

HUZOOR'S TOUR OF AUSTRALIA 2013

A Personal Account

PART 1

By Abid Khan

Arrival in Sydney

Huzoor arrived in Australia on 1st October 2013 after an overnight British Airways flight from Singapore. Despite it being an evening flight I had been unable to sleep and so just before we landed I went and washed my face thoroughly in the bathroom to try and make myself look a bit fresher!

We arrived at Sydney's Kingsford Smith International Airport at 5.15am local time. Given that Australia's time zone was 2 hours ahead of Singapore we were now 9 hours ahead of the UK.



Whilst I felt very tired, I also remember feeling very excited. Australia had always seemed like another world to me, given how far away from England it was and I never imagined that I would one day have the opportunity to visit it.

Thus, as we walked out of the plane I found myself looking in each direction trying to absorb the experience.

Whenever I have had the opportunity to travel long-distance with Huzoor, one thing I have always noticed is that no matter how long the flight, when Huzoor emerges from the plane he does not look tired but rather very fresh and alert, whilst the rest of us are quite shattered!

Welcome by local Jamaat at airport

Huzoor was greeted by the Ameer Jamaat Australia, Mahmood Ahmad Bengali Sahib and Rana Sohail Khan Sahib, a Khadim who works for Qantas Airlines.

When I saw Ameer Sahib I was taken aback. Although, I did not know him that well personally, I had seen him for many years and heard about his great service for the Jamaat over a number of decades. But when I saw him at the airport I saw he had become quite frail and was walking with difficulty with the aid of a walking stick. I felt sad but also impressed by his fortitude that despite his clear ill-health he was there ready to assume his duties upon Huzoor's arrival.

Soon, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi were seated on an airport buggy and in a very loving and affectionate manner Huzoor told Ameer Sahib that he too should sit on one of the seats of the buggy so that he would not have to walk.

Running across the terminal

Huzoor was taken across the airport terminal towards a private lounge, whilst the rest of us tried to keep up. Initially we walked at pace but still found ourselves trailing the buggy by some distance.

At times like this it is of benefit being relatively young as I can still run without looking too ridiculous or running out of breath and so seeing the increasing distance I started running and managed to catch up to Huzoor's buggy. Our elder Qafila members fell a little behind, but thankfully were soon able to join Huzoor in the airport lounge.

Huzoor being welcomed by Kevin Conolly MP

Huzoor was greeted in the airport lounge by Kevin Conolly MP, a Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

The MP said he was delighted to welcome Huzoor to Australia and said he felt it his '*personal duty*' to represent the Government because Huzoor was such an esteemed figure.

In response, Huzoor expressed his gratitude, but said on more than one occasion that he felt embarrassed that Mr Conolly had come so early in the morning to welcome him.

The MP said it was his honour to receive Huzoor and that he knew just how important Huzoor's visit was to the Ahmadis living in Australia.



After a discussion lasting around 20minutes, Huzoor was informed that everything was ready and so we all headed towards the exit.

Out of respect for Huzoor, the MP joined the Qafila all the way to the Mosque which was nearly an hour's drive away.

A year of preparations

Huzoor's arrival in Australia had been planned for quite some time in advance. As a senior Qantas Airlines employee Sohail Sahib had been very involved in the planning.

Speaking to me afterwards about some of the pre-planning he said:

“The preparations for Huzoor's visit started in October 2012 on the day of Eid when Ameer Sahib confidentially briefed me and asked that I begin to plan for Huzoor's arrival in 12 months. At this time I felt immense happiness for both myself and the Australian Jamaat along with significant pressure to ensure that Huzoor's visit was successful.

I started to formulate a plan for Huzoor's arrival and departure along with interstate travel based on my previous experience of when Huzoor last visited Australia.

Due to the grace of Allah, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade permitted VIP facilitation for Huzoor upon his arrival into Sydney. This meant that Huzoor and Qafila were able to leave the British Airways aircraft and be escorted directly to the VIP Room whereby the Customs and Immigration process was completed.”

Speaking about the experience of serving Huzoor in this way, Sohail Sahib said:

“I was fortunate to spend a lot of time in close proximity to Huzoor which was both enjoyable and daunting at the same time. I felt proud to assist Huzoor due to my position at Qantas and grateful that through my profession I was able to assist in spreading the message of Islam and Ahmadiyyat.

I was often amazed at the aura of Huzoor and how he was able to captivate the attention of strangers who just happened to be in the near vicinity. I have often worked with many VIPs however I have never felt as nervous as I was when accompanying Huzoor and wanting everything to go seamlessly.”

Meeting an ‘Aussie’ Khadim

As we left the airport, I was sat in a white Jeep type car along with Mubarak Zafar Sahib. Our driver on that first morning was Faisal Ahmad Sahib and he was someone I got to know well over the next month as he was heavily involved in Khuddam’s security team.

Faisal Sahib had been brought up in Australia and was now a State Police Officer. Being a police officer he was very disciplined in his duties and also good at managing the less experienced Khuddam.

