

HUZOOR'S TOUR OF CANADA

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2016

PART 4

A Personal Account

By Abid Khan

Introduction to Part 4

Part 3 of my personal account of Huzoor's tour of Canada related to various events that took place in Peace Village and Toronto in late October 2016. In part 4, I shall narrate incidents from the final few days of Huzoor's stay in Peace Village and from the first few days of his tour of Western Canada.

Meeting with converts

Though it was not part of his official schedule, on 29 October 2016, upon the request of Amir Sahib Canada, Huzoor briefly attended a meeting of recent converts to Ahmadiyyat.

During the meeting, Huzoor spoke to some of the converts and asked them about how they had come to accept Ahmadiyyat.

One convert, from Guyana informed Huzoor that the reason he had accepted Ahmadiyyat was after seeing how the prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*sa*) regarding the advent of the Promised Messiah (*as*) had been fulfilled in the person Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (*as*).

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“Always remember that Islam and Ahmadiyyat is the same and that we consider ourselves to be normal orthodox Muslims who follow the true teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa).”

A young African child then presented a picture which she had drawn of Huzoor.

Upon seeing it, Huzoor very softly said:

“You should not draw me.”

It was an example of how Huzoor teaches and guides with love and not with harshness.

An example of true faith

Thereafter, Huzoor proceeded to his office for a session of family Mulaqats.

Two people fortunate enough to meet Huzoor were *Zulfiqar Ali Bajwa (44)* and his wife *Tayyaba Zulfiqar*. They had migrated from Pakistan to Canada in January 2015.

Zulfiqar sahib, who had converted to Ahmadiyyat in 2002 in Sanghar, told me that two years later in 2004 he was jailed in Pakistan on false charges, merely because he was an Ahmadi. He was threatened, beaten and tortured, as his persecutors tried in vain to force him to deny his faith in the Promised Messiah (*as*).

Speaking about his past experiences, Zulfiqar sahib said:

“In the jail where I was imprisoned the conditions were horrendous and intolerable, yet I treated it like my home and stayed there peacefully. The

reason I had this attitude was because I knew that my only crime was my faith and belief in the Promised Messiah (as)."

Zulfiqar sahib continued:

"I remember once I was offering Namaz in jail and four people, incited by local Maulvis, jumped on me and attacked me. They held me from my neck and beat me mercilessly so that every part of my body was injured and bruised. Yet my faith never weakened because I had sold myself to the Promised Messiah (as) and pledged myself to him."

As Zulfiqar sahib said these words, I looked to the side and saw that his wife was wiping away her tears as she recalled her husband's past.

Tayyaba sahiba said:

"For many years, I used to sit and cry wondering if the persecution would ever end. Anyway, forgive my tears, as I cannot control my emotions having met my beloved Khalifa who I love more than even my own children. Today, I can vouch for the fact that the fruits of patience are wonderful and that Allah the Almighty never lets any sacrifice go unrewarded."

I then spoke to Zulfiqar sahib again, who said:

"I have seen the Pharaohs of this age who openly said that they would kill me unless I gave up my belief in the Promised Messiah (as) but the fact

that I am standing here today shows that they have no power and all Power and Authority is in the Hands of Allah.”

Speaking about his own faith, Zulfiqar sahib said:

“My lawyer used to say to me that if I sign a paper saying I am not an Ahmadi then he could get me out of jail within minutes. I would smile and say that they have beaten me in front of my wife and I knew then as well that I could avoid all that humiliation and pain if I denied Ahmadiyyat but I swear to Allah that even if they had burned me alive I would never have signed any paper or said anything against the truth of the Promised Messiah (as).”

Zulfiqar sahib continued:

“The Maulvis used to say to me that they would take me to a public place where they would curse the Promised Messiah (as) and if I listened silently they would free me. In response, I told them that they could take me to a public area and curse me, my wife, my parents and my children and I would remain silent and tolerate it. However, if they dared to curse the Promised Messiah (as) or Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyyat I would respond openly and proclaim that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as) is a Prophet of Allah and the Imam of the Age.”

Broadcast of Peter Mansbridge Interview

After a short break for lunch, Huzoor inaugurated the new *Ansar* guest house in Peace Village.

Huzoor unveiled a plaque and inspected the guest house, in which there were several rooms available for guest accommodation.

Following this, Huzoor visited the *Lajna Imaillah* offices and over the next hour, Huzoor met with *National Amila of Lajna Imaillah Canada*.

Whilst Huzoor's meeting continued, I went to my room and watched Huzoor's interview with *Peter Mansbridge*, which had just been broadcast across Canada.

Whenever I watch a recorded interview for the first time, I have an air of trepidation in my heart. There is always a fear that the journalist or media outlet could misrepresent what was said or try to take things out of context and this fear was even more acute with the *Peter Mansbridge* interview, as it was extremely high profile. However, with the *Grace of Allah*, it was well produced and portrayed the beauty and wisdom of Huzoor's words.

Following the end of his meeting with *Lajna Imaillah*, I informed Huzoor that the interview had been broadcast and he asked how much of the original 45minute interview was broadcast and which parts.

A few minutes with the Media Team

At this point, Amir Sahib Canada requested Huzoor to visit Canada's *Press & Media* team in the *Tahir Hall*. They had gathered together hoping to sit with Huzoor and to play some of the *Peter Mansbridge* interview in Huzoor's presence.

Even though it was not part of his schedule, Huzoor graciously accepted and spent the next 15 minutes with the *Media* team and watched some of the interview with them.



Huzoor asked Safwan Chaudhry (*in-charge Canada Media Team*) and I some questions about the broadcast and Huzoor also individually met the members of the Canada team.



Those moments proved to be an extremely precious reward for the Canada Media team, wherein they had that additional personal time in the company of Khalifa-Waqt.

Meeting with Majlis Ansarullah

Subsequently, Huzoor held a meeting with the *National Amila of Majlis Ansarullah Canada*.

During the meeting, Huzoor asked each of the Amila members their plans were for the forthcoming year and advised and guided them over various matters. The Amila members also had the chance to ask Huzoor various questions and to seek his guidance.

Speaking to the Ansar *Tarbiyyat Secretary*, Huzoor said:

“One issue where you need to focus is to guide young people about the importance of marriage and about what is required to make a successful marriage. In particular, you need to emphasise the need for patience, tolerance and mutual understanding.”

One of the Amila members said that he felt that Huzoor gave more time to *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya* than he did to the members of *Ansarullah*.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“From my perspective, I do not have any preference for one auxiliary over another and nor do I seek to give more time to Khuddam or anyone else. However, if the Ansar themselves are staying back and not making as many programmes or conducting as many activities then this is their own fault.”

In response to a question about charity fundraising by the *Khidmat-e-Khalq Secretary*, Huzoor said:

“You can, and should do, fundraising for good non-Ahmadi charities and worthwhile causes and when you hold cheque presentations you should invite the media as well. The reason we invite the media is not because we want any praise but so that the message is conveyed to the wider public that Islam teaches service to humanity.”

One Amila member mentioned that some members of Ansar would argue that they did not need to take part in Ansar academic events or programmes because they had taken part in many such events when they were younger.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“If these elder men say that their knowledge has reached a peak then you should remind them of the example of Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra). He said that some people questioned Al-Fazl and said that it comprised only short and simple articles, yet he read it every day and learned something new each day. Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) said that perhaps those who criticised it had more knowledge than him because he benefitted from it.”

Huzoor continued:

“Feeling pride or arrogance at your own knowledge and intellect is a means of destruction and so it is necessary that a person always stays humble.”

An *Amila* member asked Huzoor about the use of the social media website Facebook.

In response, Huzoor said:

“There is no ban in terms of Islamic law about using Facebook, however for personal use it is better to avoid it, as there are risks to it. For Jamaat or Tabligh purposes it may be used to spread the message of Islam and to respond to false allegations but with due safeguards.”

Another *Amila* member said that Jamaats in Europe had the opportunity to benefit from the guidance of *Khilafat* much more, as Huzoor visited the European Jamaats much more frequently.

As he said this, I thought that his point was inaccurate, because whilst it is true that Huzoor lives in the UK and visits Germany each year, his visits to other European Jamaats were no more frequent than his visits to Canada. For example, earlier in the year, Huzoor had visited Sweden after a period of 11 years, and during that interval, Huzoor had made several visits to Canada.

In response, Huzoor said:

“In Europe, there are still weaknesses and so no country is perfect. However, even during the course of my visit here in Peace Village, I have seen that the attendance at Fajr has declined and the final few rows of the Mosque now remain empty.”

Huzoor continued:

“In Germany, at least 700 or 800 people come to the Mosque for Fajr, even though I normally go in the summer when the nights are very short. People come from more than 25km to attend Fajr and I can feel the spiritual atmosphere amongst the attendees. Yet here, the nights are long and still the final few rows are empty and so has there been a revolution in the past few weeks? At the very least the Ansar living in Peace Village should attend Fajr and if they did the Mosque would easily be filled.”

Huzoor then spoke to the Amila members about the importance of building Mosques. He mentioned how in Saskatoon, the foundation stone for a new Mosque had been laid by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) and yet the Mosque had still not been completed all these years later.

In reply, several Amila members replied together:

“Huzoor, Insha’Allah it will be ready and completed by next year.”

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“I am still waiting for your Insha’Allah to turn into a Masha’Allah. Even in Brampton you asked me to lay the foundation stone for a new Mosque several years ago and it is still not completed.”

Huzoor continued:

“I follow the teaching of the Promised Messiah (as) that if you want to do effective Tabligh you should build a Mosque. Thus, you should be persistent and seek to build as many Mosques as possible.”

Meeting with Missionaries

Following the conclusion of the *Ansarullah* meeting, Huzoor held a meeting with all *Missionaries* posted either in Canada or in Jamaats that were supported by Canada Jamaat.

Present at the meeting were a number of young Missionaries, who had graduated from *Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada*, as well as more senior Missionaries.

It was notable that during the majority of the meeting, Huzoor spoke mainly with the younger Missionaries and was keen to hear their questions and the issues they faced.

