

HUZOOR'S TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES AND GUATEMALA

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2018

Part 3

A Personal Account

By Abid Khan

Introduction

In *part 2* of this diary, I wrote about Huzoor's visit to Baltimore and subsequently the historic visit to Central America. In this third part, I shall mention Huzoor's activities during the next few days in Houston and Maryland.

An emotional family

Having arrived back in Houston from Guatemala the evening before, on Thursday 25 October 2018, Huzoor met dozens of Ahmadi families in Mulaqat.

One family who met Huzoor for the first time were *Saeed Ahmad*, his wife *Rehan* and their three children. They had driven over thirteen hours from Atlanta to meet Huzoor. Parent and child alike, they were all bursting with happiness, consumed by emotion and overwhelmed at having had the chance to meet their Khalifa.

Narrating their experience, moments after the Mulaqat concluded, Rehan sahiba said:

"During the Mulaqat I lost all comprehension of where I was. It felt as though we had entered another world. We are the luckiest family in the entire world as we met Huzoor and were sitting so close to him in his office. I thought no one could love me more than my father but today I realised that even his love is not comparable to the love that Huzoor has for us."

I noticed their daughter *Labeeba* was crying and so I asked her if she was ok. In response she said:

“When Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) passed away in 2003, I was really small but I can remember feeling extremely sad and ever since I deeply wanted to meet our Fifth Khalifa. I am a Waqf-e-Nau and always felt sad and depressed that I am far away from my spiritual leader. I prayed and prayed that I could meet him and today, Allah the Almighty has answered those prayers of mine. That’s why I have tears.”

After listening to his daughter, Saeed sahib told me that he had accepted Ahmadiyyat in 1986 in Pakistan, which had led to hateful opposition from his non-Ahmadi family members.

Ever since accepting Ahmadiyyat he had prayed that he could meet Khalifatul Masih but his UK visa application had been rejected several times.

Saeed sahib said:

“Today, I am proof that a person’s prayers never ever go to waste. Allah is listening and He remembers and if He does not fulfil your supplications today then surely He will tomorrow. Ever since we found out we had a Mulaqat I have received messages of congratulations from so many people that I cannot count. My own family turned against me when I accepted Ahmadiyyat but I have gained a much bigger family who shares in our joys.”

His wife, Rehan sahiba added:

“When my husband did Bai’at we had to move to Rabwah and my husband used to get a salary of 3,000 Rupees per month. Seeing this, my husband’s family used to taunt us and said that they earn that much in a day and, very arrogantly, asked me that ‘Have you left us for just this?’ Once, my in-laws even came to meet me and said they will give me a beautiful home and great wealth if we leave Ahmadiyyat. They even had papers readied to prove that their offer was genuine. Upon this, I took the paper and wrote on it that neither I, nor my children had any interest even in our rightful share of the family inheritance. Our only interest was increasing our devotion to the Promised Messiah (as) and to Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyyat.”

Rehan sahiba continued:

“We remained patient and Allah the Almighty created a way for us to come to the United States and now we are living a comfortable life. After seeing all this, my brother-in-law said to me that he accepts that we have been blessed in a way that he could only ever dream of!”

Turning back to their Mulaqat with Huzoor, as she wiped tears from her eyes, Rehan sahiba said:

“My mother died in 1993 and before she died she told her children that if any of us were ever fortunate to meet Khalifatul Masih we should convey her salam to Huzoor. However, in the moments of Mulaqat, I was so overwhelmed that I failed to fulfil this obligation and so please Abid

sahib if you can please convey the salam of my mother to beloved Huzoor.”

From the depths of despair

Another person to meet Huzoor was *Irfan Ahmad (41)* who lived in Houston with his family. He arrived in the USA from Pakistan, via a year spent in Sri Lanka. Irfan sahib had been badly injured in the 28 May 2010 attacks in Lahore and continued to suffer physically.

Telling me about what happened, Irfan sahib said:

“I was amongst those Khuddam who was doing security duty at the Garhi Shahu Mosque in 2010 in Lahore and I was shot by one of the terrorists. My ankle was completely shattered, though since then I have undergone three major reconstruction surgeries and so now it is restored to some extent. I vividly remember the moment I was shot. I kept visualising my wife and young children and this motivated me to try to get up but every time I got up I fell down again. I thought that for sure I was dying and so just kept repeating the Kalima.”

Irfan sahib continued:

“Somehow, I managed to move to a safe position and then another Ahmadi helped me to get to the basement where we stayed for a further four or five hours. Throughout that period, we kept repeating Durood Sharif. We were devastated, heartbroken and it felt as though the entire world was caving in before us. Never would it be possible for me to

explain the emotions those of us present felt at that time. The only thing that enabled us to pass through that period of intense grief and fear was knowing that the prayers of Khalifa-Waqt were surely with us.”

After describing the harrowing circumstances that he and so many other Ahmadis endured that day, Irfan sahib showed me a photo that had been taken of him after he had been shot.

It was chilling to see and I could not help but think of those blessed souls who lost their lives on that day.

From the depths of despair and desperation, Irfan sahib had now been blessed beyond his dreams, as he and his family had just met their beloved Imam.

Irfan sahib said:

“Yes, I suffered and still I have pain in my ankle but today Allah the Almighty has blessed me in a way that is full compensation and much more for any suffering I had. The moment I entered Huzoor’s office I was left completely stunned by the beauty and radiance emanating from Huzoor. I swear to God that now I am ready to be shot again a thousand times for the sake of Ahmadiyyat. The opponents can torture or kill me but they can never ever weaken my resolve and faith in the truth of Ahmadiyyat even an iota. Ahmadiyyat is the truth and the means to salvation in this era is by walking upon the path of the Prophet (as) of this era. Thus, I will never leave the protective shade of the Promised Messiah (as).”

A protective umbrella

Also, amongst those fortunate enough to meet Huzoor for the first time was Adam Nadeem (25) from Houston.

His father was Pakistani, whilst his mother was an American lady and sadly, they had divorced when he was a young child. Ever since he had been raised by his father.

It was clear he had faced challenges and difficulties but his attachment to the Mosque had ensured he had remained firm on his faith.

Eloquent and emotional, Adam described some of the problems he had faced and also how it had felt to meet Huzoor for the first time.

Adam said:

“During my formative years, Ahmadiyyat was an umbrella that guided and protected me through the hurdles of life in a way that no other entity could ever provide. Being raised as an Ahmadi Muslim gave me a direction and a way of life. It taught me self-discipline. No doubt there were temptations all around but the Mosque saved me because having the ability to offer prayers in congregation and to attend Jamaat classes kept me away from the vices that surround us in this society. My father raised me on his own but it was not easy for him as he worked full time. So, whenever I had the chance I came to the Mosque and it felt like it was home. It kept me on the straight and narrow.”

As he described meeting Huzoor a few moments before, Adam filled up with tears. He said:

“When I was younger I don’t think I understood what Khilafat is but as I grew older I came to the realisation that Khilafat is the only solution for the problems of the world today. At a personal level, as long as I listen to Huzoor’s Friday Sermons and try to act upon them I know I will have a successful life.”

Adam continued:

“To meet Huzoor today was indescribable. It exceeded all expectations and hopes. Huzoor’s status is so high, yet when he met me he was so kind and relaxed. He even joked with me and put me instantly at ease. I told him that my Urdu is very poor and broken and Huzoor responded by saying that I do not need to worry and he considered it to be of a good standard! My faith was strong before but I know I have some personal weaknesses and seeing Huzoor has motivated me to work on them because I want to make him proud of me. That is my objective for my life – to be a good Muslim and to pass on Ahmadiyyat to many others – so that my Khalifa is proud of me.”

An instant return

I also met *Abdul Latif (19)*, who had been born in Nigeria but had grown up in the United States, an hour after he had met Huzoor for the first time.

He explained how already he was reaping the blessings of meeting Huzoor.

As he told me the story, Abdul Latif looked genuinely awestruck and overwhelmed.

Abdul Latif said:

“In my Mulaqat, Huzoor asked me what I do and I told him that I am majoring in computer science. At that point, my father asked him to pray that I get a job and Huzoor prayed for this. Anyway, a few minutes after coming out of the Mulaqat, I was sitting in the Mosque when an Ahmadi brother came up to me and we started to talk. After learning my background, he offered me an internship at Google in San Diego! It was incredible how within a few minutes Allah the Almighty had answered the prayers Huzoor did in my favour!”

Thereafter, describing the overall experience of meeting Huzoor, Abdul Latif said:

“Before the Mulaqat, it was chilly outside and I was freezing but as soon as I met Huzoor I felt a surge of spiritual warmth emanate from Huzoor towards me. Just to shake his hand was unreal and I was amazed at how down to earth he was. It was surprising to me that Huzoor is so humble and willing to engage with all of us. For ten or fifteen minutes after the Mulaqat I could not stop shaking as it had been such a spiritual experience.”

Friday Sermon in Houston

On Friday 26 October 2018, Huzoor delivered his weekly Friday Sermon from the Baitus Samee Mosque in Houston.



The foundation for the Mosque had been laid by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) and it was officially opened in March 2004.