Having grown up in Australia he was also very much a quintessential ‘Aussie’.

Throughout the tour he regularly used to tell me he wanted to take me deep into the ‘bush’ where we could camp amongst snakes, kangaroos, deer and quite possibly lions!

Each time I responded by thanking him for the offer but saying it was not possible for me to leave the Qafila, whilst trying to hide my apprehension and hesitation at the thought of camping with lions and snakes!

Drive to the Mosque

As we drove from the airport towards the Mosque, the first thing I noticed was the bright sunshine and blue sky.

Whilst the weather had been very hot in Singapore it had also been very humid but here the heat was less oppressive and easier to take.

During the daytime the drive from Sydney's Airport to our Baitul Huda Mosque in Marsden Park can take well over an hour but as we were travelling early morning we managed to avoid heavy traffic and so we arrived at the Mosque after 50minutes at 6.45am.

Arrival at Baitul Huda Mosque

With the Grace of Allah, the Mosque was set on a vast piece of land owned by the Jamaat.

In fact the distance from the first entrance of the premises to the Mosque itself was over 1 kilometre.

As we reached the second gate we saw that hundreds of Ahmadis had come early morning to greet Huzoor.

Huzoor's car stopped near the entrance and from there Huzoor walked towards his residence waving at the Ahmadis, whilst the Khuddam and Ansar

raised very passionate *naaray* and the Lajna and Nasirat recited *nazms* in happiness at Huzoor's arrival.



It was a very emotional and charged atmosphere. Occasions like this always made me reflect upon how love for Khilafat is truly universal and ingrained in people's hearts by Allah.

Being greeted by the local Ahmadis

Huzoor soon went to his residence and thereafter many of the Australian Ahmadis came and started welcoming the rest of us.

I felt embarrassed because many of the people who were welcoming me would greet me by name and yet I did not know who they were.

Thus, I would meet one person and as soon as he moved on I would quietly ask Mubarak Sahib or Majid Sahib who they were. Sometimes they knew and sometimes even they were unaware.

The kindness of the locals towards us was a demonstration of their love for Khilafat. Many times, Ahmadis came up to me and said they wished to speak to me or meet me simply because I lived and worked close to Huzoor.

I used to feel very embarrassed at those moments, but in a way I understood how they felt.

If I were ever away from Huzoor, I would always wish to speak to those who had the opportunity to see him or work with him, as it would make me feel somehow closer to him.

Breakfast with a guest

We were then taken to a large marquee recently erected on the site for breakfast. The MP who had come to receive Huzoor, Kevin Conolly, was also present and so we sat and ate breakfast together.

I thanked him for coming to receive Huzoor at 5am upon which he said that he had actually come first to the Mosque at 4am and travelled with the Australian Jamaat to the airport. He said that he understood the importance and value of Huzoor and so deemed it essential to be there to receive him and he added that he felt other MPs and Ministers should also have been at the airport to welcome Huzoor to Australia.

Lodge number 158

After breakfast we were then taken to our respective accommodations. Whilst Huzoor's security and Bashir Sahib were staying on site, the rest of us were staying about a mile away at a rather large housing complex comprising over 200 small lodges. The Jamaat had booked a number of them for both Qafila members and also to house some of their Jalsa Salana guests.

My lodge was number 158 and over the next month it came to feel like my home in Australia as I spent night after night there and even when Huzoor travelled to Melbourne and Brisbane, upon our return to Sydney we all went back to our same lodges.

A suitcase disaster

After the overnight travel from Singapore, I was very tired. We had around 3 hours until we had to go back to the Mosque for the Zuhr and Asr prayers and so I resolved to go straight to bed and sleep. However, at the last moment I thought I should first do some unpacking and so I unzipped my suitcase.

When I opened my case, to my horror I saw that a large bottle of shampoo I had brought had leaked all over my suitcase. All my clothes and personal belongings were absolutely covered! It may have been just one bottle but it appeared as though my suitcase was swimming in shampoo.

For a few minutes I really did not know what to do and how to recover the contents of my case. I decided the only way to handle it was to take each item out of the suitcase individually one by one.

Thus, over the next 2 hours I hand-washed all my clothes in the sink and wiped away shampoo from all my other personal items.

Finally, the suitcase was empty but its lining was still covered in shampoo and so I washed and scrubbed it and left it to dry.

Those two hours were extremely tiresome and frustrating, but I felt much satisfaction upon finally removing all traces of the shampoo.

I looked at the clock and saw that there was still an hour till I had to be ready to leave for Zuhur and Asr. I lay on bed and closed my eyes but before I knew it the alarm on my phone had started ringing and it was time to get up. It seemed like less than a minute had passed even though it had been nearly an hour.

Still half asleep I struggled out of bed, quickly showered and got ready. By the time we went to the Mosque I was just about awake.

Seeing kangaroos for the first time

As we drove to the Mosque I got my first sight of Australia's famous kangaroos. There was a huge stretch of land adjacent to our lodges and amongst them was a small troop of kangaroos. They looked exactly as I had seen on TV,

crouched on their legs, bouncing up and down, although perhaps they were taller than I imagined.