One young Missionary said that he felt that some younger Ahmadis living in Canada felt an ‘*internal struggle*’ or ‘*culture clash*’ between their religion and the local culture.

In response, Huzoor said:

“You should explain to the Ahmadi youth that there is a difference between religion and culture. If they do Namaz and read the Quran it is not a cultural issue but a means of following their religion.”

Huzoor continued:

“Sometimes, the younger Ahmadis get put off by observing a bad example of someone older in the Jamaat. Hence, it is the task of the young Missionaries to tell the youth that their true models should always be the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and the Promised Messiah (as) and they should remember that they have taken the Bai’at of Khalifatul Masih and not of any other Ahmadi.”

Speaking of how to make a connection with Ahmadi youth, Huzoor said:

“Our young Missionaries should not separate themselves but should spend time with the youth, play sports with them and make them attached to the Jamaat. This is a big challenge for you.”

Huzoor continued:

“If you see some Khuddam doing something bad you should not abandon them but it is your job to talk to them in their language, as people of a similar age, and become their friend and try to reform them through

love. It is not enough for you to merely deliver a Friday Sermon once a week or to lead Namaz.”

Huzoor further said:

“In recent years, I have sent young Missionaries qualified from Jamia UK and Jamia Canada to Australia and I have received many letters from the local Khuddam saying there are many more activities for them and that their attachment to the Jamaat has increased. Thus, if you work hard and diligently you will see that the local Jamaat members will themselves attest to the change you have brought.”

Another young *Missionary* said that some Khuddam had complaints with the local Canada Jamaat administration and this had caused them to become distant. He asked Huzoor how to handle such matters.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Very calmly and without getting angry you should respond to their questions and whatever complaints they may have or explain to them if they have misconceptions. If you do not know how to answer, you should write and ask me.”

Huzoor continued:

“You should be open with young people, otherwise misconceptions can develop. In the UK, Khuddamul Ahmadiyya has arranged open forums

with Khuddam, in which they are free to ask any questions they like and this has had a very positive effect.”

Huzoor further said:

“For example, some Khuddam believed that Chanda was used only as Sadqa or to support Missionaries, yet when all the projects of the Jamaat were explained to them they were extremely surprised and started happily giving Chanda themselves. Always remember that our decisions are logical and based upon Islam’s teachings and so we should not fear the questions of anyone. The only thing required is patience, tolerance and the ability to listen to others.”

One *Missionary* mentioned that he had found out that a *Khadim* was taking drugs and so he went and met him. The *Khadim* had told him that he did not come for *Namaz* as he had been ‘*banned from the Mosque*’. The *Missionary* said he had taken the *Khadim* with him for *Namaz* and ever since there had been a positive change in his attitude and character.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“It is not right to ban people from the Mosque. It is our job to decrease the distance between Ahmadis and the Mosque, rather than to increase it. If there is a genuine worry that someone could negatively affect others, someone responsible should remain present with him in the Mosque but to ban him or tell him he is not welcome is wrong.”

Another young *Missionary*, serving in Quebec, mentioned that his Jamaat was extremely small and so he asked Huzoor how he should conduct *Tabligh*.

In response, Huzoor said:

“If you truly want success then you must wake up in the night and offer Nafl (voluntary prayers) beseeching Allah for His Help. The father of your Missionary-in-charge, Mubarak Nazir sahib always used to remark that only through prayers was he able to establish a Jamaat in Sierra Leone.”

Calling their Khalifa

29 October 2016 was the penultimate day of Huzoor’s stay in Peace Village and, as the hours progressed, I felt a tangible sense of sadness amongst the local Ahmadis. Huzoor had been with them for almost a month and they had witnessed first-hand the blessings of Khilafat throughout the period but now the time was fast drawing close where Huzoor would move on to the next stage of his tour.

After *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers, Huzoor returned to his residence as normal for his evening meal and then met some of his relatives in the *2-Bashir* guest house, where I was staying.

As Huzoor was meeting relatives, Ahmad bhai (*Huzoor’s head of security*) asked me if I had seen the scene outside Huzoor’s residence. I knew instantly what he meant, as moments before, I had seen that a large crowd of Ahmadis had gathered outside Huzoor’s house.

Despite the bitter cold, in ever-increasing numbers, Ahmadi men, women and children were stood across the road from Huzoor's residence. Initially the crowd comprised a few dozen people but their powerful and emotional *naaray* (slogans) soon drew out more people from their homes. Thus, the few dozen rapidly transformed into a few hundred and ultimately the crowd appeared to comprise well over a thousand people. I am not sure exactly how many people were there, but to my eyes it seemed as though all the residents of Peace Village had camped outside Huzoor's home.

In a worldly context, if I ever saw so many people standing together and raising slogans, I would have imagined it was a protest rally. However, this was a protest with a difference. It was a protest of love and spirituality. The Ahmadis, so grief-stricken that Huzoor was soon to depart, stood outside his home beckoning him to come out so they could spend a few more blessed moments with him.

As I observed this scene, part of me thought that Huzoor had already given them so much time during the tour and wished they would let him rest. However, on another level, I was moved by their passion and love for Khilafat.

By the time, Huzoor was meeting his relatives, they had been stood for over an hour and it was clear to me that they would stay out in the cold for as long as it took just so they could have one more glimpse of Huzoor.

Ahmad bhai suggested one of us should mention to Huzoor that the Jamaat members were standing outside in the hope that Huzoor would come out

and meet them. I did not feel comfortable raising this and so Ahmad bhai mentioned the crowd to Huzoor as he was about to return to his residence.

Upon this, Huzoor said he had heard Ahmadis doing *naaray* but it did not seem as though he had any intention to come out.

It was, after all, already 10.45pm and, furthermore, Huzoor had walked for a few minutes in Peace Village the evening before, when he had returned from the home of one of his relatives.

However, just as he turned towards the door of his residence, Huzoor said:

“Dekhtay hain” – meaning ***“Let’s see”***

Thereafter, Huzoor called me for a few minutes to sit with him and asked me about my day and he mentioned some of the meetings that had taken place earlier in the day.

After a few moments, Huzoor stood up and returned to his residence and, even at that point, I had no idea if Huzoor planned to come out. I returned to where the large crowd had gathered and remember thinking to myself that if Huzoor does not come out then the people will stay on the street all night until Fajr!

Never to be forgotten scenes

After a further few minutes, as I was standing near the steps of Huzoor’s residence and facing outwards looking at the crowd of Ahmadis, I heard one

of the loudest and most emotional slogans of '*Naaray Takbir*' I have ever heard.

I immediately glanced back and saw that the door to Huzoor's residence was opening and a second later I saw Huzoor, looking radiant and ever so graceful, emerge.

It was a moment in time that I can never forget. Even now, months later, I can vividly picture that moment when I looked back and saw the door of Huzoor's residence open and the simultaneous burst of emotion amongst the Ahmadis.

I also noticed a smile on Huzoor's face and what I perceived to be a look of slight surprise. It seemed to me that, though he had heard the *naaray* from inside, Huzoor may not have realised just how large the crowd of Ahmadis waiting for him actually was.

Over the next 15 or 20 minutes, Huzoor walked along the streets of Peace Village, as he was flanked from every possible side by Ahmadis desperate to get close to him.

It was, in truth, utterly chaotic and at certain points a little dangerous, yet the overriding memory is of the intense spiritual atmosphere and the unbelievable passion which gripped Peace Village that evening. The bond of love between *Khalifa-Waqt* and his spiritual army was there for all to see and feel.

Initially, Huzoor walked along *Abdus Salam Street* up to the house adorned by enormous photos of the Promised Messiah (as) and his *Khulafa*. As he walked amongst the sea of Ahmadis, I saw countless people wipe away tears, each and all professing their eternal love for Khilafat and offering *salam* to their beloved Imam. All the while, Huzoor smiled and waved at the crowds as he walked amongst his people.

After a few minutes, Huzoor turned back and walked towards the main road of *Ahmadiyya Avenue* and with every second that passed the crowd became bigger.

Huzoor's security, and the Khuddam on-duty, tried to hold back the crowds so that no accident occurred and thus linked arms in a semi-circle behind and to the side of Huzoor. As I had done on the first day of the tour, I also joined in with the security and was part of the human chain that walked just a foot or two behind Huzoor. Hence, for the final few minutes my concentration was focused on ensuring that I stood firm but still I could not help but feel extremely emotional.

Alhamdulillah, the walk concluded safely and as Huzoor approached his residence the crowd all waved at him and I heard countless people shout out "*Jazak'Allah pyaray Huzoor*". They all knew that Huzoor had come out only for their sake and only to satisfy their hearts.

As Huzoor entered his home, I saw yet another outpouring of emotion, as Ahmadis embraced one another and gave each other *mubarakbaad* for the fact that they had been fortunate enough to be present. At least 10 people

came up to me and gave me *mubarakbaad* as well and their faces beamed with delight, whilst tears of joy streamed down their eyes.

I truly believe that in today's world, only Khilafat can inspire such pure and unbridled love, emotion, joy and passion.

Prayers for a martyr

Normally after Fajr in Peace Village, Huzoor would walk back to his residence but on the morning of 30 October, I saw that the Qafila cars were parked outside of the Mosque.

After Namaz was complete, Huzoor took a seat in his car and so I quickly took a seat in the Qafila car where I would sit.

Only as we began driving, did I realise that Huzoor was going to a local cemetery to pray at the grave of *Dr. Mehdi Ali Qamar Shaheed*, who had been martyred in Rabwah in 2014, at a time when he had travelled to do *Waqf-e-Arzi* at the *Tahir Heart Institute*.

Upon arriving, Huzoor prayed at the grave of *Dr. Mehdi Ali Qamar Shaheed* and met his brothers who were also present.

Thereafter, Huzoor asked Amir Sahib about the cemetery and enquired how many plots were reserved by the members of the Jamaat. Huzoor also noted that the graves at the cemetery were well spaced out, whereas in other countries they tended to be clustered much closer together.

The Help and Favours of God

As we left the graveyard, I thought of how Allah always rewarded the Jamaat for every sacrifice made. For example, when Dr. Mehdi sahib was martyred, it led to a great deal of media coverage in Canada as he was a Canadian citizen.

