his delight at learning that this young Bosnian girl shared the same name as his own granddaughter, Meliha.

I also told Huzur رحمه الله تعالى about a young Bosnian man who was acting as our translator. When we arrived this man had asked us why we had come and who had sent us. We replied that we had come to offer help and it was our Khalifa who had sent us. This was the first time they had been introduced to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and they already came to love him. Huzur spoke to this young boy and gave him encouragement, support and words of wisdom and he still remembers those golden words of advice. This young man, Dzevad, was to become an Ahmadi during a later trip and was the recipient of a special signed photograph of Huzur which he promptly displayed in his family's room at the camp in which they stayed. Dzevad has now moved to Canada but is still in touch with our convoy member, Tariq Ahmad BT.

Whilst in Hungary some members of the convoy had to go back to Munich to pick up some extra aid. They had been gone for two days but we had not heard anything. So I asked Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to pray for them. Amazingly, this group happened to hear the live link and

Top: Huzur رضي الله عنه enjoyed attending the barbecue nights at the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtema's.

Safdar Ali Sahib, who was Amir Kafla, phoned the Fazl Mosque straight away to inform Huzur رحمه الله تعالى about their safe arrival. That was a very memorable experience through the blessings of MTA, which had created a link between Hungary, Munich and London.

Huzur told us to serve the refugees in the best of our ability and arrange best food for them without having any constraint of budget. Khuddam continued their visits to this refugee camp until it was closed down.

Whenever the convoys left from London, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى would always meet the members and lead us in prayers. Huzur was very pleased with the spirit of his Khuddam who were prepared to face dangers of war zone for the sake of humanity. These convoys continued for almost three years. During this period, Huzur asked us to establish a charitable trust and this is how Humanity First was registered in UK and started its humble efforts to serve mankind.

It is noteworthy that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى wanted the work of Humanity First to be of a very high standard that one day it would be comparable to that of the United Nations. Today this still seems like a big challenge, but the day will come when the dream of our beloved Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV will be realised and when the Jama'at is at the forefront of serving humanity, insha'Allah.

Special Relationship with the UK Jama'at

Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى relationship with the UK was very special. Every Ahmadi was made to feel he had a distinct relationship with him. The members of the UK Jama'at felt the same way. Once I accompanied the then Amir, the late Aftab Ahmad Khan Sahib, to the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtema in Germany. After the flag hoisting ceremony we were standing with the rest of the attendees. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى spotted us and one young Khadim came to us in a panicky way saying that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was calling us. So we both went to see Huzur رحمه الله تعالى who said that he knew Amir Sahib UK and Sadr Sahib UK had come to the Ijtema and that he wanted to serve us some nice tea!

We sat with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and talked about the Ijtema as we had tea and some special barbecued chicken. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى explained in great detail how the chicken had been prepared and marinated and the special barbecues that were used to cook it.



Top: Flag Hoisting at the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Ijtema 1995



An interview with MAULANA IBRAHIM AHMAD NOONAN

Third Sadr

of 1998-2002

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK

Maulana Ibrahim Ahmad Noonan was born in Ireland into a Roman Catholic family and later became a member of the Worldwide Pentecostal Church. In 1991 he came into contact with an Ahmadi and became interested in Islam, before deciding to perform bai'at in the same year. He served Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK in various capacities before being elected Sadr in 1997. In the same year he also dedicated his life to the Jama'at under Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV's wishes. After serving two terms as Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK, he was appointed as the first missionary to Ireland.

First Recollection

My first memory of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was at Jalsa Salana UK in 1991. Within hours of listening to one of his speeches, I was completely transformed. I completely fell in love with him and concluded that he was no ordinary man. He inspired me so much, that there and then I wanted to become an Ahmadi.

The first time I met Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was about a year later during a Q&A session in the Mahmud Hall, where I put a particular question to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى about a biblical prophecy. He was so impressed by the question that he actually enquired about me from somebody else. After that session I received a call - which may have been from the Private Secretary, although I am not sure - asking whether I had met Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, and if not why not!

So a mulaqat was arranged. That was nerve-racking for me! When I met Huzur رحمه الله تعالى I could see nothing but complete *nur* (light), a spiritual force which I had never experienced before. I knew that I was in the presence of someone extraordinary. I felt a spiritual presence,

which I had never felt in my entire life, and knew it had come from God. This encounter proved to me that there is a living God Who is very much alive today.