A few weeks later, I was invited to a barbeque where kangaroo steak was being served but on that particular day I was unable to attend – which I think may have been a blessing in disguise!

Threat of bushfires

In the morning when we first arrived at the Mosque I could sense and smell smoke in the air.

Initially, I thought perhaps it was normal for Australia and so I did not think about it for too long. However, when we returned to the Mosque I saw that there was a mini-conference taking place between members of the Qafila and the Australian Jamaat. They were talking seriously of the threat posed by bushfires potentially reaching the Mosque area.

One person even suggested that an alternative residence for Huzoor be readied just in case there was a need to move. Thankfully, the winds seemed to subside over the next couple of days and the threat of bushfires at the Mosque died away.

However, that was not the last we heard of bushfires during our stay in Australia – but rather for the state of New South Wales the situation became much, much worse just a couple of weeks later...

Huzoor leading Salat in the Mosque

We entered the Mosque a few minutes before the Zuhr and Asr prayers. The Baitul Huda Mosque was very beautiful, both from the inside and particularly from the outside.



As we sat, one of the Amila members made an announcement asking all members to remain quiet whilst waiting for Huzoor to arrive.

Truth be told, on that one occasion there was no need for such an announcement because everyone was already sitting in absolute silence in anticipation, waiting anxiously for the opportunity to offer their *Salat* behind their beloved Imam.

Soon Huzoor entered through a door leading to the *Mehrab* and as Huzoor glanced at the rows of Ahmadiis, the happiness and delight on the faces of the local Jamaat members was clear to see.

Preparation for media interview and a sign of Allah's Help

Prior to the tour, I had been in contact with Australia's National Secretary Umur-e-Kharija, Ramzan Sharif Sahib. He was a Fijian Ahmadi who moved to Australia some years ago.

Whilst still in London, I had discussed media arrangements for Huzoor's tour with him and we had also discussed the arrangements for the receptions which Huzoor would Insha'Allah address.

The first interview he had arranged was with two local newspapers on the morning of 2nd October. Thus on that day I got to the Mosque in good time and went over to see Ramzan Sahib to make sure all the arrangements had been made and that the journalists were on their way.

When I saw him he said he had had a very stressful morning because less than an hour before the interviews were due to start he had received a phone call from one of the journalists saying they could not make it to the interview. He said his heart sank because Huzoor had especially given his time for the interview.

He hurriedly called some other media contacts and he said that quite unbelievably a journalist from the Daily Telegraph, a State paper with a much

wider circulation, said she would come immediately, even though when her newspaper had first been approached some weeks earlier they had not responded.

Ramzan Sahib was quite astonished and repeatedly said to me that he could not believe how events had changed for the better in just a few minutes.

I said to him that this was not a unique event but rather time after time we had witnessed Allah's Guiding Hand at work when events of Huzoor were being arranged.

Huzoor's first media interviews in Australia

And so minutes later, a female journalist, Stacy Thomas, representing the 'Daily Telegraph' arrived and then another journalist, Melanie Kembrey, representing the 'Blacktown Sun' newspaper also arrived.

Both before and after the interview I met with them and they both seemed very friendly and interested by Huzoor's visit.

Soon, Huzoor arrived at his office and the journalists entered and introduced themselves to Huzoor.

A photographer for the Daily Telegraph was also in the room taking photos.

Over the next 25 minutes the two journalists took turns to ask Huzoor questions.



It was quite interesting to see their different styles.

On the one hand, the Daily Telegraph's journalist asked more serious and pressing questions about Islam and the state of the world, whilst the journalist representing the Blacktown Sun asked more light-hearted questions such as whether Huzoor was enjoying his time in Australia and where else he planned to visit.

Huzoor answered all of the questions very beautifully, in a way that illustrated the wisdom of Islamic teachings, whilst also showing Huzoor's personal humility.

In one question, Huzoor was asked to give his 'advice' to the people of the world, Huzoor responded by saying:

“Remember, we are all human beings and so first and foremost we should discharge our responsibilities and duties to one another. We are all the creation of God and God loves His creation – thus we should all care for each other in the way that God desires.”



Huzoor was also asked how Ahmadis integrated into Western societies.

In response Huzoor said:

“I believe that amongst all Muslim communities it is Ahmadi Muslims who are the most widely accepted by the wider society, because we openly proclaim love for the country in which we live. We are law abiding, our message is of peace and our slogan is ‘Love for All, Hatred for None’ – and so I do not think anyone could dislike such a message.”

A personal reflection

Later during the interview, Huzoor was asked if he had ever ‘wanted’ to become Khalifa.

In response, Huzoor said Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (ra) had once been asked the same question and had said that no sane person could ever wish to become Khalifa because its burden was so great.

Huzoor said his answer was the same because if the Khalifa failed to fulfil his immense duties and responsibilities he would be answerable to Allah.