In this way, his sacrifice proved a great means of introducing the Jamaat to a much wider audience in Canada and was a means of training for Canada's young media team. Thus, during Huzoor's tour there had been constant media coverage across Canada in a way that we had never seen before.

One example of this occurred on the day of Huzoor's address at *York University* a couple of days earlier. Prior to the event, representatives of the *Bell Media Group*, which is Canada's largest private media broadcaster, contacted the Jamaat and said they wished to attend Huzoor's address at *York University* and wished to interview him.

In response, our media team said they would be welcome to come and we would request Huzoor for an interview, on the condition that they did not broadcast the interview before Peter Mansbridge's *CBC* interview with Huzoor was broadcast the next day. We had to set this condition as we had agreed exclusivity with *CBC*.

However, perhaps due to their rivalry with *CBC*, we received another call from *Bell* a few minutes later and Safwan Chaudhry from the media team was astonished to find that the person who made the call was the *Vice President* of the entire *Bell Media Group*. Normally, it is a producer or occasionally a

journalist who makes such calls and it it was quite unprecedented for the *Vice President* of a network to personally call to request an interview.

The *Vice President* said that *Bell* was prepared to broadcast Huzoor's address at *York University* live on three of its national channels, if we would permit them to broadcast an interview with Huzoor the same evening.

Safwan is normally very calm and collected but he later admitted to me that he was left downright astounded by this call. It was a moment where he realised just how much Allah had blessed the efforts of the Jamaat, whereby a national network was offering more media coverage than we could have ever imagined or hoped for.

In the past, the Jamaat had always had to work extremely hard to attain any significant media coverage and yet now, national networks were engaged in a rivalry to have the first opportunity to broadcast an interview with Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (*aba*).

Nonetheless, Safwan realised, that due to the exclusivity deal with Peter Mansbridge, he would have to turn down the offer from *Bell*.

An opportunity to serve

During Huzoor's stay in Peace Village, he was provided a full-police escort and on the morning of 30 October 2016, *Sheikh Daud Khurshid (36)* who is an Ahmadi police officer in Toronto told me about how this had been arranged.

Daud sahib was part of the *Toronto Police Service Motor Squad* and part of his job was to train police officers in providing police escorts.

In the past, he had himself arranged the police escort for various officials and dignitaries, such as for the *King of Saudi Arabia* when he attended a *G20 Conference* held in Canada.

Speaking of that experience, Daud sahib said:

“Several years ago, as I provided a police escort for the Saudi King, I felt a deep desire to provide such service to Huzoor. As an Ahmadi, for me Huzoor is the spiritual King of the world and so I stayed in the Police Squad in the hope that one day I would be able to be of service to him.”

Daud sahib said that he felt that the way the *Qafila* had been provided a police escort during the current trip was solely a result of prayers.

Daud sahib said:

“Just a few days before Huzoor arrived nothing had been arranged and so I met my superior officer and requested if Huzoor could be provided a police escort upon arrival and departure.

A few days earlier, as a reward for my past service, my boss had offered me the chance to go on an extremely advanced level training course in California, however that morning I said to him that providing Huzoor with service was far more important to me than the course.”

Daud sahib continued:

“Upon hearing this, my boss said ‘The Police Squad is your team and so you can use them freely as much as you need throughout the tour for all events and not just at the beginning and end’.

When I heard these words, I was left utterly speechless because he is known for being extremely strict. Hence, I honestly felt as though this is all Allah’s work, otherwise for him to respond in such a way was impossible. The way this happened truly increased my faith and showed me how Allah can turn the hearts of anyone.”

Meeting with Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya

On the morning of 30 October 2016, after a session of family Mulaqats, Huzoor held a meeting with the *National Amila of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Canada*.

As soon as the meeting started, Huzoor spoke to Kashif Danish sahib, who was soon to take over as *National Sadr Khuddam*.

Huzoor said:

“You are about to become the Sadr and so you should seek to continue any good practices shown by the previous Sadr and seek to improve upon any weaknesses that existed in the past. For example, I have heard that there has been over-formality in the past and this should not be the case.

The door of the Sadr should always be open and he and the Amila members should always remain entirely humble.”

Thereafter, Huzoor asked who had been appointed as the *Mohtamim (Secretary) Tarbiyyat* in the new Amila and upon being informed, Huzoor said he should switch positions with the *Mohtamim Taleem*, who was a young Missionary.

Huzoor said:

“The role of Mohtamim Tarbiyyat is to make programmes for the moral training of the Khuddam and so having a Missionary in this position is more suitable as they are trained for this task.”

Huzoor then turned to the newly appointed *Tarbiyyat Secretary* and said:

“You have been directly appointed by me and so now I hope you do not let me down. You should seek to fulfil all of your responsibilities in the best possible way.”

Subsequently, Huzoor gave guidance on various administrative matters and answered the questions of the different Amila members. Huzoor particularly emphasised that regular *Question and Answer* sessions with young *Missionaries* should be arranged in which other Khuddam should be encouraged to ask questions without fear or apprehension.

During the meeting, Huzoor said it had come to his attention that even amongst the youth living in Peace Village some vices and dangerous habits had spread. He said it was the particular duty of the Khuddam to reach out

to such individuals and, rather than rejecting them, efforts should be made to reform and guide them.

Very beautifully, Huzoor said:

“You raise very passionate naaray (slogans) here but you cannot conquer the hearts through slogans, you can only conquer through love and by working hard and selflessly.”

The *Mohtamim Tabligh* requested permission to proceed with a campaign called ‘*Be a Muslim for a day*’, in which non-Muslims would be encouraged to learn about Islam by following its practices for one day. For example, they would be encouraged to attend *Jumma* prayers or to wake up early and come to a Mosque at *Fajr* time.

It was suggested that such a project could lead to increased media coverage, as was the case with the Canada Jamaat’s ‘*Meet a Muslim campaign*’ a couple of years previously.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Ok, you can try it and then measure its effectiveness and see if it is having any benefit over the next year.”

Huzoor then spoke to the *Mohtamim Khidmat-e-Khalq* and said that in Canada, the *Khuddam* were not doing sufficient charity work and had left most of the work to the Jamaat.

Huzoor said:

“In terms of charity work Khuddam should set an example for the Jamaat and other auxiliaries but here in Canada it is the opposite. In the UK, the Khuddam and the Ansar raised almost £400,000 each in the past year for charities, yet here the Khuddam have raised very little and any work that has been done has been at a Jamaat level.”

Huzoor continued:

“It is your job as Khuddam to spread the true teachings of Islam but it is clearly not happening enough. Many people who attended the receptions here in Canada told me that they did not know about Islam until they heard my lecture. This means that whilst the Ahmadis have personal contacts with non-Muslims, they have failed to adequately explain the teachings of the Jamaat to them. Holding charity walks or blood drives is one way of spreading this message to a wide audience.”

One of the *Amila* members mentioned that a number of politicians in Canada were openly gay and asked if it was ok to vote for them in elections.

In response, Huzoor said:

“It is never right to persecute or to show any hatred to anyone and so at a Jamaat level there is no need to either openly support such candidates or to oppose them. Rather, individual members should be left to make their own decision about who to vote for in elections based upon whom they think is best qualified.”

Huzoor continued:

“When I was in Sweden earlier in the year, I was asked by the media about homosexuality and I told them that we bore no hate or grudge towards homosexuals and we condemned the persecution of any group. Similarly, I was also asked what our reaction would be if an Ahmadi said he was gay and in response, I said that we would not stop them coming to the Mosque. However, because homosexuality is against Islamic teaching, we would try, due to our concern and love for that person, to explain why Islam considered it to be wrong.”

Huzoor further said:

“You should never feel any complex or embarrassment over Islamic teachings. Rather, with confidence and without getting angry or anxious you should explain the logic and wisdom behind each Islamic teaching.”

One of the *Amila* members said that many of the most active Khuddam were those studying in *Jamia Canada* or who had graduated from it. However, the *Jamia* students were busy with their studies, whilst the graduates were occupied by their *Jamaat* duties.

In response, Huzoor said:

“The young Missionaries should make themselves available to serve for Khuddam duties as well and if they say they do not have time then you should write to me.

As for the Jamia students, when they are on holidays, or at weekends, they can do duties for Khuddam. In the UK, almost all of the young Jamia students or Missionaries are involved in Khuddamul Ahmadiyya activities in some way or another.”

A member of the *Amila* then requested Huzoor to visit Canada each year.

In response, Huzoor said:

“There are 209 Jamaats and so if I were to visit them all regularly I would end up spending all of my time on a plane or travelling.”

Huzoor continued:

“Sadly, even during this long trip to Canada I have seen that the standards have fallen in some way. For example, the attendance at Fajr has declined during my stay and so if I were to extend my stay then probably it would decline even more. All of you should remember that Namaz is offered for the sake of Allah, not for the sake of any person.”

An example of the love of Khilafat

During the preceding month, *Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada* had been closed due to Huzoor’s tour and the students conducted various duties throughout Huzoor’s month in Peace Village. Some served in security, some in offices, some worked in the *langhar* (kitchen) and some in other departments.

In terms of *Press and Media*, a Jamia student from New York, called *Frasat Ahmad*, had been assisting Canada's national media team for the past month and had also assisted me.

That afternoon, he came up to me and asked if I would consider writing a letter on his behalf seeking permission for him to also travel to West Canada so that he could continue to assist in the *Press & Media* work.

In response, I said I would think about it and give him an answer after a few hours. My initial instinct was to write the letter for him, as he had worked hard and been of much help to me and the local media team.

However, on the other hand, I was unsure about whether Huzoor would permit him to travel because it would mean him missing two weeks of Jamia studies.

Anyway, a few minutes later *Frasat* came back to my office and his face was beaming with delight.

Upon me asking what had happened, *Frasat* said:

“Abid bhai, just ten minutes ago, I asked you to write on my behalf but there is no need now! Najeeb (another Jamia student) wrote to Huzoor to ask permission to travel to West Canada so he could continue to do duty in the Private Secretary's Office and he has just received a reply in which Huzoor, with his own hand, has written ‘You have permission and also Frasad can travel for Press and Media work!’”