It was the first time that Huzoor was delivering a sermon in Houston, which is home to 6 million people and is the fourth largest city in the United States.

The Houston Jamaat itself had grown a lot during the past twenty years and so was now split into three separate local Jamaats.

During the sermon, Huzoor spoke about the importance of developing righteousness and said it was incumbent on the followers of the Promised Messiah (as) to uphold the highest possible moral standards.

Huzoor said:

“The words of the Promised Messiah (as) are a magnificent guide to help us achieve the purpose of our lives. In today’s materialistic world, his words hold even greater importance because people are moving away from faith and becoming increasingly materialistic.”

Later in his sermon, Huzoor spoke about the frequency of natural disasters in different countries, including in the United States.

Perhaps, in Huzoor’s mind was the fact that in 2017 *Hurricane Harvey* caused catastrophic flooding and structural damage in Houston itself. Conservative estimates put the cost of damage of that single hurricane to at least \$125 billion dollars.

Huzoor said:

“We need to understand the reasons for this phenomenon of increased natural disasters. Worldly and materialistic people may not accept or understand this, however we, Ahmadi Muslims, should understand that this is an expression of the displeasure of Allah the Almighty. We must inform others that the Promised Messiah (as) warned of these calamities a hundred years ago and the only means of averting such widespread disasters was by coming towards God Almighty.”

Meeting with Congressman McCaul

After a short break for lunch, Huzoor returned to his office in Houston for two meetings.

The first meeting was with *US Republican Congressman, Michael McCaul* from Texas, who was also serving as the *Chairman of the Congressional Homeland Security Committee*.

The second meeting was with two well-known Houston based academics, *Professor Emran al-Badawi* and *Professor Craig Considine*.

During the first meeting, Congressman McCaul welcomed Huzoor and described him as an ‘antidote’ to those who sought to interpret Islam falsely as a religion of extremism.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“Certainly, we Ahmadi Muslims, are spreading the teachings of Islam across the world but we do not use swords or guns, rather we propagate our religion peacefully. The clerics who preach extremism use the power of their pulpit to spread hatred not out of any love for their religion but to serve their own vested interests. Otherwise, they are well aware that what they preach has nothing to do with the teachings of Islam. I do not know how long it will take but we will never cease in our efforts to counter all forms of extremism and to spread Islam’s true message of peace.”

Having heard Huzoor's words, Congressman McCaul seemed genuinely moved. He said:

"Your Holiness, I think you are the true leader of Islam and you are the Muslim leader who can make a real positive difference in the world."

Thereafter, Huzoor said:

"People spoke about the Khilafat of ISIS but that was no Khilafat. They were terrorists and extremists."

In agreement, Congressman McCaul said:

"Yes, ISIS was a 'so-called' Khilafat - in name only."

In response, Huzoor said:

"Yes, when ISIS claimed a Khilafat, I said immediately that the words 'so-called' should be used to describe their Khilafat because the reality was and remains that their teachings have nothing to do with Islam."

Upon this, Congressman McCaul said:

"Your Holiness, we need your Islam to prevail across the world. I truly believe that instead of our bombs it is your unshakeable faith in peaceful Islam that can defeat the ideology of Muslim extremists. Indeed, I was speaking to another member of Congress recently and we both felt that you are the means of bringing an end to extremism within Islam."

Offering his own views about the need for unity when tackling extremism, Huzoor said:

“My advice to you is that fighting extremism should not be considered as a Republican or Democrat issue, rather you will have to work together with unity if you wish to play your role in this cause.”



Later in the meeting, the persecution faced by the Jamaat in Pakistan was discussed.

Huzoor said:

“In Pakistan, I lived in Rabwah, where the population comprises around 97% Ahmadi Muslim, yet despite this we have no influence in the local council or administration. The authorities use the voting issue to try to force us to declare ourselves as ‘non-Muslims’. On our side, we say that religion is a matter of a person’s heart. If they wish to call us ‘non-Muslims’ then that is up to them but at least give us the right to call ourselves Muslim and to identify ourselves according to our beliefs.”

Huzoor continued:

“In Pakistan, I was put in jail for 11 days. I had not killed anyone. I had not hurt anyone. I had not done anything wrong. But that did not matter and so I was sent to jail. Many other Ahmadis have also been falsely imprisoned. The laws are so restrictive that we can be jailed for three years in Pakistan for offering the greeting of ‘salam’ or if we give our children Muslim names. There are many Ahmadis who have been charged simply because they wrote ‘Bismillah’ on their wedding cards.”

Congressman McCaul had not been aware of the extent of the persecution faced by Ahmadis in Pakistan and appeared shocked.

He asked why the Pakistani authorities had sought to target Ahmadis.

In response, Huzoor said:

“In the 1970s, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto feared that Ahmadis were gaining too much influence. He ignored the fact that Ahmadis had actually helped him get elected, as he had pleaded with our Third Khalifa (rh) to assist him in the election campaign, as he knew that Ahmadis were extremely well organised and worked in a systematic way. Thus, our community assisted him during his election campaign and, as a result, his People’s Party got elected even in those areas where previously no-one had heard of them.”

Huzoor continued:

“However, as I said, later Bhutto became fearful that Ahmadis could become too powerful. Furthermore, he desired to be considered the ‘leader’ of the Muslim world and he calculated that if he took action against us then it would help him gain the support of other Muslim countries.”

Congressman McCaul mentioned that he had met one of Pakistan’s previous leaders and asked Huzoor about him.

In response, Huzoor said:

“There have been Pakistani leaders, including the one you met, who were not personally in favour of the persecution of Ahmadis but they knew that if they ever took any step in our favour the Mullahs would never tolerate it. They are all scared of the power of the Mullahs. We have already seen this in the current Pakistani administration, where an Ahmadi economist, Atif Mian, was appointed to Pakistan’s Economic Advisory Council but his appointment was withdrawn after a few days due to the pressure of the clerics.”

Having heard all this, Congressman McCaul said:

“I would like to visit your hometown of Rabwah but I will be sad that it is not possible for you to join me.”

Visibly moved by Huzoor's presence, Congressman McCaul said:

"Your Holiness, before this meeting ends, I would very much desire if you would lead us all in a prayer seeking reconciliation in the world."

Accepting the request of the Congressman, Huzoor prayed:

"I pray that may Allah the Almighty finish and eliminate from the face of the earth all extremists and I pray that we all, irrespective of our faith or beliefs, work for the common good and join together for the sake of humanity."

After offering these words of prayer, Huzoor led a silent prayer, which the Congressman and all others present joined.

It was a moving and stirring end to an extremely interesting and faith inspiring meeting.

From my perspective, the meeting with Congressman Michael McCaul had been very interesting to watch as an observer.

When it started the Congressman had come across as a very confident, perhaps even brash, American politician. However, as it progressed his attitude and style became increasingly humble and it seemed to me that the more time he spent in the blessed company of Huzoor, the more he came to understand the status of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya.

By the end, he was seeking Huzoor's prayers for the sake of humanity and expressing his sadness that if he were to visit Rabwah, Huzoor would not be able to join him.

The revelation of *nu-sirta bir-robe* promising the Promised Messiah (as) with authority, awe and majesty in front of those whom he encountered has been fulfilled on many occasions during the current period of Khilafat.

It is not just in public meetings but also in private meetings I have personally seen that very prominent leaders of the world are left humbled by Huzoor's grace and dignity. This is something I felt during the meeting with Congressman McCaul as well.

Meeting with Houston academics

The subsequent meeting, with *Professors Emran al-Badawi* and *Craig Considine* also proved very interesting and inspiring.

Professor al-Badawi was a scholar specialising in Arab Studies at the University of Houston.

Whilst I did not know Professor Al-Badawi, I had been following Professor Considine, from Rice University, on *Twitter* for some time and been impressed by many of his posts.

It would be fair to say that he had proven a staunch defender of the peaceful teachings of Islam in recent years.

Indeed, Professor Considine had the honour of having one of his papers, in defence of Islam and the Holy Prophet (sa), quoted by Huzoor during the Peace Symposium in London in 2016.

At the start of the meeting, Professor Considine informed Huzoor that the first book he had written had included interviews with two Ahmadi men.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“You should also have interviewed some Ahmadi women. The Holy Prophet (sa) said that half of the Islamic faith could be learned from Ayesha (ra) and this is a clear indication that all Muslim women should be educated. Further, the Holy Prophet (sa) said that ‘Paradise lies under the feet of one’s mother’ and so both of these Hadith attest to the fact that women play a crucial and indispensable role in society. Thus, when you come to write your next book on Islam you should interview Ahmadi women from Africa, Australia, Pakistan, America and other countries as well.”

Thereupon, with great humility, Huzoor commented on the fact that he had quoted Professor Considine’s paper in 2016.

Huzoor said:

“I wish to thank you for helping me through your paper which I quoted.”

In response, Professor Considine said:

“When I heard that you had mentioned me and quoted my work, it was the greatest honour and undoubtedly the most treasured citation that I have ever received!”

Huzoor then invited Professor Considine to attend and address the UK Jalsa Salana.