Tarbiyyat

I knew that I wanted to reform and change my life. I used to listen to all of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى speeches daily, paying attention to what he had to say in regards to Tarbiyyat. For example, I would try not to become angry because Huzur رحمه الله تعالى explained the dangers from the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Promised Messiah عليه السلام. Everyday I would listen without fail to a tape of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. I still have all the tapes now. Before MTA began broadcasting, I used to make sure that I never missed a Friday Sermon or a Question and Answer session. I would also try my best to pray behind Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. I was amazed by his him.

Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya

When my name was proposed, I actually laughed to myself thinking this is absolutely absurd. But when the then Amir, Dr Iftikhar Ayaz Sahib, announced the



Top: A photograph of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى with Maulana Ibrahim Ahmad Noonan Sahib. Ijtema 2000 was the last Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya barbecue evening Huzur رحمه الله تعالى attended.

decision, I was shocked. My feeling was one of absolute disbelief. I felt a huge weight come over my shoulders. I never had the desire to become Sadr. I had seen the pressure that both Rafiq Ahmad Hayat Sahib and Syed Ahmad Yahya Sahib had been under when they served as Sadr, as you are always accountable to Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih.

I became scared, but at the same time greatly honoured. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى embraced me, he said: "Masha'Allah, you are the first English Sadr Khuddamul Ahmadiyya!" Soon after, I went to see Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and told him I could not take on the role because of my training as a missionary. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى leaned back in his chair and laughed, and very lovingly said: "This is part of your training." In my second mulaqat with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, in the capacity as Sadr, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said to me: "Whenever you give an instruction, make sure it is being followed. Never assume. Go to the grassroots yourself. You should know everything within Khuddamul Ahmadiyya in every part of the country, every region, every Qiadat." Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also stated that I should

create love and spirituality within the hearts of Khuddam.

Special Memories

There are two moving experiences which I recall from the Jalsa Salana UK in 1998, when I had a role within the Hifaazat-e-Khaas team. I was standing behind Huzur رحمه الله تعالى when he was conducting the inauguration inspections. Mangos were being handed out and Huzur رحمه الله تعالى turned to me and said: "Ibrahim, have some of these, they are really sweet." I felt like a really insignificant person and the Khalifa had asked me to eat!

In the second instance, I was standing behind Huzur رحمه الله تعالى at a VIP reception. I was feeling very hungry, and was desperate for a cup of tea. I never said anything, but I was thinking it. At that moment, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى turned to me and said: "Ibrahim, come and sit down beside me, have some tea and eat

something." I was absolutely shocked! Also, it was unimaginable that I was asked to sit next to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى.

Another incident I remember was during a Q&A session when I had to escort Huzur رحمه الله تعالى to the Mahmud Hall. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى came out of his quarters, he put his arm around me and kept it around me as we walked to the hall. That was probably the most emotional thing that has ever happened to me. He spoke to me in such a loving and gentle way.

Amusing Incident

During the central barbecue at the Khuddam Ijtema one year, prawns were being served to the guests. I cannot stand prawns, but my Naib at the time, Rafi Bhatti Sahib, cooked them especially because Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was fond of them. At the dinner table, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى handed me one and I didn't know what to do! Naseer Dean Sahib, who was also Naib Sadr, knew



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watches the Football final and an exhibition Kabadi match in Islamabad during the Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK Ijtema 2000
Below: Barbecue night at Ijtema 2000



of my dilemma and a few Khuddam were laughing knowing I could not refuse the Khalifa of the time! So I just chewed it and chewed it!

When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى left the barbeque, he turned to me with a loving smile and he raised his hand, put his index finger and his thumb together and said the barbeque had been “excellent, excellent barbecue.” He said it in such a manner that really filled my heart with happiness and joy.

On another occasion, at a Q&A session in the Mahmud Hall, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was answering a question by a Tifl regarding a passage in the Holy Qur’an that states that people with blue eyes will go to hell. Everyone turned to me and laughed while my head dropped! Huzur رحمه الله تعالى then turned to me and said, “Except this one,” meaning and clarifying not all people with blue eyes go to hell!