Masha'Allah it was an example of how Allah accepts sincere prayers and how Huzoor knows the hopes and desires of Ahmadis, whether they tell him or not.

Learning from a mistake

I also observed another incident that same day which again showed me how Allah answers sincere prayers.

Another Jamia student, *Umar Nayyer* had been doing duty in the Khuddam security team in the early stages of the tour. However, for a few days I had noticed he was not doing duty anymore and so I asked him if everything was ok.

In reply, Umar said:

“I made a mistake during my duty, as I took a photo of Huzoor as he was doing Namaz and shared it with a few friends. As a result, I was reprimanded and removed from the security team. Ever since that moment, I have felt grief that I let down my Khalifa and have not been able to remove the pain and guilt from my heart.”

Umar continued:

“The strange thing is that I have actually felt closer to Huzoor since I was removed from duty because the guilt has led me to pray and seek Allah’s forgiveness as much as possible. When I did duty, I was standing near

Huzoor but now that I am standing at the back of the Mosque, I feel spiritually closer to him.”

Speaking of his desire to return to security duty, Umar said:

“For the past few days, I have been ardently praying that somehow I can return to security duty because I think that would lift the heavy burden of guilt that I continue to bear.”

Upon this, my conversation with Umar ended but not more than five minutes later, he returned and told me the *Mohtamim Amoomi*, who was in-charge of Khuddam’s security, had met him after our conversation and told him he had been reinstated to the security team!

An emotional meeting

Later that day, I met an elderly and very frail couple, *Mohammad Arif Nasim* and his wife *Atia Arif*. Their thirty-nine year old son, *Nasir Mahmood Khan Shaheed* had been martyred in the 28 May 2010 attacks in Lahore.

It was extremely moving to speak to them as they told me how their son had been martyred and the grief they had felt.

Speaking about her son, *Atia* sahiba said:

“At the time of the attack, my son took out his handkerchief to wrap the wounds of an Ahmadi who had been shot and tried to bring him some water. However, at the same time the terrorists were launching grenades

in all directions and one hit my son directly. Both he and another person near him were martyred there and then.”

Atia sahiba said:

“We are very proud of our son as he was the first Moosi in our family and he also became the first martyr from our family. Whilst, the pain and grief remains, I truly believe that Allah chose him for this honour because he was a very righteous person. My biggest hope and prayer is that his children stay on the right track and serve the Jamaat. I hope that the Canada Jamaat can also give the children of the martyrs who have come here proper guidance about how to integrate without forgetting their faith.”

Thereafter, her husband Mohammad Arif Nasim sahib said:

“In my family, I am the only Ahmadi and so when Huzoor called me after my son’s martyrdom it meant even more to me. I was overwhelmed at how my spiritual father had comforted me with such love and mercy. It is only the love of Khilafat that has enabled us to overcome the loss of our son and to move here to Canada where we are safe.”

Meeting with Canada National Amila

On 30 October 2017, Huzoor held a meeting with the *National Amila of Canada Jamaat*.

At the beginning, Huzoor asked *Abdul Aziz Khalifa sahib*, an elderly member of the *Jamaat* and long-serving *Naib Amir*, about what work he was responsible for and asked him who assisted him.

Khalifa sahib informed that those who worked with him, were also elderly people like himself.

Hearing this, Huzoor immediately instructed Amir Sahib to provide Khalifa sahib with three *Naibeen* (deputies) who would be aged no older than 45.

After giving this instruction, Huzoor said:

“There is nothing extraordinary in doing work yourself, what is extraordinary is to leave behind a legacy of well-trained people who are able to take over the reins and improve upon what has gone before.”

The *Secretary Tabligh* informed Huzoor that they had planned to utilise Ahmadis who had immigrated from Pakistan to Canada in recent years and ask them to do at least one day of *Tabligh* each week.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Why are you only asking for service from the Pakistani Ahmadi immigrants? At the end of the day all members of Jamaat are immigrants or the children of immigrants. It has been my observation that you are all very passionate in raising naaray (slogans) but otherwise you are prone to laziness.”

Huzoor continued:

“You should try to do Tabligh in all parts of Canada, including the remote areas but it is not enough just to go once or twice to those areas and leave it. Rather, you must be persistent and be willing to make repeated efforts.

It is the role of the Tabligh Department to spread the name and teachings of Islam far and wide. Hold events that have themes that will attract people and not just those who are religiously minded”

Regarding the distribution of *Jamaat* literature, including books like *Life of Muhammad (sa)* or *World Crisis: Pathway to Peace*, Huzoor said that rather than only distributing them for free, often it was wiser to sell them at a low price.

Huzoor said:

“In the UK, they have sold some of the Jamaat books for a pound and we have found that people who pay for a book, even if just a nominal amount, are more likely to value it and more likely to read it than if it is given to them for free.”

Huzoor continued:

“A few years ago, I met the Mayor of London at his office and he had a copy of the Quran published by our Jamaat on his bookshelf but he admitted that he had never opened it. Thus, there is no value if we give away books that just end up gathering dust on shelves.”

Thereafter, Huzoor spoke about the media coverage received during his tour.

Huzoor said:

“In terms of the media coverage during this trip, far more than the efforts of any person, the truth is that Allah has blown the wind in our direction and blessed the Jamaat with coverage that it did not think was possible. However, do not just sit back satisfied, rather now it is your duty to take benefit and to use this effort to spread the message of our Jamaat much more. My fear is that you will relax for the next year having arranged my interview with Peter Mansbridge. Yet this was just one step in the right direction.”

Huzoor said:

“With Peter Mansbridge, you may have made a ‘bridge to one man’, but I want you to make a bridge to the heart of every person and every soul in this nation.”

For years, a trend in Canada’s *Jamaat* had been to build very beautiful and large Mosques, however as a result they had built only a handful of Mosques in recent decades.

Referring to this, Huzoor addressed the Amila and said:

“The Canada Jamaat has laid the foundation stone for several Mosques and yet they take years and years to complete. This is entirely wrong and

naturally our own Ahmadi members will also be upset and wonder why it is taking so long for the Mosques to be built.”

Huzoor continued:

“Rather than making plans only to make grand and large scale Mosques, you should focus on building smaller Mosques in which around 150 people can pray. Canada is a vast country and so you need more Mosques across the country and so in your Majlis-e-Shura you should also include a formal proposal of how the Jamaat can build more Mosques.”

Thereafter, Huzoor spoke to the *National Secretary Tarbiyyat* about some of his observations and concerns.

Huzoor said:

“Materialism and worldly influences are increasing and Ahmadis, who literally live on the doorstep of the Mosque, are failing to come and pray in it.

Similarly, amongst the youth there are issues arising, for example some have become involved in drugs. If you try to reform them by being strict and harsh it will have little effect, other than to drive them even further away and so try to win their hearts and minds through love.”

Huzoor asked the *Amila* members who amongst them came regularly to offer Namaz at the Mosque.

Most of the *Amila* members raised their hands, whilst one *Secretary*, perhaps with a hint of pride, said:

“Huzoor, I come to the Mosque seven days a week.”

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“This is no favour upon Allah that you have done, rather you are only fulfilling your basic obligations to Him.”

The *Secretary Tarbiyyat* asked Huzoor about homosexuality and how the *Jamaat* should respond when asked our views.

In response, Huzoor said:

“We must always stay firm to the teachings of Islam, no matter what environment we are living in. If staying firm to the teachings of Islam means we become isolated or others begin to oppose us, it does not matter as such difficulties will be borne for the sake of Allah.”

Huzoor continued:

“Do not ever think that the success of the Canada Jamaat is dependent upon our relations with the Parliamentarians or influential people of this nation. Our success and progress will be attained only through the Grace and Blessings of Allah the Almighty.”

Mixed emotions

As I woke up on 31 October 2016, I felt a mixture of emotions. After almost a month in Peace Village, it had come to feel like something of a second home and so there was a genuine sense of sadness in my heart that we would be leaving it. However, on the other hand, I was greatly looking forward to accompanying Huzoor as he travelled to Western Canada for the final couple weeks of his tour.

Until that point, I had not allowed myself to think about when we would return to London because I might have missed my family more. However, from that day onwards, I did start to count down the days until our return in my mind. Although there was many activities and events still ahead, it felt as though we were now approaching the final stretch of the tour.

I spent the early part of the morning packing my suitcase before meeting my relative Khala Roofo and her family. They were extremely sad that Huzoor was leaving Peace Village and were wondering how they would adjust back to normal day to day life, having experienced some of the best days of their lives during the previous few weeks.

As the morning progressed into early afternoon the crowds of people in Peace Village continued to increase.

Apart from the local people, Ahmadis from surrounding towns and cities, had also made their way to Peace Village to see Huzoor for one final time before his departure.

Visit to home of a young Missionary

At 12.55pm, Huzoor emerged from his residence and he walked the short distance to the home of the young Missionary *Aizaz Khan*, who had invited Huzoor on behalf of his family.

Speaking later about their experiences, Aizaz told me:

“Out of our love for Khilafat, and in celebration of beloved Huzoor’s visit to Canada, we decorated our house with lights and large photographs of the Promised Messiah (as) and all five Khulafa that covered the front and side of our house. The photo of the Promised Messiah (as) was 10 feet by 15 feet, whilst the photos of the Khulafa were 10 feet by 14.3 feet.”

Aizaz told me that a couple of nights previously he had asked Huzoor to visit his home but Huzoor had replied that he had visited in 2012 already. In response, Aizaz mentioned that he had written to Huzoor in the summer requesting him to visit his home again and Huzoor had given a positive response. Upon hearing this, Huzoor said he would fulfil his promise before he left Peace Village.

Aizaz said:

“When beloved Huzoor said these words to me, my heart was filled with joy that Huzoor would Insha’Allah visit my house and I wondered to myself how I ever became the recipient of Huzoor’s attention and kindness. Alhamdulillah.”