Thereafter, Prof Emran al-Badawi said:

“Your Holiness, I listened to your speech at the Humanity First Conference earlier this year and it truly touched me, especially because you quoted my favourite Hadith in which it is said that Allah will say ‘I was hungry and you did not feed Me, I was thirsty and you did not give me water, I was sick and you did not meet or comfort me.’”

As the meeting continued, Professor Considine stated that he had always found Ahmadi Muslims to be ‘open and gracious’.

Upon this Huzoor said:

“Muslims should always be open and gracious, as this is the picture of a true Muslim. Everything about Islam is open and nothing is hidden. It is the only Holy Scripture which remains in its original state and many Hadith have also been accurately preserved. Spreading our teaching is not generosity or a favour on our part, rather this is our mission – to apprise the people of the world of Islam’s true teachings.”

Following on from this, Huzoor spoke about the *Charter of Medina* and said that today's Muslims claimed to follow it but that their claims were empty and hollow.



Hearing this, Professor Considine said:

“The spirit of the Charter of Medina is something for the world to learn from, as it showed how we can bridge the gaps that divide us. It is a charter for humanity.”

Appreciating the comment of Professor Considine, Huzoor said:

“Yes, and alongside the Charter of Medina, stands the Farewell Sermon of the Prophet of Islam (sa). That is a charter of human rights and so combined together with the Charter of Medina and the Farewell Sermon are the manifestation of true Islam – they provide a political framework and a moral compass that, if practiced, would ensure the peace and prosperity of the world.”

After inviting Huzoor to make an address at his university, Professor al-Badawi said:

“I am not an Ahmadi Muslim but it gives me pride that you, Your Holiness, are representing the Muslim community so impressively and, at a time, when Islam is so badly misrepresented by the media, I commend and thank you for the way you are representing Islam.”

As the conversation continued, Professor Considine informed Huzoor that he was a practicing Catholic.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“I am happy to hear this. It is good to practice one’s religion, whatever religion that may be.”

Thereupon, Professor Considine said:

“It is also the honest truth that seeing and learning from the Ahmadi spirit has made me a better Catholic and, more importantly, it has made me a better man. These are not just words that I am saying in front of you but is the sincere truth.”

In reply, Huzoor said:

“A truly religious person will always respect and value other religions and their adherents. This is something I truly believe. May Allah bless you

and enable you to further your efforts to portray the true religious teachings through your work.”

Alhamdolillah, it had proven to be an extremely blessed meeting. The spirit of mutual warmth between the guests and beloved Huzoor had been clear to see.

‘Your most beloved grandfather’

Following the meeting, I met Professor Considine and had the chance to spend some time with him. I wanted to thank him for his efforts to counter the false portrayal of Islam.

As we spoke, Professor Considine explained why he had desired to meet Huzoor. He said:

“I wanted to meet His Holiness to thank him for his never-ending efforts to promote peace in the world. I have listened to his speeches and read them and his words always resonate with me as a human being. What His Holiness says matches exactly what I feel inside my heart.”

Reflecting on the meeting itself, Professor Considine said:

“Genuinely, that was one of the most special meetings in my entire life. The whole room felt like it was covered in a beautiful pure light. To be in the presence of the Khalifa was a surreal moment in my life. It became a room of love and compassion and the peaceful demeanour and thirst for knowledge were the two things that I felt most strongly from His

Holiness. His spirit emanated light, peace and most of all love. Honestly, it felt like he had a 'halo' around him from which stemmed warmth and pure goodness. Meeting the Khalifa was like being in the presence of your most beloved grandfather, who loves you and has unmatched wisdom. Now the meeting has ended I wish I could meet him again."

A few moments with Huzoor

After the meetings with the dignitaries ended, I also had the chance to spend a few moments in Huzoor's company, during which I expressed the fact that I had personally benefitted and learned a lot from Huzoor's words during the meetings.

In particular, I had been struck by how Huzoor had said that the essence of Islamic teachings could be derived from the *Charter of Medina* and the *Farewell Sermon* of the Holy Prophet (sa).

Having observed that I had been taking a lot of notes during the meeting, Huzoor said:

"Once we return to London, you will have the UK Jalsa, Germany and Belgium tour and this tour to write up and so it will take you a few months to write it up."

As I write up this third part of the USA-Guatemala diary, more than six months after the conclusion of the tour, I feel deeply embarrassed that it has taken me not a '*few months*' but rather many months to catch up.

I mentioned how some people had suggested that upon return to London, I first write up the USA-Guatemala diary and then the others.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“There is no need to accept this suggestion! You should follow the correct order and write them up in sequence.”

Huzoor also looked at a book that Professor al-Badawi had gifted him about language. Huzoor said that his eldest grandchild, Mansoor, would enjoy reading it as he was studying several ancient languages.

Huzoor said:

“The Jamaat requires scholars and experts in particular ancient languages and Mansoor has a desire to be one of the people who fulfils this need of the Jamaat. He is determined and so Insha’Allah he will achieve it.”

It was touching to hear Huzoor speak with happiness, both as Khalifatul Masih and as a grandfather, about the efforts of his grandchild to acquire knowledge for the sake of serving the Jamaat.

As I remained in Huzoor’s office, a senior office bearer of the Houston Jamaat approached Huzoor and presented a letter to him. He explained that he was seeking permission for his daughter to attend Huzoor’s Waqfat-e-Nau class later that evening. He said that for some reason they did not have a correct Waqf-e-Nau number for her.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“She may attend the class but I am not going to write that she is officially a member of the Waqf-e-Nau scheme, rather to get this confirmation you should follow the proper procedure through the Waqf-e-Nau department.”

Huzoor further said:

“Usool, usool hai” – meaning “A principle is a principle”.



In this way, Huzoor made it clear that he expected members of the Jamaat to follow the proper system (Nizaam) and channels and not to seek to bypass them.

The office bearer thanked Huzoor for his guidance and for permitting his daughter to join the class. Thereafter, he asked Huzoor how his visit to Guatemala had been.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Bohat acha raha, Guatemala khubsoorat mulq hai, balkay mujay to
Ghana yaad agya.”***

Meaning:

***“It was very good, Guatemala is a beautiful country and, in fact, it
reminded me of Ghana.”***

Waqf-e-Nau classes in Houston

During the evening, Huzoor held two classes, the first with Waqfat-e-Nau girls and the second with Waqf-e-Nau boys. Apart from Houston, members of the Waqf-e-Nau scheme from other Jamaats in Texas and other States had travelled to take part.

In both classes, short presentations were made by members of Waqf-e-Nau before they had the opportunity to ask Huzoor questions regarding various issues and topics.

One of the Lajna members asked Huzoor what an Ahmadi Muslim woman should do if their husband instructed his wife to not observe Purdah.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“Are you going to listen to the Commands of God Almighty or follow what your husband says? The Holy Prophet (sa) has stated that modesty is part of one’s faith and the command to be modest and cover oneself is from Allah the Almighty. Thus, in such circumstances, a woman should not listen to her husband’s directive.”

Huzoor continued:

“In Pakistan, there is a law that we cannot say salam or call ourselves Muslims. Do we obey these laws? No. We obey the rest of the laws but as this law clashes and contradicts Allah’s command we do not follow it. Hence, hold this principle close to your heart, that one should not obey any directive that clashes with and opposes Allah’s command, even if that directive comes from a husband or parent.”

In the boys’ class, Huzoor was asked if Ahmadis should seek to go into politics.

In response, Huzoor said that Waqf-e-Nau should not pursue politics, as the Jamaat needed them to enter other professions such as medicine, teaching and engineering, but other Ahmadis were free to do so.

Huzoor mentioned that Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan sahib was Pakistan’s First Foreign Minister, that some Ahmadis were in Pakistan’s National Assembly prior to the implementation of anti-Ahmadi laws and that Ahmadis were also advancing in politics in some countries today.

Offering a note of caution to those who did seek to enter politics, Huzoor said:

“Whichever Ahmadi desires to become a politician should choose the party he wishes to join wisely and after carefully analysing their policies.”

As the meeting drew towards a close, a Waqf-e-Nau from the local Jamaat asked Huzoor what he thought of Houston.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“It is a good place. I can see that there is open land here, including vast land being used for agriculture and growing crops.”

Meeting his relatives

On the evening of 26 October, after Namaz and dinner, Huzoor graciously met his relatives who lived in Houston or who had come there to see him from elsewhere.

One of the family members present made a comment expressing his view that the United States and Western countries had made a series of decisions that were immoral and not in the best interests of humankind.

He said he believed that they were starting to regret their decisions and to accept their mistakes.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“The reality is that they do not regret their decisions otherwise they would not continue to make unjust and immoral decisions and policies. There is a saying that living a life of shamelessness is the easiest form of existence and this, sadly, is the way of many people and nations.”

Another relative, who had been present in Guatemala, asked Huzoor why he had not taken any time out for sightseeing in Guatemala.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“On the last morning, as we drove to the airport, I saw the main square in Antigua from my car window – that was more than enough.”

Some relatives present were eager to hear Huzoor’s views on the domestic politics of the United States and the forthcoming mid-terms.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“President Trump still has a core base who support him and will continue to vote for him. On the other side, if they want to succeed it is important that the Democrats activate their voters and ensure they actually come out to vote. In the 2016 election, there were Democrats who were ‘apathetic’ and did not vote, whilst Trump supporters all utilised their vote.”