Affection

There was one incident that moved me to tears. It took place during the Baitul Futuh foundation ceremony in 1999. As I was laying one of the stones, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى remarked: “Ibrahim, the real hero of this mosque.” Tears came out of my eyes. I was the only one who knew what Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had meant. When I had devoted my life to the Jama’at and went to Baitul Futuh for security duties, I was occasionally attacked by members of the BNP. In one instance I was nearly beaten but refused to let them come in. Nineteen of them were arrested. This is what Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was referring to and for me it was a great honour.



Top: Huzur رحمه الله تعالى watches the sport at the Ijtema
Right: Flag hoisting ceremony of Ijtema 2000

Blessings of Khilafat

Unfortunately, I never got a chance to meet Huzur رحمه الله تعالى before leaving for Ireland as he was very ill at that time. Even now, being away from Khilafat is sad. I understand why the whole world envies the UK Jama'at. The training that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had given us really had a great impact upon our people. The UK is, in my opinion, the best Jama'at in the world. Ahmadis in Pakistan and India dearly miss Khilafat and all I can say is that Khuddam should try even harder to work hard for the Khalifa and to pray behind him.

Ahmadis in England should really appreciate that the Khalifa is sitting amongst them. All the recent sermons that Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V ابيده الله تعالى بنصره العزيز has delivered on Tarbiyyat issues should encourage everyone to fully reform themselves and to become bright stars for the rest of the world.





The formulative years of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK

An interview with:
Waleed Ahmad

Waleed Ahmad was Naib Qaid and Naib Sadr of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK for 11 years until 1998, when he entered Majlis Ansarullah, which he currently serves as Qaid Amoomi (General Secretary). Since 1984 he has also been Assistant Tabligh Secretary at Jama'at level. He has enjoyed a special association with Isha'at, becoming the first editor of Tariq in 1988 - a post he held for 10 years - before being appointed as Chief Editor of the Ahmadiyya Bulletin.

First Recollection

Time has the capacity to merge memories and various events but the dominant events are the ones that you recall easily. I recall when he came in 1984. We received calls that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى has arrived in the UK. That was a memorable experience. I had never seen so many cars parked outside the Fazl Mosque for what seemed like miles. This was the second time he was visiting the UK during his Khilafat. This visit was all the more because in the short meeting that followed and the Maghrib and Isha prayers, the atmosphere was charged with emotion. It was that historic day when Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had arrived here following the passing of the infamous Ordinance in Pakistan. This was a visit that also signalled transfer of the seat of Khilafat from Rabwah to London and, unbeknown to us at the time, usher in an escalating scale of progress for the Jama'at. People had come from all parts of the country. Some of us were witnessing his Khilafat for the first time.

As time passed we came to know Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and were instantly impressed by how approachable he was. One of the ways

he demonstrated his love was by visiting the homes of members of the Jama'at. He did not mind travelling, and often visited Gillingham. For those of us in the Jama'at that were too young to remember the previous Khulafa, this experience showed us a different aspect of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى and, for us, a new aspect of Khilafat.

Why have a European Ijtema

It was felt at that time that travelling was much easier and there was a great sense of competition amongst neighbouring countries. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى attended the first ever European Ijtema, which was held in Hounslow at the Heathlands School on the 27th, 28th and 29th of July 1984. I remember on the last day of the Ijtema the organisational committee formed a line, and were given an opportunity to shake hands with Huzur. This was also the time when we first produced a Souvenir at the Ijtema. At the time Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was very happy with the event. One of the benefits of the European Ijtema was meeting our brothers from the neighbouring countries. It also helped in involving those countries, which did not possess a very large Tajneed.



Top: A photograph of Huzur رحمه الله تعالى meeting the Baitul Futuh Football team at Ijtema 2000

In the years when the European Ijtema was held, some of the new European centres, (Islamabad, Nunspeet, Germany, etc) were beginning to take a footing and bringing everyone together was one of the reasons for the Ijtema. Over time each country took its own firm footing, and need for the European Ijtema faded. There was in fact an idea to have a European Qiadat, a European identity, but Huzur رحمه الله تعالى did not favour this. Events took a different turn when in 1988 Huzur رحمه الله تعالى decided to bring all such national organisations under his direct control by establishing Sadarats. The numbers today at such an Ijtema would be so high that it would be difficult to manage, and perhaps for this reason there are no more European Ijtema's.