Speaking about the moments when Huzoor was at their home, Aizaz said:

“Once inside, Beloved Huzoor asked me who everyone was and as I introduced my family members one by one, everyone was fortunate to meet and speak with beloved Huzoor. Whilst in his blessed presence, everyone in my family was amazed and stunned.”

Mentioning an incident that illustrated Huzoor’s excellent memory and attention to detail, Aizaz said:

“My uncle offered beloved Huzoor some olives, of which he took one. After eating it Huzoor smiled and said ‘Last time, you offered cherries!’.”

Reflecting upon the happiness Huzoor’s visit conferred on his family, Aizaz said:

“As I think about these memorable moments with my spiritual King, I am overcome with so many different emotions that they leave me confused. All we can say is Alhamdolillah.”

A note of affection

As Huzoor left the home of Aizaz and his family, he asked Amir Sahib Canada if Naveed Mangla, a Missionary serving in Belize, was present. However, Huzoor was informed that Naveed sahib had travelled in advance to Saskatoon for duty.

Later, Naveed sahib explained to me why Huzoor had asked for him. He said that he and his siblings had continued the tradition of their late father, *Saleh Mangla* sahib, to decorate their home during Huzoor's visits to Peace Village and Naveed sahib had requested Huzoor to visit their home several times.

On each occasion, Huzoor had replied by saying ***"We will see"*** and in the final hour of his visit to Peace Village, Huzoor remembered Naveed sahib's request and so enquired where he was.

Naveed sahib said:

"I wrote a letter to Huzoor stating that I had been told by a few members of Huzoor's Qafila that Huzoor had asked for me and I explained why I was not there. The response I received from Huzoor was inked with nothing but the purest love and kind-heartedness. I consider this to be the best letter I have ever received and I will cherish it for the rest of my life. Huzoor wrote with his own hands 'Agar hotay to ghar jata', meaning 'If you had been present I would have visited your home'. This beautiful response made me very sentimental and emotional."

Naveed sahib continued:

"Although, Huzoor could easily have refused my invitation without any explanation, the fact is that Huzoor remembered and even went out of his way to fulfil it. This is the kind of love that is only found in Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya. I am not sure if I will ever get to witness Huzoor coming to Canada again or to visit my father's house, but I will forever cherish his love that he has shown to me."

Heartfelt emotion of an Ahmadi

Thereafter, as Huzoor walked to the Mosque for the Zuhr and Asr prayers, Amir Sahib Canada pointed in the direction of an Ahmadi mother holding her infant child and so Huzoor stopped and very lovingly patted her child on the cheek.

The child's mother was extremely emotional and had tears streaming down her face.

As Huzoor showed affection to her child, she said:

“Huzoor this child was born after 22 years of marriage and only as a result of your prayers. It was a miracle.”

I did not know who the lady was but it was clear that she considered the birth of her child to be a miracle and the result of the prayers of Khalifatul Masih.

An emotional farewell

Following Namaz, Huzoor briefly returned to his residence for the final time and during those moments it appeared as though all of Peace Village had descended onto the streets to see off their beloved Khalifa.

I will never forget the scenes when Huzoor came out for the final farewell.

For a few moments, Huzoor stood on the steps outside his residence waving at the sea of Ahmadis before him.



The *naaray* were deafening and emotional, and though there was not a cloud in the sky, tears of grief and heartache rained down.

Graciously, Huzoor took a final walk along *Bashir Street* and *Ahmadiyya Avenue* and waved at the thousands of Ahmadis who had come to see him off.

As Huzoor walked past the Lajna area, I saw countless women unable to control their emotions, including a lady on security duty who looked as though she could collapse in a state of grief at any moment.

At one point, perhaps worrying that it was getting late as there was a flight to catch, Amir Sahib suggested that they turn back. However, Huzoor said that there were still Ahmadis ahead and so he continued to walk until they had all had a chance to see him from nearby.

Personally, I felt overwhelmed and moved by the spirit of love and affection.

I also wondered how the atmosphere in Peace Village would be in a few moments once Huzoor had departed after a month of being the centre of the Ahmadiyya world.

At exactly 2pm, following a silent prayer, the Qafila departed and for as long as they could, Ahmadis ran side by side with Huzoor's cars. All the while, Huzoor pulled down his car window and waved at them.

The younger Ahmadis were able to keep up with the cars until we reached the main highway.

It had been an incredibly and extremely blessed month in Peace Village. Yet the blessings of Khilafat are never ending and so we continued our journey with great anticipation of what lay ahead.

A unique boarding pass

For the next stage of the tour, Huzoor was travelling directly from Toronto to Saskatoon in West Canada.

As we arrived at *Toronto Pearson International Airport*, I was handed a special *Air Canada* boarding pass which stated:

'Welcome to Canada, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V – World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community'.



On one side, it had a 'Love for All, Hatred for None' logo, as well as the official logo that the Canada Jamaat had made to recognise their 50th anniversary.

Break in airport lounge

Thereafter, the Qafila was taken to a lounge within the airport, where we spent the next hour. At one side, there was a small private room, in which Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) were seated, whilst the rest of us remained in the main part of the lounge.

At one point, I walked past the glass door of the room where Huzoor was seated and I heard him call my name. I went in and Huzoor spoke to me for a few minutes asking about the past couple of days.

Huzoor also asked me how my Khalu (uncle), Qamar Suleiman sahib, was.

Amongst his family and friends, Qamar sahib is known by his nickname 'Babbi' and so I mentioned that I had been enjoying Khalu Babbi's company and that he was well.

Huzoor had graciously included him in his *Qafila* for the remainder of the tour and so we would spend some more time together over the coming days as well.

Flight to Saskatoon

During the flight to Saskatoon, which departed at 4.30pm, I was seated next to one of Huzoor's security guards, Sakhawat Bajwa sahib.

After a few minutes, a flight attendant came with a trolley of sandwiches and snacks and Sakhawat sahib asked for a sandwich. Having received the sandwich, the flight attendant duly asked for payment and, for a second, I think I noted a hint of surprise in the eyes of Sakhawat sahib!

Certainly, I had assumed that the food would have been free! Anyway, he then took out his credit card and paid and very generously offered to get me one as well but I was full.

Arrival in Saskatoon

The flight was just over 3 hours long but the time zone in Saskatoon was two hours behind Toronto and so we arrived just after 5.40pm.

As Huzoor exited the plane, he was welcomed to Saskatoon by Hon. Don Morgan, *Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan Province* and various other representatives of the State Legislature.



One of the people present to receive Huzoor was *Mohammad Fiaz*, an Ahmadi Muslim, who had been elected to the *State Legislature of Saskatchewan* earlier in the year and in this way had the honour of being the Jamaat's first elected public official in Canada.

All the dignitaries spoke of their delight and honour at the presence of Huzoor in their Province.

As I heard this, I recalled a conversation I had with a Canadian non-Muslim lady after the *Vaughan Peace Symposium* earlier in the month.

She asked me where Huzoor was travelling to after Toronto and when I told her that he would be visiting Saskatoon she looked bewildered and even remarked:

“Why on earth would you take His Holiness to Saskatoon?”

She told me it was one of the last places that most Canadians would like to visit, as it was far away, extremely cold and apart from its oil and agricultural industries was not known for much else.

What she did not realise was that Huzoor does not travel for the sake of tourism or to take in the local sites.

Occasionally, if there happens to be a local landmark or some beautiful scenery and it does not interrupt his main programme Huzoor may visit but it is always a by-product and never the main reason for visiting any city or nation.

Huzoor’s priority is always to meet the members of the Jamaat and so he visits those places where there are Ahmadi populations or where there are Mosques to be opened or a particular need to the Jamaat.

Following the meeting, Huzoor and the Qafila members drove to the hotel where would stay in Saskatoon. I was staying in a room, a few doors down

from where Huzoor's own room was and the rest of the Qafila members were also staying in rooms along the same corridor.

Visits to Prairie Land Park

During Huzoor's stay in Saskatoon, the Jamaat had rented some halls and makeshift offices in a large convention centre known as the *Prairie Land Park*.

It was normally used to host trade conventions or large conferences but it also served our purposes very well.

Thus, later that evening, the Qafila drove the short distance to the convention centre, where hundreds of Ahmadis had gathered to welcome Huzoor to Saskatoon and he led the Maghreb and Isha prayers.

Due to their excitement at Huzoor's presence, a couple of Ahmadis raised *naaray* (slogans) just before Namaz started.

Upon this, Huzoor immediately stopped them and said:

“At Namaz time there should be no naaray raised.”

During his two stays in Saskatoon, Huzoor returned to the convention centre several times, as all prayers were offered there, as well as Mulaqats, classes and media interviews.

Being just on time!

In Saskatoon, the time for *Fajr* was 7am and so the next morning, on 1 November 2016, I came out of my room at 6.43am thinking I had plenty of time to reach the lobby as the hotel was just 5 minute's drive away. Yet, as I came out, I saw Huzoor walking out of his room at the exact same time.

Normally, the staff members would come out a few minutes before Huzoor and wait in the lobby or near the cars but on this occasion, I went down in the lift with Huzoor, as did Majid sahib, who had also come out of his room at the same time.

During the journey down, Huzoor enquired from Majid sahib if he had fully recovered from a severe flu he had developed earlier in the tour. Huzoor said that he had noticed Majid sahib had lost some weight during the tour and that he should take *Aconite* every few days as it was a good way of preventing colds and flus.

We were not the only people who were surprised by the fact that Huzoor had come out a few minutes earlier than expected. In fact, both Amir Sahib Canada and *Private Secretary*, Munir Javed sahib were both late and so joined for *Fajr* later. Anyway, it was a good lesson for us and so for the rest of the tour we all ensured we were ready in good time.

Upon arriving at the Mosque, there were still a few minutes until *Fajr* and so Huzoor asked the local Missionary how many people attended *Fajr* prayers in normal circumstances and the figure was very low. Huzoor told him that he must make efforts to improve the attendance.

Huzoor also noticed the Jamaat's *General Secretary*, Sabih Nasir wearing a tracksuit under his overcoat and asked him if he planned to go jogging after Fajr!