Huzoor continued:

“All Ahmadis who are eligible to vote should not waste their vote but should participate in the election and the Jamaat should encourage Ahmadis to take part.”

Thereafter, Huzoor mentioned his meeting with Congressman McCaul earlier in the day.

Huzoor said:

“When the Congressman came in, I forgot that he was a Republican and asked him if he was a Democrat.”

Laughing, Huzoor continued:

“When I asked this, he seemed shocked and his jaw dropped and he quickly made it clear that he was a Republican!”

Calling the Azan

The next morning, 27 October 2018, I met thirty-one year old twin brothers Syed Awais Ahmed and Syed Nawas Ahmad. Both were doctors and members of the Waqf-e-Nau scheme. Originally from Rabwah, they had moved to the United States a decade earlier.

The evening before, Nawas had the opportunity to offer the Azan for the Maghreb and Isha prayers in the presence of Huzoor. After he had given the

Azan, Huzoor called him towards *Mehrab* where he was standing and spoke to him for a few moments.

Telling me about the experience, Nawas said:

“Whilst performing the Azan I was shaking constantly knowing that Huzoor is present and when I turned to say hayya alal-falaa I saw that Huzoor was looking directly at me! I do not know how I managed to continue as I was trembling with nerves!”

Nawas continued:

“After the Azan was complete, I was getting ready to recite the takbir when suddenly Huzoor asked me where I was from. In front of everyone, Huzoor affectionately held my arm and enquired about my family background. Throughout this time, I was shaking. It is hard to explain those moments, it felt as though my personal state had progressed from ‘normal’ nerves upon giving Azan to a state of complete shock by the time Huzoor spoke to me! It was incredible. The Mosque was full of hundreds of people and yet Huzoor was speaking only to me. To say it was the best moment of my life is to fail to do justice to how it felt.”

Twin brother Awais told me how it felt to see his brother have the chance to meet Huzoor in this unexpected way. He said:

“I was watching from the back of the Mosque and I felt extremely emotional and moved that my twin brother is the recipient of the direct love of Khilafat. When Huzoor is present you forget the rest of the world

completely. Whenever we see Huzoor walk to the Mosque or to his office it is unbelievable and the emotions are unlike anything I have experienced before. Huzoor's presence focuses your mind towards your faith and makes you realise your true objective."

A day of Mulaqats

That final full day of Huzoor's Houston visit was spent morning to evening with members of the Jamaat. Family Mulaqat sessions took place morning and evening and both overran significantly.

The morning session had been scheduled to last three hours but continued uninterrupted for four and a half hours during which Huzoor met with over 80 families and dozens of individual Ahmadis, whilst the evening session, which had been scheduled for two hours, lasted more than three.

In addition, Huzoor visited the home of a member of the Houston Jamaat, *Nasir Malik* for a few moments and in the evening Huzoor also visited the Lajna hall at the Mosque and met the Lajna members.

As a result of the pressing activities, Huzoor's afternoon break for lunch lasted barely a few minutes.

Those of us present, who were merely observing Huzoor's activities were thoroughly tired by the end of the day, yet Huzoor did not give any indication of fatigue and sought to give every possible moment to the Jamaat members.

No challenge too big

People travel across the world to see Khalifa-Waqt. In England, almost every day there are people who come to meet him from abroad.

For some people it is not difficult to travel, as they have means and are in good health but for others it can prove extremely challenging. Nonetheless, I have never met an Ahmadi who does not hold the deepest desire to meet Huzoor as frequently as possible.

In Houston, I met a family for whom it had proved almost impossible to come. Yet, Allah the Almighty accepted their prayers and the yearnings of their heart and so they were able to meet Huzoor that day.

I met two members of the family, Hafeez Ahmad (40) and their four year old son, Rasheed Ahmad shortly after they had met Huzoor for the very first time. The family had travelled 1400 miles from Utah to see their Khalifa.

It was plainly apparent that little Rasheed was severely disabled. The innocent young boy was wheelchair bound and had tubes attached to various parts of his body.

His father explained that his son was fully paralysed, had severe learning disabilities and had already been through many invasive procedures, including an operation on his brain, another on his back and various others.

He could not eat nor drink and, rather than improve, his condition was deteriorating.

Hafeez sahib said:

“My son cannot understand or comprehend much, if anything. Yet whenever he sees Huzoor on MTA he always says ‘Huzoor’ with great love and happiness. Hence, when we heard Huzoor was coming to Houston it was our deep desire for Rasheed to meet Huzoor so that Huzoor could bless him and pray for him.”

Hafeez sahib continued:

“However, to travel with Rasheed on a plane was not something simple. In fact, when I told his doctor that we want to go to Houston, he told me it was risky and would not be easy. He said we would need to keep an oxygen supply with us at all times.”

Hafeez sahib told me that even before they could work out the logistics of travel he had to find the money to pay for the airfare and the cost of the oxygen supply. As he was not working, he did not have the money to hand. Yet, at every step, they observed the blessings of Allah the Almighty and the love of the fellow members of the Jamaat.

Hafeez sahib said:

“I did not have the money to fly here and so kept praying that a miracle will happen. Then some days ago, I was involved in a car collision and the other person admitted that it was his fault. They gave me \$1,000 dollars in compensation and when I saw that I was overjoyed and saw how Allah

the Almighty was opening a way for us! Instead of getting the car fixed, I bought air tickets for us to come to Houston.”

Hafeez sahib continued:

“The cost of the oxygen supply was going to be a further \$495 dollars, which I did not have but Ahmadis are so kind and so loving that the local Jamaat members joined together and paid for the oxygen. Thereafter, some Ahmadis who were also coming to Houston purposely booked the same flight as us so they could help us with Rasheed’s wheelchair and carry the machines and baggage we had to bring. How beautiful is the spirit of the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah (as)!”

The family made it on to the plane but even there they were left panicked and aghast when the battery to their oxygen supply ran dangerously low.

Hafeez sahib said:

“We had to take two flights and there was no interval scheduled in between the flights. Whilst on the first flight, it soon became apparent that the battery would not last the second flight. We were devastated and thought that we will have to stay at the airport to charge the oxygen supply and would miss the connecting flight and it would mean that we would miss our Mulaqat. Yet, at that time of genuine heartbreak, Allah the Almighty came to our aid again. As we got off the plane, we learned that our connecting flight had been delayed! We were so delighted and overjoyed. We went and charged the battery of the oxygen supply and made it onto the second flight on time, Alhamdolillah.”

After telling me what had transpired, Hafeez sahib showed me a video they had made on the plane, in which Rasheed was cradled by his mother, whilst several machines and wires were attached to him.

After telling me the story of their journey, Hafeez sahib could no longer control his emotions, as he told me about the fact that their dreams had come true and that they had been able to meet Huzoor a few moments before.

As Rasheed looked on, his father, Hafeez sahib said:

“I will never forget the moment that my son was able to meet Huzoor and to receive his love and affection. Huzoor met him with such kindness and gave him so much attention that I will never forget and will always remain grateful for. You should have seen Rasheed’s face when he saw Huzoor in person! His whole face lit up and he kissed his own hand, which I am sure was his way of telling us that he desired to kiss Huzoor’s hand as I had done.”

It had been a deeply emotional few minutes. I thought about how there is seemingly nothing that will stop sincere Ahmadi Muslims from reaching their Khalifa.

Expressing exactly what came to my mind, Hafeez sahib said:

“It was a huge challenge to come here but there is no challenge too big when it comes to meeting Khalifatul Masih and gaining his blessings and prayers.”

A spiritual transformation

Throughout Huzoor's tour, an African-American convert to Islam, *Abdul-Hai Dawud Bajwa Thomas (36)* from Orlando Jamaat had the opportunity to serve in the Khuddam security team.

During the afternoon, we sat together in the courtyard of the Houston Mosque and he told me why he had accepted Islam.

As he narrated his personal experiences and what had transpired after accepting Islam I was left genuinely astonished.

Having been born and raised in the suburbs of Dayton, Ohio, Abdul-Hai was not especially religious during his youth.

He was raised as a member of the Presbyterian Church but had never felt satisfied by its religious doctrines, especially the Christian belief of Jesus being the son of God.

He asked questions from his elders about Christianity but was not given proper answers and merely told to '*believe whatever the Bible says*'.

Having been a sceptic of religion, Abdul-Hai candidly admitted to me that as he entered adulthood he was living a life devoid of spirituality and belief.

Like so many other young people in Western society, he fell prey to alcohol and other vices. It all led to the night of his 29th birthday.

Telling me what happened, Abdul-Hai said:

“After spending the day and night celebrating my birthday, I went to bed intoxicated and passed out. Then, suddenly, I woke up unable to breathe. I was frightened and panicked. That moment changed my life. I was tired of living like this and so for the very first time, I truly prayed with all my heart asking God that if He was real to show me a sign. I continued to pray this over the next few weeks.”

After a few weeks of this prayer, Abdul-Hai met an Ahmadi Muslim at the school where he worked and the Ahmadi told him about the advent of the Promised Messiah (as).