Advice to the Majlis

In regards to organisational matters, we had to listen to Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى instructions very carefully and then try to apply them to all our activities. One of the things I recall Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had said was that the person at the top should have his finger on the pulse and know what is happening in each department and to ensure that instructions were being implemented. It was not enough for officers to give instructions

and wait for them to be implemented. They needed to watch were such instructions were to be enacted so that they could react to any flaws promptly and effectively.

I remember when I was given the responsibility for editing the Tariq Souvenir in 1988/89. We were given an audience with Huzur رحمه الله تعالى, who was very encouraging and keen for us to work well. I remember he would sit with us for two to three hours. But, in accordance with his specific instructions, we had to do our homework and cross check other interviews that had taken place so that we did not repeat any question and were able to use his time productively. There were certain questions he would not answer, as he did not want to repeat answers he had given to other interviewers.

Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK was still very young as an organisation and we were learning so much from Huzur رحمه الله تعالى during those days. We were constantly being trained by him. One of the items he

enlightened us upon was how to conduct ourselves in socialising with others. He explained that when he was a student here he did go to University social events but remained vigilant in maintaining his Islamic values. Similarly, when he invited his acquaintances to his own parties he ensured that there was no alcohol, no dancing and nothing else that was unIslamic. Socialising was important but it had to be conducted on one's own terms.

I remember, once when compiling the 1984 Souvenir, we wanted to print a historic list of names but were unsure about one of the names. However, we were told by the Wakilul Tabshir that we could not erase someone's name from history just because they had fallen from grace. There were many other issues like this and we were educated all the time by Huzur رحمه الله تعالى in terms of the content – it was an enlightening experience.



Top: Huzur رضي الله عنه samples the the chicken Tikka's at a regional barbecue site during Ijtema 1995

Legacy

One thing Huzur رحمه الله تعالى told us was that people talk about the prophecies of Hadhrat Musleh Ma'oud as if they died when he died. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى explained that this was not the case. The prophecy of the Musleh Maood is a living prophecy and the legacy he has left behind is a living legacy. This he said can be observed in many of the institutions he has left behind - such as Tehrik-e-Jadid - which continue to benefit us.

And this is how, I believe we should also remember Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. He has left us with works he accomplished that will remain alive for time immemorial such as MTA, the Waqf-e-Nau Scheme, the Dawat-ilallah initiatives and the reorganisation of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya.

Inspiration

All his addresses were inspirational, but there is one that always stood out for me. It was the address on the inauguration of Jalsa Salana where the workers are introduced to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى (I think it was 1991). Huzur رحمه الله تعالى spoke about how in all our organisation we strive to attain perfection knowing full well that this is something that we can come increasingly closer to but never achieve since perfection is the sole reserve of God. He advised how the Jama'at should strive to become perfect, and although it cannot be achieved, we should still keep trying. He highlighted in this and many other addresses the importance of prayer and told us that its significance was much greater when we are dealing with Jama'at matters.

Barbecues

One memory that springs to mind was the barbecues we used to have. The barbecue started in 1984 on the first evening of the London Ijtema, which was a two-day event. It was introduced to try and encourage those Khuddam who seldom come to attend and to increase our participation on the first day. In 1988 the then National Qaid implemented the same idea at the National Ijtema. It was held on a Friday. This trend continued until in 1992 Huzur رحمه الله تعالى advised to have it on a Saturday as this would serve as the highlight of the three days. We thought at the time it would not work and feared this would reduce attendance but we knew in the back of our minds that in complying with Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى instructions we could not really fail. Thus, when we did do it, we found that we had a very favourable attendance and the event proved to be better than before. The overall Ijtema benefited from this change. From then on we always had the barbecue on a Saturday.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was always fond of the barbecues held at Ijtemas. I think this was partly because he liked the open atmosphere and also because of his personal interest in cuisine generally. He would comment on things if they were not right. I remember he would sometimes crack a joke regarding some of the food he sampled! His jokes were not seen as criticism, but only as light-hearted, constructive advice from which we could learn.



Top: One of the earliest events in Islamabad.

Majlis-e-Shura

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى made a massive contribution to the way we now hold Shura in the UK specifically and also in other countries. The first, properly arranged UK Khuddam Shura was held at the Mahmud Hall in 1988. One of the things Huzur رحمه الله تعالى did was to ask his Private Secretary to link the loud speakers of the Mahmud Hall to the one in his office so that he could hear the proceedings - without us knowing! He then came and told us that he was listening and corrected us on the mistakes we made.