Interview with CKOM Radio

On the morning of 1 November 2016, Huzoor returned to the Prairie Land Park centre where he held a series of media interviews, followed by a session of family Mulaqats.

The first interview was with a local radio broadcaster John Gormley, formerly a politician and now a very well-known radio host. The second interview was *CBC News* and the third interview was with the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* newspaper.

The local media team had set up two separate media areas, side-by-side and divided by a screen.

Thus, following the first interview, Huzoor walked to the other side of the screen for the second before returning to the original setting for the third interview.

In this way, time was saved, as the journalists were able to set up their recording equipment prior to Huzoor's arrival.

During his interview with John Gormley, who hosted a show on the *CKOM* radio station, Huzoor was asked about why the Jamaat was so focused on preaching a message of peace and love.

In response, Huzoor said:

“There are so many atrocities taking place in the world today. There is so much injustice and dishonesty and so what is the need of the time? It is for all people to show love and compassion to one another and for this message to be spread far and wide so that all humanity can come to live peacefully.”



The journalist also asked Huzoor if the Jamaat would be able to spread and preach its message of *‘Love for All, Hatred for None’* with success in Canada.

In reply, Huzoor smiled and replied very beautifully using just a few words:

“No sane person could ever deny or reject this slogan!”

In his media interviews, Huzoor may sometimes give very detailed answers, however, on other occasions, Huzoor sometimes gives very short and concise answers.

I have come to realise that this is also one of Huzoor's techniques, whereby sometimes he wants to leave the journalist or listeners in a position where they are forced to think and reflect upon what Huzoor has said. In such situations, a short sentence can have a greater impact than a thousand words.

Yet, there are other times, where it is necessary to elaborate and explain a point. Huzoor always judges the situation and responds as he deems appropriate.

On this occasion, Huzoor's short answer elicited a large smile from the journalist, as he knew that Huzoor's argument had been perfectly made in a matter of a mere few words.

Interview with CBC News

During the subsequent interview with CBC, Huzoor was interviewed by a journalist called *Devin Heroux* who asked why Ahmadi Mosques were open to non-Muslims.

In reply, Huzoor mentioned how when the Holy Quran gave permission for a defensive war through *Jihad* to the Holy Prophet (sa) it was given to protect all religions and not just Islam.

Thereafter, citing an incident from the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), Huzoor said:

“Once, a delegation of Christians from the city of Najran came to meet the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) and he permitted them to worship in his Mosque and so our practice is not a modification of Islam, rather we follow the example of the Holy Prophet (sa). ”



Huzoor continued:

“Hence, it is the duty of a Muslim to open the doors of their Mosques and to respect all people, regardless of their faith and religion.”

Later, the same journalist, asked the local media team if he could return in the evening when he was ‘off-duty’. He said he just wished to observe how Huzoor and the Jamaat prayed together and so he did return and remained in close contact with our media team thereafter.

Interview with Star Phoenix

During the third interview, a journalist called Thea James, from the *Star Phoenix*, asked Huzoor why there were segregation of sexes in Mosques.



In reply, Huzoor said that the purpose of segregation was to ensure that the attention of all worshippers remained focused solely on the worship of God and that Ahmadi women were more comfortable worshipping and conducting their events in an independent environment.

Upon hearing this, the journalist seemed surprised and queried whether Ahmadi women were actually more comfortable or whether it was something that had been assumed.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“You should interview our Ahmadi women and they will tell you for themselves how they feel. A couple of years ago, a non-Muslim female journalist attended our Annual Convention in the UK where fifteen thousand ladies and girls were gathered separately from the men.

Later, she told us how initially she had found the separation strange but after just a few moments she began to feel extremely comfortable and safe. She ended up spending the entire day with the ladies and said she had enjoyed her time far more than she did at mixed events.”

Huzoor continued:

“Even in worldly clubs or organisations there are certain rules or guidelines that the members follow. In religious terms, we follow the teachings of our religion but just because men and women sit separately do not think Islam deprives women of their rights.”

Huzoor further said:

“The status of women in Islam is extremely high and no less than that of a man. Our Ahmadi women are extremely educated and have forged very successful careers as doctors, scientists, lawyers and many other professions through which they are serving mankind.”

Her interview with Huzoor appeared on the front page of the *Star Phoenix* and so the next day, in all newsstands, Huzoor’s photo and message was prominently displayed.



Press Conference in Saskatoon

Thereafter, Huzoor answered questions during a formal Press Conference, in which seven different media outlets covering Saskatchewan were present.

One of the journalists asked Huzoor if there was any particular message he wished to convey to the public through the media.

In response, Huzoor said:

“I just want that when the media gives news it should do so with justice and honesty. Do not only give one side of the story when discussing Islam

by only focusing on extremists, rather also report upon those who are peaceful and who spread a message of peace, harmony and tolerance.”



Huzoor continued:

“The total membership of the terrorist group known as Daesh is not more than 30,000 and yet they are front page news, whereas this year 500,000 joined the peaceful Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and this news will hardly attain any coverage. This is unjust.

Similarly, if a Muslim does something wrong you say it is due to his religion but if a non-Muslim does something wrong you say it is a normal crime or that he is mentally disturbed.”

As in previous interviews and press conferences, Huzoor was asked about the potential of a Donald Trump Presidency.

In response, Huzoor said:

“If Donald Trump is elected and tries to implement some of the divisive policies that he has suggested then it will be very dangerous. For example, if he takes discriminatory action against Muslims there is a risk that extremist clerics from outside the United States will try to incite Muslims and so there is a risk of disturbances and chaos. No person should discriminate and say ‘All Muslims are banned or will all be deported’.”

Huzoor continued:

“On the other hand, it is our belief that a person should remain law-abiding no matter what the circumstances and a Muslim should always remember that love for their country is a necessary part of their faith.”

Emotions of a Ahmadis

Later, Huzoor held a session of family Mulaqats during which he met dozens of families.

One person who met Huzoor was *Mukkaram Ahmad (50)* who explained the blessings Huzoor’s tour had conferred upon his family.

Mukkaram sahib said:

“My grandfather was a companion of the Promised Messiah (as) but, apart from my father, all other members of his family later left

Ahmadiyyat. Similarly, my grandfather's brother was also a companion of the Promised Messiah (as) but his children all left Ahmadiyyat. Yet during Huzoor's current tour, his granddaughter came to accept Ahmadiyyat and did Bai'at. In this way, due to the blessings of Huzoor's presence, Ahmadiyyat has returned to the family of a companion of the Promised Messiah (as) after many decades of being spiritually lost."

Another family to meet Huzoor were *Aziz Salifu* and his wife and children. Aziz sahib was from Ghana but had lived in Canada for the past 11 years.

After meeting Huzoor for the very first time, Aziz sahib said:

"It was extremely humbling and special to meet Huzoor and to seek his prayers and blessings. As we are Ghanaians, we feel a special connection with Huzoor and we felt this today as well. For example, Huzoor even knew the name of our village in Ghana! The way to describe Huzoor is 'love' and so me and my children will never forget the love he showed us today."

A deceptively warm coat

Following the conclusion of Mulaqats, Huzoor graciously called me to his office for a few minutes.

Our first evening in Saskatoon had been very cold and I had been worried that Huzoor would be cold, as his overcoat appeared quite light and so somehow, I mustered the courage to mention this to Huzoor and to even offer my coat to him.

Although, I am significantly shorter in height, my overcoat is quite long and loose and so I thought it might fit Huzoor.

Upon this, Huzoor told me that his overcoat looked and felt light but was actually extremely warm. He said it had an inner lining that kept him insulated from the cold and that during summer months he would remove the lining and in this way, it was suitable for most weather conditions.

Huzoor said that he used to wear the overcoat belonging to his respected father, the late Hazrat Sahibzada Mirza Mansoor sahib, however after some time it became worn and frayed.

As a replacement, Huzoor said he desired to get a coat that was as similar to his father's coat as possible and so he had sent his son-in-law Fateh Dahri to try and find one.

Huzoor said that it took several efforts but finally he had found a coat which was like the one his father had worn.

Huzoor then smiled and joked:

“I went to so much effort to try and find an appropriate coat, which was to my personal taste and now you are saying it is not good enough!”

Anyway, I was grateful that Huzoor had not minded my suggestion. In fact, Huzoor was extremely kind and even told me to take off my own overcoat before he personally held it and checked it.

I was also touched by the fact that Huzoor had worn his father's coat and when it was no longer possible to wear it, he had sought a similar coat. It illustrated, the love and respect Huzoor had for his father.

Defying all predictions

Though, it was extremely cold that day, the weather changed over the next day and for the rest of the tour it remained very mild. In fact, later in the tour there were days when it was very warm and so the weather defied all predictions and previous forecasts.

For example, one day the weather reached plus fifteen degrees Celsius in Calgary and upon this, someone showed us a news clipping that said on the same day a year before, the weather had been *minus* fifteen degrees Celsius and so there had been a swing of a full thirty degrees in temperature!

It truly seemed as though Allah *Himself* had intervened to keep the weather mild during Huzoor's stay in West Canada, which had been expected to be far and away the coldest period of the tour. In fact, the day after Huzoor returned to London from Calgary, someone sent me a photo showing that the weather had changed again and there had been significant snowfall.

Huzoor's respect for Khilafat

I also mentioned a comment I had heard a few days earlier, which had bothered me. Someone had told another person that they seemed as busy as Huzoor.

In response, Huzoor said:

“When I was Nazir-e-Ala in Rabwah, a person said to me that there were only two busy people in the world and that one was Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) and the other was me. I very rarely raised my voice but on that occasion, I did raise my voice purposely so that even the people around me could hear. I said to him that how dare you insult my Khalifa by comparing him to me?”

As Huzoor said these words, I trembled and thought of the incredible levels of respect he himself had for Khilafat before being appointed Khalifatul Masih himself.

An emotional narration

On 2 November 2016, Huzoor held a session of family Mulaqats in Saskatoon. During that period, I met a number of Ahmadis, who told me how it felt to meet Huzoor for the first or second time in their lives.

I met a young Ahmadi lady, who had come to meet Huzoor along with her husband. She told me about the difficulties she had faced during her childhood growing up in Pakistan. Throughout our conversation, she was emotional and unable to restrain her tears.