Abdul-Hai said:

“I had served in the US Marines when I was younger and had been deployed to Kenya, Djibouti, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia and so had interacted with Muslims before but I never knew what Islam was until I knew of Ahmadiyyat. I read the book the ‘Elementary Study of Islam’ and after reading just a few lines I knew it was the truth. I knew that God had answered my prayers. I felt the light of Islam, which was suddenly as tangible to me as the pages of the book I was reading.”

Abdul-Hai told me that accepting Islam led to a complete change in his life. Apart from giving up alcohol, his social circle changed completely, as he began to make friendships amongst Ahmadis. Yet, there was one haunting element of his past, which came back in a way that he could never have imagined.

Abdul-Hai said:

“When I was deployed to Iraq in 2003 my mother became addicted to crack cocaine. I was beyond angry and I pledged that if I ever met the person who fed my mother’s addiction I would kill him.”

What Abdul-Hai told me next left me completely astounded and shaken.

Abdul-Hai said:

“In 2013, I went to the UK Jalsa and I met another convert who was also a member of the US delegation. As we started talking, I found out that he was from the same town from where I grew up. He told me how Ahmadiyyat had transformed his life, as before he was living a life of crime as a drug dealer. At that moment, as I sat with this Ahmadi brother I knew that he was the one who had been selling crack cocaine to my mother.”

In order to confirm his worst suspicions, Abdul-Hai took a photo with the convert and sent it to his mother and asked her if this was the man who used to feed her habit.

In reply, his mother wrote back:

“Yes, it is him, but he looks so different. Before he looked like darkness but now he looks like light.”

With his suspicions confirmed, Abdul-Hai wrestled with his emotions. He had no idea how to react.

Abdul-Hai said:

“I prayed with all my heart that Allah the Almighty enable me to forgive this person, who I had desired to kill. It took some time and prayers but ultimately I completely forgave him with all my heart. I spoke to him and he accepted what he had done and asked for my forgiveness. Since then we have taken Bai’at twice together at the hand of Khalifatul Masih. This is the epitome of Islam, as only Islam can bring about such a spiritual transformation and only Islam can give us the capacity to open our hearts and forgive.”

I was genuinely stunned by what I had heard. How the message of Ahmadiyyat had brought together these two men in a state of peace, where without it who knows what the results would have been if their paths had ever crossed.

Light and love

Already emotional, having recounted his journey to Islam, Abdul-Hai became ever more so as he shared with me his personal experiences with Khilafat.

Abdul-Hai said:

“When I met Huzoor for the very first time, he was extremely affectionate and kind but still I did not feel that spiritual connection and bond with

Khilafat which others had told me I would feel. I was confused and worried. I continued to write to Huzoor and he kept writing back and through this my relationship with Khilafat developed. Then, in 2013 I came to the UK Jalsa Salana where Huzoor graciously led my Nikah (marriage) ceremony.”

Abdul-Hai continued:

“A few days later, our USA delegation had a meeting with Huzoor and that day changed my life forever. The moment Huzoor walked in, I felt completely spellbound. Suddenly, I found myself weeping and I felt that deep connection and profound love that everyone had told me about. In fact, much, much more! In that moment, I realised that Khilafat is everything and that without it I was the walking dead. All I saw from Huzoor’s blessed face was light and love. It was the best moment of my life. Ever since that day, I have seen miracles achieved through the prayers of Khilafat.”

Very sadly, the first child *Hafiza Bajwa Thomas* of Abdul-Hai and his wife *Maariya Bajwa* was stillborn. In the aftermath of that time of personal grief, they travelled to London to meet Huzoor.

Narrating how Huzoor’s love gave them strength and the capacity for patience, Abdul-Hai said:

“Huzoor is the most loving human being I have ever seen. He is compassionate, empathetic and selfless. At our time of devastation, Huzoor reassured us and regarding our daughter, Huzoor very

beautifully said: ‘She is Allah’s’ and that comment gave us relief, patience and comfort. In the Mulaqat, Huzoor prayed for us that Allah grants us pious and healthy progeny and that prayer was fulfilled when we were recently blessed with a healthy and beautiful daughter (Nusayba Bajwa Thomas). Alhamdolillah.”

As our conversation ended, Abdul-Hai reflected upon his observations as a member of the *Hifazat-e-Khas* team.

Abdul-Hai said:

“As a member of the Hifazat-e-Khas team, I am on site wherever Huzoor is based and I can say with complete sincerity there is not a harder working or devoted man on the planet than him. I am 36 and in good physical shape but after following Huzoor for just one day I felt exhausted. Here in the USA, we talk of great men and leaders like Lincoln, Jefferson but their efforts do not scratch the surface compared to what the Khalifa of the time is doing for the sake of humanity. He has basically lived his past fifteen years of life without a break and is unceasing in his efforts to propagate the mission of the Promised Messiah (as). His love has transformed my life, guided me to the right path and he is doing the same to countless other souls across the world.”

Sampling Texan barbecue

I had heard from many sources that Texas was known as the ‘meat-capital’ of the United States! Notably, the people of Texas were known for their fondness of all things barbecue. Several Ahmadis local to the area said that a

trip to Houston would not be complete without a visit to a local restaurant called '*Rudy's BBQ*'.

As we were on duty, it was not possible to go there but, very kindly, that afternoon, someone ordered in *brisket* from Rudy's which we tried at lunch. It was very good, though the locals assured me that eaten fresh it would have tasted even better.

They certainly like their meat in Houston and cook a lot of it! In fact, everything in Texas seemed super-sized.

The cars were big, the roads even bigger, the land was vast and some members of the public were positively Viking like!

Always by his side

As late afternoon moved into evening, Huzoor met dozens of families and individual Ahmadis in Mulaqat in Houston.

As one family came out, Munir Javed sahib, Private Secretary called me. He said that he had entered Huzoor's office for the final moments of the previous Mulaqat to take the photo and that one of the Ahmadis meeting Huzoor had asked him about the early days of Huzoor's Khilafat.

The person had asked Huzoor about how he had managed the monumental change in his life, where one minute he was an ordinary person and the next he was Khalifatul Masih and whether any person had been there to guide and help Huzoor in those early days.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Prior to being elected, I never once thought of becoming Khalifa but for some reason Allah the Almighty placed this burden upon my shoulders. After the election, there was no person assigned to help me, rather it was Allah the Almighty who was my constant companion and was forever there to help and support me.”

Very beautifully, Huzoor continued:

“From the very first moment, Allah the Almighty has constantly been by my side and has helped me, supported me and guided me. If I ever require anything it is to Allah the Almighty that I turn and He never forsakes me. Thus, when a person is elected as Khalifatul Masih he does not turn to any individual for help, he turns only to his Creator. If Allah the Almighty gives His servant a task then He Himself helps him to fulfil it.”

It was a beautiful and moving answer that illustrated the absolute trust that Huzoor had in Allah the Almighty.

As I write up this diary, I recall how a few months after the USA tour, Huzoor was interviewed at the Fazl Mosque in London by a British journalist who asked Huzoor if he was ever lonely.

Huzoor’s answer which was published by the *Daily Telegraph* has been widely read.

Huzoor said:

“No, God is with me. I’m not lonely.”

What the journalist omitted to mention was one aspect that I will never personally forget. As Huzoor gave the answer, he pointed with one finger towards the sky and look of love in Huzoor’s eyes illustrated his complete devotion and trust in His Creator.

It was a look and an answer that illustrated how in times of grief or trouble, our Khalifa knew that His Creator would always be there to shoulder his burdens.

No need for a second opinion

Another person to meet Huzoor in Houston was *Hailey Ahmed*, a young lady in her mid-twenties who had accepted Ahmadiyyat in November 2015 and was now married to an Ahmadi man, *Harris Ahmed*, with whom she lived in Arizona. I asked her how and why she had come to accept Islam.

In reply, Hailey sahiba said:

“Back when I was in high school, I went to church but there were definite gaps in my Christian faith on some issues and questions that were not answered to my satisfaction. Then, when I went to college, I met a Sunni Muslim girl who observed Hijab and I was interested in why she wore it. I used to ask her questions and then asked if I could see her Mosque. The more I learned about Islam, the more I liked it but there were some things

that made me uncomfortable. For example, at the Sunni Mosque, there was a person who gave a sermon that was somewhat extreme.”

The real turning point in her life came when she found Ahmadiyyat through the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Women’s Student Association (AMWSA)* in California.

As she told me her experiences with Ahmadis, Hailey sahiba became emotional.

Trying to hold back her tears, Hailey sahiba said:

“When I came into contact with Ahmadis I was bombarded with love and affection. I consider myself so blessed and fortunate to have accepted the true Islam and if there have been any challenges, God has always been there to help me. For example, my father and his family are very conservative and so they refused to acknowledge that I was a Muslim but in the last year, at least my father has accepted it, even if his family are still against my choice. Despite the pressure, it has never weakened my faith nor made me consider if I made a mistake.”