As I sat and listened to this, I felt very emotional as I pondered just how fortunate and lucky we Ahmadis were to have Khilafat to guide us and help us at every stage of our lives.

Literally, from the cradle to the grave, we are guided by the love and guidance of the Khalifa.

To give a personal example, when I was younger, I very rarely used to tell anyone that my parents had passed away because I did not wish to gain sympathy. In fact in my school for many years even my teachers and a lot of my friends were unaware of this.

Yet, in the last few years from time to time, I have mentioned my family history to some people. However, I always say to them that there is no need to show me any sympathy or to feel sorry for me in any way, because the truth is that we Ahmadis can never be orphans, we can never be without a father – because Allah has given us this gift of Khilafat which is a blessing even greater than the love of one's parents.

Whilst, I have of course missed my parents intensely and feel sad that I could not spend longer with them, I have never once in my life felt that I have been deprived in any way, because wherever and whenever I have needed any help or guidance, the Khalifa has been there with his unlimited love, compassion and prayers.

Such a blessing is not given just to me or to a few select others but is available for *all* of mankind.

And so as I listened to Huzoor say that he had no desire to be elected Khalifa, it reminded me just how truly great his responsibilities were – because he had been chosen by Allah to guide the *entire* world towards goodness and to be a spiritual father to all of mankind.

Surely, there could be no greater responsibility than this.

Post-interview meeting with the journalists

After the interview was completed, Huzoor began his routine of family Mulaqats with Ahmadis.

I went and sat with the journalists for some time and listened as they spoke of their pleasure at having the opportunity to meet and interview Huzoor. They also spoke of how much they appreciated the positive work done by the Jamaat in society.

I responded by saying that the reason we raised money for charities and we sought to help those in need was because of the guidance of the person they had just interviewed.

I said it was under Huzoor's direction that such activities were conducted in all parts of the world and that he directed the Jamaat to do these things because they formed Islam's true teachings.

An interesting observation by the non-Ahmadi photographer

As we were sat together, the photographer from the Daily Telegraph asked me if it would be possible to go back to Huzoor's office and take more photos of him. I said that as Huzoor was now meeting Ahmadis this would not be possible.

When I asked if he had not been able to take enough photos, he said that he had got more than enough, but the truth was he had found Huzoor's face

extremely beautiful and radiant and so simply *wished* to take more photos of him.

When I heard this, it reminded me instantly of how the Promised Messiah had said that some people are attracted to the truth just by seeing the face of a truthful person.

The comment of the journalist highlighted the magnetic charm and beauty of Huzoor's blessed countenance.

Jalsa Salana Inspection

Australia's 29th Jalsa Salana was to begin on 4th October 2013 and so the evening before, Huzoor did an inspection of the Jalsa arrangements.

For me personally, this would prove to be one inspection I would never ever forget.

The inspection began very normally, whereby Huzoor visited the various *Nizamats* and gave instructions and guidance to the Jamaat office bearers.

Huzoor also visited a photography exhibition organised by MTA.

Whilst reviewing the photos, Huzoor said that photography should not come under MTA but that the central model of having a separate '*Makhzan-e-Tasaweer*' department should be followed.

Huzoor also noticed that there were no photos of the martyrs of Ahmadiyyat. He instructed that it was essential to have photos of our Ahmadi martyrs in all Jamaat photo exhibitions.



Thereafter, Huzoor inspected the rest of the exhibition and noted that it included some photos of Huzoor's arrival in Australia just two days before. Upon seeing those photos, Huzoor smiled and remarked that those who had set up the exhibition had been "*very efficient*".

Huzoor went on to the main Jalsa marquee where he walked around shaking the hands of the *Nazimeen*. It was clear that people who were not Nazims were also coming forward to shake Huzoor's hand. Some people were pushing in front of others trying to get close to Huzoor.

Whilst perhaps there had been a lack of organisation, it was also clear that the Ahmadis were simply overcome with joy that Huzoor was with them.

After a few minutes, Huzoor addressed all of the Jalsa volunteers and workers and advised them to conduct their respective duties with kindness and compassion.



Huzoor said that no task ought to be considered insignificant or ordinary; rather each and every assigned duty was of importance.

Huzoor added that all of the Jalsa workers had to uphold the very highest moral standards because if they did so it would prove to be a means of Tabligh.

Huzoor said:

“Serving with love and kindness is a great means of conveying the message of Ahmadiyyat. Remember that our Jalsas are not just a means of moral training but are also a means of spreading the true teachings of Islam. Thus each worker should make sure that his or her every act is of the very highest standards.”

A very embarrassing incident

After the formal session concluded Huzoor went to the food marquee where all the workers of Jalsa Salana had the chance to sit in the presence of Huzoor for a few minutes. All present were served tea, *pakoray* and cake.

Huzoor sat on a stage erected in the marquee with a few national office bearers of Australia’s Jamaat.

Due to his ill-health it took Ameer Sahib some time to arrive and Huzoor very kindly and patiently chose to wait for Ameer Sahib before starting to eat.