During an earlier year he had adopted the same manner in a Jama'at Shura at Islamabad. In fact in one year he actually chaired the UK Jama'at Shura in order to show us how we should conduct it. I think this was in 1986. He also explained the role of the sub-committees and cleared the confusion about proposals, recommendations and amendments. There were times when he had to explain the same point more than once just so that we could understand. Those who were Khuddam at the time learnt from this and adopted his guidance in the Khuddam Shuras.

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى also pointed out that remarks made during Shura deliberations should be to the point and not be personal in any way. He mentioned his own experience, when he had made some remarks in a Shura meeting that put another person in bad light. When he made the comment, Hadhrat Musleh Ma'oud (who was chairing the session) immediately stopped him and told him to

retract the remarks, advising that he should only speak on the point of issue and not undermine another person whilst doing so.

Sensitivity

There are so many things one can say about Huzur رحمه الله تعالى. The thing that stood out was his sensitivity and care for others. He would take your problems on his own shoulders and was desperately keen to solve them. He would admonish you like a father, but there was always the undertone of sensitivity that always lay behind it.

For example, at the Silver Jubilee Khuddam Ijtema, he expressed unhappiness because some of his personal guests were not served food in the proper manner. When Huzur رحمه الله تعالى delivered the concluding address, he gave a devastating rebuke, which reduced many of us to tears. As he left the stage, he beckoned an MTA worker and said he did not want the speech to be broadcast. This, I am sure, was because he did not wish our inadequacies to be exposed to the wider public. Such was his sensitivity. We learnt a great deal from this and realised the importance of paying attention to detail, even in matters of food. We had to be sure that standards didn't drop. The speech shook us, and made us determined to make up for it the following year.

Interpreter of Dreams

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was always very approachable and one could talk to him about anything. I used to relate to him some of my dreams. I did not do this all the time. In total only a handful of dreams were related often dealing with an important issue or relating to some



Jama'at matter. He was very sharp in this area and managed to give an interpretation as soon as I had finished relating a dream. He would also be kind enough to explain how he got to that conclusion often quoting a verse or verses from the Holy Qur'an. In addition to this he would be able to identify those dreams that were likely to be from God and others that were not so significant.

All this showed that he was not only blessed with a vast knowledge of religious scriptures but also endowed with the capacity of knowing how to apply this knowledge correctly. These are the hallmarks of the truly wise.

Knowledge & Wisdom

His vastly superior intellect was evident in his question and answer sessions where he would display in depth knowledge of every subject that was thrown at him. In addition to this, he was blessed with a very logical mind that could resolve difficult problems with great incisiveness. I remember once at an International Shura in 1994, two proposals were put forward. Because of my duties at the time, I witnessed the sub-committee deliberations and the discussions at the plenary session. The issues that these proposals raised appeared very difficult throughout and we seemed to be in utter darkness as we slowly edged our way to developing a policy of sorts without much conviction. Then Huzur رحمه الله تعالى spoke and within minutes shed such light that it illuminated the entire subject absolutely brilliantly. What Huzur رحمه الله تعالى said appealed to us at an intellectual level and it was as if he had solved an impossible puzzle. This was for me one of those moments where Huzur رحمه الله تعالى caused the hair at the back of my head to stand on end. There were other moments like these.

Top: Huzur رضي الله عنه inspects the site map of the Ijtema . After this photo was taken, Huzur رضي الله عنه met with all the members of Majlis-e-Amila, Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK, 2000.

One was at the Khuddam Marathon Walk of 1986 where at the closing ceremony, Huzur رحمه الله تعالى was introduced to the main beneficiary of the Walk who was from Imperial Cancer Research. Huzur رحمه الله تعالى in his concluding remarks spoke about cancer – but with a completely new angle. He said that some ailments that arise reflect the conduct of the society at large. He stressed that this was not always a hard and fast rule but behaviour of people in a certain manner can give rise to ailments with the same characteristics. He then went on to describe the misbehaviour that society has generally indulged in and how that is reflected in the misbehaviour of cells within the body that give rise to cancer. It was a riveting and inspirational address – an address that made the hairs on the back of your head stand on end.