Hailey sahiba continued:

“The real difference I have found compared to the Sunni Mosque I used to visit is that they (non-Ahmadi Muslims) have no leadership or unity, whereas through Khilafat we Ahmadis are one. If there is a question, he answers it and there is no need for a second opinion.”

As she again wiped away her tears, Hailey sahiba told me about meeting Huzoor a few moments before. She said:

“Today, I had the chance to meet Huzoor for the first time and he was so kind to me. I felt relaxed and content and I was amazed at his friendliness and how down to earth Huzoor is.”

An unfortunate mistake

It is extremely rare to see Huzoor angered. He is a model of restraint and patience. There have been many occasions, where I have thought that Huzoor will be angry, whether it is with me or with others, yet almost always Huzoor guides with love and kindness.

Over the years, if I have ever witnessed Huzoor’s anger it has never been due to a personal grievance or something that pertained to him. Rather, invariably it is because something has happened or been said that is against the teachings of Islam or against the traditions of our Jamaat.

During Huzoor’s tour of the United States, there were two such occasions where it was clear that Huzoor was angered and both occasions were due to the same issue.

The first occasion was on his final night in Houston as Huzoor walked to the Mosque and the second occasion was during the final moments of the USA tour, as Huzoor waved goodbye to Ahmadis at the Baitur Rahman Mosque in Maryland.

On both occasions, Ahmadis raised *naaray* (slogans) expressing their love for Khilafat.

However, both times, an individual raised a slogan of:

“Mirza Masroor Ahmad ki jai” – meaning

“Victory of Mirza Masroor Ahmad”

On both occasions, Huzoor admonished the person who raised the slogan.

With firmness, Huzoor said:

“Do not raise the slogan that ‘Mirza Masroor Ahmad ki jai’. There is no such slogan! The only slogan is ‘Ghulam Ahmad ki jai’ which is a revelation received by the Promised Messiah (as).”

Hence, Huzoor’s displeasure was because he could not tolerate even for a second that something was said that could equate the status of Khalifa-Waqt with that of the Promised Messiah (as).

Return to Maryland

Huzoor’s visit to Houston, which had proven very blessed and memorable, reached an end on the morning of 28 October 2018.

Hundreds of Ahmadis gathered at the Baitus Samee Mosque to see him off and, after a silent prayer, Huzoor departed from the Mosque at 10.40am and proceeded to the airport for his return flight to Washington.

After a brief stay at the airport, the flight departed from Houston at 12.20pm and landed at Dulles Airport at 3.40pm.

The Qafila proceeded directly to the Baitur Rahman Mosque, where Huzoor was greeted by hundreds of Ahmadis at 5.05pm.

After almost two weeks of travel, we had entered the final part of the tour, where Huzoor would remain based at Baitur Rahman for the remainder of the USA tour.

Meeting with Missionaries

On the morning of Monday 29 October 2018, Huzoor held a four-hour session of family Mulaqats and then after a short break, Huzoor held a two hour meeting with all Jamaat Missionaries serving in the United States.

It was the first of several administrative meetings Huzoor held that week, during which those present presented their respective Tabligh and Tarbiyyat reports to Huzoor, received Huzoor's directions and were also able to ask Huzoor questions on a wide range of issues pertaining to Jamaat work.

During the meeting, Huzoor emphasised the importance of Missionaries developing their own relationship with Allah the Almighty.

Huzoor said:

“To be successful in your duties you must first elevate your own relationship with Allah the Almighty. It is essential that all Missionaries are regular in offering Tahajjad prayer. Some people consider that two quick Nafl (voluntary) prayer are enough but you should be offering Tahajjad at least between thirty minutes to forty-five minutes each morning and it would be better if it is longer than this.”

Thereafter, Huzoor enquired the attendance at prayers at the Mosques or Centres where each of the field Missionaries were based.

Mostly, the figures were low and so Huzoor spent a significant portion of the meeting instructing the Missionaries in ways of encouraging people to attend the Mosque with regularity.

Huzoor said:

“What is the benefit of building Mosques if the attendance at prayers is so low? If only the office bearers come to prayers then the Mosques will start filling up so tell them it is up to them to set an example. First and foremost, it is up to you, as Missionaries, to set the example. Even if there is no one else present, you should open up the Mosques and offer prayers at the correct times.”

Huzoor continued:

“The trend of combining prayers has become so much ingrained that some of our youngsters think that there are only three daily prayers! Hence, in the Mosques you must offer the five prayers separately, on time, unless there is a genuine reason not to.”

One Missionary reported that the local Amila in his Jamaat wanted Zuhr and Asr prayers and Maghreb and Isha prayers to be combined. In support of their argument, they suggested that these prayers were regularly combined at the Markaz in London.

After hearing this, Huzoor said:

“What they are saying is incorrect. For one or two months of the year, either Zuhr and Asr or Maghreb and Isha are combined in London because the days become either extremely short or extremely long but for more than ten months of the year the prayers are offered separately.”

Regarding issues that Missionaries may face when dealing with local Jamaat office bearers, Huzoor said:

“If you have problems or difficulties from the office bearers you should not confront them angrily, rather with patience a Missionary should seek to guide them with love and you should not become easily irritated or impatient. As Missionaries, you have been posted for the Tarbiyyat of all members of the Jamaat and this includes the office bearers as well.”

Huzoor continued:

“Do not think that clashes or problems between Missionaries and office bearers are a new phenomenon. Many decades ago, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) held a meeting in Karachi and after observing the high levels of cooperation between the Missionaries and the Ameer, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) remarked that he wished that in other Jamaats the Missionaries and office bearers would work together with the same spirit of cooperation as he had witnessed there.”

Later in the meeting, Huzoor told the Missionaries how they should spend a typical day. Repeatedly Huzoor emphasised that they should not waste time but should utilise all of their time productively.

Huzoor said:

“You should be resourceful and innovative. Come up with new ideas and plans to motivate the members of the Jamaat and to spread the message of Islam. When I was in Ghana, I observed that the successful Missionaries were those who would come up with new ideas and ways to fulfil their duties. On the other hand, the less successful Missionaries were those who became impatient and were not willing to adapt their ways according to the environment.”

Specifically referring to the propagation of Islam, Huzoor said:

“Around ten years ago, I instructed each Jamaat to convey the message of the Jamaat to ten percent of their people each year. Yet, now I am not

convinced that even 1% of the US population is aware of Ahmadiyyat. A campaign of billboards or leaflets will only take you so far and the next step requires Missionaries to come into their own. You should be the driving force of Tabligh by making plans and activating the members of the Jamaat to join you in this effort."

Huzoor also mentioned that Ahmadi mothers from the United States had written to him seeking permission to use non-Ahmadis to teach their children the Holy Quran, as they could not find any local Ahmadis to help them teach the Quran to their children.

Regarding this, Huzoor said that if Ahmadi Quranic teachers were not available then Missionaries should take on this responsibility in their Jamaats so that Ahmadi parents would not have to resort to non-Ahmadis.

Outlining the importance of maintaining and protecting the unity of the Jamaat, Huzoor said:

"The Missionaries have a crucial role in guarding and strengthening the bonds of unity within our Jamaat. Sometimes, Ahmadis become disheartened due to the conduct of certain office bearers and so it is your duty to remind them that they did not take the Bai'at of any office bearer. Rather, they have accepted the Promised Messiah (as) and taken the Bai'at of his Khalifa alone."

One Missionary asked Huzoor about how to deal with those Ahmadis who may have been expelled from the Jamaat (*Ikhraj*) but who indicated a desire to reform.

Huzoor said:

“Anyone who wishes to come to the Mosque to offer their prayers, including those who have been given Ikhraj from the Jamaat, is free to do so. Furthermore, the vast majority of people who have been expelled are forgiven after some time. As Missionaries, you should not turn your back on anyone who indicates a desire to reform, rather you should encourage them in this effort.”

Huzoor continued:

“Our Jamaat system (Nizaam) is such that the role of the father and mother work in parallel. On the one hand, it is necessary to preserve the integrity of the Jamaat and so sanctions are given from time to time, however, on the other side we encourage and desire for all Ahmadis to reform and Missionaries must support them in this effort.”

As the meeting concluded, Huzoor addressed the Missionaries collectively.

Huzoor said:

“As Missionaries, you must be a positive role model for others in every aspect of your life. You should have the highest possible standards of prayer and maintain the highest morals. You should constantly increase your religious knowledge, whilst at the same time you should remain informed of contemporary issues and secular news, as you are a representative of the Jamaat.”

Huzoor continued:

“Every Ahmadi should have a firm belief in your honesty, fairness and integrity. If there is a dispute within the Jamaat, you should never be influenced by anything other than the facts of the case and do not take any action that could potentially undermine your impartiality or give the impression that your neutrality may be compromised.”

An affectionate moment

Following the meeting, Huzoor proceeded to the Mosque where, before Namaz, the *Aameen* ceremonies of around thirty children took place.

One child, whether due to nerves or otherwise, was unable to read the Quran at all whilst sitting next to Huzoor.

To save the child and his family from embarrassment, Huzoor very affectionately and patiently himself read each word and the boy then repeated each word after Huzoor.

At the end, Huzoor turned to the boy and jokingly said:

“Tum nay aaj meri Aameen karwa di hai!”