Seeing this, I thought it would be a good time to show Huzoor an article printed in the Daily Telegraph written by the journalist who had interviewed Huzoor the previous day.

I walked over to the stage and showed Huzoor the article and so Huzoor took out his glasses and read the article.

As Huzoor returned the iPad to me, I stepped backwards and did not realise there was a gap at the back of the stage and so suddenly I felt myself falling uncontrollably.



I tried desperately to scramble and retain my balance but to no avail and suddenly with a great bang I fell off the back of the stage and onto the ground directly behind where Huzoor was seated. Everyone suddenly looked towards me and I saw Ahmad bhai run towards me to see if I was ok as did the Officer Jalsa Salana.

Huzoor also looked in my direction and asked if I was ok. He told me to take Arnica before adding '*Laghta hai tum josh may agay thay!*' – meaning it seemed that I had become a bit over-enthused!

As I got up, I looked and saw hundreds of people looking in my direction and whilst the physical pain of the fall was quite strong, the humiliation was far, far worse.

I just wanted to get off the stage as quickly as possible and so I started walking towards the side and felt relieved as I walked down the steps. Yet, just as I was doing so, I once again lost balance and went flying down the steps!

I could not believe it! Twice! I had fallen twice within a minute in front of Huzoor and all of the other people in the marquee.

I got up and saw that Ahmad bhai, who had been concerned after the first fall, was now stood laughing hysterically at my subsequent fall. I turned towards the other members of the Qafila and they too could not contain their laughter.

I think the reason for the second fall was that I had yet to regain my balance and composure from the first fall.

As I got up, I heard Huzoor say to Ameer Sahib, who had arrived a minute or two before, that ***“Zalzalay kay beghair aaj zalzalay aghain hain!”*** – that is ***“Without any earthquake, earthquakes are taking place today!”***

Feeling embarrassment that I did not know was possible I went head down and sat on a chair to the side of the stage. Ahmad bhai brought me some cake to cheer me up but it did not make any difference.

I took out my phone and texted Mala back in London and simply wrote *“You will not believe what has just happened!”*

Even now, months later, when I think of that moment and write about it I feel mortified. Perhaps, I took it too seriously, but I just felt so embarrassed that

during a formal Jamaat event, in the presence of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba), I became the centre of attention by falling twice in such a comedic fashion!

Huzoor's love and kindness

I felt embarrassed throughout the evening and even into the next day and tried to stay in the background as much as possible. However, it so transpired that Huzoor had another media interview on the Friday afternoon and upon its conclusion Huzoor called me to stay behind in his office.

Huzoor immediately asked if I was ok after my fall the night before. I admitted I had actually hurt my knee a little but that more damage had been to my self-esteem! Huzoor laughed and just seeing his radiant smile made me feel a lot better.

Huzoor also said he was not surprised I had hurt myself given the nature of the fall and so once again Huzoor kindly prescribed some homeopathy and told me to take it immediately. I did take the medicine and by the next day with the Grace of Allah, I was fine.

I also mentioned to Huzoor how upon my first fall everyone seemed concerned and worried but upon my second fall it seemed that the same people could not control their laughter! Huzoor smiled and laughed as I narrated this.

Huzoor even very kindly narrated one his own personal anecdotes from when he was living in Ghana. Huzoor said that once he too had fallen over quite severely but he had jumped up in a second before any people could rush

towards him or become panicked. Huzoor said that whilst it was quite a steep fall, with the Grace of Allah he was ok.

As I left the office that day, I remember finally feeling better because of Huzoor's love and kindness.

The reason I had felt so dejected and upset was because at the bottom of my heart I had felt I had let Huzoor down by causing such commotion during a Jamaat event.

But seeing and receiving Huzoor's love at that time put my mind at rest. As I walked out of Huzoor's office I finally began to see the funny side of it!

A safety improvement

There was one practical benefit to my falling off the stage. The next day the Officer Jalsa Salana came up to me to ask how I was.

He said that after seeing me fall he realised that having a gap at the back of the stage was a serious health and safety issue and so he had closed the gap entirely and also had the steps from the stage reinforced as they had been a little bit loose.

I was glad that these steps had been taken so that hopefully no one else would injure themselves in a similar fashion.

Jalsa Salana Australia

On Friday 4 October, Australia's 29th Jalsa Salana began on the premises of the Baitul Huda Mosque.

At 1pm, Huzoor came from his residence to raise the *Liwai-e-Ahmadiyyat* before proceeding to the main Jalsa marquee to deliver his Friday Sermon.



Huzoor's sermon was very inspiring as he narrated how the first Jalsa of 1891 had taken place in Qadian with only 75 people attending and yet that very same event now took place in all parts of the world each year.

Huzoor said that the leaders of nations were openly accepting the fact that the message of Ahmadiyyat was one which brought people together in love and brotherhood.



Huzoor said that all Ahmadis were duty bound to strive to attain the highest moral standards so that each and every Ahmadi could become an example for others to follow and learn from.

Huzoor asked the Ahmadis to continually reflect and assess if they were living their lives according to the teachings of the Quran.