Salat

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى had a passion for prayer. He used to tell us how he got into the habit of prayer himself and how Hadhrat Musleh Mau'ood رضي الله عنه had appointed a person to ensure that he observed prayers regularly especially the Fajr namaz. He recalled how this appointee would carry him even while he was asleep to the tap itself for wudhu in the morning. He recalled that helper with affection since he had helped instil in him a regularity in prayer. Indeed this was also a reflection of Huzur's رحمه الله تعالى magnanimity. Any person no matter how big or small, if he had brought benefit to Huzur رحمه الله تعالى no matter how big or small would be remembered



Top: Huzur رضي الله عنه practiced his archery skills with a crossbow.

with great affection and gratitude.

It was this regularity in *nimaz* that Huzur رحمه الله تعالى wished all of us to observe and many a time his addresses to Khuddam and Atfal would be based on this subject. Moreover, just the mere offering of *nimaz* was not enough. It was vital to him that we did this properly, with full concentration and complete understanding of what we were saying. Thus at the 1993 annual Ijtema he urged us all to know the meanings word for word of the *nimaz*. In later addresses at the Atfal Rally he explained that our understanding of the *nimaz* should be such that any Arabic word that occurs in the *nimaz*, when uttered in any order should be immediately understood. It is interesting to note that one of the last addresses Huzur رحمه الله تعالى gave to the Khuddam at their Ijtema in 1999 also featured the regular offering of *salat* as the main subject. In a sense this was fitting. The thing that was most dear to him was his love of God and it is that love that he wanted us to instil in ourselves through the worship of Allah.

Assessing Progress

Huzur رحمه الله تعالى advised us how to improve upon the status of *nimaz* within Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya. The key point in this was the concept of the zero point. He explained before you begin any initiative to improve matters, find out where you stand. Otherwise you will not be able to ascertain if your initiative has been successful and if so to what degree. This method, we employed to good effect, when trying to improve the knowledge of *nimaz* and its meanings among our membership.

When it came to Tabligh, he adopted the same type of scrutiny when assessing progress. Here, at one International Tabligh Seminar in the early 90's he taught us to draw a distinction between gatherers and cultivators. He explained in the history of mankind, a big leap in our development occurred when instead of just gathering food as and when it was found, man began to cultivate food and animals. This is the type of transformation that he wanted office bearers in the Jama'at to adopt to take us to the next level in tabligh. He explained that the current situation of many office bearers was very similar to gatherers in that their reports would just represent what others had done in their Jama'at in the field of tabligh. In order to elevate our progress, it was necessary for such office bearers to facilitate new activities, activate members and develop new methods. Thus we had to transform ourselves from mere gatherers of activity to ones that cultivate activity and thus enhance progress. This leap was important if we were to substantially increase the number of converts in the future.

What Huzur رحمه الله تعالى as an individual meant for me

On a personal level, before he became Khalifa, I hardly knew of him let alone know him. But over the 20 years or so that he spent in this country which is throughout my adult life, I came to know him with deep affection and he certainly found a place deep in my heart. He became my hero - one whose conduct was such that it epitomised everything that is expected of a perfect Muslim. In that sense he became a model, an ideal for me to emulate.

Much more than that he taught me about my Maker. He explained that when we talk about the fear of Allah, we should not conjure up



a picture of a malevolent ogre who would do us harm. Rather this term should be equated with the fear of a beloved who would be disappointed if one did not behave in a proper manner. In essence fear of Allah should really be understood as fear for the love of Allah. Similarly, he taught that Hell could also be viewed as the absence of God and heaven as being with the presence of God. These were wonderful concepts and made us view our Maker from a completely new perspective.

Our understanding of the intricacies of our faith was threadbare and he endowed us with the richness of an ocean of knowledge mainly through his Majlis-e-Irfan. He came to us when we found it difficult to organise one major function a year, and trained us such that we now hold many such functions in a single month and in all parts of

the country. Indeed when he first arrived here we were just another outpost among a host of branches of the Jama'at. Yet by the time he left, we were blessed to become the centre of activity. He came to us when we found it difficult to disseminate the message of Islam within our shores and left us with the miracle MTA - and the list simply goes on. The analogy of rags to riches is not an unfitting one. We should never forget the state we used to be in before Huzur رحمه الله تعالى first arrived here - for there is indeed much that Allah gave us through the blessed person of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, and we in the UK, have more reason to be thankful to the Almighty for endowing us with such a outstanding personality who was so beneficent to us. We pray that Allah grant our dear Huzur رحمه الله تعالى a lofty station in paradise and showers his choicest blessings upon him.