The lady said:

“When I was a child, aged four or five, my parents got divorced and upon this our mother left us and I did not see her again for at least 10 years.

Thereafter, we lived in tough conditions, whereby my father, my two sisters and me all lived together in just one room.”

She continued:

“Though, I felt extremely grieved that our mother has left us, even as a child I believed that due to Khilafat I would be ok. I used to write to Huzoor as a child but it was difficult to post the letter because of the cost and so I would keep the letter under my pillow until I was able to send it and just writing to Huzoor gave me comfort, even as a young child.”

Speaking of her Mulaqat, she said:

“Today, I met Huzoor for the second time and Huzoor’s love and mercy is unparalleled. The fact that today, I am living comfortably in Canada, is due only to the prayers I received from him whilst I was growing up in Pakistan. Only Allah knows the conditions in which I lived before and the grief I felt and yet today I am happily married and living in comfort.”

Meeting with Mayor of Saskatoon

During the morning session, Huzoor also met with the newly elected Mayor of Saskatoon, Mr. Charlie Clark, who along with his wife, Professor Sarah Buhler, came to welcome Huzoor to Saskatoon. The Mayor had only assumed office two days earlier.

During the meeting, the Mayor spoke of the positive contribution of Ahmadi Muslims to Saskatoon and said that they were a model of integration. The

Mayor also asked Huzoor how he had found Canada's National Parliament and about the Mosque openings that were due to take place in Regina and Lloydminster.



Following the meeting, I also met the Mayor and he told me about his experience of meeting Huzoor.

Mayor Charlie Clark said:

“The Caliph has a very spiritual presence and you can tell that he knows all of the issues facing the world. There is no doubt that the burden upon his shoulders is extremely heavy but at the same time he is very calm and considerate. What distinguishes the Caliph is that he is seeking good for all of mankind and striving for peace in the world. It is no surprise that

Ahmadi Muslims are so peaceful and well-integrated because the message their leader is spreading is of love and peace. The presence of the Caliph has greatly enriched our community."

His wife, Sarah Buhler added:

"I found the Caliph to be extremely thoughtful and I was very touched that he was interested in us as people and cared for our well-being and happiness. Similarly, he took interest in our city and the people of this area. He has travelled all over the world, yet he remains extremely humble and gracious."

Travel to Regina and visit to new Mosque

Later that afternoon, the Qafila departed for Regina, the State capital of Saskatchewan, where the Jamaat had built a new Mosque.

The drive to Regina was about two and a half hours and the Qafila stayed at a hotel about 15 minutes from the Mosque.

After a short break at the hotel, Huzoor went to the Mahmood Mosque to lead the *Aameen* ceremonies of several children before leading the Maghreb and Isha prayers.

Following the *Aameen* ceremonies, Huzoor told the local Missionary that the girls had recited the Quran much better than the boys.

As he was returning to his car, Huzoor spoke to Amir sahib and said:

“One thing I noticed was that in Toronto, you did not light up the minaret and so in future it should be lit up at night. In London, I also instructed that the minaret at Baitul Futuh be lit up.”

An elected official

On 3 November 2016, Huzoor met the local Ahmadis of Regina during a session of Mulaqat.

One person fortunate enough to meet Huzoor was *Muhammad Fiaz*, the Ahmadi Muslim who had been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

Speaking after he and his family had met Huzoor, Muhammad Fiaz sahib said:

“It has been a great honour and the greatest privilege of my life to officially be appointed by the State Government to receive Huzoor here in Saskatchewan. In particular, when I had the opportunity to receive Huzoor at the airport in Saskatoon I felt incredibly lucky and emotional.”

Muhammad Fiaz sahib continued:

“On the day of Huzoor’s arrival, there was an important session taking place in the State Legislature but the Ministers and myself were instructed to fly from Regina to receive Huzoor and were sent in the

State's Executive Plane. Thus, I am happy that our State politicians also were able to appreciate the status of Khalifatul Masih."

Speaking about the effect of the past few days upon him, Fiaz sahib said:

"Just being physically close to Huzoor has made me feel great spiritual enhancement and has made me realise the need for humility because we are nothing in comparison to Khilafat."

A few moments with Huzoor

After Mulaqats were concluded, Huzoor called *Ataul Qudus Malik* from the United States to his office for a few minutes. Qudus, is a friend of mine, and as a lawyer, has served the Jamaat by travelling to countries like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to provide legal assistance to the local Jamaats. To my pleasant surprise, when Huzoor called Qudus, he also called me in as well.

Qudus had been present at Huzoor's media interviews earlier in the day and so he mentioned that this had been a great honour for him.

In reply, Huzoor smiled and said:

"In such interviews, you should not stand directly in my eyeline as you can be a cause of distraction!"

Huzoor made this point with great love but there was a lesson to learn for the local Jamaat as well. In my opinion there had been too many people

present in the morning interviews and I had communicated this to the local team.

I do not get angry very often but I was momentarily angry and so I had spoken quite strictly to my friends Asif Khan (*Secretary Umoor-Kharija*) and Safwan Chaudhry (*in-charge Media team*) following the interview to ensure that they did not have more people than necessary attend the interviews.

On a number of occasions, Huzoor has instructed that during his interviews as few people as possible should attend. After all, those who are unable to attend, can view the interview when it is broadcast or published.

Huzoor asked Qudus where he was staying and he mentioned that he had booked a room in the same hotel where Huzoor was staying. Upon this, I mentioned that Qudus had also travelled on the same flight from Toronto to Saskatoon.

Qudus remarked that upon realising he had booked a ticket on the same flight he had been worried that Huzoor might not like this. He added, ***“Abid bhai said it was ok and I should not worry”***.

As he said these words, I almost burst out laughing thinking how quickly Qudus had shifted the blame to me!

Huzoor smiled and said:

“It does not matter. Often, during flights I do not see the members of the Qafila even until the end and so it made no difference to me.”

Inauguration of Mahmood Mosque in Regina

On 4 November 2016, Huzoor inaugurated the Mahmood Mosque in Regina, as he delivered his weekly *Friday Sermon* from the new Mosque.



During the sermon Huzoor praised the efforts and sacrifices of the local Ahmadi Muslims who raised funds for the construction of the Mosque and even played a major role in its physical construction.

Huzoor mentioned that the money spent on constructing the Mosque was greatly reduced due to the sacrifices made by the local Ahmadi Muslims who volunteered their time to help construct the Mosque.

Huzoor said it was the first time that local Ahmadis had played such a role in physically building a Mosque in Canada and that he hoped this would become a template for the future.

Very beautifully, Huzoor said:

“Whilst certain Muslims are busy in spreading disorder in the world, Ahmadi Muslims are dedicating their time and wealth for building Houses of God. Ahmadi Muslims are acting in accordance to saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who said that whosoever builds a House of Allah in this life, builds a house for himself in heaven.”

A rare instruction

Following the Friday Sermon, Huzoor answered questions during a formal press conference, followed by two *one-on-one* interviews with *CTV* and *Global News*.

It so happened that one of the journalists who interviewed Huzoor, was a young Asian lady, whose father is an Ahmadi but she herself had lost connection with the Jamaat and was no longer an Ahmadi.

The day before, the Canada Jamaat team had asked me whether there would be any problem with her interviewing Huzoor. I suggested that she take part in the Press Conference but not a *one-to-one* interview. However, I also said Amir Sahib should inform Huzoor and seek his guidance.

Thus, later Amir Sahib did ask and Huzoor approved an interview with the journalist, however Huzoor instructed that the journalist could conduct the interview if she was willing to wear a headscarf during the interview.

This was very interesting to me, as I had never seen Huzoor ask any female journalist or guest to wear a headscarf. I thought about this and my personal view was that there may have been two reasons why Huzoor had given this instruction.

On the one hand, Huzoor would regret the fact that an Ahmadi girl had left her faith and not only left her faith but had also stopped observing Hijab. Thus, he sought to emphasise its importance and encourage her, even if she was no longer a practicing Ahmadi.

Secondly, I also thought that Huzoor may have considered that if he was interviewed by a former Ahmadi lady, without Hijab, it could set a negative example for other Ahmadi girls or ladies. Hence, he may have placed this condition.

Certainly, in support of the first point at least, later Huzoor sent a message to the journalist through our local team, in which he cited the example of a non-Ahmadi Muslim female journalist, *Ginella Massa* who had become the first Muslim lady to anchor the news whilst observing Hijab in Canada a few days earlier.

In his message to the journalist, Huzoor said:

“If you think that observing Hijab and modest attire will limit your career opportunities, you should look at the example set by Ginella Massa. If you can no longer be the first, you can at least become the second Hijab observing reporter in Canada.”

Press Conference in Regina

During the media session, one journalist asked Huzoor what he had meant in his Friday Sermon, when Huzoor had prayed that ***“may our tomorrow prove better than our today”***.



In response, Huzoor said:

“If you stand still in one place, others will overtake you and you will be left behind. Our objective is to spread the true teachings of Islam and so I want the members of our Community to increase in this effort. Similarly, at a personal level, our Jihad is to spiritually reform and improve and if we pay attention to this then there is no doubt that our tomorrow, which means our future, will prove blessed.”

Interview with Global News

At the start of Huzoor’s interview with *Global News*, the female journalist Whitney Stinson, struggled to pronounce Huzoor’s name. Thus, Huzoor

himself assisted her by slowly repeating his name 'Masroor' two or three times until she was able to say it correctly!

The same journalist asked Huzoor about the role of women in Islam. She said the Jamaat promoted a message of 'Love for All, Hatred for None' but, in her view, there seemed to be differences in how men and women were treated.



In response, Huzoor said:

“There is no discrimination between the sexes in Islam. In the Holy Quran, God Almighty has said that those who do good works will be rewarded and makes no distinction between men and women.”

Huzoor continued:

“Islam teaches that both boys and girls should be educated and should be trained to serve their society in the best way. Thus, Ahmadi women

are excelling in all respects. Just as we have males who are working in the professional environment, we also have women who are doing so. If you mean to ask why our women observe Hijab, then it is because modesty in dress is a part of Islamic teaching.”