Time difference with London

As Huzoor delivered his sermon, I thought of how it was the middle of the night back in London and I wondered if our Ahmadis had stayed up to watch Huzoor's sermon on MTA.

I remembered that someone from the UK had mentioned to me before we left how difficult it would be to watch Huzoor's sermons live.

But the truth was that the people of Australia, New Zealand and the Far East had to contend with such time differences all year around and yet many of the people I met during the tour told me they used to watch the Friday Sermon live each week no matter what.

Huzoor's interview with ABC

In the afternoon, Huzoor held another media interview in his office. This interview was Bill Birtles, a journalist representing '*ABC National TV*' and '*ABC National Radio*'.

ABC, short for the '*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*' is the Australian equivalent of the BBC and so its news services are Australia's most respected.



Over the years, I have seen Huzoor conduct many media interviews. Whilst Huzoor's answers have always been wonderful, the standard of the journalists have always varied from interview to interview.

In light of this, I have to say that I found Bill Birtles to be one of the very best interviewers I had seen.

He had clearly done a lot of research about the Jamaat and so he had some understanding of how Ahmadis view the Khalifa and so in the way he addressed Huzoor and asked questions he was very respectful.

All of his questions were good and a means of allowing Huzoor to convey his views about the state of the world and also the true teachings of Islam.

Bill Birtles also spoke very clearly. Sometimes, certain journalists speak very fast or with very strong accents and so it is difficult to follow them but this was not the case with Bill Birtles. This is also something that Huzoor noted and mentioned to me afterwards.

The interview lasted for 25 minutes during which Huzoor fielded a range of questions about Islam.

Upon being asked what message he was bringing to Australia, Huzoor responded by saying:

“Wherever I have the chance I will extend Islam’s message of love and peace throughout this society and across the country. The truth is that the state of the world today is extremely dangerous and so we must take steps towards peace otherwise the consequences could be disastrous.”

Huzoor was also asked about the persecution the Jamaat faced in Pakistan. In response, Huzoor said that every few weeks he received news that yet another Ahmadi Muslim had been murdered because of his faith in Pakistan. Huzoor said such violence would continue until “***those obnoxious anti-Ahmadi laws are repealed***”.



After the interview and for the rest of the day I thought about this particular line that Huzoor had spoken. I thought of how the Khalifa had so much love for the members of the Jamaat and so how much pain and anguish it must cause Huzoor to learn about the brutal murders of Ahmadis time and time again.

All of us normal Ahmadis feel bitter pain and sadness at such news, but for the Khalifa the pain must be many, many times worse. Yet despite this the Khalifa always remains a model of patience and restraint.

Bill Birtles also asked Huzoor about the issue of Muslims immigrating to Western countries and the perceived problems with integration into the local society.

Huzoor responded by saying:

“If Muslims practice the true and peaceful Islam then they will have no difficulty integrating into Western countries.

We believe that Allah is for the entire world and that wherever the rights of His creation are usurped it displeases Him.

Thus, it is the duty of true Muslims to spread love and harmony within society. If they follow such a path they will face no difficulties.”

Immigration had been a real ‘hot-topic’ in Australia over the past few months leading into their recent general election in which Australia’s Government changed.

Huzoor’s answer to the question was perfect, as it dispelled entirely the notion that a true Muslim living in the West could seek to cause harm to his host country or that it would be difficult for them to show loyalty to their nation.

Huzoor visits Ameer Sahib

Much earlier that day, at Fajr time, we were told that Ameer Sahib Australia, Mahmood Ahmad Bengali Sahib, had been taken unwell and had gone to hospital.

We were very shocked, because although he had been unwell, we had seen him at dinner the just a few hours before and he had seemed ok.

Thankfully, later in the day Ameer Sahib returned to the Mosque but he was understandably resting in his residence.

At the conclusion of the day's activities, as Huzoor was about to return to his home, he suddenly turned and walked towards Ameer Sahib's residence.

Huzoor went and sat with Ameer Sahib for a few minutes to enquire about his health.

Huzoor's schedule, especially in those days of Jalsa, was completely packed and yet he still took time to visit Ameer Sahib. It really was an example to all of us about the importance of visiting those who are unwell.

Ameer Sahib's attention to detail

No doubt, Huzoor's visit lifted the spirits of Ameer Sahib and his family. This was proved by the fact that later in the evening, as we were having dinner, Ameer Sahib came to sit with us.

As soon as he entered the dining room Ameer Sahib asked the local Ziafat team why they were serving the vegetable '*Benghan*' as they had served the same dish the previous evening.

I was very impressed by Ameer Sahib's attention to detail, wherein even when he was quite seriously unwell, he had noticed that the same vegetable had been served two days consecutively. Of course none of us had minded this, but it was a sign of his very high standards of hospitality that he had noted it.

I got to know Ameer Sahib better during this tour. It was an education to sit with him as he had served the Jamaat for many decades, including a long period as Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya in Pakistan during some very tough and critical times for the Jamaat.