Meaning:

“You have performed my Aameen today!”

Everyone in the Mosque laughed and enjoyed Huzoor's comment.

Visit to Joppatowne

At 9.30am the next morning, 30 October 2019, Huzoor left the Baitur Rahman complex and travelled one hour by car to Joppatowne, a small town with a population of around 12,000 in Maryland.

The purpose of Huzoor's visit was to inspect a housing complex initiated by Majlis Ansarullah USA in conjunction with a housing developer.

A few houses had been built so far, whilst others were pending and the majority were being purchased privately.

Upon arriving, Huzoor inspected one of the newly built houses and thereafter, the Ahmadis who had purchased homes at the complex all requested Huzoor to visit their homes.

A session of family Mulaqats was due to take place that morning and so time was extremely tight. Yet, Huzoor still took the time to bless the homes of the Ahmadis who owned properties in the complex with his presence.

It was a very touching scene, where Huzoor would enter one home and spend a few minutes and then the next host would be ready and waiting to receive Huzoor and take him to their home.

The unbridled joy on the faces of those whose home Huzoor visited was clear for all to see. As he entered their homes, Huzoor bestowed upon them

blessings and memories which they would surely prize for generations to come.

An emotional Khadim

Immediately after returning to Baitur Rahman, the Mulaqat session commenced.

During that period, I met a Khadim, *Musa Tariq (29)* who was part of the Khuddam security team. Originally from Bangladesh, Musa was now living in Los Angeles.

Telling me about his duty, Musa said:

“I specially asked to do this duty because it was an opportunity to be near Huzoor. For the first week, I had been stationed at positions close to where Huzoor was due to walk but I was always facing away from Huzoor. It was very strange, as I knew Huzoor was just a few metres from me but I never once saw him with my own eyes. Then, yesterday, I had a break from duty and I was able to stand in a position from where I was finally able to see Huzoor from nearby.”

As he said this, Musa suddenly began to cry uncontrollably.

As he sought to compose himself, Musa said:

“I saw him! I saw Huzoor with my own eyes! That is why I am crying – because I saw him!”

Musa continued:

“During the tour, I have had night duties and I sometimes look in the direction of Huzoor’s residence and pay attention to the light, to get an indication of when Huzoor rests. One night, the light was off for hardly a few minutes. Huzoor works all day and then all night he supplicates before Allah the Almighty for our benefit. Just to see how Huzoor works and serve has changed my entire perspective on life.”

Let her live

That morning I was also able to spend some time with *Sarjo Trawalley (52)*, originally from The Gambia, but living in the United States since 2000. He told me that his parents, who were not Ahmadis, had died when he was an infant. As a result, he was raised by his uncle and older brother who were Ahmadis and so Trawalley sahib considered himself to be a ‘born Ahmadi’.

During his life, Trawalley sahib had witnessed the blessings of obedience to Khilafat time and again, especially with regard to the health of his children.

Sarjo Trawalley sahib said:

“When I was in The Gambia, we had a child born with a congenital heart defect and I wrote to the Fourth Khalifa, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) to inform him that the doctors had said that our child will die. In response, the Fourth Khalifa (rh) wrote back that the child will be healed. As there was no treatment available in The Gambia, I wrote back to ask if I should take my child to the UK or to Germany for treatment. In

response, Huzoor said to be patient and to keep praying and Allah Himself will provide the means for healing. A few weeks later, I received a letter, that entirely unexpectedly a hospital in New Jersey in the United States had offered to sponsor the treatment of my child. So, we came here and received the treatment that, without the Help of Allah, would have been impossible.”

Some years later, Trawalley sahib’s wife was expecting a daughter in the United States but the doctors had informed that the child had tested positive for Downs Syndrome and asked the family if they wanted to keep the child or abort it.

At that time of grief and confusion, Trawalley sahib sought the guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba).

Sarjo Trawalley sahib said:

“The doctor told me we had just one week to decide if we want to have an abortion. I told the doctor that I will not make a decision until I have consulted my Khalifa in London. In reply, the doctor’s tone was quite dismissive and condescending. He said, ‘You are the father, not someone in London’. Upon this, I told him that I do not make any major decision without my Khalifa. The doctor then handed me his business card and said somewhat indignantly ‘Give it to your Khalifa!’”

After writing to Huzoor, Trawalley sahib waited for a response. Just one night before the abortion deadline was due to pass, he got a call from the Private Secretary’s office in London.

Narrating the message, Sarjo Trawalley sahib said:

“The Private Secretary’s office conveyed Huzoor’s clear message to me. The person on the phone said that Huzoor has said that ‘If you are a sincere Ahmadi, do not abort your child. She will be fine, if you let her live!’”

As soon as he received the message, any doubt in the mind of Trawalley sahib was eliminated. He went and told his wife that they would keep the child.

The next morning, he went to see the doctor to inform him that they would keep the child. However, before he could say anything, his doctor greeted him with a smile and said: *“Congratulations”*.

Sarjo Trawalley sahib said:

“I could not understand why he was congratulating me, as our baby was sick. But then the doctor explained. He said they had taken another test at my wife’s last appointment and it showed that our baby was fine and the initial Downs Syndrome diagnosis was mistaken! It was then that I told him the message we had received the night before and that our Khalifa had given us the glad tiding already. The doctor, who initially had been dismissive of our desire to seek Huzoor’s guidance, was genuinely amazed. He took a lot of interest and so I was able to do Tabligh and tell him about the advent of the Promised Messiah (as). Now, over a decade later, my daughter is ten years old and just as Huzoor promised, she is fine and healthy, Alhamdolillah!”

It had been faith inspiring to hear how Huzoor's words had come true. Only a person, who is divinely guided, can say with such confidence that a child, yet to be born, will be fine, when all medical evidence speaks to the contrary.

Thereafter, as we continued to sit in the courtyard of the Mosque premises, Sarjo Trawalley sahib told me he had once seen a dream in which he was fortunate enough to see the Promised Messiah (as).

He told me that in his dream he was standing in the blessed company of the Promised Messiah (as) by the very tree at Baitur Rahman that we happened to be standing next to now.

Narrating the rest of the dream, Sarjo Trawalley sahib said:

"In the dream, the Promised Messiah (as) said to me that there is a journalist present and so you should tell him that the Imam Mahdi has come. We were standing exactly near the tree that you and I are standing at now. In my view, you are a journalist of our Jamaat and so my dream has come true. Hence, let me proclaim before the entire world that there is no doubt that the Imam Mahdi has come and his Fifth Khalifa is here today!"

As he said these words, Trawalley sahib broke down in tears and kept repeating 'Alhamdolillah'.

I had been grateful to meet him and to learn of the incredible way that Khilafat had touched his family's life.

Meeting with Majlis Ansarullah USA National Amila

Following Namaz and lunch, Huzoor held a meeting with the *National Amila of Majlis Ansarullah USA*, which was followed by separate classes with Waqf-e-Nau girls and boys.

During the meeting with Majlis Ansarullah, the members of the National Amila presented their departmental reports to Huzoor and sought his guidance on various matters.

The *Qaid Tarbiyyat* informed Huzoor that one of his department's targets was to ensure that all members of Majlis Ansarullah USA listened to at least one of Huzoor's Friday Sermons each month.

In response, Huzoor said:

“The members of Ansar should be listening to the sermon of Khalifa-Waqt every week and so a target of once a month is extremely inadequate.”

During the meeting, Huzoor also encouraged Majlis Ansarullah USA to increase its efforts to serve humanity.

Huzoor cited the example of Majlis Ansarullah UK who were seeking to build a state of the art eye hospital in Burkina Faso.

Huzoor said:

“Majlis Ansarullah USA should make ambitious plans to serve those people who are in desperate need. At the very least, you should raise funds to build a ‘model-village’ in Africa to provide relief and basic services to those who are living in remote areas.”

Later in the meeting, Huzoor enquired about how many Ansar members offered their prayers regularly in Mosques or Salat Centres. The Qaid Tarbiyyat informed that they did not have the exact information on prayer attendance.

Huzoor said:

“Every single member should know the value and importance of prayer. Here in America, people have cars and transport easily available. Just this morning, I was remembering my time in Tamale in Ghana and I was thinking of how, even though the conditions were extremely tough, the Mosque was small and transport was difficult, still every day around 50 to 60 people would come to offer Namaz in congregation.”

As he recalled fondly his old memories, Huzoor turned to Abu Bakr bin Saeed sahib, an Ahmadi originally from Ghana and said:

“Abu Bakr, you are from Tamale and so you know the example of the Ahmadis in Ghana and so you must do everything you can to encourage the Ahmadis here in the United States about the importance of Namaz. Never be disheartened or give up in this regard.”

It was very touching to see Huzoor recall the standards of piety and righteousness amongst the people of Ghana and how he used them as an example for people of the Western world to follow and learn from.