Interview with CTV News

During Huzoor’s interview with *CTV News*, he was asked about the concept of integration of immigrants into the West and what it required.

In response, Huzoor said:

“A person should not be forced to abandon his religion in the name of integration. In my opinion integration does not mean that a Muslim immigrant should be forced to drink alcohol or to go into a nightclub. Similarly, a Muslim woman should not be forced to remove her Hijab. Rather, than promoting integration, such policies usurp the principle of religious freedom and will increase division. This is not limited to Muslims, for example, it would be entirely wrong to ban a Sikh man from wearing a turban.”

Huzoor continued:

“I have said many times before that integration means to serve your country, to work for its progress and to use all your faculties and capabilities for the benefit of your nation. It means to remain law abiding and to honour and love your country. It is not to forcefully remove the scarf from a Muslim lady’s head or to pull off a turban worn by a Sikh.”

As the interviews finally concluded, Huzoor turned to Safwan Chaudhry from Canada's media team and jokingly said:

“There have been so many interviews, do you also now want to interview me?”

Mahmood Mosque Reception

In the evening of 4 November 2016, Huzoor delivered the keynote address at a special reception held to mark the opening of the *Mahmood Mosque* in Regina. The reception was held at the *Ramada Plaza* hotel in Regina city centre and was attended by more than 180 dignitaries and guests, including the *Premier of Saskatchewan*, Brad Wall.

Following a welcome address by Amir Sahib Canada, a number of guest speakers took to the stage, who all welcomed Huzoor to Regina and spoke of how honoured they were that Huzoor would choose to visit Saskatchewan.

Huzoor's address

During his address, Huzoor spoke about the purposes of Mosques, the efforts of the Jamaat to serve humanity and upon the need for peace and justice in the world.

Very beautifully, Huzoor said:

“Our Jihad is not a Jihad of swords, guns or bombs. Our Jihad is not a Jihad of cruelty, brutality and injustice. Rather, our Jihad is of love, mercy and

compassion. Our Jihad is of tolerance, justice and human sympathy. Our Jihad is to fulfill the rights of God Almighty and of His Creation.”



Huzoor said that some non-Muslims had come to fear Mosques as a place where violent plots were hatched or considered them breeding grounds for terrorism and extremism. In response to such fears, Huzoor explained that true Mosques were places of peace where all people were welcomed.

Huzoor said:

“The only plotting that takes place in our Ahmadi Mosques is to determine how we can quell the heartache and grief of those who are bereft and deprived. The only schemes we hatch are to remove the heavy burden of desperation and hopelessness that weigh down those who are consumed by hardship and misfortune.”

Huzoor continued:

“From every organ, every pore and every fibre of the Holy Prophet’s being gushed forth a spring of eternal mercy and compassion for humanity and

so true Muslims, who follow him, can never enter Mosques with ill-intent or a desire to harm others.”

During the address, Huzoor also spoke of how the Jamaat was serving humanity, according to the teachings of Islam, by building hospitals, schools and providing water to those in need in remote parts of the world.

Very emotively, Huzoor also spoke about the state of children living in deprived nations, whereby they struggled daily for basic necessities such as water and food. Huzoor contrasted their situation with the issues faced by children living in the first world.

Huzoor said:

“The most we have to worry about here in the Western world is ensuring that our children get to school on time each morning or other similar minor issues. Such insignificant problems are a distant dream for the people living in deprived parts of the world. Those children would give anything for the opportunities that our children have here.”

Impact of Huzoor’s address

As ever, Huzoor’s words had a profound effect on many of the guests in attendance.

I was seated alongside a Canadian man *Ken Burgess* and his wife Sarah. They were now retired and had spent the past few years engaged in Christian missionary work.

Mr. Burgess said:

“My wife and I lived in Ghana as Christian Missionaries and so we have seen some of the things His Holiness spoke about and the difficulties that the local people have to contend with. Thus, when the Caliph spoke about water and how it is the means of life, I felt emotional and I was touched by how much your community is giving to others. I will never forget this evening and in my heart the appreciation of Islam that I will hold henceforth is due to the beauty of the words of your eloquent leader. He opened his heart to all of us this evening.”

His wife, Mrs. Susan Burgess said:

“Your leader’s speech was marvelous but he does not have an easy task because there is so much negativity about Islam in the world. At the same time, you can see he is determined to fulfil his mission and I got the feeling that he will not give up, whether it takes one year or whether it takes 100 years! I really liked how he said that the biggest weapon that Muslims have are prayers. He is truly a man of God!”

I also met a lady called Mrs. Verna who told me she had been struck by Huzoor’s definition of *Jihad*.

Mrs. Verna said:

“I loved how he said that the Jihad of Ahmadi Muslims is a Jihad of love and peace and that if the Ahmadis have a Jihadi group it is not like the Taliban but is a group that serves others.”

I also met an amateur photographer called *Kevin Gereggain*, who told me that he had lived in New York at the time of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Kevin Gereggain said:

“Due to my experience of being in New York at the time of 9/11, I had a semi-hostile impression of Islam and that lingered to this day. Having said that, today’s event was completely eye-opening and has changed my perspective 180 degrees.”

Mr. Gereggain continued:

“The few lines that I found particularly incredible was when he spoke about what ‘Jihad’ is. We have the impression that Jihad is a type of war and is about killing people with swords or suicide bombs. Yet, he flipped this concept on its head and said that Jihad is the opposite and is actually a means of giving life, which you are doing by providing water to those people who are thirsty. Wow! In the past, I have heard many Muslims say that Islam is a religion of peace but until today I never truly believed it. Your Caliph is eloquent, he is honest and he has given my brain so much to think about tonight on my way home.”

A teacher called *Rhonda Rosenburg* shared her reflections with me. She said:

“Me and my colleagues were discussing earlier how the most powerful part of the Caliph’s speech was when he spoke about water in Africa and how your community is providing hand and solar pumps. The obvious conclusion is that you are trying to help others but I also drew one other

conclusion, which is that your community is promoting the need to protect the environment by generating energy through non-fossil fuels. Thus, your Caliph to my mind is not just a spiritual man but is also eco-friendly and I applaud him for this!"

Rhonda Rosenburg continued:

"I kept thinking how the Caliph is not concerned about just today or the short-term but he has long term goals and he wants the world to be in the best of health for decades and even centuries to come."

A barrage of questions!

Alhamdulillah, the event proved to be extremely blessed in all respects.

For me personally, it was also an interesting experience, as during dinner, I was seated at a table of Christians who worked or volunteered at a local church.

It would be an understatement to say they were curious to learn more about Islam and so during the 30 or 40 minutes it took for dinner to be served, they each asked me question after question! It was like a heavy assault or bombardment of questions! Normally, I get asked two or three questions and then the guests tend to start focusing on their meal but on this occasion, I think I got at least 25 or more!

I was asked questions about the concept of *Khilafat*, about Jihad, about segregation between the sexes, about extremism and many other topics!

Allah helped me as normally my memory is quite poor and when asked a question, I tend to think of the correct reference or a better way to respond after the questioner has left. However, on this occasion, I felt that my mind was working much faster than normal and so the guests seemed satisfied.

The simple truth was that I had heard Huzoor answer all of the questions on previous occasions and so I just repeated what I had heard him say. Nonetheless, when dinner was concluded and the guests got up, I took a long deep sigh of relief, followed by a drink of water to soothe my parched throat!

An example of Huzoor's affection

That evening, *Dr. Ahsan Khan* from LA Jamaat was also in attendance and following the event he was fortunate that Huzoor saw him in the lobby of the hotel where the reception was held.

Later he narrated to me, how those moments in Huzoor's company felt.

Ahsan said:

“Following the reception, I had the incredible opportunity to meet Huzoor for a few minutes and he expressed his condolences about the recent passing of my aunt Dr. Nusrat Jahan and asked about my trip to Rabwah for her burial. It was an extraordinary moment for me and those stood with me and one we will treasure forever.”

Ahsan said that after the conversation concluded and Huzoor departed he was overwhelmed with joy and he hugged both his brother-in-law and a

friend who were with him. However, he said they got caught up in the excitement and so failed to travel to the Mosque where Huzoor led the Maghreb and Isha prayers. Instead, they returned to their hotel, which was the same hotel where Huzoor was staying.

Telling me what happened next, Ahsan said:

“When Huzoor returned to the hotel and exited his car he saw me and looked surprised and asked if I had offered Salat. I felt so embarrassed, whereby I had missed congregational Salat behind Huzoor. Anyway, that moment had a profound effect on me, as it showed me the beauty of Khilafat. After my earlier Mulaqat with Huzoor, my mind was completely immersed in the thoughts of my Khalifa, when in fact, it should have been focused towards worship. It was left to Huzoor himself to remind me of the importance of always putting God first.”

A long night!

Upon return to our hotel in Regina, I returned to my room and my attention turned towards a personal and very trivial issue.

As I took out my clothes for the next day, I realised I had no clean trousers left. Actually, I did have one clean pair but when I ironed them the iron had left a horrible stain, which meant that they could not be worn without looking utterly ridiculous!

Feeling tired, and wanting to go to bed, I decided I had no option but to hand-wash my trousers in the sink with a bar of soap. However, after washing

them they remained completely soaked and heavy. I squeezed and squeezed trying to take as much moisture out of them as possible but they remained soaked! I took them to the ironing board and ironed the wet trousers on full heat and hung them out to dry and went to sleep having no idea if they would be wearable in the morning.

To my disappointment, when I woke at Fajr they were still soaked and so I wondered what to do. I called my wife Mala and she told me to just keep ironing them on a low heat and then hang them out to dry again. I followed her advice before going back to bed for an hour. When I woke up, to my immense relief, the trousers were dry! The waist-band remained a little wet and cold but due to my jacket nobody noticed that apart from me!

With my trousers just about dry, I got ready and looked forward to the final few days of Huzoor's blessed tour, in which Huzoor would visit Lloydminster, Saskatoon and Calgary.

End of Part 4

Any comments or feedback: abid.khan@pressahmadiyya.com