He also had known both of my grandfathers' very well and so told me stories about them. I found Ameer Sahib to be one of those people whose company you could never tire of because he had so many stories to tell and so much experience to draw on.

Meeting members of Australia's Jamaat

Over the course of the three days of Jalsa I got to meet a lot of Australia's Ahmadiis who had travelled across the country to take part in the Jalsa and to meet Huzoor.

Every single one, no matter what age, used to express their delight that their Khalifa was amongst them.

They all used to say that seeing Huzoor and listening to him directly had a completely different impact upon them. No matter how much they saw Huzoor on MTA or corresponded with him through letters, it did not have the same impact as seeing Huzoor in person.

Some used to say that they were now more regular in prayers, some used to say that they had more attachment to the Jamaat, whilst others would say that they had been inspired by Huzoor's visit to further spread the message of Ahmadiyyat.

With each person I met, the more I felt and understood just how important Huzoor's tour was for the Jamaat and for the local Ahmadis.

It would be no exaggeration to say they were being spiritually rejuvenated with each hour and each day they spent in the company of the Khalifa.

Spending time with Huzoor's Security

This sense of spiritual rejuvenation was not limited only to the Australian Ahmadis but was also something that was felt amongst the members of Huzoor's Qafila.

Whilst, I would normally sit in an office alongside Majid Sahib and Mubarak Zafar Sahib, sometimes I would go and sit with Huzoor's security guards and I used to enjoy their company a great deal.

I had known Nasir Saeed Sahib and Sakawat Bajwa Sahib since I was a young child and so they were not just fellow Qafila members but were like older uncles.

And whilst I had counted Ahmad bhai as a friend for a long time, I felt as though a closer bond had developed with him during the past year as we had shared a number of memorable experiences together.

I also got to know Khalid Akram Sahib better. Whilst I had seen him for many years in London, it was not until this tour that I got to know him well.

Anyway, on one occasion I was sat with Sakawat Bajwa Sahib and he told me that during the tour, he would often have a night shift when he would sit outside guarding Huzoor's residence. He said in those hours, when it was completely quiet, he would reflect upon Allah's blessings and Allah's Might and thus he felt that as the tour was progressing he was becoming closer and closer to Allah.

He said that in London, he would be so busy with family and the normal routine of life that he would find it difficult to set time aside for such remembrance and so in this way the tour was proving to be a source of spiritual rejuvenation and blessing for him.

An emotional narration by Majid Sahib

On another occasion, I was sat in our office with Majid Sahib. He narrated the famous incident of Hazrat Abu Hurreira being very thirsty and hungry and upon

obtaining a cup of milk being directed by the Holy Prophet (saw) to serve the milk to everyone else one by one.

As he served, Hazrat Abu Hurreira became disheartened and fearful that there would not be any milk left for him but when his turn finally came he drank and he drank and he drank. The blessing in that cup was such that Hazrat Abu Hurreira said that in the end he felt that milk was pouring out of his fingernails.

Whilst narrating this story, Majid Sahib's eyes welled and he said that the reason he was narrating this story was that he felt that, in a similar vein, Allah had blessed the members of the Jamaat so much through Khilafat that it felt like every pore of our bodies were filled with Allah's countless bounties.

As I listened to Majid Sahib speak, I felt my own eyes begin to water. All Ahmadis were so fortunate to be united at the hand of the Khalifa and the more I thought about this the more I realised its truth.

Family Mulaqats with Huzoor

During the days of Jalsa, apart from his speeches, Huzoor continued to hold long Mulaqat sessions, meeting around 50 families at a time.

The office in which I was sat was adjacent to the Private Secretary's office and next to his office was Huzoor's office.

I used to wander out sometimes to get some fresh air and would see long queues of Ahmadi men, women and children stood outside waiting patiently for their Mulaqat.

Every few minutes the line would move forward a couple of steps. Not once did I ever see any impatience on anyone's face, all I ever saw was pure delight and happiness mixed with nerves.

Some Ahmadis had written bullet points on pieces of paper to remind them of what they wanted to say to Huzoor. Though what use those bullet points were was debatable because often I would meet them after their Mulaqats and they used to tell me they had completely forgotten to mention what they had intended.

They said that when entering Huzoor's office they had become overcome and so their minds had become entirely blank.

Nevertheless, they still emerged from Huzoor's office delighted and completely content having met with their beloved Imam.

Meeting with Ahmadi children

On Huzoor's tours, I particularly enjoy sitting and talking to children or teenagers because they see me as an older brother and so it is easier to talk to them as compared people who are my elders.

On one occasion there was a young boy aged five or six who came up to me and asked if I had come from London with Huzoor. I nodded and so his next question was to ask me if I was the Private Secretary!

I said that I wasn't and so he asked who I was. Before I had a chance to answer, another young boy who was not more than five years old said in a very serious, innocent and charming voice:

“Whenever Huzoor travels he probably takes a few friends with him to keep him company and so he must be Huzoor’s friend.”