Waqf-e-Nau Classes at Baitur Rahman

Later that evening, during his meeting with Waqfat-e-Nau at Baitur Rahman, Huzoor was asked how an Ahmadi could stay loyal to their nation, if they vehemently disagreed with the policies of their leaders.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Your love for the nation must continue regardless of the policies of the government. There may be political parties, politicians or individuals who are causing problems or who enact bad policies but regardless, according to the teachings of the Holy Prophet (sa), you must remain loyal to your nation. You should not take any action that could harm or destroy the peace of society. Rather, be patient, pray and wait for the next election and then vote for those leaders who you consider to be better and sincere to the country, to society and for humanity.”

In the boys’ class that followed, a Waqf-e-Nau boy asked Huzoor what he had personally desired to become when he was a child.

Smiling, Huzoor said:

“Whatever I desired and wanted to become, I did not!”

Another boy asked Huzoor why it was not permitted to use plates or dishes made of gold.

“Such things are a means of showing off and arrogance. How could someone desire to eat in gold plates when there are people who are dying of hunger and living in abject poverty? Allah the Almighty does not like people to flaunt their wealth, rather He prefers and appreciates simplicity. So, if someone has the money to buy lavish crockery, it is far better for them to eat from simple plates and to use the money they save to feed the poor. Hence, the reason why we do not use golden dishes and plates is to ensure that we remain simple and humble. Always remember that Allah the Almighty said to the Promised Messiah (as) that He liked his humble ways.”

A few moments with Huzoor

The next day, 31 October 2018, Huzoor held separate meetings with *Sam Brownback*, the *United States Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom* and *Congressman Jamie Raskin*, a representative of Maryland in the House of Representatives.

Prior to the meetings, which started at 10am, Huzoor called me to his office at Baitur Rahman for a few moments.

The day before, I had been anxious and worried because I felt that Huzoor may be displeased with me and so I had prayed a lot during the night. When Huzoor called me to his office, I was very nervous, as I did not know if Huzoor was calling me to express his displeasure.

My own personal experience is that Huzoor's way of training the Waqf-e-Zindighis is masterful. At almost all times, Huzoor is extremely loving and kind and whenever I have a problem or concern, he reassures me, guides me and invariably solves whatever difficulty or issue I face.

However, there are occasions when a stern glance from Huzoor or an element of strictness in his tone leaves me reflecting upon my weaknesses and shortcomings. There are times when I do not know if Huzoor is pleased or displeased with me and this forces me to turn to Allah the Almighty and to strive to increase my bond with Him.

As I took a seat in Huzoor's office that morning, I was relieved and breathed a sigh of relief when Huzoor greeted me with a smile and asked me how I was.

Seeing Huzoor's kind smile and hearing his loving tone was a great relief and in my heart I thanked Allah the Almighty for having accepted my prayers so quickly.

Feeling better, I mentioned some of my experiences in the USA over the last couple of days.

As Huzoor was about to meet the politicians, I also mentioned that after nine years Pakistan's Supreme Court had just announced the revocation of the death sentence given to the Christian lady, Asia Bibi, in a case that gained worldwide attention.

Upon hearing this news, Huzoor expressed his hope that she be released soon and remained safe.

I also mentioned to Huzoor that I had been told that an Ahmadi man from the USA Jamaat had suggested that Khalifatul Masih should have a *'social coordinator'* who accompanied him and would *'guide'* Huzoor when to stop and talk to people and similar things, in the way that politicians or other well-known people have consultants on such matters.

It was an idea that illustrated a lack of understanding of the status and dignity of Khilafat.

Upon hearing this suggestion, Huzoor said:

"Such things are for worldly leaders and materialistic people and are of no use for those who are God-fearing."

Laughing, Huzoor said:

"If I had such a 'social-coordinator' I would make sure that I did the exact opposite to whatever he suggested! So, if he told me to pause and wait, I would walk faster and run away!"

I laughed out loud and with that, Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib entered and informed Huzoor that Ambassador Brownback had arrived.

Thus, Huzoor stood up and walked out of his office and across to a small reception room at the Mosque where the Ambassador was waiting.

Meeting with Ambassador Sam Brownback

During the thirty-minute meeting, Ambassador Sam Brownback explained his role and responsibilities to Huzoor and sought Huzoor's advice and opinion on various matters regarding religious freedom.



With great detail, Huzoor outlined the persecution faced by Ahmadi Muslims in different countries, notably in Pakistan and explained the differences of belief between Ahmadi Muslims and the wider Muslim population.

Huzoor specifically mentioned the case of Abdul Shakoor sahib (*Shakoor bhai*), who at the time remained in jail in Pakistan but thankfully has since been released.

Referring to Shakoor bhai's case, Huzoor said:

“He is an elderly man and his only crime was keeping books that promoted peace. Despite posing no threat to anyone, when they came to raid his shop and arrest him the police came in armoured vehicles and charged him under anti-terrorism laws.”

The Ambassador expressed his shock and regret that Ahmadis faced such sustained and unjust persecution and pledged to assist as best he could.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“We follow a very simple principle, which is according to the teachings of Islam – that faith is a matter of one’s heart. What I believe is a matter for me and what you believe is a matter for you. To impose one’s own beliefs on others through force and compulsion is completely wrong.”

Huzoor continued:

“Different religions have different beliefs and even within a religion people interpret the same teaching differently. What we say is that, irrespective of these differences of belief, we should recognise the fact that we are all human beings and, as such, we should honour human values. We should care for one another and respect each other’s right to freedom of belief. Let us all sit down together as friends and as brothers and sisters.”

Upon this, Ambassador Brownback replied:

“Your Holiness, I fully agree and I personally believe that mere ‘tolerance’ is too low of a standard and so, as you have said, it is essential that we have ‘respect’ for one another and recognise that we are all the children of God. In light of this, I wish to let you know that we deeply and genuinely respect your efforts in promoting inter-faith dialogue throughout the world.”

As the meeting continued, Huzoor spoke about our Jamaat's beliefs regarding the Prophet Jesus (as) and the advent of the Messiah of the latter days.

Huzoor said:

“Most other Muslims believe that Jesus (as) will descend from heaven, whilst Christians and the followers of certain other religions are also awaiting the ‘second coming’ of the Messiah. However, we Ahmadi Muslims believe that Jesus (as) died a natural death and that his ‘second coming’ was a metaphor that signalled the coming of a Prophet in the latter days.”

Huzoor continued:

“We believe the second coming of Jesus (as) has been metaphorically fulfilled with the advent of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He is the Messiah (as) awaited by the followers of all major religions and he was sent by Allah the Almighty to spread a message of love, peace and harmony and to unite the people of all religions at one hand.”

Thereafter, Huzoor mentioned the Lahore attacks of 28 May 2010.

Huzoor said:

“Not a single Ahmadi Muslim retaliated or sought revenge after 86 of our members were brutally martyred. I am sure that others would have

responded in a different way but we followed the teachings of Islam which is to show patience in the face of cruelty and turn to God."

Hearing this, Ambassador Brownback said:

"Your Community's example of not retaliating is an extremely strong testimony to your high standards of faith and an illustration of your commitment to peace. It is a testimony to who you are. Today, in the world most people are running away from God and yet the faith of your community remains so strong."

As the meeting drew to a close, Huzoor said:

"For us, Ahmadi Muslims, the persecution we face is a blessing in disguise because it leads us towards the blessings of God Almighty. Where some 90 or so Ahmadi Mosques have been sealed by the authorities in Pakistan, we have built around 16,000 Mosques throughout the world through the sheer blessings and Help of Allah the Almighty!"

Meeting with Congressman Jamie Raskin

Ambassador Brownback left the room and a few moments later, Congressman Jamie Raskin entered and had the opportunity to meet Huzoor.

The Congressman, who before entering politics worked as a Law Professor, informed Huzoor that he had taken a personal interest in the case of *Shakoor bhai* and was advocating for his release.

As the meeting progressed, the issue of the voting rights of Ahmadis in Pakistan was raised.

Regarding this, Huzoor said:

“We do not desire any special or favourable treatment; all we desire is fairness and equality. We want a joint electorate system in Pakistan so that we can take part in the democratic process. If we have the right to vote then we have a voice through which it is possible that we could start to get some of our rights.”

After hearing about the destructive effect of clerics who preached hatred and extremism, Congressman Raskin said:

“It is my view that religious people will either take us to peace or towards death and destruction.”

In response, Huzoor said:

“A truly religious person can only take you towards peace. Our Jihad is not of bombs or violence, rather our Jihad is of love, peace and harmony. This is what the Holy Quran teaches, this is what the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) practiced and it is these noble and peaceful teachings of Islam that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (as) revived.”

Towards the end of the meeting, Huzoor spoke about the unity within the Jamaat. Huzoor spoke of the bond of love that existed between Ahmadi

Muslims and their Khalifa and how sincere Jamaat members followed the guidance and instructions of Khalifa-Waqt.



Upon this, Congressman Raskin jokingly said:

“Your Holiness, in that case I would be really grateful if you could tell the members of your community in my District to vote for me in the mid-term elections coming up next week!”

Huzoor enjoyed the comment and laughed.

With that, the meeting came to an end and Huzoor walked the few steps across the corridor to his office and continued his duties. We had been on tour for over two weeks and now we had entered the final few days of Huzoor’s tour. I looked forward with great anticipation to those final few days before the Qafila would Insha’Allah return to London.

End of Part 3

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