I really enjoyed being described as ‘*Huzoor’s friend*’ and the other boy who asked the question seemed quite satisfied by this answer and so I did not say anything further.

Impressions of a Waqf-e-Nau

One 14 year old Waqf-e-Nau boy, Arsalan Ahmad Arif, from Brisbane had travelled with his family to attend the Jalsa and also to take part in a Waqf-e-Nau class with Huzoor.

He was quite small for his age and looked only 11 or 12, yet when I met with him he spoke with a maturity of someone much older.

Speaking about Huzoor’s visit, Arsalan said:

“It feels so exciting that the worldwide Head of our Jamaat has come just to meet and see us. Every moment Huzoor is here is precious and something we will always cherish. When I shook Huzoor’s hand I felt such happiness.

And then a couple of days ago by chance I was able to eat something which had been served to Huzoor. When I ate that food I felt so lucky that I had been chosen by God for such a blessing...

Today, we had a Waqf-e-Nau class with Huzoor – I can’t explain how amazing it was. The time flew by so that it seemed to finish in just a few seconds. I will remember everything Huzoor said – because I heard it directly from him and so I cannot forget it.

I think it is so important for the Khalifa to visit Australia so he can see the progress of our Jamaat and help us. There are many people who could never travel to London and so this is their only chance to meet him.”

I would meet Arsalan again a few weeks later in Brisbane where he was constantly doing various duties with great pride and dedication.

Second and Third days of Jalsa

As per the traditions of Jalsas attended by Huzoor, on the second day he addressed Lajna Imaillah directly.

During his address, Huzoor spoke, amongst other things, of the importance of marriage in Islam and the need for a husband and wife to show love and

loyalty to each other. Huzoor said righteousness and mutual trust were the cornerstones for a successful marriage.

Then on 6th October the Jalsa concluded as Huzoor delivered the concluding address to an audience of more than 4,000 people.

During a very powerful and emotional address, Huzoor spoke of how this era was a time for propagating the message of Islam to the corners of the earth.

Huzoor continued by saying it was wrong to say Ahmadis were against Jihad.

Rather, Huzoor explained:

“In this era, with the advent of the Promised Messiah, the ‘Jihad of the Sword’ has been entirely eradicated. Today it is the ‘Jihad of the Pen’ that is the need of the time.”

Huzoor further explained:

“We firmly believe in Jihad, however the type of Jihad required in the modern era has changed. At this time no Government or organisation is physically attacking Islam in the name of religion. If Islam is being attacked today it is not by the sword but through the press, through the media and through preaching. And so it is the need of the time that we respond using the very same means. That is what the Promised Messiah taught – to fight with our pens and not with our swords.”

The Jalsa concluded with a silent prayer and then after the Zuhr and Asr prayers a Bai'at ceremony took place. In every respect, the Jalsa had proved to be extremely blessed and very historic.

During our stay in Australia, I got to know a Khadim called Nouman Khan very well. He was part of a strong and dedicated MTA Australia team.

In a very simple way he reflected upon Huzoor's presence at Jalsa.

Nouman said:

"Huzoor is one man for the whole of mankind. His presence in Australia and at Jalsa brought us up close to a true man of God. May Allah bless us with the opportunity to re-live those days once again."

An example of Huzoor's selflessness

The day after Jalsa, Huzoor held various classes with Waqfe-Nau, Waqfat-Nau, male Ahmadi students and female Ahmadi students. Huzoor also held a number of Mulaqats and in the evening Huzoor partook in the *Aameen* ceremonies of dozens of young children.

In the afternoon, as Huzoor left the Mosque after leading the Zuhr and Asr prayers, he walked towards his residence, which was at a distance of around 100metres.

As Huzoor walked, quite suddenly an Ahmadi gentleman approached him and requested Huzoor to lead the *Aameen* of his young son.

Huzoor said that the *Aameen* ceremonies would take place in the evening and he could bring his son then. The man said he was returning home later that day and had to leave for the airport at 6pm.

At this point, I think Huzoor's security and staff were becoming quite tense because for such requests there is a proper procedure whereby parents contact the Private Secretary's office.

Huzoor however did not exhibit any anger at the man's persistence and told him to bring his son. Huzoor then went into his residence and after a few minutes he especially came back out and led the *Aameen* of that young boy at the entrance of his home.

It was a prime example of Huzoor's selfless love for the Jamaat. Huzoor gets so little time to himself and yet because he did not wish to disappoint an Ahmadi family he especially came back out to partake in the *Aameen* of that young boy.

Whilst, I do not think the way the man approached Huzoor was necessarily correct, the truth is that he and his child will remember and cherish those few minutes for the rest of their lives.

Conclusion of Huzoor's first week in Australia

In the evening, after the student classes, Huzoor graced a dinner with all of the Jalsa workers with his presence.

It was held in the same marquee where I had fallen off the stage a few days before. I made sure I stayed far away from the stage on this occasion!

With that, Huzoor's first week in Australia had concluded and it had been a week of constant activities and blessings.

The next three weeks in the country would continue in the same vein.
